

From Knowledge to Action
Defining Effective and Functional School Division Planning Practices
to Maximize Organizational Improvement and Change

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Abstract

The practice of education planning across Canada is established for the manifest purpose of guiding school improvement. In Manitoba, the planning process is reportedly intended to improve linkages that will increase efficiency and enhance communication, thereby improving educational outcomes for all students (Manitoba Education, 2004, 2007). The problem arises in a practical sense, however, in determining whether the education planning process creates the necessary linkage between strategic intentions and activities, or whether the planning process exists simply as a bureaucratic requirement or condition (Meyer and Rowan, 1983).

This research study was designed to determine whether there were systemic features of school division planning for Student Services, which would result in improved linkages between educational intentions and related actions, making the process more effective and functional. In order to respond to the questions posed in this study, I focused on a concrete aspect involved in planning for students with challenging learning behaviours. With the assistance of school divisions participating in the study, I collected data from structured interviews with key personnel, and from planning templates or other selected documentation.

The information was compiled and examined through a conceptual framework, derived from the review of literature, which served to organize and analyze the school division data. A process of analytic abduction was used to define similarities and variances in planning practices, according to the conceptual framework. The information was summarized and a synthesis of effective planning practices was created as a result.

The findings informed the development of a new framework detailing the archetypes of effective and functional planning practices for Student Services at the school division level, a process more likely to set the stage for organizational improvement and change.

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Chapter One

Introduction to the Study

In recent years, educators have been given a mandate for large-scale, sustainable, organizational reform. Changes have taken place that have resulted in pressure on those in public services, particularly education, to cope with fundamental shifts in political, economic, social and cultural climate (McEwan, 1995). McEwan characterizes recent political changes to include societal dissatisfaction with government, government's diminished capacity and will to meet public expectations, and extreme effects of media on public policy. She describes economic changes to encompass trends toward globalization, increasing international competitiveness and mounting government and personal debt. McEwan adds that social changes incorporate shifting demographics and distributions of wealth, as well as increasing urbanization, while cultural trends include greater ethnic and linguistic diversity and shifts in once-shared values. McEwan emphasizes that as Canadian society confronts the knowledge of these changes over time, concerns about educational inadequacy and inaction are contributing to a collective anxiety about the nature of our schools. For example, is the education system preparing students for productive lives? Can we ensure that all students will receive an education that will help them thrive as equal and contributing members of society? In this qualitative study I will explore education planning, a process generally endorsed by educators in Manitoba and across Canada, to address such questions of improvement and accountability. While there is some debate in the literature as to the definition, scope and efficacy of education planning, I will attempt to determine whether the current planning process in Manitoba provides the necessary mechanisms to move educators from

knowledge to action, as well as to maximize organizational learning and change. For the purpose of this study, the focus of the research will be on strategic education planning for Student Services at the school division (district) level. In this chapter, I will review school division planning models from various provincial jurisdictions, followed by a thorough description of the school division planning process in Manitoba. Additionally, I will establish the challenges involved in education planning in general, with specific questions raised for further study.

Planning for Student Services – The Case for Accountability

Education is clearly an investment in the future and prosperity of a nation. The importance of providing students with an education that will equip them for lifelong living and learning is widely recognized, and the impact of students not reaching their full potential is evident (Fullan 2005). Wilkinson (2005) asserts that good education systems promote societies that are affiliative, supportive and inclusive. As well, in a recent analysis of material living conditions done by the C.D. Howe Institute of Canada, Coulombe and Tremblay (2005) concluded that increasing a country's literacy scores by simply one per cent relative to the international average, resulted in a 2.5 per cent increase in labour productivity and a 1.5 per cent rise in GDP per person. Fullan (2006) adds that improving education for all has a double payoff for individuals and society, including both increased social cohesion and economic prosperity. Stringfield, Milsap and Herman (1998) share that the greatest achievement gains for exceptional students are achieved by attention to long-term implementation and institutionalization of educational reform. In other words, the hope of reform is that the increased achievement of all

students will become integral to schools and education systems with or without external supports.

McEwan (1995) conceives that the education reform movement erupted onto the public agenda in the 1980's in reaction to numerous perceived shortcomings of education and international competitiveness. McEwan believes that this global movement has led to increased expectations of accountability, including greater monitoring and evaluation of schools and education systems. Owens (1998) indicates that in 1982-83, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published no fewer than ten reports on the condition of public education in the United States and that by 1985 approximately thirty reports and calls for reform were in existence. McEwan (1995) affirms that at the same time, the Canadian Education Statistics Council began studies of elementary and secondary education in Canada and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) undertook studies to provide information on demographic, economic and social context and outcomes of education. Owens (1998) proposes that the effectiveness of schools, as a theme for reform, flows from the issues of equality and access that were prevalent in the 1970's. Although he sees the education reform movement as a natural progression in a world affected by accelerating growth and change, he believes that increased expectations, pressure for democracy, personal freedom, and respect and dignity of all individuals are elements characterizing reform at the current time.

Compounding this pressure to perform and reform is the recognition of competing demands for limited resources (McEwan, 1995). According to the Financial Reporting and Accounting in Manitoba Education (FRAME) Report (2007-08), public kindergarten

to grade 12 educations in the 2007-08 school year cost 1.62 billion, up 4.1 per cent from the previous year. The cost per student in 2007-08 was \$9,401, up 5.7 per cent from the previous school year. It is also necessary to acknowledge that while student enrollments in Manitoba schools have generally been declining at the rate of eight per cent from 1999-2006; the numbers of identified students with exceptional needs have been steadily on the rise. In fact, costs in the area of Student Services are up 7.2 per cent overall at approximately nine per cent per student, almost doubling the costs of regular instruction on the same per student basis. Hence, although provincial funding is continually increasing, it has not kept pace with ever-rising costs. School divisions are therefore placed in positions where they are expected to do more with less, not only facilitating improvement in teaching and learning with extremely diverse and challenging student populations, but at the same time attempting to maintain cost control and fiscal responsibility in light of limited government funding and dollars from municipal taxation. Ultimately, the question of accountability exists in part because of the reform movement, but also due to the need for accountability in the use of public funds. Finding the most effective way of ensuring the integrity of school systems is the issue at hand

Accountability through Planning

The Director of the Canadian School Boards Association (2002) believes that accountability is about understanding why we are educating students in public schools, how public funds are being utilized, how responsibility for children's education is shared and, most importantly, how we can improve education in Canada. From another perspective, Miliband (2004) suggests that accountability involves transparent external responsibility to the public and to the government, for summative assessment or

assessment of learning. The other aspect of accountability he suggests concerns formative assessment or assessment for learning, which involves the use of data about student progress to improve both learning and teaching. McEwan (1995) indicates that there are a number of tools that can help focus on accountability, ultimately improving student achievement and educational equity. She identifies that one of the most common ways for educational organizations to set agendas for action and change is through strategic improvement planning. The assumption implicit in strategic planning is that the content and the format of the plan will be related to what it purports to achieve. McEwan states that strategic plans generally contain vision and mission statements, goals, priorities, directions and methods of measuring success. They provide a blueprint with common language that generally links organizational purpose with daily activities. McEwan concludes that strategic improvement plans can assist employees with understanding the bigger picture, rather than merely the part on which they are working. Education planning has therefore become a mechanism of accountability and reform, established to ensure that knowledge and intentions are linked to related actions. The remainder of the chapter will be devoted to an exploration of education planning as a mechanism of reform across the country.

Provincial Planning Models

In a review of planning documentation developed by provincial departments of education across Canada, it is evident that the urgent sense for reform described by Stringfield (1998) translates into pragmatic planning models and frameworks to guide school improvement. The British Columbia Ministry of Education has a Strategic Annual Service Plan (2005-2008) that links school district planning to the government's five

foundational great goals. Each school district's Superintendent is required to complete a district accountability contract and school districts are subject to an external review every three years. The accountability contracts include a description of each district, its objectives, challenges, strengths, connections (similarity of objectives) between district and schools, and a description of strategies and structures to achieve goals.

Accountability contracts accompany budgets, illustrating the proposed and actual amounts spent in the improvement process.

Alberta Education officials produce a guide to Education Planning and Results Reporting that details the requirements for school boards and Francophone school authorities in the province. This document (2005) describes an accountability framework cycle that involves developing school district plans in alignment with provincial outcomes, involving community, identifying strategies and methods to improve student learning, allocating appropriate resources, monitoring the progress of goals, measuring results, using results to identify priorities or adjust strategies, and then communicating with stakeholders about the results. Districts are required to submit education plans every three years that include accountability statements in accordance with the Alberta School Act and the Government Accountability Act, foundational statements (mission, vision, principles and beliefs), a profile of board jurisdiction, provincial goals, related district outcomes, performance measures and targets, budget highlights, as well as capital and facility plans. In years when a full education plan is not required, Alberta districts are required to submit an Annual Education Results Report (AERR). The Results Reports are to detail the district accountability statement, a list of accomplishments and results of performance measures. There is a requirement that they school districts post this

information on websites and Alberta Education officials encourage that they be shared with newspapers, or placed in various forms of divisional communication (report cards, newsletters or brochures).

Saskatchewan Learning (2006) has a Pre-K-12 Continuous Improvement CI Framework designed to assist school divisions in the production of annual strategic plans. The goal, according to this framework is to align system priorities with strategies and supports to strengthen learning outcomes. The CI Framework introduces an annual planning, monitoring and reporting cycle that involves a plan that is completed by school divisions to establish priorities for each academic year. A report produced describes strategy implementation. An information collection template attached to the framework provides details on finance, facilities, governance and special programs as part of the CI cycle. A bi-annual joint monitoring conference occurs between Saskatchewan Learning and school divisions to discuss a school division's improvement plan in relation to policy direction, local orientation, and learning outcomes.

In Ontario, the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) assists in improving the quality of the province's education system. The EQAO is involved in designing student assessment programs and province wide assessments, reporting to and advising the minister of education in Ontario, leading provincial participation in national and international assessments, promoting research on best practices in educational accountability and conducting quality reviews with local school boards. Documents obtained from the EQAO (2005) are evidence of the importance of improvement planning and contain a guide for both school and board improvement planning. The five steps to planning include ownership, understanding and focusing, accountability,

planning for improvement, and assessment of ongoing impact. Although there is no direct reference, it appears that the EQAO documentation appears to be a slight modification of the Context, Input, Process, and Product (CIPP) Model (Stufflebeam, Madaus & Kelleher, 1998, 2003), a planning tool for continuous educational improvement. Within the model, context indicators influence results, but would not be within the control of a school division. Input indicators are those resources within a school division and are considered controllable variables. Process indicators illustrate those activities associated with, or done by a school division to fulfill its mandate. Results indicators involve the benefits for students during and after completing their education.

Education Quebec officials have developed a system of province-wide indicators (2003) as part of a broad process to modernize public administration. The Ministère de l'Éducation (MEQ) is subject to this act and must establish Quebec-wide indicators. Using the indicators, school boards are required to prepare multi-year, strategic plans and establish goals for the communities they serve. Subsequent to this, schools and any education centers are required to create success plans that contribute to the implementation of objectives to improve student success. The MEQ analyzes strategic plans prepared by school boards, schools and education centers and then identifies trends in the province's education system. The process for improvement planning suggested by the MEQ contains eleven steps that include: establishing the planning team, defining the project, focusing on current information and trends, gathering new information, analyzing indicators, establishing strategies, producing the plan, publicizing the document, implementing the plan, monitoring the plan, and evaluating the process.

In New Brunswick, government officials have recently unveiled a new plan for public education entitled, *When Kids Come First* (2007). The plan reveals three fundamental goals for all children, namely: readiness to learn, mastery of reading, writing and numeracy by grade five, and discovery of personal strengths prior to graduation. The province also identifies five other commitments and 140 specific actions to move New Brunswick into the future as a leader in education. In alignment with the provincial goals, district administrators are required to produce comprehensive improvement plans that detail local planning processes, health and human service needs, mission and vision statements, district strengths and concerns, objectives and information on implementation, evaluation and monitoring.

In 2005, the Department of Education in Nova Scotia introduced a business plan for Primary-12 education entitled *Learning for Life II: Brighter Futures Together*. The Department officials are continuing to implement the initiatives in this four-year plan designed to improve outcomes for students. For example, many of the initiatives defined in the plan are interdepartmental in nature and aimed at achieving “lifelong learning opportunities, full participation at all levels of education and training system for all Nova Scotians and accountability of all partners.” (p.2) There is a province-wide goal for school improvement planning accreditation that engages school boards and schools in a review process around student achievement and school performance. School and board improvement plans consist of outcomes, measures (indicators), data, targets and strategies of each school district. The long-term goal is to have the accreditation process completed for all districts in the province by 2010.

In 2004, the Prince Edward Island Department of Education initiated an accountability project known as the provincial School Improvement Planning (SIP) Model for the purpose of improving learning outcomes and increasing student achievement. The proposed model is designed to help districts and schools develop a plan that reflects their unique climate and context while, at the same time, providing information to the Department of Education for the development of common provincial indicators and for reporting to the public. The planning model involves a three-year cycle for each school district, a list of provincial indicators, as well as a self-assessment and reporting process. Prince Edward Island is expected to implement this school improvement model over a three-year period.

The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador (2004) has set a goal of, “continuous improvement of the educational experience for all students.” Insights and understandings from the literature, such as the significance of a planned and structured approach and the importance of data collection and interpretation to guide actions, are endorsed by the province. Hence, school districts and schools in the province are part of the Development Cycle. It includes pre-planning, exploration of values and vision, involvement with an internal review process, development of a mission statement, establishment of goals, objectives, strategies, action plans and outcome measures, participation in an external review, monitoring of implementation plans and assurance of consistent communication throughout the Development Planning Process. A report is required on a yearly basis to analyze the performance of the school districts and constituent schools.

Under agreement with Alberta Learning, both education officials from Nunavut and the Northwest Territories have approval to use the Alberta Program of Study and provincial examinations. The Northwest Territories Student Success Initiative is modeled after the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement. Officials from the Department of Education in the Yukon follow the British Columbia Curriculum and Provincial Examination Program (BCPE). From 1994 until 2002, the Public Schools Branch in the Yukon followed the British Columbia Schools Accreditation Process. In 2003, officials from the Yukon adopted a similar process as a territorial school and district evaluation program.

It is evident from the examination of planning documentation across Canada, that educators use the process of education planning to address questions of improvement and accountability. School divisions across the country are engaging in pragmatic planning models and frameworks aligned with provincial expectations. A summary of provincial planning practices can be found in Table 1.

The Manitoba Context

The majority of literature pertaining to strategic planning for education in Manitoba exists in the form of procedural support documents produced by Manitoba Education. These documents support the suggested practice of education planning for all school divisions in the province. Essentially, the process of strategic planning in education rests with the idea that linkages will enhance communication, thereby improving educational outcomes for all students and increasing responsibility and accountability in the system (Manitoba Education, 2004). When school divisions plan, the process can potentially

Table 1

Summary of School Division (District) Planning Practices Across Canada

Alberta	School district plans in alignment with the Provincial Accountability Act every 3 years; in other years, Annual Education Results Reports
British Columbia	District accountability contracts relating to the province's Five Foundational Great Goals; external review of districts every 3 years
Manitoba	Planning cycle with production of documentation including full template every 3 years, with a listing of school division priorities required in other years; rotational visitation process to review initiatives and areas of shared interest
New Brunswick	Provincial plan entitled, "When Kids Come First"; districts required to produce comprehensive improvement plans in alignment with provincial goals
Newfoundland and Labrador	Provincial goal of continuous improvement with schools part of an internal planning and reporting cycle; school districts involved in an external review and monitoring of plans
Nova Scotia	Provincial plans for K-12 with goals for school improvement and accreditation; school and board improvement plans with five provincial expectations
Nunavut and Northwest Territories	Uses the Alberta program of study and provincial examinations; follows the Alberta Success Initiative
Ontario	EQAO responsible to monitor the quality of the education system; planning focusing on ownership, understanding, accountability, improvement and ongoing impact
Prince Edward Island	Provincial school improvement model with indicators to improve learning outcomes and increase student achievement; 3 year planning cycle for each district including a self-assessment and reporting process
Quebec	Multi-year strategic plans to establish goals for school communities; creation of success plans for purposes of implementation
Saskatchewan	Annual planning, monitoring and reporting cycle each year and information collection to facilitate governance and monitor special programs; bi-annual monitoring conference with the province
Yukon	Uses the BC curriculum and system of provincial examinations; follows the provincial/territorial school and district evaluation program

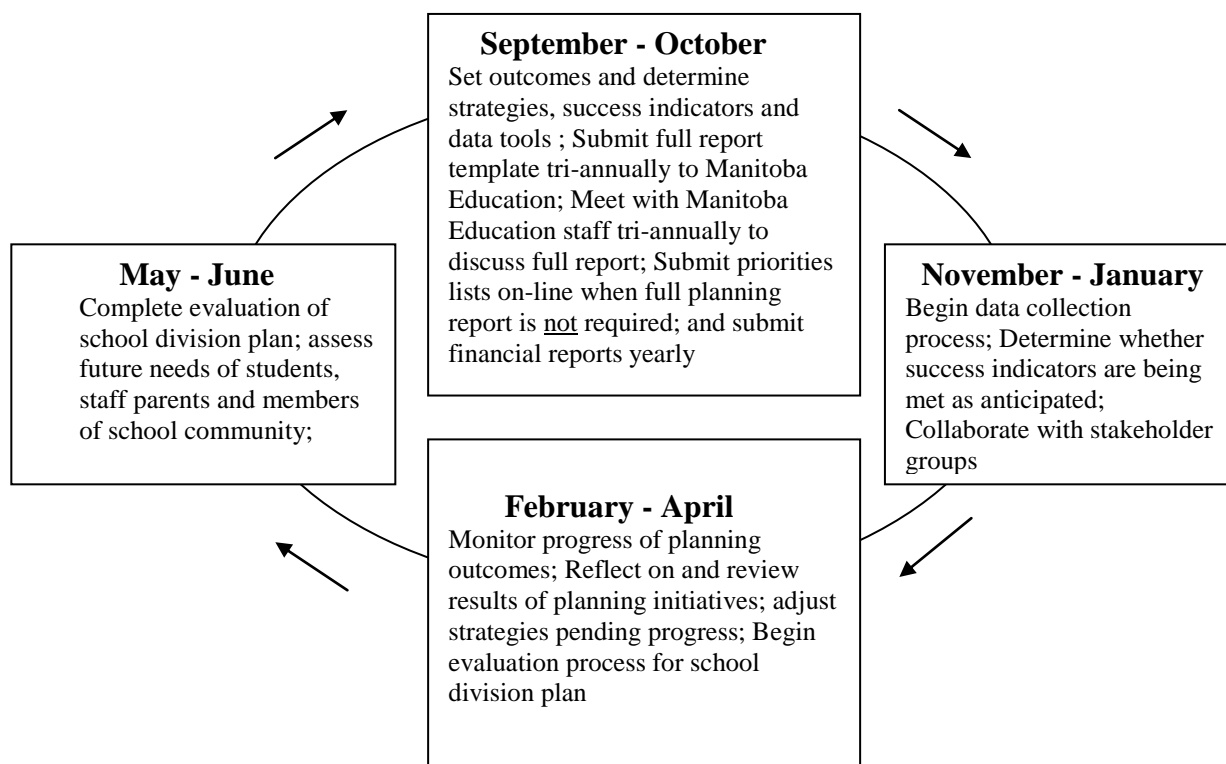
track and measure the success of educational activities or programs. In other words, given the sense of urgency and demands for accountability previously described, school division administrators can potentially determine through the planning process whether a strategy has been realized as designated or intended. In addition to monitoring for accountability, the staff from Manitoba Education identify that school division plans can also assist educators in gaining a better understanding of local needs, establishing budgets, identifying issues and trends, as well as communicating with the community. School division plans are written documents that should articulate clear purposes and directions, as well as strengths and areas for improvement. Stakeholders are to prepare plans collaboratively, including students, school staff, parents and members of the school community. At its most effective level, school division planning and reporting serves to demonstrate accountability by increasing the linkages between intended strategic outcomes and activities, as well as between school division personnel and the stakeholders with whom they are connected.

While education planning is not new to Manitoba educators, the provincial government revised the suggested planning framework in April 2007. The new process contains three distinct elements that include a planning cycle, the production of planning documentation, and a rotational visitation process to review initiatives and other areas of shared interest. I have illustrated a typical planning cycle, which might be undertaken, in Figure 1. School personnel and stakeholders may choose to enter a range of points in the planning cycle, pending their readiness and consideration of individual strengths, needs and interests. Planning team members may collaborate during any one of these entry points to monitor outcomes and strategies, and to establish whether success is being

achieved as determined by the indicators that they set. Team members may choose to adjust goals and strategies, depending on various circumstances that may confront them.

Figure 1

School Division Planning Cycle



The Planning Report, Priorities and Visitations

Planning documentation occurring within the cycle involves a number of possibilities. First, Manitoba Education requires a full report template to be submitted on a tri-annual basis. In the full report template, planning teams detail their intended strategic outcomes, methods for achieving those outcomes, indicators that outcomes have been accomplished and description of tools used for measurement. A sample Template of Planning and Reporting is included in Appendix A. There is no requirement that school divisions use the template (and some do not), however, Manitoba Education indicates in

correspondence that the use of the template allows the plans to be analyzed and collated much more effectively. Manitoba Education personnel visit on a tri-annual basis in the same year as the full division reports have been completed. The sample list of School Division Interview Questions used during visitations is included in Appendix B. School division administrators are still required to complete an annual report on planning initiatives to their communities, as in the past, but submit “priorities lists” in years where a full planning report is not required. An internet-based utility program currently supports the annual documentation of the new planning priorities lists. The priorities lists allow personnel at Manitoba Education to obtain a working knowledge of activities occurring in each division within the province. This information serves to inform Manitoba Education on education priorities and plans for the future. Lastly, secretary treasurers from school divisions provide a yearly financial report for all categorical grants. Categorical grants include activities for which a school division receives specifically designated funding. This may include funds for Early Childhood Development, Aboriginal Academic Achievement, or English as an Additional Language, just to name a few (Manitoba Education Grants in Education), <http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/ecy/grants.html>. Personnel from Manitoba Education caution school divisions that any funds not spent in a particular planning year are deducted from grants in the following planning year. As a result, the school division planning process not only proposes to support improved educational outcomes for all learners, but also serves to hold school divisions responsible and account for the use of public funds (Manitoba Education, 2004).

With the information provided by school divisions in the tri-annual report, Manitoba Education staff analyze and collate the documentation on a four-category

rubric. The rubric essentially identifies the four stages of report writing development according to five regular components of planning and related categories of criteria. I have outlined the basic structure of the rubric in Table 2.

Table 2

School Planning Report Rubric (Manitoba Education, 2004)

Component	Category	Stage 1-4
Planning Process	Stakeholder Involvement Information to Parents Frequency of Planning School Planning Team	Planning process restrictive to inclusive
Expected Outcomes	*SMART Format Outcomes Priorities	Vague outcomes or priorities to *SMART Format
Strategies	Description Relationship to Outcome Achievement	Strategies not linked or linked to outcomes
Indicators	Results Strategies Relationship between factors	No evidence of indicators to recognition of indicators as evidence of results
Data Sources	Description Linkage	No recognition of data sources to recognition of data sources as measurement tools

*SMART Format = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Related

In the component entitled planning process, the four categories include stakeholder involvement, information to parents, frequency of planning and school planning team. This section of the rubric outlines the degree to which the planning process is developed, and defines whether it is inclusive or restrictive in approach. In the component entitled expected outcomes, there are three categories including SMART format (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Related), outcomes developed, and priorities linked. Here, school division personnel can determine whether outcomes are linked to provincial or school division priorities, or whether they are more vague and generalized. The purpose of this portion of the rubric is to determine whether a school plan contains strategies that link directly to outcomes or whether they do not relate to, or are vague pertaining to the overall plan. In the segment entitled indicators, the categories include results, strategies and relationships between outcomes and strategies. At this stage, the rubric can assist in determining whether there is recognition of indicators as evidence of results. In the final phase of the rubric, school division personnel can evaluate data sources or tools. A determination is then made as to whether data are recognized as measurement tools in the description of anticipated results and an overall rating is given as to the stage of the plan. Again, this information is factored into the development of the provincial education agenda and is provided in the form of feedback to school divisions on their planning progress.

The Challenge for Planning in Education

In spite of the efforts toward education planning for purposes of accountability, research about school systems demonstrates that the capacity to support accountability mechanisms has been a consistent challenge for Canadian educators. March and Olson

(1976) as well as Weick (1976) described a feature inherent in educational organizations which they proposed to be a cause of this challenge. They viewed the context or structure of educational organizations as very loosely coupled or decoupled in nature. In using this terminology, they suggested that those involved in educational strategy and direction might rely more on faith and trust than on coordination and control when determining whether established goals are being realized as they were intended. Meyer and Rowan (1977, 1983) identified that, in addition to the context of loose coupling, educators might also avoid making determinations of whether inconsistency or ineffectiveness exists in their work. Meyer and Rowan argued that, as a result, educators might commonly assume that what is going on makes sense or conforms to their intentions without any objective measure for determining if this is actually the case. Meyer and Rowan defined this unique sense of faith and trust as *logic of confidence*. They rationalized that while logic of confidence allowed educators to engage fully in the work that they do, it was precisely this approach that created difficult circumstances when it came to external accountability systems. For example, teachers have traditionally worked on a highly autonomous basis behind the classroom door and this has compounded the effects of loose coupling. Barber (2002) recognized that, in spite of many excellent teachers, there had been no culture in place to systematically extend and deepen the quality of education. He acknowledged that the system was now involved in more appearance-oriented efforts as part of the reform movement, yet still not contributing to authentic, sustainable or change-related practice. Hence, educators might view planning as superficial rather than being seen as a bona fide response to assist in educational improvement. Meyer and Rowan (1983) originally documented the phenomenon of appearance-oriented efforts in a study of education

reforms, such as teacher credentialing, student classification, as well as planning and funding models. They suggested that educators in their efforts towards accountability adopted planning structures simply for purposes of legitimization rather than for actual benefit. Meyer and Rowan described this process as bureaucratization, a practice commonly perpetuated by institutional systems. They believed that systems would plan explicitly for purposes of gaining resources and stability, or for enhancing survival prospects of the organization. Meyer and Rowan argued that educators established organizational structures without determining whether they were actually effective or advantageous to educational organizations or society as a whole. In this case, they claimed that institutional structures functioned as rationalized myths, and that these structures were negligible when compared with daily activities and actual behaviours. In other words, they suspected that outcomes might not actually be achieved because of school planning processes. It is important however to note that such assertions in the literature are contrary to key concepts and suggestions outlined in this study, namely the planning and reporting frameworks across Canada, and more specifically in the province of Manitoba.

Statement of the Problem – Contrary Views

In order to explore this dilemma further, Merton Diligio (2000) clarified the conceptual tools to be used in a functional analysis of social situations. In an attempt to reconcile the discrepancy that I had identified between the literature and the current context of planning thus far in my study, I applied the tools that Diligio had outlined to the concept of school division planning. It would appear that the literature did not take into account the manifest (intended) or latent (recognized) functions of educational

planning, but more so the manifest (unintended) and latent (unrecognized) dysfunctions of the process. Nonetheless, the contrary viewpoints set the stage for the problem described herein.

Ultimately, the practice of education planning and reporting across Canada is established for the manifest function of guiding school improvement. In Manitoba, the planning process is reportedly intended to improve “linkages” that will increase efficiency and enhance communication, thereby improving educational outcomes for all students (Manitoba Education, 2004, 2007). Ultimately, educators across Canada have established the practice of education planning and reporting for the manifest function of guiding school improvement. In Manitoba, the planning process is reportedly improves “linkages” that will increase efficiency and enhance communication, thereby improving educational outcomes for all students (Manitoba Education, 2004, 2007). Given that officials from departments of education across the country require that planning occur, school division administrators necessarily comply by submitting planning templates as evidenced in the previous discussion of planning models across Canada. School teams assess the latent function of planning in each jurisdiction is assessed by teams to determine the degree that outcomes have been realized as intended. The research suggests that such mechanisms might rather have a latent dysfunction of appearance-oriented efforts, designed simply for purposes of organizational legitimization.

The problem arises in a practical sense in determining whether education planning and reporting processes proposed through Manitoba Education (2004, 2007) or other provincial departments of education, create the necessary linkage between strategic outcomes and school division activities (effectively re-coupling their systems), or

whether this planning and reporting structure simply exemplifies the proposed rationalized or legitimized myth originally suggested by Meyer and Rowan (1977). As well, it is advantageous in a practical sense to determine whether educational planning and reporting process serves as an effective and functional practice for school division in moving them from intention to implementation, or action. By definition, planning is effective if it has an intended or expected effect; and planning is useful if it can be of practical utility in the planning framework or process (The Free Online Dictionary, <http://www.thefreedictionary.com>). Finally, it will be beneficial to establish whether school division personnel associate certain planning attributes more favourably with organizational improvement and change. Therefore, the general questions that I pose in this study are as follows:

1. What are the characteristics of educational planning acknowledged in the literature that link organizational intention with action, effectively recoupling the system and dispelling the myth of bureaucratization?
2. According to the perspectives of key individuals in school divisions, how do planning practices relate to, or differ from the examples cited in the literature and summarized in the analytical framework established in this study?
3. Are there planning practices of the school divisions participating in this study that are effective and functional, and will serve to construct a new framework for organizational improvement and change?

Significance of this Study – Extending Theory and Enhancing Practice

There is a large body of literature on the topics of student and school planning, student achievement, school improvement, and accountability. The existence of literature

on school division planning in the domain of Student Services, however, is minimal. Maguire (2003) conceives that the research on student achievement rarely extends beyond the classroom to a larger setting such as the school district. The research in this study will be theoretically significant, given that it will add the school division, organizational and systems perspective to the existing literature on educational planning. While the documentation on planning in education (Manitoba Education, 2004) holds that the process of education planning in general should result in focus, reflection and collaboration as well as contribute to clarity of thought, purpose and action, there is some doubt cast as to whether this is possible given the loosely coupled nature of educational organizations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977, 1983). As well, the literature demonstrates the view that while responsibility and accountability are maintained through the appearance of educational planning and reporting, the more practical aspects of organizational learning and change do not always occur because of this possibly superficial process. Accordingly, I will endeavor to document the systemic school division planning features that improve linkages between intentions and actions and are more favorably associated with organizational learning and change. I believe this will result in what school division personnel consider more effective (having an intended or expected effect) and useful (being of practical use). While plans from various parts of the professional learning community (student, school and division) are designed to flow from similar priorities, the knowledge on school division planning and organizational learning gained from this study should link correspondingly with findings from the current literature on student and school planning.

On a practical level, this study will assist educators (particularly Student Services Administrators) in considering the discrepancies or similarities between the theoretical implications presented in the literature on planning and the actual planning processes in their school divisions. Those involved with Student Services planning will have an opportunity to compare and gauge their own perceptions of the provincial planning process with that of others participating in the study. If school divisions are truly the loosely coupled organizations described in the literature, then the findings of this study on Student Services planning practices will assist in narrowing the gap or increasing the connection between strategic intentions and resulting actions. In this way, planning processes might not be viewed simply as rationalized myths or bureaucracies, but as effective and functional practices that have the potential to generate organizational improvement and eventual change. The findings will be more inclusive in nature due to the fact that an aspect of the study will focus on systemic planning outcomes relating specifically to students with exceptional learning and behavioural needs. Data gleaned from this study can form the basis of further investigations on Student Services Planning at the school division, or provincial level.

Overview of the Study

Besides Chapter One which provides an overview of the background information, current context and rationale for planning in education, a statement of the problem, as well as, the significance of the study, this work will be presented over eleven chapters. In Chapter Two I will review the literature and document the implications of the literature as it relates to the identified problem. In Chapter Three, I will describe the methods and design of this study, my role as researcher, the nature of the participants

selected, the ethical implications involved in a study of this type, and the process for data collection and analysis. In Chapters Four through Nine, I will provide the results of the study and the interpretations made on the basis of the data. Each chapter will contain a case study detailing the interview results of participants from selected school divisions. In Chapter Ten I will summarize the perspectives of study participants regarding their effective and functional planning practices, based on the case study data. In the final chapter of the study, I will respond to the research questions originally raised and will present a new framework detailing the archetypes of planning that capture the suggested characteristics and practices of effective and functional Student Services strategic planning. The final chapter will present conclusions regarding the impact of the suggested planning practices on educational improvement and change. Additionally, the final chapter will contain recommendations and areas for further exploration and study, pertaining to the problem initially identified.

Chapter Two

The Review of Literature

In Chapter One, I outlined that education is largely a social enterprise with a shared priority of developing the next generation of citizens with the ability to lead productive lives and thrive as equal and contributing members of society. This massive undertaking exists, however, within a context of fundamental political, economic, social and cultural change. Hence, concerns have arisen around educational inadequacy to meet the demands of change, and there has been a perceived need for educational reform to ensure that the system is preparing students effectively for the future. During this time, there has been an expectation for educators to deliver enhanced instruction and improved outcomes for increasingly diverse learners, while competing for limited resources in the environment. Accordingly, accountability has followed as an essential element of educational reform to ensure that previously described ends are achieved within the necessary means. Throughout the discussion, I presented examples on how provincial departments of education across Canada have translated the need for accountability into pragmatic models, cycles and frameworks for planning to guide school improvement. Organizational structures such as school division plans are examples of accountability mechanisms established to monitor the work in education. Manitoba Education specifically proposes that school divisions engage in planning processes to presumably enhance communication and improve educational outcomes for all students (2004). I revealed initially, however, that school organizations tend to rely more on faith and trust than on coordination and control to achieve desired intentions toward school improvement. As a result, bureaucratic or structural mechanisms such as school division plans are sometimes viewed as superficial rather than effective or functional, and are

being completed simply because they are required. In this chapter, I will further engage in an exploration of the literature to address the challenges involved with education reform and the system's response of strategic educational planning. At the end of the chapter, I will summarize the key practices identified from the literature that are most commonly associated with effective educational planning. The conclusion of this chapter will set the stage for the discussion of the research methods involved in this study.

Planning for Change

Similar to the findings in Chapter 1 on the status of educational organization across Canada, Caplow (1976, p.158) indicates, "No organization exists in a vacuum." He advocates that every organization exists within its own environment where it is compelled to respond to external demands of environmental change. Caplow (p. 158) cites a well-known study of civic association: "The Reluctant Organization and the Aggressive Environment." In his review, he states that the title of the study is indicative that even the most reluctant or passive group can be pushed or pulled into successive activities through the influence of external stimuli. Caplow adds that organizations can also engage in change without the pressure of outside forces. He describes how organizations, similar to individuals, initiate their own campaigns toward self-improvement. Nonetheless, whether the route is passively experienced or actively sought, he suggests that change must be facilitated or managed in some way

One of the dominant ideas to emerge in the twentieth century is the concept of directed and controlled social change (Owens, 1998). Owens indicates that Marxist political and social theory as well as empirically based social sciences have prompted and shaped the concept of social change. Owens describes how society is no longer solely

confined to the perspective of adaptive reaction to unfolding events and values, but rather takes a much more active approach in consciously directing forces to facilitate predetermined goals. An equally important and related trend surrounds the notion that social change can in fact be successfully planned, and therefore managed. Owens describes how this type of thinking has given way to the concept that controlled change in life is not only possible, but also necessary to realize the goals of society.

Planning departments, designated groups or individuals, are generally responsible for navigating through change. Caplow indicates that, in spite of leadership in this area, planning does not protect an organization entirely. Planners cannot control forces outside the organizational environment and there can ultimately be unanticipated change. Caplow adds that the best-laid plans can result in unexpected stresses in other parts of an organization. Similar to the concerns held by Meyer and Rowan (1977), Caplow (p. 181) believes that “not all of what passes for organizational planning deserves the name.” He indicates that some plans are merely “sales prospectuses”, while others are “science fiction”. He goes so far as to say that in several cases the only functions of plans were to draw attention away from current issues. Caplow advocates that, by contrast, serious plans have to emphasize contingency and focus on details. He adds that good plans, at best, force self-appraisal, help to resolve contradictions in goals, identify useful new strategies and improve the flow of required, routine information.

The Change Process

In the years since reform has become the embodiment of educational organizations, however, strategic planning has had only a questionable impact on improvement efforts. Fullan (2006) concludes that despite the structure of planning as a

mechanism of accountability, educators do not yet know how to obtain wide-scale, comprehensive reform. Elmore (2004) resolves that there can be no effective system of external accountability until there is also a system of internal accountability. He continues by citing that those school systems that have improved are those that have succeeded in having their personnel internalize the expectations of organizations. In other words, educational organizations have obtained a commitment to change through improving relationships, rather than from establishing bureaucratic controls. Elmore reinforces that the basic process in place here has involved unlearning the tradition of loose coupling which inherently exists in school organizations, and relearning new behaviours and values aligned with collective responsibility. By doing this, educators achieve internal accountability prior to external accountability and this has become the essential context for improvement and change. Fullan (2006) refers to this process as capacity building with a focus on results. Kanter (2004) addresses capacity building as the turnaround solution, based on accountability, collaboration and initiative. She believes that the most important aspect of capacity building is collaboration, especially when people feel valued and have a sense of belonging.

A classic study on resistance to change by Coch and French at the Hardwood Manufacturing Company (Dent & Goldberg, 1999) exemplifies the importance of collaboration and involvement in times of change. The study focused first, on why people resist change so strongly, and second on how to overcome the resistance. In the study, the organization experienced change in three distinct ways. In the first group, the garment workers were told about the new procedure with no opportunity for participation. In the second group a mentor (a trained co-worker) introduced change, while the third group

learned about the new procedure through a presentation explaining its cost saving potential. Although the second group obtained mixed results, the results for the first and third were completely different. Output dropped and grievances increased for the first group, whereas the results for the third more involved group recorded high output levels while experiencing almost no turnover in staff. Since the Coch and French study, participation has been highly recommended as an approach to counter resistance to change.

The fundamental dilemma according to Fullan (2006), however, is that most educational organizations have not built the capacity to operate in a collaborative manner and thus have not been able to develop the internal accountability systems necessary for school improvement. The “terms travel well, but the underlying conceptualization and thinking do not” (2003, p.10). Therefore, schools tend to remain loosely coupled, performing ritualistic tasks such as planning in order to maintain public confidence in the current state of public education (Elmore, 2000). The research on planning for change does not add a positive dimension to the discussion. Deutschman (2005) writes that if most people are given the choice to change or die, his research demonstrates that odds of changing are negatively stacked against them. He adds that people initially plan to change due to fear, but in the long term generally return to their initial state of being. Kotter (1996) elaborates that the main issue is often about the behaviour of people. Reeves (2006) indicates that the cycle of organizational improvement typically consists of vision, action, buy-in, followed by more action. Reeves concludes, however, that buy-in does not generally occur until after people have seen the results of their actions. In other words, action needs to occur first, followed by changes in thought processes. Kotter argues,

though, that in order to change people's behaviour, their feelings need to be addressed. He believes that motivating people based on experience assists in changing behaviour and ensuring improvement when required. Fullan (2005) concurs with this perspective in his review of district work. He indicates that by appealing to the emotion of collective moral purpose, change is more liable to occur. Fullan illustrates that this requires teams of people creating and developing coherent strategy, ensuring plenty of interactive communication and deepening commitment at all levels of the educational organization. Kleiner (2003) notes a similar capacity in organizations where the sense of purpose involves moving beyond fulfilling the assignment or completing the plan to the world, a better place in some way related to an organization's core function.

The Dynamics of Change

Fullan (2005) indicates that a combination of pressure and support are required to achieve educational reform. He sees pressure relating to accountability, and support relating to capacity building for knowledge, competencies, resources and motivation. All change solutions face what Fullan (2006) identifies as the too-tight, too-loose dilemma. While educational organizations are naturally, loosely coupled, the common reaction in the age of accountability and reform is to tighten or structure things more securely. While tight planning frameworks can get results in the short term, over a longer period they have proved to be largely unsuccessful. Fullan adds that the opposite approach of giving people latitude and trusting them to do the right thing has generated equally dismal results. Fullan concludes that educators should aim to achieve a balance between tightness and looseness with an emphasis on collaboration and communication in order to achieve organizational improvement and change. Isaksen, Lauer and Ekvall (2000)

elaborate on this idea in their determination that factors in the climate of an organization often provide intervening variables that affect performance. In their study on climate, they identify certain concepts that are more conducive to organizational creativity and change. These concepts include dimensions of challenge, freedom, liveliness, trust, idea time, humour, level of conflict, idea support, debate, and degree of risk taking. In other words, they identify that in organizations with high levels of contention, there can be fear of reprisal upon suggestions for improvement or change. McCluskey (2008) elaborates that educational leadership, creativity and planning depend very much on the tone of the organizational climate. Without the appropriate tone in an organization, he adds, a plan with the best intentions can be rendered meaningless. Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) report that fear and distrust have a negative association with organizational productivity. In numerous studies, they cite the phenomenon where fear has caused a focus on individual self-preservation in the short term and has prevented open communication, honest assessment of performance and concerted dialogue on planning for future improvement. Fullan similarly adds that if school divisions surrender in the face of conflict and fail to remain with their course of action, they will not be able to confront the inevitable barriers to improvement and change. Fullan concludes that while successful school divisions should be collaborative in nature, they may not be ultimately consensual or congenial in their process. Educators should view disagreements as a regular part of working toward change. Bryck and Schneider (2002) find that, in spite of conflict in organizations, high trust climates energize people and allow them to be successful in extremely demanding conditions.

Owens (1991) argues, however, that people view conflict in a particularly negative light or as evidence that the organization has failed to produce appropriate group norms. Nonetheless, he cites that contemporary behavioural science has evolved, focusing on the management of conflict with the view that hostility can either be avoided or minimized. Owens concurs with Fullan (2005) when he states that conflict in organizations is now seen as common if not legitimate. He indicates that this perspective is imminent given the interdependent, dynamic and social processes involved in educational organizations. Owens cites Pondy (1967) who has compiled and classified three main causes of organizational conflict. Pondy points out that conflict can arise due to competition for limited resources, protection of one's autonomy, or from the frustration of divergent goals. Owens adds from a contingency view that while these latent types of conflict are unlikely to disappear, it is essential to develop a means of managing issues appropriately, as this will ultimately strengthen the organization.

Owens (1991) elaborates that the contingency approach to conflict management identifies that there is no best method of managing all issues. Nevertheless, there are optimal ways of managing conflict under certain conditions, and in such cases, it is important to determine which alternatives may be most effective. Owens cautions that many times apparent conflict can simply be a misunderstanding that may be dealt with through improved goal setting and communication. When a true conflict does exist and groups need to identify and work through problems however, they require both the necessary skills for communicating and working together and attitudes of openness and trust. Thomas (1976) adds that it is critical to determine how cooperative a group is in meeting the needs of one another and how assertive the members are in

satisfying their own concerns. Thomas adds that in collaborative situations, highly competitive or win-lose type of behaviour is viewed as uncooperative. Avoidant behaviour is viewed as both uncooperative and unassertive, while accommodation is viewed as highly cooperative yet not assertive enough to salvage group members' interests. A sharing orientation is seen as moderately cooperative and assertive at the same time and can lead to a compromise, whereas a collaborative orientation which is both highly assertive and cooperative, and can fully satisfy the concerns of both parties through mutual problem solving. Thomas indicates that conflict analysis of this type can help to assess how best to approach and manage issues so that the outcomes will be as productive as possible for the organization while at the same time minimizing unintended consequences. Thomas emphasizes that, when conflict is approached in a positive and appropriate manner, groups will feel safe to present divergent perspectives. He observes that the confrontation of divergent viewpoints often produces better quality outcomes. After all, divergent ideas are based on different evidence, considerations, insights, and frames of reference. From a societal perspective, Deutsche (1973) adds that conflict within groups regularly helps them to revitalize existing norms, develop new norms and assures continued success under changing conditions. Conflict is therefore not only inevitable when working in collaborative groups, but it can also serve a useful purpose by generating creative solutions to challenging issues.

Accountability and Change

Fullan (2005) relates that improving educational organizations means changing the environment and organizational structures within which educators work. Fullan relates however, that complex or systemic implementation plans, while designed to help,

can more often be a source of burden and confusion. Kouzes and Posner (2003) concur that, sometimes, strategic planning simply does not work, especially when planning documents are too lengthy or detailed. Reeves (2006) cautions educators against what he denotes as documentarianism, or the devotion to plans and procedures ahead of consideration of the complex, real world of educational organizations. He adds that educators must continuously be conscious of the number of new initiatives that they add to existing activities. Reeves warns that while enthusiasm is often present in the early stages of new plans, this feeling can be reduced to fatigue and burnout if planning structures are not facilitated appropriately. Schmoker (2004) indicates that educators have realized the importance of limiting the number of goals to create more coherent and realistic plans, where goals and action steps are more easily distinguishable. He adds that educators have planned for years before learning that clear definitions of fewer goals or outcomes, is the key to success. Schmoker suggests that educators have also discovered that in order to have any impact on school improvement, goals have to be measurable statements linked to student achievement, rather than commitments to implement programs or offer workshops. Miliband (2004) describes this type of approach to planning as intelligent accountability. Black, Harrison, Marshall and Wiliam (1998, 2003), Hill and Crevola (2003), as well as Stiggins (2001) identify that staff working in educational organizations are becoming increasingly proficient with the use of measurable goals and subsequent decision-making based on evidence or supporting data. By identifying specific indicators or variables of performance, school divisions can monitor their goals to determine whether those goals have been met. Thus, evidence is value free until interpretation, and the resulting information is therefore, used to inform

both future planning and policy development. Educational indicators determine trends, identify successes and concentrate on areas that are in need of improvement. Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) advise that organizations most successful with the use of data and the consideration of evidence are those that emphasize comparatively fewer sets of measures believed to be crucial to the future of planning. They conclude, however, that at its best evidence-based decision making allows for assessment of what an organization is doing, and narrows the gap between what the organization knows and what it does.

The Essential Elements of Change

Fullan (2006) argues that while educational planning is important for accountability and improvement, change is more likely to occur by doing than by elaborate planning. Fullan states that it is important to realize that successful planning strategies are most often action oriented and socially based. Elmore (2004) cautions educators not to neglect the importance of people, who help to bring the planning mechanism to life. Schmoker (2004) cites that there is a broad concurrence among organizational theorists and educational researchers that the best known means to achieve improvement in teaching and learning is by having educators function as members of professional learning communities. He suggests that wide scale improvements in education are far more likely to occur through the structured, empirical work of active groups that challenge beliefs, assumptions and expectations, than through the passive implementation of someone else's script. In other words, Schmoker indicates that carefully structured learning teams that engage in dialogue on the improvement of instruction (rather than creating elaborate or complex written plans) seem to find the most practical route to educational change. He adds that educators systematically achieve

school improvement when they engage in frequent, continuous and concrete conversations about teaching and learning. Senge (2000) indicates that the most effective practice for team learning emerges from dialogue. He suggests that, during the process, people not only learn how to think together, but they create new aspects of shared knowledge in which the emotions, thoughts and actions belong to all team members. This results in elevated levels of involvement and greater satisfaction with strategic decisions. Argyris and Schon (1978) and Schon (1983), point out the critical nature of team dialogue that they coin, double-loop learning or reflection in action. They believe that when a team engages in critically reflective practice to consider behavior or assumptions, and attempt to understand how thoughts and actions have impacted a situation, future change will result. Nonaka (1994) advocates for team building to create socialization, on-going essential and meaningful dialogue to share explicit knowledge, the use of metaphors and analogies to enable individuals to articulate their perspectives, and a trial and error process to trigger the internalization of ideas. Nonaka, similarly to Reeves (2006), suggests that actions precede attitude change, and are a signal that learning has begun. Mintzberg and Waters (1984, 1985) concur that the most important part of strategic planning involves organizational learning. During this process, they emphasize the importance of time for groups to reflect on goals and then accommodate, adapt and learn from their experiences. Mintzberg (1996) suggests that an organization can go nowhere without learning alongside deliberate planning. He therefore not only sees the importance of having the planning documentation, but also the accompanying dialogue that facilitates emergent learning. Pascal (1996) identifies the advantage of emergent learning in a process that he coins organizational agility. Organizational agility, he writes,

is how organizations experiment, adapt and learn. He relates that while western society tends to attribute coherence to linear and purposive strategic plans, it is how an organization copes with reality, deals with inequities, and handles the unexpected events that is most crucial to its success over time. Pascale goes on to say that, the Japanese have expanded their view of strategy to include the broader notion of agility. He acknowledges the idea of strategic intention and forethought that is involved in planning, but also recognizes the power of teamwork, shared commitment, inquiry in action and meaningful resolution. Pascale concludes that, in successful organizations, these qualities are part of the social fabric of strategic planning. Metcalf (1981) elaborates that organizations are much more likely to succeed in the long term if they engage in planning routines involving smaller, continuous, incremental or adaptive changes rather than major, disruptive agendas. Weick and Westley (1999) define this special form of learning and change as small wins. They reinforce the importance of viewing organizational learning and change as the mindful moment in actions or routines when order and disorder are juxtaposed. They add that, because of incremental learning, organizations are more successful in breaching existing assumptions, changing old routines and uncovering new opportunities

Summary of Findings from the Literature

The characteristics summarized in Table 3, are key practices that I identified from the Review of Literature, commonly associated with effective planning.

Table 3

Key Characteristics Associated with Effective Planning

Effective Planning Practices (Identified in the Review of Literature)

<p>a) Social change can be consciously directed and actively approached (Owens, 1998)</p> <p>b) Planning can be more successful if responsibility for it is delegated to designated groups or individuals (Caplow, 1976)</p> <p>c) Serious plans need to have an emphasis on contingency with a focus on details (Caplow, 1976)</p> <p>d) Internal accountability is established through face to face relationships, as opposed to the implementation of bureaucratic policies and procedures (Elmore, 2004; Kanter, 2004)</p> <p>e) If people are expected to collaborate it is essential for people to feel valued by and have an increased sense of belonging in the organization (Dent & Goldberg, 1999; Fullan, 2006)</p> <p>f) Change is more likely to occur through a deepening sense of commitment toward collective moral purpose at all levels of the organization (Fullan, 2006; Kanter, 2003; Kanter 2004)</p> <p>g) Emphasis on collaboration and open communication achieves a balance between bureaucratic structures and the loosely coupled nature of educational organizations (Elmore, 2004; Fullan 2006)</p> <p>h) Low levels of fear and high levels of trust have positive effects on organizational productivity (Isaksen et al, 2000; McCluskey, 2008; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000)</p> <p>i) Conflict is common, legitimate, and ultimately strengthens organizations if managed properly (Deutsche, 1973; Fullan, 2005; Owens 1991; Pondy 1967)</p> <p>j) Planning needs to emphasize the real world of educational organizations in addition to documents and procedures (Elmore, 2004)</p> <p>k) The number of goals in a planning document should be limited to create more coherent and realistic plans (Kouzes & Posner, 2003; Reeves, 2006; Schmoker, 2004)</p> <p>l) Effective planning goals are measurable statements linked to student achievement, rather than commitments to implement programs or offer workshops (Miliband, 2004; Schmoker, 2004)</p> <p>m) Empirical work of active groups helps them to challenge beliefs, assumptions and expectations, rather than passively implementing someone else's script (Senge, 2000; Schmoker, 2004)</p> <p>n) Groups strategically set goals then reflect, accommodate, adapt and learn from their experiences (Argyris, 1978; Mintzberg, 1996; Pascale, 1996; Schon, 1978, 1993)</p> <p>o) Planning routines involving smaller, continuous, incremental or adaptive changes are more successful than major, disruptive agendas (Metcalf, 1981; Weick & Westley, 1999)</p>

The research in this chapter illustrates that the practice of strategic planning in education has had a questionable impact on efforts toward accountability and improvement.

Common threads run through the literature, however, which suggest that there are approaches that can be taken to ultimately strengthen planning, improve organizational learning, and enhance change.

The characteristics of effective planning, derived from the literature and summarized in Table 3, will serve as useful information to construct the conceptual framework for examining the educational planning practices of school divisions selected for this study. I will present the methods, design and conceptual framework of the study in the following chapter.

Chapter Three

Methods – The Design of the Study

Research Approach and Foundations

This research study was designed to determine whether there were systemic features of school division planning that would result in improved linkages between strategic educational intentions and related actions, rendering the planning process more effective and useful for educators. In other words, the purpose of this study was to narrow the gap (in the loosely coupled context of education) between the *myth* of planning cited in the literature, and the reality of engaging in concrete, organizational activities. In this study, I examined the nature of the planning process of participating school divisions as it relates to organizational improvement and change. The culmination of the research would provide a foundation for a new framework, detailing the archetypes of effective Student Services strategic planning to set the stage for organizational improvement and change. When implemented, educators might not view planning as a rationalized or bureaucratic myth, but rather as a more authentic practice.

In order to address the questions posed in this study, I centered on a concrete aspect of Student Services planning, namely the process of planning for exceptional learning needs. I asked participants to focus specifically on planning for students with challenging behaviours. By defining one aspect of planning, participants would be able to offer perspectives on their planning practices within a familiar and identified context. I acknowledged that, through the interview process, school division personnel might refer to a continuum of student learning that affects student behaviour. This might range from

academics in general and improvement of student achievement, to specific programming aimed at increasing literacy and reading levels, as well as social emotional functioning.

The location of the school divisions participating in the study were selected for purposes of proximity. However, in purposeful sampling I considered only those school divisions that had written some planning outcomes for students with challenging behaviours. For school divisions that agreed to participate in the study, I reviewed their planning documentation and interviewed key participants involved in their planning processes. I filtered the information gained from their documentation and subsequent interviews, through a conceptual framework derived from the Review of Literature. The data from each school division was summarized and organized in a case study format. I, then, analyzed the case study information from all of the school divisions to determine how the perspectives of interview participants were similar to, or varied from the ideas in the conceptual framework. The final phase of the research involved the development of a new framework, detailing the archetypes of planning that school divisions identified to be effective and functional in Student Services, creating a process more likely to set the stage for organizational improvement and change. I concluded with recommendations and areas for further exploration pertaining to the identified research questions.

Role of the Researcher

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) shared that the research methods chosen for a particular study say something about the researcher's views on valuable knowledge, personal perspectives and the nature of reality. For this study, I selected a qualitative method of inquiry. Bogdan and Bicklen (2003) identified five phenomena commonly exhibited in qualitative research. They indicated that qualitative research is naturalistic,

researchers often go to the setting that they are studying for purposes of context, and that data are generally taken in the form of words or pictures as opposed to numbers. They found that researchers are usually concerned with process as opposed to products, data are analyzed inductively, and that meaning is of essential concern as qualitative researchers attempt to elicit participant perspectives.

The concern that researchers have for meaning leads directly to the consideration of the paradigm or the collection of related assumptions, which orient both thoughts and research. Bogdan and Bicklen (2003) assert that a good understanding of a theoretical base helps researchers to collect and analyze data. From a theoretical perspective, Burrell and Morgan (1999) added that qualitative methods generally exist within the interpretivist paradigm, one that portrays the world not only as a complex and dynamic place but also as a socially constructed entity. Therefore, in a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm there can be a multiplicity of realities, as each individual experiences and creates meaning of that reality in different ways. From this standpoint, my aim was to understand others' experiences and relate them as much as possible to my context.

Glaser and Strauss (1967, 1978, 1987) proposed that qualitative analysis has its own logic and can generate its own theory that they defined as *grounded theory practice*. They indicated that the components of grounded theory included concurrent involvement in data collection and analysis, the construction of codes and categories from data, comparisons made during each stage of analysis, and advancing theory development as the data collection and analysis proceeds. In essence, grounded theory is a research approach that involves continual interplay between the data collection and data analysis in order to produce a theory during the process. In grounded theory, Glaser and Strauss

advocated that sampling would occur for the purposes of theory construction, as opposed to a representation of population.

The Selection of Participants

The school divisions that were proposed for participation in this study were selected by a method of purposeful sampling. As noted by Bogdan and Bicklen (2003), participants selected by purposeful sampling were included as part of the study because of their potential ability to assist in expanding the developing theory proposed as part of the research. Originally, it was my intention to include five school divisions in this study. A sixth school division was included just prior to the commencement of the research, as I viewed the participation of the additional school division as beneficial to the outcome of the study. In order to select school divisions purposefully, it was first necessary to consult the planning documentation that was submitted to Manitoba Education. As education planning templates are publicly accessible information in the province, I began by examining this data to determine which school divisions displayed specific outcomes on planning for students with challenging behaviours. By purposefully selecting only those school divisions that had included outcomes of this type in their planning templates, I had narrowed and focused the vast amount of potential and available data on school division planning in Manitoba.. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) indicated that the selection of participants would not only allow the researcher to decide who would participate in the study, but would also delineate where the study would be conducted. For the purposes of this research, I considered the participation of any school divisions that were located in the City of Winnipeg, or within a four hour driving distance of the City of Winnipeg

Once I examined the planning templates and potential study sites identified, I sent a letter to the Superintendent/CEO of each selected school division, explaining the purpose of this study and the meaning of informed consent (Appendix C). Additionally, I provided information on the study's purpose, duration, process, risks and benefits. The information contained in the initial letter would enable persons in the Superintendent/CEO position to voluntarily decide whether to consent on behalf of the school division to participate in this research study. I had asked the Superintendent/CEO to identify key personnel in the school division who could participate in individual interviews in order to provide information on the divisional planning processes for students with challenging behaviours. Once I received a positive response to participation in the study from the Superintendent/CEO of designated school divisions and key personnel were identified, further consent was obtained from those identified personnel to participate in a structured interview process. A separate consent form was sent to the identified personnel, again detailing the meaning of informed consent, as well as the purpose, duration, process, risks and benefits of the study (Appendix D). I expected that participants' roles would vary slightly by school division, however I anticipated that persons in the Superintendent/CEO and Student Services Administrator positions would be consistently represented during the interview process. School divisions could choose to include other participants such as Behaviour Intervention Specialists, Student Services Consultants or designated staff members of their choice.

Research Process

The data collection and analysis for this qualitative, interpretive study took place in three phases. As indicated, the process began by identifying participant school divisions

that had included systemic outcomes for students with challenging behaviours in their planning templates. Within this context, I then entered into a more in-depth examination of the planning documents of each school division, engaged in individual interviews with, the Superintendent/CEO, the Student Services Administrator, and finally with other key persons identified by the school divisions. I embarked on this second phase of the research in order to gain perspectives on Student Services planning practices at the school division level. It was important to note that school division personnel could choose to highlight other formal planning documentation during the individual interview process, in addition to their specific responses to the structured interview questions. The documentation could include but was not limited to information on student placement in the school division, behaviour intervention plans, categorical funding applications, student suspensions and incident reports. I summarized the findings from each school division in a case study format, as well as, codified and organized the ideas of participants thematically according to a conceptual framework described herein. The final phase of the research involved a cross analysis of each of the case studies in order to determine commonalities and variances of planning practices among the participating school divisions, using the conceptual framework as a guideline. The study concluded with the creation of a new framework, detailing the archetypes of suggested effective and functional planning practices of participating school divisions, relating to organizational improvement and change.

Data Collection

Bogdan and Bicklen (2003) noted that, increasingly, qualitative researchers were turning to documents as a primary source of data. Documents could be considered extant

as opposed to elicited text, in that the researcher would not affect their construction. The planning template (Appendix A) would be categorized as the first item of extant text. The planning template was a structure that was formally provided to school divisions for purposes of record keeping and dissemination of information. As some school divisions in the province did not use the suggested template, the local, formalized planning structures were considered also. Additionally school division personnel could chose to identify other examples of extant text. Bogdan and Bicklen added that documents would fit the criteria for data rich description. How the researcher would use the data from the documents and to what extent the documents were used would be determined by each individual researcher.

Data in this study were collected through structured interviews with school division participants. According to Glesne and Peshkin (1992), the interview process consisted of researchers asking specific questions and respondents answering those questions, in a context of motives, values, needs and concerns. The questions were typically established prior to the interview, but could also be added or revised as they emerged during the course of an interview. Glesne and Peshkin noted that interviewing would allow the researcher to move beyond observational inference to conjecture on future behaviour, and move from basic facts to perceptions and opinions of behaviour. The list to guide the structured interview for each school division participant (Superintendent, Student Services Administrator or Key Individual) is located in Appendix E. Glesne and Peshkin advised that researchers should strive to create appropriate questions that would not defeat or minimize the purpose of the interview. They indicated for example, that it was important to avoid leading or loaded questions,

and to begin with more manageable or warm-up questions. They suggested asking participants to recall certain situations, using a quotation which contained concrete ideas on which to comment, or asking advice or opinion on a particular predicament. Glesne and Peshkin also recommended that interviews should be offered to participants at times that were most convenient and appropriate to them. They suggested that it might be necessary to meet participants off-site from their regular place of work if this would be more comfortable for them. As a matter of course, this suggestion was followed in this study. I offered to meet with interview participants when and where they were most comfortable. In most cases, they invited me to conduct the interviews at their work places. Two participants preferred to meet in local restaurants.

With the consent of participants, each interview was recorded for future clarification and assurance of accuracy and authenticity in transcription. Permission was obtained from participants for audio taping. The recordings were then transcribed by the researcher on a laptop computer, and saved on an external memory device. A comprehensive member check was used after the interviews had been completed in order to allow participants to evaluate the fairness and validity of the researcher's interpretation of interview responses (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Transcripts of each individual interview were forwarded to the individual participants by email. Participants were asked to specify any additions, deletions or changes to the transcript, and were asked if they had any final comments. I asked that participants provide their feedback within two weeks of receiving their individual transcripts. The responses of all participants and the raw data collected in this study will be destroyed when this study is completed.

Data Analysis - Developing the Conceptual Framework

The data collected from each participant school division, that included the information derived from the planning documents, structured interviews and other relevant documentation, was compiled and examined through an analytic framework. A conceptual or *analytic framework* is a set of ideas and principles developed from relevant fields of inquiry and is used to provide structure for a subsequent presentation (Reichel & Ramy, 1987). Guba and Lincoln (1989) indicated that an analytic framework is a useful tool to scaffold research, provide clear links from the literature to the research goals, and provide opportunities for discussion of the literature and analysis of the data. A conceptual framework often links various concepts and assists in formulating theory in research. Both Blumer (1969) and Van den Hoonaard (1997) indicated that grounded theorists often begin their studies with particular research interests and set of concepts. Rather than activating definitive concepts that have a clear definition in terms of attributes or bench marks, the grounded theorist uses *sensitizing concepts*, which give the researcher a general sense of reference and direction in which to look. According to Blumer and Van den Hoonaard, sensitizing concepts give you ideas to track, or particular types of questions to pursue. They alert researchers to look for possibilities and processes within their data. Sensitizing concepts do not force preconceived notions or theories. The idea of beginning with a framework is consistent with the description of sensitizing concepts. Glaser (1978), Padgett (2004) and Patton (2002) indicated that social researchers commonly view sensitizing concepts as interpretive devices and as beginning points in a qualitative study. Blumer (1969) argued that grounded theorists generally have concepts in mind that give a loose frame to their work. In short, he indicated that

sensitizing concepts provide a disciplinary perspective to begin a study. Charmaz (2000) referred to sensitizing concepts as background ideas that serve to inform the research problem. The sensitizing concepts in my study served to inform the conceptual or analytic framework. In order to construct the framework, illustrated in Table 4, the fifteen characteristics of effective planning summarized at the end of Chapter Two were arranged according to five concise groups of sensitizing concepts: context, capacity, climate, structure and strategy. As a grounded researcher, I used concepts that I perceived while reviewing the literature to provide a disciplinary perspective, or in this case, to create the conceptual framework to analyze the data collected in this study.

In the first category of context, I referenced details and information about events or circumstances around which planning would occur. In the category of capacity, I noted the importance of personnel internalizing the expectations of an organization in order to develop the capability to perform or produce. In the category of climate, I highlighted the importance of prevailing conditions and attitudes toward planning. For the category of structure, I referred to the organization of the discrete parts involved in the process of planning for change. In the final category of strategy, I focused on the process or approach used when planning. Maguire (2003) developed a similar conceptual framework based on the key features of high performing school districts, with related categories for analysis. Although the structure in this framework was comparable to that of Maguire, the content and subsequent categories for analysis had a different focus.

Mason and Waywood (1996) cautioned researchers to be aware that the construction of a framework would be bounded by the actual experiences of the developer and should not be given power that it does not have. Mason and Waywood

added that researchers must be sure not to limit the results of their study based on the constraints posed by a framework. Miles and Huberman (1994) recommended that researchers remain open to new or unexpected occurrences with the data through the process. Hood (1983) noted that early categories should be suggestive, but not definitive. The cautionary advice noted here was duly important in the case of the conceptual framework shown in Table 4. The framework would serve only to organize and further analyze school division data presented in this study.

Table 4

Framework of Effective Planning Practices

Categories of Analysis	Key Features Commonly Associated with Effective Planning (Derived from the Review of Literature)
Context	Conscious Direction & Active Approach Designated Individuals or Groups Involved Emphasis on Contingency & Detail
Capacity	Internal Accountability Feelings of Value & Belonging Collective Moral Purpose
Climate	Collaboration & Open Communication Low Fear & High Trust Well-Managed Conflict
Structure	Real World Context Clear & Concise Outcomes Evidence Based Decisions
Strategy	Socially Based Practice Deliberate Planning & Emergent Learning Incremental Adaptive Change

Once the data for each school division was collected, a case study summarizing the planning practices in each school division was developed. I used an inductive approach to organize and identify patterns and relationships from the interview data, according to the themes of the conceptual framework. The next phase of the research involved analyzing each of the case studies to determine the commonalities and variances of planning practices across participating school divisions. Once these factors were identified, they were described and defined, again using the conceptual framework as a guideline.

The method for comparing and contrasting the case study information of each of the school divisions, occurred by way of *analytical abduction*. Taylor and Bogdan (1998) identified the practice of inducing meaning from isolated instances, as the process of *analytic induction*. Ragin (1994) elaborated that analytic induction referred to a systemic examination of similarities among various social phenomena in order to develop concepts or ideas. The process of analytic induction did not, however, allow for consideration of differences or ideas that would contrast from a particular framework. Charmaz (2006) identified that this type of reasoning was more aptly termed abduction. She indicated that analytic abduction involved reasoning that was both inductive and deductive in nature. Charmaz illustrated that in grounded theory the researcher would often make theoretical conjectures and then check them through further experience. Hence the researcher would not only infer similarities, but would also generate differences through the process. Deely (1990), Fann (1970), and Rosenthal (2004) specified that through abductive reasoning the researcher would begin with data, move toward hypothesis formation, check the

hypothesis empirically through data examination and then pursue the most plausible explanation of the situation. Scheff (1990) added that abduction would involve a quick shuttling back and forth between outer signs and inner imaging or framing of an event. He shared that, while the outer searching would involve reading cues elicited from an interaction, inner searching would entail memory, emotion, cognition, imagination and experience. Scheff explained that we create mental pictures of events in life which involve immediate context, extended context (the differences between past and present), counterfactual aspects (what could have happened but did not) and future possibilities of a situation. He elaborated that just as human behaviour and interaction are improvisational, inner searching allows us to make links and associations freely and openly. Scheff argued that through the inner and outer search processes involved in abduction, we could get a feel for another's situation. In this study, analytic abduction was used not only to define similarities, but also to identify variances in planning practices of school divisions participating in this study. The information was summarized and a synthesis of effective planning practices was developed as a result. The findings were able to inform the research questions posed, and to develop a new framework detailing the archetypes of effective and functional planning practices for Student Services at the school division level.

Ethical Issues in Research

As noted earlier, school division planning templates within the province of Manitoba are public documents. I consulted the planning templates in order to identify school divisions that had a divisional focus in the area of planning for students with challenging behaviours. Once this information had been determined, I identified and

approached fifteen school divisions for involvement in this study. It was necessary to receive written consent of the Superintendent/CEO of participating school divisions, prior to commencing this study. In addition, I obtained written consent from each Student Services Administrator, as well as other key, designated participants. Information contained within the consent forms enabled persons to voluntarily decide whether to participate in the research study. This included a description of the meaning of informed consent, a brief description and purpose of the research study and the process involved. As well, details about the amount of time necessary, the minimal risks involved in participation, the manner in which the data would be collected, the necessity of confidentiality and the method of feedback were included. In the event that participants from the consenting school divisions were unwilling to be involved in the study, I was prepared to select other potential school divisions as alternates. I did not find this contingency to be necessary as I obtained full consent from six school divisions within two weeks of sending out requests for participation. Two school divisions declined participation in writing, while seven did not respond. As a result, I sent a letter to those who did not respond thanking them for their time and consideration, but indicating that full participation had been obtained.

It was my intention to maintain the integrity of the consent that all participants had granted. There was no compensation, nor costs borne for those who were involved in this study. Although participants were in various locations, I travelled to meet with them in order to avoid any related expenses being incurred. As mentioned previously, there was minimal risk associated with this study. The research and analysis involved the Superintendent/CEO of each school division, the Student Services Administrator, and

other key personnel designated by each school division. There were anticipated benefits to participants in terms of the possible satisfaction gained in providing information, which could be of benefit to the future of school division planning for both participating school divisions and for those outside of the study. An ethics proposal was submitted to and approved by the University of Manitoba, Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) prior to embarking on this research.

Research Plan and Timeline

The research proposal for this study was prepared for public defence on October 15, 2008. Subsequently, an application was prepared for submission to the University of Manitoba, Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) in February 2009 and approval was received in April 2009. Data collection with participating school divisions was conducted during May and June 2009. Analysis and synthesis of the data were compiled and documented between July and December 2009.

Chapter Four

Summary of the Data – School Division U

School Division U is located in southern Manitoba and is one of the larger school divisions in the province. The Division provides educational services to over 7000 students, and consists of seventeen schools of various grade configurations. Schools range in size from 39 to 1201 students. The economy of the area is dependent primarily on agriculture, although the manufacturing and retail service industry employs many local citizens. In recent years, there has been a substantial influx of immigrant families to the region, from England, Germany, Russia, the Philippines and South America. This has resulted in continuous growth for the school division, but has also increased the need for professional development, support and learning for all staff working with English Language Learners. In School Division U, interviews were held with the Assistant Superintendent, Assistant Deputy Superintendent (herein referred to as Student Services Administrator) and Vice-Principal of Student Services.

Context

In the past, it seemed as though planning, as with each new initiative, was just one more thing to do in School Division U. The perception was that planning was the job of the school administrator and working in isolation was the manner in which the planning process was undertaken. According to the Assistant Superintendent, “The process of having the school administrator tell everyone what to do and planning in isolation to doing it collaboratively has come a long way. So I think teachers would say that planning is a collaborative process at the school level.” Insofar as division planning, however, the process was not as collaborative or transparent. He added, “I would think

that they (the teachers) don't really know what's going on in that sense. All that they would know is our division priorities. Teachers get a copy of that and there is a one page community report.”

In School Division U, the Board of Trustees set the divisional priorities in a format known locally as the Strategic Overview. In the 2008-09 school year, the Division identified five core priorities with sub categories of items that the division personnel would undertake. Each contained additional information that the schools could use to inform their planning (see Table 5).

Table 5

School Division U – Priorities

School Division U - Strategic Overview 2008 - 2009

Priority #1

- Strengthening learning for all, through engaging instruction and meaningful assessment across the curriculum.

Priority #2

- Providing students with an enriched and healthy learning experience including a broad range of the arts, physical education, health and nutrition.

Priority #3

- Building strong school communities and enhancing individual engagement in those communities through strengthening of relationships at all levels and a commitment to social responsibility.

Priority #4

- Preparing students to become all that they can be, with awareness of their possibilities and the capacity to pursue them - including pathways to continuing education and a career.

Priority #5

- Promoting learning conversations that includes all voices and building leadership capacity of staff and students at all levels.

The Assistant Superintendent also described large wall mounted versions of the mission statement and beliefs of the school division, located in the board office and in each school. “Our Mission Statement used to be just a mission statement, but now it is central to all that we do.” He countered that the more recent approach to planning had been more collaborative. “We are no longer a top down organization, so to speak. Principals and teachers are part of planning committees, and there is expanded stakeholder involvement in all that is going on in the school division.” The Division recently increased consultation with the Parent Council liaisons to four times during the year. There was also the addition of student voice in the school division planning process, as a result of the first divisional student forum. According to the Student Services Administrator, “I have never seen so many (kids) invited to so many meetings and they are making good sense! You listen to them and (think) why didn’t we think of that?” As well, staff frequently invited students to services. Students often made presentations to the Board of Trustees, served food to groups coming into the high school and created art that adorned the walls of the Board Office. The Student Services Administrator added that she believed the division planning process was becoming more collaborative and cohesive with increased alignment between the Department (Manitoba Education), the Board of Trustees, Senior Administration of the Division, School Staffs and Students. She added, “We really do follow nicely right from the Department, Division, School, and what I like is the piece where it gets down to the kids. It is coming back up again. The kids are very involved because they are our community.”

Capacity

The Assistant Superintendent of School Division U was primarily responsible for developing capacity for divisional and school planning. He admitted that some administrators were better at planning than others, and elaborated that there was perhaps a disconnect between planning, and the actual side of engaging in daily practice. He rationalized that this may be due to the changing role of the school administrator, and added, “How can they balance all of that plus run the school?” School Division U was in the process of making planning practice a component of professional development for all administrators. The Assistant Superintendent noted that many educators did not have a background in planning. In order to deal with the varying degrees of background knowledge in the area of planning, both the Assistant Superintendent and the Student Services Administrator co-facilitated workshops on SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-Related) goals to assist in developing more effective planning practices. School Division U hosted two, three-day professional development workshops each summer for new teachers in order to introduce the school division philosophy, priorities, outcomes and basic structure. As well, the Board of Trustees and the School Administrators held a retreat on planning practices.

Both the Assistant Superintendent and Student Services Administrator reinforced the student-centered nature of planning in School Division U. The Student Services Administrator explained, “It’s not just motivating, it is challenging and it is what keeps you going because you have to be thinking about all the different ways that you can plan for student need. We are about the kids.” She added that one of the more recent Student Services outcomes for the school division had centered on an identified need: how to

handle kids with challenging behaviours. The school division administration was focusing on collecting data on student suspensions, student engagement and dropout rates in an effort to learn more about the current situation and improve upon it. The Vice-Principal of Student Services cautioned, however, that, although there was more than sufficient moral purpose on which to structure planning for this initiative in the school division, she did not believe that there was wide-scale staff involvement in setting priorities or outcomes. She indicated, “I can’t argue with the outcomes, they are good. We want to look at alternative programming for students. When I read through, I think yes, this is going in the right direction, but I was not involved. Our division is very much structured, very much hierarchical. This is what they feel is important, and then it trickles down, the pyramid approach.” At the same time, she countered, “Although I’ve had little impact on the decisions around Divisional planning, I try everyday to think about our main philosophy. One of our main priorities is that we are student centered, so I try to make sure that is in the back of all the decisions that I make. This reflects my strong personal belief that we are a student centered school division. What is in the best interest of the student?” She added that the planning process was motivating in School Division U as it was based on student need, diversity and changing populations. The Student Services Administrator confirmed this perspective in discussing planning for capacity building for teachers in the area of Aboriginal Academic Achievement. She revealed that although the Aboriginal population was low in the school division, students might one day live in an area with a much higher Aboriginal representation and needed to learn about the Aboriginal history and the culture.

Climate

In terms of conveying information on planning to divisional stakeholders in School Division U, there were two primary vehicles of communication directly from the Board Office. The Superintendent sent out a monthly newsletter known as, *Learning Matters*, which contained information on identified divisional priorities. The senior administration distributed the newsletter throughout the school division as well as throughout the province. The Superintendent would publish an article in the monthly newsletter and he invited each school to submit a success story. Student Services also had a regular column in the newsletter. The Assistant Superintendent described an additional communication vehicle that he had created. The wiki entitled, *The Data Den*, was designed as an on-line location where planning resources could be viewed and shared by school and division administrators, at their convenience. The Assistant Superintendent explained, “People don’t like to admit that they are not very good at certain things or they don’t know things, but if they get a resource or they know where to go, they will take a look at it, they will adapt it and they will make it manageable. So those people that need ideas in terms of where they want to go, what they want to do, now become collaborative in the sense of sharing our information.” Unfortunately, the Vice-Principal of Student Services by her own admission found it difficult to locate this wiki or information about Division planning priorities on the website of School Division U.

The Student Services Administrator described some additional common means of regular communication with the community and parents, including monthly school newsletters, consultative and collaborative meetings, and regular telephone contacts. She reinforced the importance of collaboration and trust in planning, otherwise noting that a plan might collapse if conflicting messages were conveyed between the school division,

schools, families, and the department (Manitoba Education), outside agencies or communities. In the event of conflicting circumstances, the Student Services Administrator would often have contingency plans available in the event that the flexibility of alternatives or options was required for successful outcomes to occur. She provided the example of securing a small budget at the school division level in order to provide additional funding to schools to support students. The Vice-Principal of Student Services suggested that it would be important to be aware of personal biases and agendas in order to communicate and collaborate during planning. If conflict were to arise in the planning process, she believed that it would be imperative to express viewpoints in a respectful and knowledgeable manner. The Student Services Administrator added that trust and respect were critical factors for collaboration and planning. In conflict situations, she strongly believed in listening and understanding the position of others. For this reason, it was important for the Student Services Administrator to know that with information and understanding, the Superintendent would support the decisions of the entire administrative team and advocate on their behalf with the Board of Trustees, school administration, parents or members of the community.

Structure

In School Division U, communication was critically important as the Division administration were “getting people used to the idea of using data to guide decisions.” The Assistant Superintendent added that the division had “tons of data.” The debate, he countered, was on whether the data was being used to the best capabilities. As well, a dilemma now centered on which data would provide the most efficacy in terms of informing future practice. He continued by describing the changes evident in the decision

making process of the school division. “Where before we would make an administrative decision, (now) we will always have some supportive data to back it up.” When asked if the data would drive the decision making process, the Assistant Superintendent promptly replied, “If data drives everything you do, you take away that personal relationship.” He alluded to the American education system and shared his interpretation of the dependence on statistics and data. He reinforced that for School Division U, this was not the case. “It is a balanced approach. It starts with our teachers who are not just looking at statistical data of the class or of the school, they are looking at each individual kid.” He added that by the end of the year, teachers would review all of the data to determine if there was a difference evident in learning. The Assistant Superintendent argued that, in School Division U, the focus was on learning for students, not only on results. He continued that, in Manitoba, data collection provided a snapshot of progress at a particular time along a learning continuum. He believed that School Division U was research informed, and that best practice was research based. Staff did not undertake data collection as an audit to determine whether funding or jobs would continue. In his words, “We are working smarter in the sense that if we are doing something, we are doing something for a reason. If it is not working, we are not going to be doing it.” The Vice-Principal of Student Services emphasized the need for clear and concise outcomes in the planning process. She also described her preference for accomplishing fewer outcomes well, as opposed to performing poorly on a greater number of outcomes.

The Student Services Administrator revealed that, in spite of the large amount of data collected to inform future practice, she still did not often have a sense of whether the students were receiving an appropriate education. She agreed that the division

administration collected Student Services data on the numbers of students with Individual Education Plans or Behaviour Intervention Plans, as well as the number of students with specific outcomes in literacy and numeracy. She felt, however, that the existing data was not providing adequate information to inform future practice. The Student Services Administrator mentioned that, in spite of the information gained from some of the existing data collection, new learning did not seem to emerge, and the division was not able to act on all new information due to issues such as budget constraints, lack of available space, or socio-political factors. Contrary to that trend, however, the Student Services Administrator shared that the data was informing the school division of the real world relevancy and the necessity to explore more sustainable alternative types of programming in each school, for students at-risk; programming that would incorporate high standards, an experiential learning component, additional counseling time, as well as mentorship and apprenticeship components. In this area, data seemed to be informing current practice.

At the time of the interview, administrators from School Division U were collecting relevant data on students through the electronic database collection system known as Maplewood. The Student Services Administrator indicated that although Maplewood was in use across the school division, Student Services personnel kept a separate centralized, Excel spreadsheet, to compile information on funded students and clinical intervention. Division administration was in the process of negotiating the potential purchase of a specific electronic database for Student Services data, which would allow access to information on a more timely and accurate basis. The Student

Services Administrator felt that this would be helpful, especially with students who had multidisciplinary clinical involvement.

Strategy

The Student Services Administrator emphasized the importance of learning and change as part of the planning cycle. She urged that division administrators become aware of ideas and results that emerge through the planning process. She cited an example in School Division U where staff had used planning strategies to achieve an entirely separate outcome from one that had been originally established. In this situation, the division had set out to reduce suspension rates, however, the strategies designed to do so were affecting school culture instead. Rather than feeling discouraged about not accomplishing the original outcome, the Student Services Administrator urged school administrators, this time, to be aware of the emergent learning that they were experiencing as a result of their planning. The original outcome eventually evolved to focus on an improvement in school culture, rather than concentrating solely on a reduction in the number of student suspensions. The Vice-Principal of Student Services added that shifts like this or in-flight corrections in planning, as she referred to them, are critical in environments where there is multiple stakeholder involvement in planning. She noted that, if the expectation was for her, as one of the principal stakeholders in the divisional planning process, to assist in achieving outcomes established by the senior administration, then she would need to know that she had the flexibility of adjusting the strategies and indicators to accommodate for her planning style and inevitably for emergent learning.

Although there was some discrepancy among the interview participants in determining whether planning was done as a team in School Division U, there was agreement that the Divisional Priorities were created centrally, and that latitude was given with regard to the creation of related school outcomes, strategies and indicators. There was certainly evidence provided in the interviews of a more recent collaborative approach and expanded stakeholder involvement in planning. The Assistant Superintendent felt that planning was effecting change in School Division U, but that “It had been done in a very quiet manner.” He expanded on the idea of first providing a divisional framework or structure and then being flexible to allow for innovation, creativity, emergent learning and ultimately ownership in the plan. He reinforced that the divisionally created wiki was instrumental in creating opportunities for socially based networking for collaboration and planning

A Summary of Planning Perspectives in School Division U

School Division U was a large, rural school division experiencing increasing enrollment because of an influx of immigrant families. In this jurisdiction, the Board of Trustees established divisional priorities, although interview participants identified a gradual expansion of stakeholder involvement in the planning process. The role of school administrators in educational planning was identified as critical, however many had varied background experiences in educational planning. As a result, Senior Administrators in the school division facilitated professional development sessions to help build capacity in the area of planning and setting SMART goals. Administrators were able to collaborate on data collection and interpretation on a divisionally developed website. They also published planning information in a monthly newsletter that they

distributed throughout the school division. School Division U was collecting a lot of data and working with staff to use this information to guide their decision-making. In spite of this, senior administrators were unsure as to whether evidence was consistently resulting in emergent learning or changes in practice. From their perspective, the socio-political climate was affecting how the school division could act on the interpretation of data.

Interview participants emphasized the importance of clear messages when planning and contingencies for unexpected results. They also identified flexibility as a critical requirement to make planning adjustments and accommodate for emerging information.

Chapter Five

Summary of the Data – School Division V

School Division V is a smaller rural school division located in the immediate vicinity of Winnipeg. Fifteen schools are situated within the Division and the organization serves 3500 students, with both English program and French Immersion schools. Many of the towns in the northwest portion of this school division are bedroom communities for residents working in the City of Winnipeg while in the southeast region of the school division, local citizens are primarily employed in agriculture with some employed in the manufacturing and the retail service sector. The population in School Division V has been stable over time although there is a fairly consistent but transient population of children in care of Manitoba Child and Family Services. The Senior Administration of the Division recently experienced the retirement of a long-time Superintendent. In School Division V, interviews were held with the new Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services (herein referred to as the Student Services Administrator) and the Consultant for Student Services.

Context

The Board of Trustees and the senior administration of School Division V have developed parallel sets of priorities each year. The Board of Trustees of the school division established a set of supporting priorities to assist with the work of the school division, and another set of enabling priorities that accompanied the division mission statement. Subsequent to the board establishing their priorities, the Senior Administrative Team of the School Division identified three outcomes as part of the School Division Plan to be submitted to Manitoba Education. The Student Services Administrator

believed that, while the priorities of the Board and the Division could be more aligned, traditionally they had not purposefully intersected. “I used to find it interesting that the Board priorities and the Divisional priorities were different. It bothered me. It seems to be traditional that our Board looks at their priorities as something that they can affect as a Board.” The Superintendent shared that, above all, the Board wanted to ensure that their priorities would enhance learning and promote innovation for all students.

The Superintendent of School Division V described a planning process that established a wide context and structure, and yet allowed for individual flexibility for each school. He added, “you can’t just plan with fifteen different buildings having fifteen different sets (of plans); there has to be some common practice, and still allow for individual differences based on schools.” The superintendent of School Division V described the planning process as “Top down and bottom up at the same time.” He indicated that in setting priorities for the division the Board of Trustees would try to ensure that they were doing things that would ultimately benefit the kids. According to the Superintendent, the Senior Administrative Team in School Division V, as well as the Information Technology Manager, Secretary Treasurer, Senior Accountant, Transportation Manager and Maintenance Manager, would meet twice monthly to address any planning issues arising from the Board of Trustees. The outcomes set by the Board of Trustees in School Division V are listed in Table 6. Once the board identified its priorities, the division developed outcomes in the areas of Character Education, Inclusion and Assessment as part of the School Division Plan. This portion of the division plan was required for the province (Manitoba Education) every three years. The Student Services Administrator shared the details of the process. “We identify our priorities in our own

areas. For instance, Curriculum and Instruction would have their priorities, Student Services would have theirs, the Superintendent's area would have a few priorities, as well as the Secretary Treasurer. Everyone has their silo in their area, we try to make the process inform each other of the work of that unit, and then we try to look at the things we can all work on. This is an attempt to make connections with each other so that we are all, more or less, moving in the same direction.”

Table 6

School Division V – Priorities and Outcomes

SCHOOL DIVISION V - BOARD PRIORITIES—*SUPPORTING* VARIABLES

1. Develop and implement policies that demonstrate clear Board Vision.
2. Provide the orientation and the support to assist the new CEO to transition into his new role.
3. Develop and implement a plan to liaise with other levels of local *and provincial* government to build a mutual understanding of purpose and functioning.
4. Work collaboratively with local governments to develop wider shared facility use agreements.
5. Continue to foster and support the development of a culture of character that emphasizes the three Division V core ethical values of honesty, respect and empathy.
6. Promote healthy life style practices of students, staff and our communities.
7. Encourage innovative practices and solutions as Division V continues its role as a leader in education in Manitoba.
8. In a manner consistent with our core ethical values, maintain the positive working relationship with all our employee groups.

SCHOOL DIVISION V -DIVISIONAL ACTION PLAN—*ENABLING* VARIABLES

Mission... to ensure the highest quality education by providing learning opportunities in a safe and caring environment

1. Review staff and student wellness and safety issues.
2. Improve planning, reporting and communications across the school division and in schools.
3. Improve outcomes for all learners.
4. Strengthen the use of technology for student and staff learning.
5. Strengthen the capacity and leadership potential of staff and students.

The Student Services Administrator added that planning should be considered important whether it is formal or informal. She suggested the importance of “notes to self” that would eventually be shared and developed at the different tables. While the Manitoba Education planning structure did not necessarily help the Student Services Administrator improve or align her planning process, she did admit that it forced her to spend more time on documenting the plan. She added, “It forces me to spend more time on the formal part and put it on paper. I know what my plan is. I know where I am going. That seems good enough to me, but at the end of the day, I would have nothing to share. It does make me put it on paper and that practice alone allows me to reflect and probably makes that planning the next year better.

Capacity

In School Division V, schools could use the Division Plan as a framework to establish outcomes for their school plans. The Superintendent cautioned, however, that principals had a choice as to the degree of individual compliance with the planning structure set forth by the division and the type of outcomes that they would eventually designate as part of their school plans. He mentioned that the division had recently increased the number of meetings of the Principals’ Council where reflection on practice as a school administrator was a regular component of their professional development. As well, principals were involved in a full day planning session in the fall to assist in setting divisional outcomes, and in a full day session in the spring to report on the results of their school plans. Throughout the year, the Principals’ Council met regularly. “The group tells us that the majority of the day should be PD, and anything that could be sent out in paper form at that time is important. Going through administrivia at least part of the day six or

seven times a year is not good use of their time.” The Principals’ Council was focusing on two book studies as part of their professional learning at their meetings. “We have been collecting information, reading and going through *Barriers to Change* (Davies, Herbst & Parrot Reynolds, 2008). We are also looking at Starratt (2004) on *Ethical Leadership* because that ties in to teaching and learning, and also ties into inclusive practice too.”

The Superintendent asserted, “Any change that is going to happen is only as good as the principal driving it in that building.” He continued, “From a divisional perspective I think you have to understand that every school has different challenges and that a (particular) priority in the building may not be that high.” He mentioned for example, that if you have a building that has 50% of the students identified as having English as a Second Language, then a priority in numeracy might not be a focus. The Student Services Consultant added that, “There are a lot of needs that are different in one area of the division than in the other. That provides a challenge for planning because they have different wishes and desires around what they would like their teachers to know more about. Our division is very widely flung when it comes to what different areas have and don’t have.” The Superintendent also emphasized the need to identify key people in the school division and in the schools who could potentially help to drive a plan. He added, “You’ve got to hope you have the right people who can recognize the need to push.”

The Superintendent elaborated on other groups involved in the planning process of the school division. He briefly mentioned the Community Education Committee that consisted of three trustees, himself, a principal representative and designates from every parent advisory council in the division. This group met nine times throughout the year,

and enabled parents to regularly consult and collaborate in the divisional planning process. Nonetheless, the Superintendent reinforced that parents would also have opportunities for issue specific consultation when and if significant situations arose in any of their communities. He noted that various educational committees were also established in School Division V under the direction of divisional administration and consultants. Consultation and collaboration in planning was a central role of the educational committees. On the contrary, the Student Services Consultant questioned the degree of involvement in school division planning for those on divisional committees. It seemed to her that there was little involvement in formal planning beyond those in administrative positions. She added that she had experienced much less formal planning structure and process in School Division V than she had in the past, after having worked with several school divisions in the City of Winnipeg. The Student Services Consultant suggested that her involvement in planning at the school division level, was limited to planning for workshops with groups such as the Resource Teachers, Guidance Counselors, and Educational Assistants. In spite of her lack of direct involvement in divisional planning, the Student Services Consultant admitted that the Senior Administrative Team of School Division V was wide open to new ideas on a more informal basis. She felt that this was the advantage to working in her current environment. "There is a real sense of what do you think we need? (They) ask the resource teachers, counselors and classroom teachers what they want. Then let's see if we can bring it in. That is motivating because there are no standards around what the norm is, so ideas come from all areas and we are allowed to explore them."

The Superintendent of School Division V was very aware of the challenge of extending the planning circle, and he questioned how the school division administrators could embed planning into multiple levels of the organization. At times, he believed that perhaps the school division planning process was only reaching very few. “I think that one of the biggest challenges of any learning organization is how to get the roots deep, and not just be superficial, to look good on paper.” One point in the system where he felt that the plan actually extended to classrooms and affected students was in the area of assessment. The Superintendent rationalized that perhaps divisional outcomes were being achieved in this area due to the pressure from both within the division, and from outside the division at the provincial level. He believed that recent provincial curriculum support documents and professional development through Manitoba Education served to increase the knowledge and understanding of classroom teachers, and was building systemic capacity. He added, “There is good information shared, passed on and brought into the division by the system.” The Student Services Consultant shared that she believed that there was an improvement in the link between the outcome on inclusion, and actual practice in Division V high schools. She mentioned that in the past, high school teachers had never been involved in Individual Education Planning meetings. With the advent of the new outcome at the division level, and the subsequent adoption of outcomes for inclusion in school plans, high school teachers were now attending Individual Education Planning meetings for students.

Climate

Frequently throughout the interview, the Superintendent referred to the core ethical values of honesty, empathy and respect held by the Board of Trustees and senior

administration. These values formed the basis for all decision making in the school division. He recalled several situations that required careful reference to the core values in order to address underlying issues. One situation in particular involved the inadequate physical facilities of a school that was part of a tri-school complex located in a one of the communities. When it became clear to the school division that Manitoba Education would not be providing funding to construct a new school, and that facility issues would remain in the one building, senior administration carefully constructed a collaborative process with the community to seek solutions. Members of the senior administrative team met with former students of the school, administrators, teachers, clinicians, consultants, parents and current students, to develop a plan on how to re-organize the space in the complex. At that time, the division hired an outside consultant to facilitate a PATH planning process to respond to the dilemma at hand. The Superintendent described the tenuous nature of the situation. Parents of the students from the other schools in the complex were not amenable to making changes that “would impact their domain”. The use of the PATH strategy helped to deescalate an emotionally charged situation and, according to its theme, kept participants focused on “what’s best for kids”. Once the PATH was complete, the results were shared widely with the community. When asked whether some of the feedback changed the PATH outcomes that the community had collectively reached, the Superintendent responded that it did not change the outcomes per se, however the PATH did open the dialogue with the community at a time when communication was a struggle. The Superintendent was anticipating that this new avenue of communication would provide more feedback as the changes were going forward. The Student Services Consultant elaborated that, in times of potential conflict, characteristics

such as collaborative process, perseverance and flexibility helped to navigate the situations at hand. She added that although “a bottom line” (from the Superintendent or Assistant Superintendent) was sometimes helpful when a conflict erupted in the schools and school division, this practice had not gone well because division staff perceived that administrators from the Division Office were “telling people what to do.” The Student Services Consultant argued, “If principals don’t buy in then it (change) won’t happen.” The Student Services Consultant suggested that the school division was “principal driven” and argued, “If principals don’t buy in then it (change) won’t happen.” She advocated that the balanced and collaborative approach to communication between senior administrators and school principals was most successful in School Division V. The Superintendent summarized the philosophy of the Senior Administrators in the board office about miscommunication or misunderstandings. “Regardless of how right we are at division office, if the message doesn’t get through, then it is our responsibility to change what we are doing; not necessarily saying I can’t believe that so and so is not doing it. It does not matter. Obviously, we missed the boat as a central office, so what things can we do differently to make sure that it does not happen again; be willing to say, that is our responsibility. For some reason it got missed. We are going this way because we don’t want it missed again!”

The other important avenue of communication and collaboration in School Division V was the divisional newsletter. The Superintendent noted that the newsletter was distributed twice per year. The second newsletter distributed in the spring included the Report to the Community, required by Manitoba Education. School division personnel created opportunities to share information on divisional outcomes and related

progress through the division newsletter. It also served as a venue for school administrators to report on school planning outcomes and for school staff members to share information on happenings in schools. The Superintendent continued, “We added pages to the newsletter because people are wanting to write about things they are doing, which I think is powerful.” When asked if staff and the community were reading the newsletter, he added that the administration would be mailing the second newsletter to every taxpayer in the division. He related, as well, that the Report to the Community was on the website of School Division V. The Student Services Administrator noted that school division priorities were listed on the opening page of the division website and clearly articulated in the section entitled, “Leading the Way to Personal Growth.”

Additionally, the Student Services Administrator shared that the division had a brochure published detailing the continuum of services in School Division V. She mentioned that the brochure not only communicated this important information to parents, but also served to articulate the divisional process for classroom teachers, resource teachers and school administrators. “Ours is very specific to the division and the processes that occur at each level. (It includes) for example, referrals, what questions you need to ask, who you need to involve, and what assessments need to be done at each level in order to get schools more resources that they need for individual students.” Both the Student Services Administrator and the Student Services Consultant mentioned the importance of being transparent in communication about division funding opportunities to meet student needs. Using the example of the Early Years Literacy Intervention Program, they related the importance of clear and consistent criteria, and the development of a formula to determine how the funds would be distributed. The Student Services Administrator

reinforced, “We do distribute resources based on criteria. Mine is very transparent. I show them the formula. I am pretty well targeting and allocating the resources, I think, in a justifiable way.” She added that there is a climate of trust developing between principals and the division office, “Especially because they have seen that it worked. Those kids now instead of being struggling readers have gone up to Benchmark 13 readers.”

Structure

Although the students in the Early Literacy Intervention Program showed tremendous progress, the same could not be said about students’ progress in other literacy and numeracy initiatives in the division. The Superintendent reluctantly shared, “I’m not saying that we are not getting good results. I am saying that for our data collection, we don’t have definable measures of how well we’re doing.” He felt that data played a serious role in the division although not across the spectrum of grades. The Superintendent mentioned that while the division was collecting high school data on graduation rates, marks and credits achieved, he believed that the data was very basic. He cautioned that some of the seventh and eighth grade, math assessment data was also very limited. “I don’t necessarily put a lot of stock in it.” On the other hand, the Superintendent was quite satisfied with data collection at the early years. “I think in our early years, there is a lot of data and I think early years is a lot more conducive to collecting data; much easier for benchmarks, reading and writing levels.” He supplemented with the information that early years teachers have been collecting and using data for a long time. The Student Services Administrator shared that data gathered through the Early Development Instrument (EDI) on student readiness for the school

system had informed a lot of the resourcing for early intervention initiatives in School Division V. She then described a division-wide early years assessment practice known as Strong Beginnings. This process involved a formative assessment done individually with students to gain descriptive feedback and ultimately improve teaching and learning. The Student Services Administrator seemed pleased that, with the advent of Strong Beginnings, the division now had consistent yearly data. When asked about the importance of data in the school division, the Student Services Administrator indicated that, “Data provides information that most of us have tip-toed around for too long. How do I know, and how does a principal know when the initiatives and strategies we used are working? The only way you know is you measure what you had and have now. The more information I can gather, the more data I get and the more consistent that data is, the better my decisions are.” The Superintendent on the other hand, expressed a concern that teachers might become data driven, move purely toward specific targets and away from essential educational standards such as critical thinking, developing imagination, getting inspired about learning and developing their own opinions and ideas. He reinforced, “I know that targeted outcomes are important, and if that is the only focus, I think you end up with a regurgitation process. You need to have some benchmarks and you need to help kids along and give them feedback; but how do you get them to think, and live, and to understand? You know, the global citizen, how do you get them to relate to what they are learning about? How do you get them to create that meaning where they can actually think differently?” The Student Services Consultant offered that she was the person assigned to collect data in the division. “I am the research and planning department. My life is pretty regimented around the data.” She advised care in approach to this role, as the

function was critical, but she did not want to report on what principals and school staff did not accomplish in their data collection processes. The Student Services Consultant suggested that there was not as much “hands-on wrestling with the details of the data” as she would like to see. She felt that the educational leaders at the board office looked more at the big picture ideas and impressions from the data, rather than processing through it with the teachers. While the Early Literacy Intervention Program was informing practice, “Because it is very prescribed and prescriptive”, the Student Services consultant seemed concerned that perhaps the information gained from data collection was “Not necessarily filtering down to best practice in the classroom.” After all, she advised, School Division V had a number of concurrent initiatives. She alluded that the focus was also scattered. “We are hoping for (the Superintendent) to cut back on our commitments and focus on finishing or completing and following through with what we have started, so that we are not all over the map with this initiative, or that. Teachers are feeling overwhelmed.”

Strategy

The Superintendent recognized that, in the planning process, it was necessary to reflect on the feedback and have continual dialogue throughout the year to learn from the process. He also mentioned, “Planning is not a one shot deal, planning is continuous. If it is a one shot deal, you could sit down and in a couple of hours make a fantastic school division plan and then at the end of the year collect a bunch of things and say, look this fits into here!” He added, “There has to be an opportunity to develop where we are at, where we are going, what things should we be asking and do we need to change course at all?; Especially for someone as one of the leaders in the division: How are you going to improve? How are you going to share that with people?” The Student Services

administrator talked about the importance of looking at the broader picture and reflecting. For instance, she advocated that, after looking at the data on the efficacy of having an educational assistant assigned to each student provincially funded in the category for Emotional and Behaviour Disorders (EBD), the Senior Administration of the division review the way the funding resources are used. The division, in pilot sites, used the funds to increase teaching staff and reduce class sizes, so that the classroom teachers were responsible for 12 instead of 24 students. The changes suggested by the Student Services Administrator were incremental and adaptive in nature. She added, “So those are the kinds of things I mean about planning, just changing it up a little bit. I think for me the trick is to allow decisions to be made in smaller doses so that you have flexibility within the framework. When the evidence seems to point to a different type of solution, as long as it makes good sense we can change that up.” The Student Services Administrator reinforced the importance of having the planning data in a consistent form. She mentioned that, after collecting the data from the schools, she would often spread it all out at one time, so that she was able to see the results from the entire division. Only then, she indicated, could she see where the successes were occurring and where the gaps and challenges remained. On this basis, the Student Services Administrator advocated for allocating resources according to need. She shared the example of data from the Early Literacy Intervention Program. Due to the emergent learning from the planning data, resources were eventually allocated to students who had literacy scores in the bottom twenty per cent of students in School Division V. Although this shift in practice was evidence-based, principals still expected to receive support for the same number of students in every school. The Student Services Administrator recalled, “I said no! They

were outraged, (saying) “this isn’t fair.” So we had that discussion and we said what’s not fair about this? These are the numbers of children and these are the ones who need the help.” The Student Services administrator shared that the most surprising aspect of planning surrounded the fact that schools now had specific data lined up without a formal meeting with senior administration. They were now looking at the data themselves and beginning to make decisions around it. “So they are starting to identify and put things in place to prevent or to respond to the perceived needs. I think that is getting people to see a system, a way of looking at things.” She indicated that, in School Division V, school team members were often reluctant to access outside agency support to assist with students who had challenging behaviours. “If it works well once or twice, I think they will open their minds to that possibility. If it is unknown, it is not welcome.” The Student Services Consultant found that the planning process was helpful in yielding successful outcomes, so long as there was the possibility of predictable and positive outcomes.

A Summary of Planning Perspectives in School Division V

School Division V is a small, rural school division that has experienced challenges because of the large number of children in care who are now attending local schools. While the Board of Trustees set parallel priorities to focus the work of the board, and separate outcomes to focus the work of the school division, they identified extending involvement and planning deeper as challenges. Interview participants emphasized the importance of socially based planning by including various partners in the planning process. They advocated for a process involving perseverance and flexibility to assist with situations of conflict. The interview participants deemed transparency in communication as critically important. Division and school newsletters, as well as,

website and brochures publicized information about planning outcomes. At the time of the interview, there was a flexible, wide context and structure for the divisional plan with allowances for individual latitude at each school. Principals reported a full day of professional development in the fall, allowing input on planning, and a full day in the spring to reflect on their planning. Decisions were beginning to be made in certain areas based on data and evidence, and data was playing a greater role at the early years (Early Development Instrument, Divisional Early Assessment Information – Strong Beginnings). Concerns were being raised, however, about Division V being data driven and moving away from thinking, imagination, inspiration and diverse perspectives.

Chapter Six

Summary of the Data – School Division W

School Division W is one of the smaller school divisions located in the City of Winnipeg. The division has 22 schools serving a student population of 9,212. The mission, vision and values of the division are centered around, and focused on the very diverse, suburban, community. The division consists, largely, of residential property that results in a taxation mill rate higher than other city school divisions, due to the fewer number of commercial enterprises available to cover the provincial education funding shortfall. Personnel from School Division W recently experienced the immigration of 575 families, 81 of which came from war affected countries. The Senior Administration of the School Division has notable partnerships with the local Neighbourhood Resource Network, Parent Child Coalition and Community Daycare Facilities. In the summer, school division personnel offer free Parent Child Pre-School Sessions at local community schools. They provide talent development camps for resident students. Personnel in School Division W also offer a summer school program for high school students for the purpose of credit recovery. In School Division W, interviews were held with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services (herein referred to as the Student Services Administrator), and the Consultant for Student Services.

Context

Members of the Board of Trustees of School Division W have a clear sense of mission according to the Superintendent of Schools. He shared that trustees have developed a very powerful mission statement and set of values along with it. “They have been able to dream, marshal resources, and support innovations for risk taking that enable

people to get to that dream.” The Superintendent referenced the Annual Report to the Community (June 2009) where the Chairperson of the Board of Trustees reinforced, “The ultimate goal (mission) of the trustees is to provide each child every opportunity to reach potential and realize greatness.” The Superintendent added that constancy around the division’s mission statement was critical to planning. “I think you would find a fairly common language around the division; the term “north star” is constant. That is how people would describe the mission statement and that (term) comes from an article by Gary Fenstermacher, who is working both with our board and our administrators.” The Superintendent elaborated on the article by Fenstermacher (2000), *What is the Difference between the North Star and Northfield? How Educational Goals and Ideals Become Confused*. He recalled that the article set the stage for the trustees and administrators to re-think the importance of establishing a mission statement, and not confuse it with the ways of getting to the ideal. The Superintendent countered, “I think the planning in School Division W is also varied and it is layered. It is multi-leveled so that our division mission statement informs divisional outcomes, and they inform school planning.” He then interjected, “Really, if what you are doing divisionally isn’t echoed in your school plans, then there isn’t much point in having a divisional plan.”

The Superintendent indicated that, after the annual retreat of the Board of Trustees, the divisional plan was shared with everyone and follow up points were established throughout the year. The Student Services Administrator suggested that the retreat for the Board of Trustees was a time to come forward and reflect with the Superintendent’s team on “what we are working on, what’s going well, doing environmental scans, (determining) what else we want to see, or what we are hearing

from the community.” The Superintendent concurred, “So the stuff we are working on, we are working on publicly and regularly. If we are not, it should not be in the plan. Some of the bureaucratic stuff is just ongoing management. It doesn’t deserve the airtime.” The Superintendent described how the divisional goals or pillars as they were known, were aligned and built around the mission statement. In fact, School Division W had a focus on outcomes under each goal pillar that are summarized in Table 7. The outcomes are listed as they appear in division documentation. The Superintendent noted that each of the outcomes also included a listing of current initiatives, recent accomplishments and strategies. He indicated that when formally reporting to Manitoba Education, school and division administrators in School Division W did not follow the planning template established by the Department. The Superintendent noted, “We really do a report format that communicates and tells our stories. We echo our goal pillars.”

The Student Services Administrator explained that the divisional approach to setting planning outcomes was broader in nature. She noted, “One of the things that we are careful about is, if you are only looking at specific or isolated factors in outcomes, you will get a very narrow view. So, (we ask ourselves) what is it that will tell us that the kids are having success? We look at graduation rates, absenteeism, even how they are doing on standardized tests; on global things rather than these little tiny things.” The Student Services consultant added that once the division outcomes were set, various subcommittees such as resource teachers and guidance counselors would then look at where they saw gaps or needs in relation to the larger divisional planning themes.

Table 7

School Division W - Divisional Plan - 2008-09

Mission Statement: School Division W is a community of learners, every one of whom shares the responsibility to assist children in acquiring an education which will enable them to lead fulfilling lives within the world as moral people and contributing members of society.

Our Goal: Building Community

School Division W continues to build our schools and our school division as exemplars of our mission statement and our motto

In a democratic society, we balance individual and community good. We value the differences that make each person special and the shared values that unite us in community. In School Division W we are a community of learners. We help students realize their deep connection to and responsibility for both their own individual experience and for the other human beings who share the world.

Our Goal: Engaging Learners

School Division W wants each child actively and thoughtfully engaged in the learning process, making meaning and building understandings. Every learner is not only included, but needed. Learners engage in conscious and thoughtful consideration of their work and their progress.

We will continue to improve classroom and school programs to ensure that each child is successful and able to live a fulfilling life contributing to our community.

Our Goals: Staff Who Make a Positive Difference in the Lives of Children

School Division W values its employees' skills, professionalism and commitment to our children and our community. We expect our employees to be mindful of our mission statement, to know their responsibilities, to exercise sound judgment and to take initiative.

Our Goals: Best Possible Learning Conditions

We want to ensure that we use our resources wisely in order to create the best possible learning conditions for children.

She shared that at times, specific planning outcomes in Student Services were added because of the identification of gaps, as well as from research articles, books, specific requests, or professional development workshops attended. The Student Services Consultant mentioned that she would meet regularly with the Student Services Administrator, the other consultant and the Director of Clinical and Educational Support Services, to review past planning, gauge where progress had been made, determine if any

areas had been overlooked and also to set new outcomes. In the 2008-09 school year, the group reviewed outcomes in the area of threat assessment, supporting students and school readiness. Their planning dialogue resulted in the development of sub-committees consisting of community members, various service organizations, classroom teachers, resource teachers and clinicians. The groups collaborated to develop workshop training and in-class supports in the areas of Autism, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder, and mental health. As well, the group explored training options for educational assistants in the area of inclusive education. The dialogue further developed into a community-wide effort to enhance early childhood practice across the division through on-going articulation between pre-school and school age programming, as well as through a community sponsored early childhood conference. The groups also collaborated to increase the availability of before and after programs in existing daycare spaces.

Capacity

The Superintendent reinforced that the planning process in the division was less about detailed planning and more about the process of visioning a better future for children. The Student Services Administrator agreed that it was about making a difference in the lives of children. She described the process of having the yearly conversation across the division on defining the qualities of an educated person. The Student Services Administrator felt that once everyone in the educational community understood the collective values and hopes, the remaining planning process was much easier. The Superintendent posited, “We talked way back about being the division of choice both for employees and for parents, so if you wanted to locate somewhere, buy a home, raise a family, this would be the very best place.” He continued, “A lot of our

planning is almost blue sky, and then working backward toward the steps that we can take to do that. The other way to look at some of our planning would be growing good practice. We start at one place and then grow it, and our strength is that we tend to grow a lot faster than we thought we could.” The Superintendent advocated for people at every level of the school organization to “suspend disbelief”, establish a planning outcome, and build on it to eventually achieving a mission or vision. “As a Principal, the only decisions that I can make for teachers are what room you are in and what kids you meet, and all the really important decisions are left to teachers after that.” (For that reason) “You have to build the capacity in your staff. I really think that planning and achieving goals is capacity development, and I think schools as institutions can achieve way more than they think they can.” This optimistic attitude seemed to permeate through School Division W.

The Student Services Administrator added that much of the planning in the school division involved developing capacity in the learning relationship. She argued that this was not about “I like you, or you like me.” Rather she described that it was about being able to say, “What do I need to do differently in order to enhance the learning relationship? It is more than just settling that I am doing this, and they (the students) are not getting it. It is how you and the learners position yourselves, and get the learners to believe that they are capable.” The Superintendent described how the school division was developing capacity to include student voice in planning practice. Students were regularly asked, “What do you want said about you when you cross the stage at grad, and what are you working towards?” He added, “By doing that you start to bring the plan to life at the student level.”

Capacity building in planning also extended to the work with divisional support teams. The Student Services Consultant elaborated on the task of shaping the role of the guidance counselors and resource teachers so that they would see themselves as one support team. “Now the guidance counselors attend even when we are calling the meetings for resource teachers! They are coming and participating in writing funding applications and behaviour plans.” The Student Services Consultant noted that interest in other professional development topics was mixed depending on the topic. “Sometimes people just hear and ask to join in. It (participation) is largely interest based so you end up with a pretty keen group in most cases.” She indicated that the division had allowed interested teachers to participate in workshops related to educational assistant course work, as well. On the other hand, the Student Services Consultant added that if division staff had been working on additional training, if they were involved in an interesting event in their schools, or if they had a particular interest, they would be recommended for inclusion in the planning process for particular areas. For example, the Student Services consultant herself had a background and interest in the area of self-determination at the high school level. Prior to her divisional role, she worked at one of the high schools in an effort to empower and enhance the voice of students with special needs. In order to have students assist with their own planning, she developed questionnaires to elicit their opinions and interests, brainstormed with students about potential goals, helped them to become self-advocates and taught them their rights in regard to appropriate education. At that time, she shared her knowledge with division staff through the resource teachers’ study group. Since then the Student Services Consultant has helped to build staff capacity in the division by attending grade level meetings at schools to discuss Appropriate

Educational Programming, and planning with schools around Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support. The Student Services Consultant concluded that, in terms of capacity building, all staff were encouraged to be “intentional” in their daily practice. “We also try to hear what staff are saying about what they are struggling with, and then we try to plan with them in ways that will support them and help them to achieve success.”

Climate

It was evident through the conversations, that School Division W was intentional in terms of bringing planning priorities off the written page. Although Senior Administration listed the mission statement of School Division W on the website, other planning initiatives and the divisional outcomes or pillars were located there. The Superintendent asserted however, “If your kids are in one of our schools you would be well aware of them (priorities); well aware because it comes down to the level of your kid. People see the divisional plan in their schools. We talked about student engagement, and we did Arts in the Park. We had 5600 of 9200 kids perform over the three-day period in the park. They will see the way we approach literacy. They will see the teacher advisor and the way we construct relationships.” The Student Services Administrator reinforced the importance of the collaborative and team-based teacher advisory approach in the high school. In School Division W, students were assigned an advisor over four years, who would assist with timetabling, find out about personal interests and ensure that supports were there so that students could meet their goals. The Student Services Administrator added, “In those scenarios it is a collaborative approach that makes a difference, because you’ve got a team there and everyone can imagine things differently and hopefully we

can all do that with a lens that makes a difference for the child. The importance of having family involved with that is a key piece and a challenge.” She continued, “It is about building relationships so that when we come to some difficult circumstances, it is not like we are blaming them or they are blaming us. We are working together.” The Superintendent recounted the collaborative process of transition planning between pre-school, School Division W, as well as, post secondary or adult services. “We do a lot of work with post secondary in terms of things that provide a ready pathway for kids so that high school graduation is a launching pad, not a finish line.” He also alluded to the dialogue occurring between pre-school programs, day cares and early years teachers, on how classroom teachers could enhance the learning that had already occurred during the pre-school years. The Student Services Administrator summarized the climate for planning in the school division. “It’s really just keeping your ear connected to the community, and listening always for what the community, parents, teachers and students are saying, and paying attention to that.”

The Student Services Consultant shared that principals and vice principals were well aware of planning practices in Division W. There was ample collaboration and dialogue about educational outcomes, at monthly administration meetings. She noted that discussion about outcomes often centered on related articles, or books. The Student Services Administrator added that in the past Senior Administration from Division W had brought in a researcher to work with the Board of Trustees and the staff, where there was a match between the philosophical beliefs and the practice of the organization. “It was really nice to have the actual author there, so we could get into a deeper discussion.” The Student Services Consultant reinforced the importance of the work that Gary

Fenstermacher had done with the division. She also noted that Senior Administrators of Division W had also brought in Gert Biesta to work with the entire administrative team on the interrelationship between pedagogy, community, educational responsibility, and life. The Student Services Consultant indicated that considerable discussion ensued after a group of administrators and high school staff attended a workshop on inclusion facilitated by Pat Miranda. She notioned, “Sometimes it is a matter of nudging them (staff) in the direction that you are hoping to move, but it can’t entirely be your own agenda. Again, it’s a collaborative piece. People often ask for articles and readings, so trying to find the time to read and look for items that are worth sharing is sometimes a struggle.” The Student Services Administrator reasoned that there was an expectation in School Division W, which that senior administration modeled with, school administrators and staff. “There is not just a discussion, but there is an expectation that you will be a reader; that you will read with, write with, think with others, and that you will surface the tensions and not just go along with something. We meet with our administrators once a month, so as we are working on different topics and different themes. We would read articles, have discussions and we would surface things that are not going well for them, or we would be able to surface tensions and that kind of difficulty.”

Nonetheless, the style and approach that was most common in School Division W involved an appreciative stance to collaboration and dialogue. The appreciative stance was described by the Student Services Administrator as a solution focused approach to determining what was going well, and taking note of that rather than focusing on the negative. The Student Services Administrator suggested that the appreciative stance would generally set a positive tone for planning dialogue and at times inadvertently

managed conflict in conversation. The Student Services Administrator clarified that she was referring to the Appreciative Inquiry Approach (Cooperrider, 1990), when she mentioned the appreciative stance in dialogue. She added, “So if, for instance, you are a classroom teacher and you have been teaching for thirty years, and all of a sudden someone says so why aren’t you doing that because research shows that this is a good approach. You have just shut them down. So if you are talking from an appreciative stance, it is about what is working well. Then you can start to build from there. There is room for everyone’s voice. What is good is that it allows people to share stories. It is in and through the sharing of stories that others can start to imagine things and think outside the box.” The Superintendent indicated that conflict was often inevitable as, “It is hard to talk about what kind of world we want”. He added that from time to time, planning choices were set between competing goods, and a positive approach was helpful to problem solving. He used the example of the interplay between zero tolerance and inclusion and the misconceptions around zero tolerance. “I would say to a parent, no we don’t tolerate it (the behaviour), but the kid isn’t banished to another planet.” He again suggested the importance of planning and working together to find a positive solution for all. The Student Services Administrator reinforced that the critical aspect of climate in School Division W surrounded the importance of listening to ideas brought to the table, rather than believing that there was only one way to go about a task or a plan. The Student Services Consultant suggested that listening and trying to understand another’s point of view did not mean that you would “end up on the same page. Often you will figure out that you are coming from the same place but that you might be approaching the situation differently.” The Student Services Administrator added that, by not shutting

down the conversation, people would then have the opportunity to use their creativity for improving outcomes when working together.

Structure

The Superintendent indicated that, in spite of the nature and importance of dialogue in Division W, planning was often much more concrete and active. “They (staff, students and community) are not seeing bureaucratic objectives. We really talk about things that bring it right down to the kid, teacher, school and parent. I would say that if you can’t conceive of your plan in those direct ways, you are probably not getting your plan in place, where the rubber meets the road.” The Student Services Administrator alluded to a number of examples of active planning in the division. She discussed the Bright Futures mentoring, tutoring and leadership project that increased the graduation rate at one school from fifty to eighty-five per cent. She added that data from the Universal Early Childhood programs in the pre-school community resulted in increased parental involvement in education and reduced the summer learning lag. In terms of a focus on inquiry-based learning, the division adopted the Reggio Emilia approach. Data demonstrated a more positive climate for learning in schools, and a decrease in reports of challenging behaviours (both physical and verbal). “What Did You Do In School Today,” on-line student surveys, provided the division with critical information on the meaning of student engagement and on the benefit of a student advisory system. This information was able to look inside classrooms and allow student voices to be heard. We tracked data from threat assessments to when the division required additional training for staff, and whether the students that were part of the threat assessments were able to maintain appropriate behaviour and contact with education resources after a threat was made. The

Student Services Administrator added that the division would often review broad categories of students, including those who received provincial categorical funding for special needs, to determine if there was anything more that the division could be doing to support students. One of those areas involved the idea and philosophy of experiential learning. In the fall of 2009, School Division W was leading an initiative to develop Winnipeg's first *Big Picture School* within one of their high schools (Washor, 2009).

The Superintendent of School Division W referred to the questions frequently asked by Chris Kelly, Superintendent of Vancouver School District. "What do we know; What are we doing about it? and; Can we stop doing things that we know aren't productive?" The Superintendent of School Division W indicated that essential questions of this nature needed to permeate through the educational organization. He added that if this active approach to planning were taken each time administrators came together, the discussion would be informed and would lead to improved practice. Once the conversation occurred with administrators, it could extend to school staff and to individual teachers. The Student Services Consultant, at one point, conducted a sharing circle with division administrators to collect data (ideas) on how to better support students with special needs. She advocated that because staff were comfortable talking with her, she heard from music teachers, school therapy staff, resource teachers, guidance counselors and administrators. Staff provided her with perspectives on planning and gave input into what people were struggling with, what needed work and where they were feeling inadequacies. The Student Services Administrator indicated that the Senior Administration of School Division W had recently also initiated an on-line blog that teachers could access from the divisional website. She suggested that the intent was to

elicit different voices through the writing conversation instead of always privileging those through the traditional verbal paradigm. Initially, members of the senior administrative team were unsure of how well the blog was being used, however, they were willing to be patient as they were just beginning to harness technology to stimulate educational dialogue in the school division.

Strategy

The Superintendent indicated that through the active and concrete approach to planning, Senior Administrators of School Division W were tracking the effect of various initiatives and programs, on improvement in student learning. He suggested, “We should be able to go down the plan and say done, ongoing, or better back-up and take another run at this. If the objective is good, sometimes you have to learn from your failures. Just back up and go again.” He shared that the planning documents in School Division W appeared more descriptive than strategic, and that indicators would be considered more of an environmental scan than as a qualifier to achievement. He suggested that administration never set targets (outcomes) on provincial exams because the division was generally above provincial averages in Math, and within range on English Language Arts. He added, however, that the division did set outcomes with indicators that would have a predictive ability. He referred to them as causal or leading indicators. For example, the superintendent recalled that the division had set an outcome that every student would have an important adult in their life that was hopelessly committed to them. He indicated, “So as we achieve that, then grad rates come up, provincial exam scores come up, but we are not directly aiming at them. Those indicators say yes, kids are connected, they feel cared about, they feel motivated, they are working harder, and they are achieving more.

They are more likely to seek help, and they are more likely to trust teachers. This is the way that Senior Administration of School Division W has framed the use of data.” The Superintendent concluded that, “You can’t often get to those things you’re aiming at. When you work on your leading indicators, your trailing indicators will come. If you talk to anybody who is good at anything, the person will break it down into all of leading steps. With athletes, they will say, we will do this with our nutrition, we will get this kind of coaching, we will work on our core strength, and we will work on our anaerobic activity. When they win the Stanley Cup, they will say, We were doing this.” The superintendent continued, “Or if say, I want to be wealthy, my goal is to be wealthy but I don’t want to save, I don’t want to work harder, and I don’t want to invest. So the leading indicator would be how much pay in your paycheck are you willing to set aside at the end of the day, your desire to be wealthy will not get you there.”

The Student Services Administrator indicated that the division would look at data in various ways but would not be controlled by it. While alluding to the focus on data in the United States, she added, “I always feel very fortunate that we are able to think a little more broadly rather than just A equals B. We do use data, we do reflect on it in terms of our plans, but we do not necessarily pressure our administrators and our schools in terms of seeing an improved score. Students need to have skills and attributes that will lead them to a fulfilling life, but that is different from a numeric score on math. Everything we do is linked to an outcome.” The Student Services Administrator added that when data was presented concerning an area where there was a deficit or a gap, it was simply a matter of mentioning this to classroom teachers and the next year, there would be improvement in the outcome. “In School Division W we have always said that we are a

community of learners, so our foundation is the dialogue and reflection, and that is foundational in what we ask our teachers to do every year.” She added that senior administration of School Division W would often ask schools to make sense of their own data and then ask the schools to assist the division to interpret it on a larger scale. “So data is really useful in the construction and deconstruction of meaning.” The Student Services Administrator believed that reflection and thinking with others facilitated the greatest link between knowledge and action. She shared that the partnership between classroom teachers in the school division and the Early Years Practicum at the University of Manitoba was a positive example of reflective dialogue in action. “They (student teacher candidates) are dispersed into classrooms and then they come back to the university to deconstruct. Built in there is also dialogue time with the teachers, students and professors so that practice and research are melding.” The Student Services Administrator reiterated that the power in planning would occur in building relationships, forming networks, working together in partnership, conversing, reflecting and acting on new findings. The Student Services Consultant elaborated that the senior administration of the division provided opportunities for dialogue and reflection through the New Administrators Group and was encouraging teachers to engage in reflective writing as well as suggesting to all staff that they adopt a critical friend with whom they could engage in reflections and personal learning. She added that in some schools, professional learning groups were meeting to talk about how to move philosophy into action. “Ultimately, that is the thing, isn’t it? Being able to sort through things critically, and not take offence by looking at things in a different way.”

A Summary of Planning Perspectives in School Division W

School Division W is one of the smaller school divisions located in the city of Winnipeg. Within the last five years, there has been a large influx of immigrant and war-affected families into the school division. The planning focus within this school division has been on building community. There has been a very clear sense of mission to provide each child with the opportunity to reach potential and greatness. Senior Administration of the division have attempted to work on planning outcomes, actively, publicly and regularly. The divisional approach to setting planning outcomes has been broader in scope, and planning for the ideal or the North Star has been a constant reference point. Divisional staff have been using data more often to inform planning and practice. Lately, the trustees and senior administration of the division has been inclined to set outcomes that would have a predictive ability, rather than aiming at the outcomes directly. They have been extending the planning circle to various staff, groups and partners, and the discussion has centered on developing capacity in the learning relationship. The division has engaged in transition planning discussions with pre-school partners and post-secondary institutions. Staff have been encouraged to build working relationships, networks and partnerships, as well as to read, research, dialogue, reflect and act on new findings. The most common style and approach to collaboration and communication has involved a positive and appreciative stance.

Chapter Seven

Summary of the Data – School Division X

School Division X is a growing school division located in the industrialized farmland of south central Manitoba. It has a student population of 4100 and is growing at a rate of approximately 300 students per year, as a result of immigration to the province. The two primary sources of immigration are from Central and South America, as well as Germany and Russia. The school division has one large high school and seven elementary schools. As well, the Public Schools Finance Board has recently announced that they would be building two new schools within the school division to handle the increasing student population, given the inability for existing schools to accommodate the student numbers. Due to the current overcrowding, many existing school buildings are characterized by add-on portable classrooms. Senior Administration of the school division have been vigilant about monitoring growth and searching for land to purchase for future school locations. In School Division X, I conducted interviews with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services (herein referred to as the Student Services Administrator) and the Assistant Superintendent of Program and Curriculum (herein referred to as the Assistant Superintendent).

Context

According to the Superintendent, three primary tools formed a comprehensive planning process in School Division X. First, he noted the importance of planning for projected enrollment growth given the recent wave of immigration.

“Having been in the division now for twenty- three years, I have seen an incredible change in what the demands are. When you are growing by over three hundred students a

year, it has huge implications for both human and material resources, as well as for programming. How do we chart a course to meet those needs that are changing so rapidly because of immigration and the changing nature of our community? I certainly think time is a critical component.” The Superintendent described the contingency plan for growth experienced in the division, indicating that trustees and senior administrators of the division were developing their own tracking mechanisms to determine where new building developments would be located and how best to maximize existing resources for the growing numbers of students.

The Superintendent elaborated on the planning process, next revealing the division’s five-year strategic plan. The discussion centered on the cyclical nature of the planning process in School Division X. He explained that the priority setting process followed the four-year window of elected representation by the Board of Trustees. “After every board election, we review the entire Strategic Plan, which includes vision statements, mission statement and belief statements, to determine whether we are on track. We had thirty-eight people from business, industry, city council, municipal council, local ministry, parents and students. It is a pretty good cross section of the community.” He noted that the large group established and reviewed objectives (outcomes), once each year during the electoral cycle. “We also use a pretty strong, what we call grassroots based system, so annually everybody in our organization will report to their supervisor and all of our schools and senior administration will bring presentations to the annual strategic planning session. The Assistant Superintendent elaborated that each principal would be given an amount of time to facilitate a presentation for his or her school. The Student Services Administrator recalled that the presentations would follow a business

model known as a S.W.O.T. Analysis: Identifying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and potential threats. Each administrative team would then create items for round table discussions and debate. When asked how the S.W.O.T. model was working as part of the planning process in School Division X, the Student Services Administrator responded that, “We struggled with it last year, but we certainly wanted the principals to look at the strengths, weaknesses and opportunities in their systems, and then consider the threats to actually accomplishing these things.”

The Assistant Superintendent recalled that, over the years, senior administration of Division X had encouraged principals to look collectively at critical issues that were common to all of them. He added that school administrators had come to recognize that a scattered approach would not work well if they presented individually with a multitude of issues. Information would be better if it were strategic and focused. The Student Services Administrator reported, for example, that she would gather data from a number of sources including, Resource Teachers, Guidance Counselors, members of the English as An Additional Language Committee, keeping in mind where they were seeing the greatest number of student needs and would bring forward parent concerns as well. The Superintendent summarized, “Everybody has a voice and then of course, the board has to filter through all of that information because the needs are always greater than the resources. We sift through all of that. We dream. We leave the information for about a week and only when we return to the process do we start saying, we can’t do everything.” The Student Services Administrator concurred. “That is one of the things we are finding here, that there are so many more things to do than we have personnel or time to do

because of the growth, and just the two new schools that we are building, that's just intense involvement over the next while."

The Superintendent summarized that the final product of the collaborative planning process was a published executive summary of the common voice on critical issues heard through the strategic planning process. He added that the published document became a guideline for senior administration to follow and for other stakeholders to refer to during the year, to determine if progress was being made. The Assistant Superintendent noted that the Strategic Plan also helped to identify the key people to move things forward in each of the outcome areas. He argued, "Without planning, I feel like I'm sort of tapping around in the dark wondering what it is that I'm supposed to focus on! The Strategic Plan helps me to decide that these are the things that I need to focus on." The mission statement and major objectives included in the Strategic Planning Summary document are listed in Table 8.

Table 8

School Division X - Priorities

The mission of School Division X is to operate great schools based on core community values and educational excellence

1. To recognize the diverse cultures represented by students and provide for effective integration.
2. To provide well-maintained and new facilities to accommodate enrolment increase and maximize student learning.
3. To hire and retain well-trained teachers and support personnel.
4. To develop and implement a plan to improve student retention.
5. To evaluate and prioritize programs and professional development to maximize student achievement. To develop and implement a divisional evidence-informed decision making model.

The Superintendent concluded that the final portion of the planning process in School Division X involved a five-year capital plan to accompany the established divisional outcomes. He noted, “This is information from local developers, from the city planning department, from the municipality, settlement services and it just gives you a good understanding of why this need is here. Bottom line is that it comes down to a growth rate of 8.3 per cent and we have twelve hundred kids in portables (classrooms). That’s it, we need more schools. This process has everybody understanding not only what the needs of their school may be, but also what the needs of the division are. It brings everyone to the table at the same time and there is great understanding and collaboration. Our three planning tools have really serviced us well!” The Student Services Administrator explained that this local division planning process seemed to be more helpful than the planning process required by Manitoba Education. “(Our process) It’s local. You are working at it. You are bringing it back to the table frequently. These books (referring to the local strategic plan) are never far. I am pulling them out all the time to check. Where does this fit?” She added that the Superintendent encouraged Senior Administration to stay focused on the local plan as any deviation might cause problems given the rapid growth and change that the division was experiencing. The Student Services Administrator elaborated, “I wish they (the local process and the Manitoba Education process) would fit more closely together. I have always felt that for the Manitoba Education Student Services Plan, you always try to have a certain number of goals even though you know that you are working on way more, or on much bigger goals, because there is an expectation that you have to have a few things in place (to share with

the province). I think this is a less valid process than our division planning process. Maybe for people who are new to the processes of Student Services or new to the role, this (the Manitoba Education process) probably does provide a guide. I have been in this for a while, so I am going to do this anyway whether there is a piece of paper or not. She concluded, however, “It does make you a little more accountable, probably.”

Capacity

Once the strategic planning process was complete and the document detailing objectives was published, the administration of School Division X were accountable to report on progress in the various areas. The Superintendent explained, “I have to fulfill the strategic plan with my senior administrators as well as with my school based administrators, and I have to report three times a year at a public board meeting.” The Assistant Superintendent described how he was held accountable for reporting to the board on the things that he had done. He noted an example on student assessment that had previously been identified as part of the strategic plan in School Division X. He continued, “I reported to the board saying here is what we have done. We have a new assessment policy that is being shared with teachers. We have developed a brochure for parents where parents are informed of this new assessment policy. What does it look like? What does it mean to me as a parent? What does it mean to my children? Then we have established committees that are looking at report cards and how we are going to communicate that learning. So I report and say this is where we are at, this is where we are going, and this is when we are hoping to get there.” The Superintendent shared a similar reporting process concerning division outcomes. He identified a document from the previous school year, outlining how the division colour-coded progress during the

year in each of the outcome areas. Outcomes that were completed in October were color coded in red. Once they were completed in February, they appeared in blue and when completed in May, they were printed in green. The Superintendent added, “That gives the Board and the public a very clear picture of how we’re doing.”

The Superintendent explained that, the trustees needed to have as much information as possible, as they were ambassadors of the division’s strategic plan. “There has to be ownership, and that means becoming very familiar with our priorities. Not just showing up at a meeting and saying, tell me. It is actually understanding, knowing and getting into the community. It’s a complex operation, but unless you can somehow show them, they won’t connect those dots. So that is our job.” The Superintendent reinforced the importance of training the Board of Trustees. He indicated that because of his age, he would likely remain in his role for much longer than the average superintendent would. For this reason, he believed that, under his leadership and direction, School Division X would be able to achieve a more longitudinal outlook or vision than most school divisions would in their planning process. The Superintendent elaborated that in School Division X, you would hear the language of servant leadership from Board members: “We are here to serve you. Tell us what you need. We are here to help you accomplish your goals and not overwhelm you.” He noted that he felt fortunate to work with the current Board of Trustees.

The Superintendent reinforced that during the entire planning process, the Board of Trustees and senior administration in the school division needed to ensure that there was adequate internal capacity to deal with local issues and maintain autonomy within each of the school catchment areas. The Student Services Administrator for example,

questioned how inclusion would work itself through each of the divisional outcomes.

“What motivates me is that I really believe in the whole philosophy of inclusion. A lot of my thinking when we go into the planning process is around how does everything tie into that?” The Student Services Administrator elaborated that parents were included in the formal strategic planning process in School Division X. She added that, division personnel regularly gathered input from community meetings, and transcribed and documented information shared by parents of students with special needs. The Student Services Administrator added that feedback for the purposes of divisional planning was also gained on a more informal basis at IEP meetings. She indicated that, once an area of concern began to arise more frequently, she would bring this information forward in a presentation at the division’s strategic planning sessions. She would also use this information to inform the practice of various professional learning groups in the school division, including the resource teachers and guidance counselors. The Student Services Administrator made a point of adding, “If an item doesn’t make it to the Strategic Plan, and it relates to Student Services, I might still be able to pick it up and run with it. Just because it is not necessarily a division priority, doesn’t mean that I can’t do that through Student Services.”

Climate

Collaboration and open communication had become part of the fabric in School Division X. The Superintendent shared that in addition to the planning presentations with school administrators at their annual retreat and the three public planning review sessions throughout the year, he periodically attended parent advisory council meetings to share planning information. He recalled, “I think the key here is that we try to have all partners

at the table, and the information that we share with the principals is the same information that we share with the trustees, and the same information that I use to present at a staff meeting, with a public meeting, at city council or advisory council. He noted that parents on the advisory council for school leadership also had opportunities to be part of school division planning through involvement in the hiring of new school administrators. The Superintendent continued to elaborate on collaboration in planning. “What I do is create presentations and I might not share certain slides because one stakeholder group may not be at the stage and ready to see it. What we try to do is share all the same information. Let’s all get on this together!” The Assistant Superintendent summarized that the process of having input from various stakeholder groups was working well for the planning process in School Division X. “The important part is that you get buy in after the fact. You don’t have to sell it (the Strategic Plan). So as opposed to us having to promote the division plan and say here is what you should believe is important, Actually, it is us coming forward and saying this is what you’ve indicated is important and here is how we are going to help you address those things that you’ve identified. They go yah okay, I don’t agree with the way that you’ve got them prioritized (outcomes), but you are right, those are the critical issues.” He added that school administrators were encouraged to share information consistently on division outcomes with their staff, and to consider both division outcomes and provincial priorities when creating their individual school plans.

The Student Services Administrator noted that sometimes there were heated discussions in the process of choosing priorities for divisional outcomes. She added, however, that with the collaborative approach that was adopted by School Division X, most recognized that it was not about getting what you need for your school or for a

particular interest group, but rather it was about optimal division functioning. She felt that the collective and collaborative thinking helped to resolve any potential conflict that might arise from the competing priorities. The Student Services Administrator recalled that in the most recent process, stakeholders were reminded that the budget was tight and that not a lot of items could be added. She indicated, "I think that being up front helps to eliminate conflict later on. Then you don't have people asking why they did all this work and now nothing is changing." She concluded that having a strategic planning process allowed stakeholders to feel that there was a fair system. Both the Superintendent and Student Services Administrator agreed that having a good facilitator and clear guidelines were critical to the success of a strategic plan. The Assistant Superintendent reinforced, "Everybody coming into it has to understand the ground rules and understand that this is not an opportunity to carry forward their own personal agenda." He recommended that the facilitator keep the discussion positive and solution focused around a common goal. The Assistant Superintendent added, "A lot of times when people become derailed, the trick of getting them back is finding the one thing that they can support." The Superintendent reinforced that people often confused consensus in decision making with being unanimous. He added, "You don't need to be unanimous on a decision, but folks will be asked, even if it wasn't your idea or you don't agree with it, will you support it?" (And) what will you need so that you can support it? The Superintendent continued, "(It's critical to have) a good facilitator, somebody who can remain neutral, can lead the group and stay focused on the task; Having someone who can help people understand and feel that there is enough trust in the room to be able to say the difficult things and having others, especially those in positional authority and controlling those budgets, truly listen,

reserve judgment and not be defensive!” The Assistant Superintendent suggested that in planning together, you could not be the type of person who had to capture the attention of others or share your own ideas, but rather you would simply have to be willing to sit and listen. The Assistant Superintendent suggested that in planning together, you could not be the type of person who had to capture the attention of others or share your own ideas, but rather you would simply have to be willing to sit and listen. He added the importance of being visionary and able to determine the impact of various decisions on the future. He echoed the importance of trust in the planning process. “You have to trust the process so that at the end of the day if your idea doesn’t reach into the priority list now, it means that even if it is important to you, you have to believe that it is not vitally important to the organization as a whole.”

The Senior Administration of School Division X published a yearly report to the community that detailed the progress made on division outcomes. The community report was traditionally placed in the local newspaper and a copy was sent home with students. In recent years, senior administration also posted the report on the school division’s website. The Superintendent added that the Board of Trustees and staff also received excellent press coverage on division happenings and the strategic plan, from two former high school students who reported on board meetings, as well as public meetings. The Superintendent reinforced that the purpose of information sharing was to gain feedback from stakeholders. “The information gets posted on our website within twenty-four hours after a board meeting; no secrets. We say, take a look. We want to know what you think. It has worked well for us.” The Superintendent noted that the division favoured transparency in the planning process with clear communication, respecting all those

involved. He reinforced that senior administrators were always asking the questions: “How will this improve learning? How will this help children? When that is there, very few people can dispute one’s intentions.” The Assistant Superintendent concluded that collaboration was the way of the future. He felt that for years, the public viewed education like a secret society where people sent their children to school and entrusted the school system. He believed that parents had done that without the knowledge of division priorities or educational outcomes. “I think that now we have entered a time and age whereby we have come to realize that we are all partners in education and that one partner can’t have all of the information and expect the other partner to have no information, and still be supportive. If we are a true partnership, educators need to communicate with parents. That is the triangle of support.”

Structure

The Superintendent of School Division X reminded colleagues the importance of working together to achieve the outcomes in the strategic plan. He candidly discussed that although he was considered the one employee of the board under the current Policy Governance structure, he felt that one person could not do the job alone. Hence, the Superintendent spent time working with Board members to move them toward the notion of distributed leadership. He shared, “That’s why you see trustees speaking in public meetings and not just the senior administration reporting at board meetings. The last two years, if you were to look at all the clips, you have senior administrators on the radio, you have got trustees doing reports. So the idea is that we want everybody to understand we are all in this together. One person can’t do it all.” He asserted that the challenge in the distributed structure were the three types of leadership associated with it. He explained

that leadership ranged from fairly rote responses to policy and procedures, to visioning for the future. A third more recent structure involved transformational leadership. The Superintendent explained, “It is one thing to have a destination, but how are we going to get there? That is where the Senior Administration, the leadership, have to provide the information so that we can make evidence informed decisions.” He added that if the evidence was there, the Board of Trustees were able to make an informed choice and feel confident in the decisions that they made. He noted that the Board of Trustees recently a consultant to conduct an internal audit of administrative staffing. The report that followed informed the Board of Trustees that the division was eight staff members short of the required need. During budget deliberations that year, the Board followed the recommendation of the consultant and they allocated funds to hire new staff. The Superintendent explained, “It’s all about making informed decisions, not just gut feelings. Yet he admitted at the same time that, “We are not as far down the path as we want to be. Right now, because of our rapid growth, we are doing lots of things on the capital side, but in terms of student learning, we want to do a better job on the educational leadership piece. We need to do more work on that, and we are taking some steps; but we are not where we want to be.”

The Student Services Administrator suggested that data was playing an increasing role in School Division X. She explained that, at the current time, administrators were collecting a lot of qualitative data. “It’s not always numerical. Sometimes it is a survey; sometimes it involves meeting comments. So if we go around the circle as we do at principals’ meetings (to gain feedback), we are really trying to look at what has worked. That kind of data drives our decision-making, even though it is measurable. It is

summative data, and I think it still gives us a pretty good idea (of how we're doing)." The Assistant Superintendent indicated that data was a foundation in the school division, and was able to lend validity to a multitude of critical issues. He added, "It gives us guidance in selecting the strategies that will hopefully give us a solution. Following up the data is a way of measuring whether our strategies are working or not." He argued that, in the past, educators have been adept at implementing programs, yet seldom following up to determine if the programs had any impact. The Assistant Superintendent agreed that, divisionally, administrators were trying to improve in the domain of evidence-based decision making by looking at available data, interpreting critical issues, identifying strategies and then evaluating their progress. Similarly, the Student Services Administrator noted that planning for categorical grants, such as the divisional grant for English As An Additional Language, involved requesting proposals from schools at the beginning of the year, and collecting data at the end of the period to determine if outcomes were met. She explained that, now, schools were providing more qualitative than quantitative responses as evidence of progress. The Student Services Administrator reinforced that despite the early stages of development in data collection, planning for all division initiatives helped to keep the focus and commitment of all involved. She reinforced, "Once it (an initiative) is committed to a plan, we are also committed to it. That is one thing that we know. The plan is not just on paper; We are always going back to it!"

Strategy

The Student Services Administrator noted that input for planning was always encouraged through the many professional learning groups in School Division X. She

described how she would initially draft the outcomes and strategies, share them with the groups, and then solicit regular input and feedback at specific points throughout the year. The Assistant Superintendent asserted that the Strategic Planning process could be described as an opportunity for everyone in the organization to have input and identify critical issues. The Assistant Superintendent believed that planning should come from staff and schools, and reflect what they believed to be most important. He notioned that the role of the senior administration was to assist them in identifying the priorities as opposed to selling or indoctrinating them with a plan that was created on their behalf. The Assistant Superintendent concluded that involving various stakeholders in the planning process allowed the groups to see the world from different perspectives. “How they see our world of education is very enlightening, because as insiders, we see the whole operation of education through a certain lens. Sometimes we have created a (planning) document, but lose sight of how that document is operationalized and impacts people’s lives. Sometimes when you are three steps removed from that, you create a beautiful document without recognizing the full impact that this is going to have on the common family that is just trying to do the best that they can!”

The Superintendent reminded his colleagues of the necessity to trust the strategic planning process, as that was how gains would be achieved in School Division X. He argued, “If they are under the impression that they have to create a crisis, and surely if there is a fire, a fire truck will come; We are saying no, it won’t. That is not how we do things here. Do your homework, present the needs and we will help you. We are here to do this together.” The Superintendent noted that the planning process had forced everyone to shift their thinking from a paradigm of, “In case of emergency break glass”,

to a more proactive focus. The Superintendent mentioned that he would periodically remind administrators that if an issue was presenting as urgent or emergent, then it should be reflected in their school plans. He added that if a number of schools were presenting with similar issues in their planning, this information would then serve to generate a division focus for budget purposes.

The Assistant Superintendent elaborated that the division typically allocated resources and energy into meeting the issues and objectives in the plan. He joked, “As opposed to (saying), yes we do use strategic planning. It is a very nice brochure, it is colorful, it is interesting to read, but when the time comes to put resources to it, they actually go in a different direction. That would give me a lot of concern if those two weren’t in alignment.” The Assistant Superintendent elaborated that the planning process allowed all stakeholders in the division the opportunity to focus on priorities, align resources and reach new understandings. He suggested that, through discussion or by reviewing data, a group might change what they originally believed or thought. “It’s not just merely an opportunity to share what they know, but also an opportunity to learn some new things.” He continued, “When you have a process where different parties are providing input and you are getting different perspectives, there is opportunity to give voice to what it is that you know, and hopefully align what you know with what you believe are the right things to do.” The Superintendent concluded that the mission statement of Division X was essentially to run schools of excellence, based on core community values. He asserted that community members were known to be modest and were awarded two new schools because of working from a base of integrity, prioritizing

the needs of students and working in a respectful partnership with the government through a strategic planning process.

A Summary of Planning Perspectives in School Division X

School Division X was a growing, rural school division with a mission to run schools of excellence, based on core community values. At the time of the interviews, participants disclosed that student populations were increasing at a rate of 300 students per year as a result of provincial immigration. The Board of Trustees and Senior Administration of School Division X had a highly collaborative approach to choosing divisional planning outcomes. They also had a five-year comprehensive strategic plan developed and involvement of staff, students, parents, and community partners was evident in the planning process. The Senior Administration of the school division valued the input of partners outside of education, to offer perspectives on how a plan would become operationalized. The division also favoured a distributed leadership structure in planning and reporting. Strategic planning was described as an opportunity for everyone in the organization to have input and identify issues on which to focus. The Division and School Administration were attempting to improve the use of data for planning and decision-making. School administrators were reminded of the importance of including urgent items in planning documents as this would establish systemic focus and help to align resources.

Chapter Eight

Summary of the Data – School Division Y

School Division Y is one of the smaller school divisions located in central Manitoba. The staff of the division serves 1340 students in six, rural communities. They also serve a number of first nation communities. In spite of the smaller student population, there is seven thousand square kilometers of rural ranch land within the boundaries of School Division Y. Given the large geographical distances within its boundaries, students often ride the school buses well over an hour, one way to school each day. The primary industries in the region are cattle and mixed farming, as well as local businesses that serve the communities and surrounding areas. There was a recent change in senior administration relating to positions of Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent. In School Division Y, interviews were conducted with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services (herein referred to as the Student Services Administrator) and a Principal of one of the largest schools in the division.

Context

The new Superintendent of School Division Y noted that, originally, there was a strategic plan in place until 2011. Within the plan there was a vision and mission statement outlined, along with core beliefs and values (See Table 9). It also consisted of a large amount of priorities (outcome statements). With the recent changes in senior administration, the Superintendent indicated that community partners were engaged in a consultative and collaborative process, to renew, focus and narrow the existing outcomes in the division, over the next eighteen months.

Table 9

School Division Y – Vision, Mission, Beliefs and Values

<p>School Division Y</p> <p>VISION:</p> <p>Inspiring all learners to be successful.</p> <p>MISSION STATEMENT:</p> <p>School Division Y is committed to the delivery of quality education to all learners through the use of innovative instruction and curricula. We strive for excellence with a caring, dedicated staff who continue to develop strategies to meet the challenges of an ever-changing society. We will attain these goals by way of consultation, collaboration and communication with partners in education.</p> <p>BELIEFS:</p> <p>We believe all learners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Learn differently → Want to learn → Can learn → Have a right to learn → Learn best in a safe, secure, and culturally appropriate environment <p>VALUES:</p> <p>We value decisions that are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Made in the best interests of students → Fiscally practical and responsible → Data-driven (planning, prioritized decisions based on learner’s needs) → Innovative and creative → Fair and responsible → Developed through compromise and consensus
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The Student Services Administrator declared, “They had a massive, long term plan for the past four or five years; it had twenty or thirty priorities on it.” She noted that when she and the Superintendent conducted school and community visits within the first few months of initiation in the school division, partners had no awareness of the divisional

outcomes. The Superintendent recalled, “I don’t even know if the board was using it to guide their decisions. So we went through a kind of shortened version of the process where we did focus groups with the kids in our schools. We interviewed staff, we looked at school plans and their priorities. We also had the opportunity to have a divisional Parent Advisory Council meeting where we got input from our communities.” She added that, although the Board of Trustees set their own priorities separate from the outcomes of the school division, the trustees valued the engagement of various partners and had been supporting the consultation process to set divisional outcomes. The Student Services Administrator explained that once they narrowed the divisional outcomes and focused, they created a set of post cards that illustrated the outcomes at the early, middle and senior years levels. An example of the Early Years’ Post Card can be found in Table 10.

Table 10

Divisional Postcards

**A Plan for Moving Forward: January 2009-June 2010 (revised January 2009)
Inspiring All Learners to be Successful**

Curriculum:

Develop a reasonable interpretation of effective early years programming.

Implement the writing continuum

Literacy

Numeracy

ICT

Instruction:

Deepen the understanding around an Inquiry approach to learning - K-8

Assessment:

Implement and refine “Strong Beginnings”

Implement assessment, grading and reporting practices that support student learning

Student Transition:

Address the issues of smooth transitions for students between schools – social, pedagogical, managerial

“We distributed those post cards to every teacher, to every Parent Advisory Council member; we carried the postcards in our bags and we gave them out. They just say, this is what we are working on, because we wanted to simplify it to a message that had a little bit of traction and that also had speed.” The Principal noted that he had the post cards in his office and would use them daily as a reference point with staff, students and the community. The Superintendent reinforced the importance of the school division outcomes in consolidating the work already happening in the school division. “We don’t see the division plan being an add-on to what the schools are already doing. It is working in a way where we all understand where we are going, what we are doing, why we are doing it, and how we are doing it.” The Principal, in fact, explained that not only was his school plan linked to divisional outcomes, but the process of establishing local school outcomes was similar as well. He summarized that there was a new sense of hope and a clear sense of purpose for the school division. “This has now filtered down through our Principals, Vice-Principals, resource staff and now the teachers, that there is a commonality and focus for how we want to make a difference for students in our division. That is definitely evident now and has not been so evident as of late. That is exciting.”

Capacity

The Superintendent emphasized the significance of planning in terms of personal and public accountability for student success. She added that good personnel and leadership were important to any planning process or improvement initiative. “The real key is having the right people, in the right places, doing the right kinds of things.” She recalled that in the past teachers and administrators had relied a lot on their instincts to

guide their work, rather than engaging in more reflective practice and conversation to shape their planning. The Superintendent explained, “School based leadership is really the key in all of this. If you don’t have school administrators facilitating those (reflective) conversations and keeping the light on the priorities, then we get busy doing things, and we get lost in the doing.” She believed that skills in facilitating those conversations were critical. The principal elaborated that it was important to focus on a structure or process to gather input, so that people’s opinions were heard and valued. He added, “We don’t always have to agree as to the direction, but if everyone has an equal voice, and if you have a structure for people to at least voice their opinion, then a common purpose can be reached for our school. So you need people who can lead that conversation, and it doesn’t have to come from the administrator alone. The Superintendent reinforced that it was not just talking about outcomes on planning days, but it was more about a consistent conversation, knowing where you were going, how you were getting there and realizing the skills that you would need to be able to facilitate that in a school.” She continued, “If the plan is not made to be living and breathing, then you get busy doing things because they sort of come along and they seem good at the time.” The Student Services Administrator believed, that it was important to teach people how to plan so that they could have a successful experience. She added, “So that they have experiences where planning actually makes a difference for them.” The Student Services Administrator added that people could start to trust the process, once planning was successful. They would do more of it, they would give it more time and they would let it inform their work.” The Superintendent explained, “As we plan, we model so that administrators engage in the same kinds of activities in their schools and develop an understanding of

the process. There is always that balance between gathering information, teaching, supporting and recognizing where people are at, and the skill sets they bring to the whole planning piece.”

The Student Services Administrator indicated that her thinking had been shaped by the work of Margaret Wheatley (2002, 2009), understanding that planning was not linear, but was highly influenced by all of the people who regularly approached a plan with their attitude and stance. She joked, “It may look orderly on paper, but in fact the implementation is quite disorderly.” To illustrate this point, the Student Services Administrator recalled a recent trip with a divisional group to visit positive examples of alternative high schools in Chicago. Upon her return, she noted the importance of all partners in visioning what alternative education should look like. She explained that both she and the Superintendent planned to assist in facilitating community consultations whereby two schools would face the challenge of redefining themselves to look significantly different for all students, rather than establishing separate programming for students requiring alternative education options. The Student Services Administrator added, “We are going to have town halls where we expect the issue to be hot and loud and debated.” She declared that Alternative Education Programs have often become dumping groups when staff did not take ownership for the structures, and hence for the students. By planning together and providing opportunities for input from various partners, she was attempting to avoid that potential scenario. “That is what you do, you make some compelling reasons around what you are going to do and then you raise their sense of consciousness around it. You have to have reasons for values to shift. Reasons that say it isn’t okay (to continue to do more of the same).” The Student Services

Administrator summarized that, as leaders we need to communicate the deeper sense of why actions are worth doing and that this meant discussion around moral purpose. The Student Services Administrator cautioned, however, that at the provincial level, she did not believe that the model of school and school division planning was creating a shift in thinking around the larger notion of moral purpose or school improvement. She elaborated, “Significant improvement, not just tinkering around school improvement;” adding a further explanation, “I was at the initial stages when the province said this is what we are going to do. When you look at that piece of work and you had a great deal of influence on it, you see what is right about it, but you also see all the things that are wrong. For the province (Manitoba Education), one of the things that would help significantly is a shift from an accountability stance to a real inquiry, improvement stance. I don’t think we are there yet.”

Climate

The Superintendent noted that in School Division Y the aspect of the planning process that worked extremely well involved going to every school and interviewing teachers as well as conducting focus groups with the students on the topic of what they envisioned to be quality education at all levels. In addition to creating post cards highlighting the division’s outcomes, Senior Administrators facilitated the creation of three position papers to detail the ideal nature of early, middle and senior years classrooms. The Superintendent noted, “We are calling it our North Star. Schools may develop plans and priorities, but we are all working towards the same end in learning.” She added that parents and teachers were the first partner groups to be engaged in the planning process around the position papers, with a next step to involve students. She

notioned that this allowed everyone to feel valued with the opportunity to have input or voice. The Principal concurred that there had been a change in morale once that staff felt that someone was listening. He believed that there was a sense that the division could finally begin moving forward, as opposed to always seeing students fall through the cracks. There was a sense of purpose again. The Student Services Administrator explained that, in the first few months of her tenure, both she and the Superintendent spent a fair amount of time just visioning what it was that all partners believed, collectively and collaboratively. The Superintendent added, “I think they got the impression that we weren’t going to assume things were happening, and that we were going to ask questions around some of those things. I think when they saw the postcards that were really reflective of what they told us, it was all about building commitment. Every time we did something, we gave it back and said, is this representing our conversations? Does it represent where you stand? Give us feedback. Test this out in your own school environment. Is it working? Does this resonate where you are going?” She added that, by defining what early, middle and high school classrooms should look like, partners in Division Y had a solid basis of understanding about quality education. As a result, this portion of the planning process gave them the opportunity to reflect on where they were at in achieving the North Star. The Superintendent believed that even though the goals and priorities were different in each school and with various aspects of the diverse student population, staff were all working toward the same end. This was seen as a positive result to Senior Administration in a school division where the entire Student Services component was historically non-inclusive and seen as a separate entity. The Superintendent added, “It was really interesting to have the parent piece and without

sharing out what the teachers had developed, we asked them to define their ideal classrooms and what they would look like at each level, and the parallels were unbelievable. What the parents and the teachers defined was very close.”

The planning process in School Division Y was described by the Superintendent as consultative and collaborative in nature. Otherwise, she suggested that it would have been impossible to conduct the number of focus groups that the senior administrators had established with staff, parents, community members and with the Board of Trustees. The Student Services Administrator observed that, in the past, involvement with parents and community members had been quite limited. The Principal confirmed that, if parents had been engaged in the planning process, it was at the school level and on an individual student basis. The Principal added that staff had also been involved more so in school processes such as class reviews, or as part of individual education planning teams. The planning process in the division had now undergone a shift, and partner groups were providing input into the development of postcards and position papers for the school division. The Superintendent explained that through this process, it was important for staff to feel open minded and honest in their approaches to planning. She reinforced, “I really like to put issues on the table as they present themselves. I don’t like to couch them in niceties, but I prefer to deal with things as they arise rather than ignoring that they exist.” The Superintendent noted that if the planning process was truly collaborative and if people felt a commitment to the direction of the school or the school division, then she believed there would be less chance of having conflict arise. She suggested that when there was tension in planning, it was often helpful to consult the data, or to engage partners in doing some research on a particular topic. With this approach, the group could

adopt a learning stance that would enable and empower them to work through most dilemmas. The principal agreed that setting the stage with tone and tact would be critical in order for differences of opinion to lead to proactive discussions rather than to arguments. He explained, “If you are up front on how people can be heard and not overly criticized, then you can often move beyond a stall or tense situation. That has to be part of the forward planning so that we can make effective change in the division and that will result in effective change for students.” The Student Services Administrator cautioned that neither the loudest nor the most educated voice in the group would necessarily be the most enlightened in terms of influencing the direction of education. At the time of the interview, the Student Services Administrator was strongly advocating that student activism and voice play more of a role in planning for educational change. Referring to the work of William Schubert, a curriculum researcher that she and the Superintendent had recently worked with in Chicago, the Student Services Administrator summarized “When we’re planning, it all comes down to what is worth doing. We had better be clear on what is worth doing and why.” The Principal agreed that it was not just about having more money or more staff, rather it was about considering options and thinking creatively within the means of the operation. He added, “We need data to compare if we are successful and if we are actually meeting our goals.”

Structure

The Superintendent of School Division Y indicated that data collection was the critical element in evidence-based decision-making. Both the Superintendent and Student Services Administrator had been collecting qualitative data from the focus group planning sessions with various partners, and discussion had recently begun on the types

of data that schools should be collecting. The goal of gathering a consistent set of data surrounded the recent development of an equity based staffing model. The Superintendent explained, “We believe that this model is more equitable in the sense that it provides the resources where the needs are in terms of students.” She added that schools were no longer funded, supported or resourced at the same level, and she now felt a lot of pressure to ensure that resources were making a positive difference for kids. In one school in the division for example, a literacy teacher was added to the staffing component due to preliminary data showing low literacy levels in grades five through twelve. The Student Services Administrator, however, alluded to the fact that there was not a great amount of data in existence across the school division to create the foundation for effective decision-making. She rationalized that the senior administrators had been far more entrenched in the visioning process up to this point, and so the lack of data had been identified as a gap. The Superintendent noted, “We are in a painful part of the process. There is a void right now and we believe that is in the data piece.” The Student Services Administrator explained, “We already gave folks the heads up and we’ve said, now we have got to collect evidence, and it is going to impact how we do things. It makes a difference!” The Superintendent was unsure as to whether data would eventually drive decision making in the school division, but did add that she believed it would serve to inform their planning process. “There is very clear direction in our division right now. I would not have been confident to say that when we arrived. Everyone (now) has a sense of where we are going.”

The Student Services Administrator shared that she and the Superintendent had adopted the mantra that, “There are no real answers.” She indicated that rather than being

frustrated with the lack of solid data in School Division Y, they made a decision to develop an action research stance. The Student Services Administrator explained that once they delineated divisional outcomes in the strategic plan, both she and the Superintendent, along with various partner groups, would choose their approaches or strategies. They would determine the types of data they needed to collect, keeping the process simple and manageable, and used the data to provide evidence of whether their chosen strategies had been successful. The Student Services Administrator explained, “I think that we need to be thoughtful right from the beginning about the things that we are going to be looking for, and how are we going to collect the information. We also have to be flexible enough, that if other things are surfacing, (we need) to pay attention to that.”

Evidence-based decisions began to occur in various forms under the tenure of the new divisional administration. School team members have been asked to look at the divisional vision in the position papers that had been created, and to gauge their progress by comparison. The Student Services Administrator reminded me that the position papers were essentially pictures for classrooms. “Whether we are talking about student behaviour, engagement or assessment, these papers are an amalgam of those issues because we know that those things all work in tandem with each other. She elaborated that schools were asked to consider the divisional position papers as they were writing their school plans to determine if their plans were in alignment with the divisional vision for student learning. The Student Services Administrator cautioned, however, “You can put all kinds of sophistication to this thing or not. I am saying to them, let us not over-think this! Let’s just think whether we are seeing that (indicator) yet or not, and whether what we are seeing is reliable.”

Strategy

The focus for the year, according to the Principal, was to develop solid baseline data on student performance so that the staff in his school could use that information to enhance instruction and improve student learning. He mentioned that the school staff were planning to monitor information on the number of credits obtained by students and were going to track attendance more carefully than in previous years. The Principal added that the staff were also hoping to obtain information on how students felt about school. “We need data to compare if we are actually meeting our goals.” He suggested that, with the new baseline data, staff would be able to reflect on whether they were making a positive difference for students. “We could load up the strategy piece and never really understand whether we were making a difference. So what would that look like? What are those indicators, and how do we collect evidence?” The Superintendent explained that by defining the ideal classroom and doing that collaboratively, the process would inform administrators and staff of the types of outcomes to establish as well as possible indicators by which to gauge success.

The school that the Principal was describing was a central point of a very large geographic area, with students attending from a number of First Nation, and small, rural communities. When the students arrived at the school, the Principal recalled that many of them had report cards that were not, in his opinion, accurate measures of their ability. The challenge he described, was to find some way of quickly assessing the diverse student population so that teachers would have an authentic account of the students’ abilities and could tailor instruction accordingly. The Principal described how many students in his school were either not working to their potential, or were dropping out of high school

prior to graduation. The Student Services Administrator argued, “When forty per cent of our kids are dropping out of grade nine, I want our teachers to say, that is awful. How can we change?”

The Principal emphasized proactively, “We need to find a new carrot.” He was referring specifically to the effort to discover what motivates students about learning, and engages them to stay in school. The Principal would eventually share this data to assist in the division’s quest for effective models of alternative learning. As well, his school was undergoing a community consultation process, and information gained through the process would contribute to the divisional vision for improved student learning. The Principal explained, “That is an example of taking what you know and making it concrete so that we can address the needs. That goes back to having the right kind of data to drive decision making, and that is how we make that positive difference for the students who are walking through our doors.” The Student Services Administrator reflected that the criticism of any system would be the inability to act, or the huge gap between the knowledge and the action. She often questioned whether she as part of the Senior Administration of School Division Y would be able to move the educational partners to feel passionate about the vision, and compelled, as a result, to do something about it. The Student Services Administrator observed that people were struggling just to make sense of what the Senior Administration of School Division Y was attempting to do. She concluded, “People only change if they understand the value and purpose of why they ought to do something.”

A Summary of Planning Perspectives in School Division Y

School Division Y was a rural School Division with a smaller, diverse student population, in a very large geographic area. Senior Administrators, who were new to the division, were recently engaged in community consultations to assist in updating and improving the division's strategic plan. They capitalized on communication with parents and on community involvement. Part of the consultation process involved the development of post cards and position papers as reference points in planning and communication back to planning partners. School staffs were being asked to refer to the division position papers and post cards when planning, and gauge their progress in comparison. Senior Administrators place emphasis on good personnel and leadership as critical to facilitating conversations involving planning processes or improvement initiatives. Planning participants valued the need to communicate a deeper sense of purpose in planning for school improvement. Recent professional development visits by staff and their connections with the research were helpful to inform the planning process on the re-design of schools. Data collection by school personnel was in its early stages with baseline information being collected. Administration and staff of School Division Y were working toward gathering a consistent set of data to align resources and staffing, as well as to inform planning.

Chapter Nine

Summary of the Data – School Division Z

School Division Z is a moderately sized school division located in the City of Winnipeg. It has a student population of 12,500 located within 33 schools. While some areas of the school division are experiencing rapid growth, there are pockets of the division where enrollment is declining. As a result, no new schools are being constructed, but rather students are being placed in existing schools where space allows. The staff of School Division Z operates a highly successful International Student Program, Advanced Placement Programs at its four high schools, a vocational high school for both adolescent and adult students, and nationally recognized, quality daily physical education programs. The school division administration and staff also supports a highly inclusive continuum of services for students with special needs. Notably, School Division Z is the only organization in the study that was involved in the series of Manitoba school division amalgamations that occurred in Manitoba in 2001. Hence, all of the policies, procedures and planning practices that were discussed are new to the division since that time. In School Division Z, interviews were conducted with the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent of Student Services (herein referred to as the Student Services Administrator) and with the Director of Clinical Services.

Context

The planning process in School Division Z was focused on improvement, The Superintendent recounted, “I think that the planning process is designed so that we can tap into the strengths and gifts of individual people. In helping them grow, we can grow the organization and hopefully also affect student achievement.” He elaborated that, in

School Division Z, the planning process had multiple levels. Overall, the Board of Trustees developed a vision statement that became known as their Divisional Purpose Statement. The Superintendent indicated that this document the trustees described the division's purpose of supporting student learning, in five key points. The Student Services administrator elaborated, "When we are doing this right, the Board chooses what we want them to choose; Not because we told them, but because we have brought them those needs." Beyond the vision, the Trustees also spent time reflecting on their leadership specifically, and chose six strategic directions (outcomes) for the division from 2008-2011. The Superintendent noted that of the six directions, two of them were education related. The other four were pertaining to the non-educational operations of the organization. The three year time period reflected the planning cycle set by Manitoba Education. Table 11 details the Divisional Purpose Statement, as well as the two strategic educational directions known in School Division Z as the Action Plan. The Superintendent indicated that the Action Plan would change over time, but noted that, in its current iteration, it was a list of major initiatives in the Division. He explained that the Divisional Purpose Statement and Action Plan were designed to be general enough that school or departmental initiatives could fit within any one statement or outcome quite easily. He then concentrated on the lists of departmental areas, including Educational Programs, Student Services and operational areas such as Human Resources, Divisional Support Services, Technology and Finance. Each of the departments had individually documented their initiatives and related outcomes. For the purposes of this study, however, the information derived from the interview process focused on the Action Plan for Student Services.

Table 11

School Division Z – Purpose and Outcomes

<u>School Division Z – Divisional Purpose Statement</u>		
<p>➤ To support student learning by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhancing the success of all students through the identification of relevant learning targets, differentiated instruction and valid assessment practices. ▪ Emphasizing partnership and collaboration among the schools, families, Division and community. ▪ Strengthening professional learning through reflection, research, collaboration and implementation of practices that foster student learning. ▪ Building and maintaining safe and caring communities that promote a positive and respectful learning environment. ▪ Preparing and supporting students as active, healthy, and responsible citizens respectful of each other’s rights, in diverse and democratic society. 		
<u>School Division Z Action Plan 2008-09 to 2010-2011</u>		
Ref	Initiative	Desired Outcome
M1.0	Student Achievement	Monitor and consistently utilize external and internal data to demonstrate student achievement.
M2.0	Literacy	Use a consistent assessment tool across early grades to measure reading and writing to help ensure all students are reading at grade level.

The Action Plan for Student Services, featured in Table 12, consisted of initiatives and outcomes in the areas of Inclusion, Teaming and Planning for Student Behaviour, Leadership Development, and Expansion of Divisional Supports. The Student Services Administrator explained that the departmental planning process in Student Services was transparent, responsive and proactive. She added, “When decisions are made, people know how that decision will be made (most of the time).”

Table 12

The Student Services Action Plan

Ref	Initiative	Desired Outcome
A 2.1	Supporting the Inclusion of Students with Special Needs	This is the second year of a three-year plan to develop core competencies for school-based student services teams to enable them to offer appropriate educational programming for students with special needs. Working groups consisting of Resource Teachers, Principals and SS Consultants are researching , and developing three specific competencies. By June 2009, Resource Teachers will attend workshops of three of the Core Competencies: EAL Reception Protocol; Adaptations planning for students with special needs; and Adaptive skills for students with disabilities
A 2.2	Role of the EA/Teaming with the Classroom Teacher	This is the second year of a two-year plan to review the role of the educational assistant and effective teaming with the teacher. By June 30 th 2009, Student Services will have reviewed currently literature and promising practices, consulted with Resource Teachers, PTAC members and other Winnipeg school divisions. A brief report will be provided with next steps.
A 2.3	Planning for Appropriate Student Behaviour	This is the third year in a three-year plan to support schools in responding to violent or threatening behaviours. By the end of the school year, all Administrators, Teachers in Charge and Counselors will have participated in the training and will be able to use the collaborative threat assessment process to respond to student threats.
A 2.4	Initiation of a Leadership Development Plan for Resource Teachers	The focus for this year will be to explore the issues surrounding the Resource Teacher Role by consulting with School Administrators. The outcome will be to establish a plan of action to develop leadership and consistent practice in the area of school-based Resource support
A 2.5	Review of Supports for Students with Multiple & Complex Needs in the Middle and Senior Years	Accessibility to divisional supports for students with multiple and complex special needs will be reviewed. Recommendations will be developed by June 30 th , 2009.

We are responsive to what we are seeing, ground up, and although things come up spontaneously, our PD is generally planned for next year. That is because we have a system of needs assessment that is integral to what we have been doing.” The Director of Clinical Services suggested that planning in Student Services was cyclical in nature. She notioned, “I think the whole idea of having some consistency in an over-arching process that starts at the classroom level, connects to school planning and then links to the division, really unifies the system. I don’t think it needs to be top down driven, but it is a process where information, thinking and planning goes both ways.” She notioned that having a broad base for dialogue was important to gain perspective in the planning process. In view of that, she mentioned that senior administrators and consultants in School Division Z had the opportunity to meet and dialogue with Manitoba Education.

The Director of Clinical Services believed that it might have been more helpful if the discussion was held in the broader context of departmental visits. She indicated for example, “To get more exchange in communication if some school division had extended the planning or the thinking. A good next step for us would be to make the observation, the connection about what is being done differently or where other divisions have gone; just to give us a little more feedback from the department’s perspective on what they thought was important to consider.” The Student Services Administrator felt that there was wonderful potential for the meetings to be useful, once a reciprocal relationship between Manitoba Education and the School Divisions was developed.

The Superintendent discussed that parents could be formally involved in the planning process at the division level through the structure called the Council of Presidents. He indicated that this group consisted of the presidents of the local parent

councils at each of the schools. The Superintendent recalled that, at the current time, the division was inviting the President and one other member of the local parent council to become members of the Presidents Council. He noted that, over a period of years, the particular structure was working less and less well. He explained that it seemed to be difficult to get thirty-three individuals (one from each school) and, “to obtain two representatives from each school was nearly impossible.” The Superintendent observed, however, that parents still had the option to provide input into the planning process at the local level. He elaborated, “To be realistic, there are various levels of parent involvement and for some it is incredibly well done and there is great participation at the local level. The principal, who is leading the process of school planning, brings a plan or develops a plan that includes input from the parents. I know that it goes from that, as what I would call the very positive, maybe great end of the continuum. The other end of the continuum is that they might be asked a question or might not be included at all. I am pretty sure that we have the whole gamut in thirty-three schools, to be realistic.”

The Student Services Administrator shared that there was a divisional committee for parents of students with special needs. Its purpose was to assist in developing the relationship with this group of parents in order to gain a sense of understanding of their struggles within the system. The Student Services Administrator added that she did not generally see the parents of students with special needs as a separate group, but countered that they did have an additional layer of planning that they needed to address, so she was particular to support them in that regard. As for involving community members in school division planning, the Superintendent conceded that much of the activity occurred as the division was fulfilling its legal obligation to have public discussion on the budget. Even

in that forum, he suggested, the turnout of members of the public seemed dismal at best. The Superintendent added that the board was now attempting to organize community outreach luncheons, twice each year, to get service outreach organizations, business people and other influential citizens in a room to discuss the value of public education. Unfortunately, he shared that, while this sounded very good, he believed that the process was connected more to getting the political vote than with the goal of increasing student achievement. He was basing his opinion on information gained recently at a workshop attended by three Senior Administrators and three members of the Board of Trustees in Division Z. The facilitator of the workshop, Mary Delagardelle, conducted a seven-year study on the positive effects that school boards can have on student achievement. The results of that study indicated that efforts to do community outreach and to get community members involved in planning and process, although productive for the board, were not the most effective means of improving student achievement. The best strategy he indicated, “involved supporting the quality of teaching and instruction in the classroom.” While the Superintendent acknowledged the research, he added that the board would need to choose what they were going to do in the future. He would try to influence them, but that, ultimately, they would make their choices. By selecting assessment and literacy as their three-year action plan, he felt that the board demonstrated leadership in outwardly stating the value and importance that they placed on these two educational domains.

Capacity

In order to increase capacity to meet divisional outcomes, Senior Administration in School Division Z implemented a collaborative planning structure and process known

as Family of Schools Sessions. Prior to this initiative, the Director of Clinical Services noted that there “really wasn’t much dialogue between schools.” After amalgamation of the school division in 2001, the Director of Clinical Services noted that schools seemed to draw inwards in an attempt to stabilize them. At that time, she mentioned that much of the connecting and dialogue between schools was minimal or had shut down entirely. The Director of Clinical Services indicated that it was critical to be flexible and open in planning for the Family of Schools Process. She emphasized the importance of “wanting things to move forward to keep pace with change instead of digging in and saying, this is the way we have always done it and so we should continue.” She summarized, “I always keep in mind as I think the team does, the whole change process, the idea of the change cycle, the (implementation) dip and that it (change) is at least a five year process.”

The Student Services Administrator explained that, as a starting point, school staff would generally begin planning at the grassroots level in their schools. Administration of the division had created a template known as the Classroom Profile that initially served as the conversation tool for the staff in an individual school. They had also allocated funding through the budget process in order to facilitate classroom release time for each teacher in a school to meet with the student services team, and map out their classroom needs. Once completed, the classroom profiles were compiled to create a picture of school needs in each building in the division. The Student Services Administrator added, “We told them that we are giving you this (template). We are going to meet with you at the end of the year, and we are going to ask you to show us your school profile.” She noted that it took a couple of years to get the school profile to happen with no (external) accountability, just the invitation to share. The Student Services Administrator rationalized that the

information from the school profiles eventually became the needs assessment that informed professional development planning for the school division. She added, “It aligns your needs, your school planning and your request for capital.”

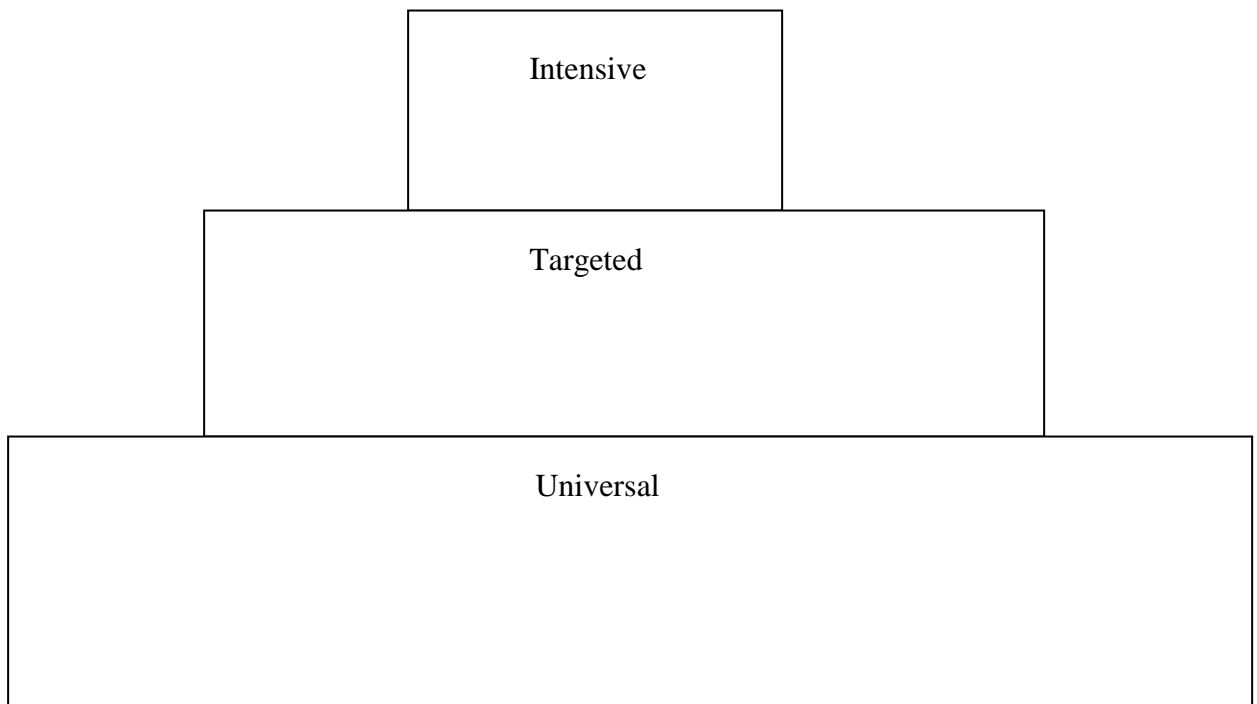
The Student Services Administrator elaborated that once the school profile was in place, the needs in each school were then plotted on a template known as the *Pyramid of Interventions*. An example of this template can be found in Figure 2.

Figure 2

School Division Z – Appropriate Educational Programming - Pyramid of Interventions

Planning proactive and reactive strategies for students allows schools to offer appropriate educational programming for all students. This includes school-wide systems of support for the Universal population (the majority of our students); classroom and small group strategies for Targeted students who continue to experience challenges; and Intensive interventions for a small number of students who have multiple and intense needs. Please describe the continuum of programming you have implemented in your school.

School: _____ Date: _____



The Student Services Administrator recalled, “We started saying, let’s begin by sharing your Pyramid of Interventions with the other schools. We got them (the schools) to share, and because they shared, then more people were interested. So we said let’s have the schools sit down at a Family of Schools Session. We created table groups (families of schools) that sat together to share their information.” The Director of Clinical Services explained that the Family of Schools Process involved vertical (grade to grade) as well as horizontal (school to school) sharing. The Student Services administrator noted that staff from different departments in schools were mimicking others’ good ideas and sharing at multiple levels. She related that the Family of Schools Sessions, in time, evolved to a point where staff from several schools were focusing on specific research that they could conduct and report to staff in partner schools. The Student Services Administrator added, “They are going to choose what they think are the key areas that would be most helpful and they are going to research those areas and then come back together again. Staff recognize that some of the things they’re doing are not adequate to meet the needs of students in their schools, and they are actively searching for better ways to serve them.”

The Director of Clinical Services elaborated that one of the areas of need involved a significant attendance issue. Staff and administration from the early years schools in one of the school families began to focus on attendance. Soon, the staff and administration from the middle and senior years schools in that same family followed, as well. The Director of Clinical Services added, “Schools have looked at some processes around supporting kids and how they would do that, but it is broadening beyond the individual schools now. We are starting to get administrators meeting with each other on their own, and they are starting to talk about common issues. That is just a beginning, and it is

certainly a hope. It is starting to happen.” Ultimately, the Family of Schools Process was a very supportive arrangement. The Student Services administrator added that the information from the Family of Schools Process would eventually be shared with the Board of Trustees and also with the Senior Administrative Team of School Division Z.

Climate

The Superintendent referred to the climate in School Division Z as being bottom up. He indicated, “What we are finding, really by trial and error, is what works. We know because we have tried a couple of ad hoc initiatives from the top down, and this does not work. You get a lot of push back. (We are) giving people the autonomy and general goals that they can fit what they are specifically doing into that, and also supplying them with a lot of freedom to exercise their own leadership. That is something that we want to do. We want to build this collaborative culture that we espouse!” The Director of Clinical Services reinforced that the current planning initiatives including the Family of Schools process and the Pyramid of Interventions template were designed to engage the grassroots (schools and school staff) in dialogue and discussion. She elaborated, “I just think the whole process where you have the school teams sitting down first together at the classroom level, with the classroom teacher, and with the support teams (is critical). I think it is the dialogue, review of information, summarizing it and pulling it together that strengthens the process. Then the conversation with other schools really solidifies the process for engaging everyone in thinking about needs and strengths, and what an action plan will look like. To me that conversation, dialogue, and identifying key factors together is just critical; not being a top down piece but interactive across all staff.” The Director of Clinical Services observed that the school staff that were the furthest ahead

were those in schools that got involved earlier in the process of looking at structure such as Positive Behaviour Support (Horner et al., 1990) or Creating Safe and Caring Learning Communities (formerly known as Together We Light the Way) (Dean et al. 2004).

The Student Services Administrator shared that the Senior Administration of the division was aware that “growth comes from teachers being committed (to planning outcomes), and that teachers being committed comes from being nurtured.” She continued, “So if I am a principal starting in a school that has a lot of transition, I am going to begin with nurturing. I will be building (relationships) and setting the climate for teacher learning. I do think outcomes are excellent when you are ready for them.” She agreed that a climate of collaboration and positive relationships were foundational for future planning initiatives in School Division Z. “It is collaborative so that no one person feels the weight of that decision. They all work together and it gives strength to the group.” The Superintendent indicated that, when planning he would look for staff to connect to their real passions, know who they are, share their gifts and really contribute. He did not want staff to have their guard up. He added, “That means to be trustful and trustworthy, and to take their leadership responsibilities seriously.” The Superintendent shared that Senior Administration in the school division had advocated for staff to search out opportunities, instead of focusing on problems as they arose. Once in conflict, however, the Superintendent suggested the idea of working with individuals to describe or explain the conflict. From each position, he would then attempt to find a common ground. The Student Services Administrator supported the idea of stepping back and reflecting on any conflict at hand, providing more data and then restating the purpose. She mentioned that, when additional information and understanding could be provided,

individuals were often able to move beyond the conflict. The Director of Clinical Services indicated that it was also helpful to know which decisions people would have impact or direct involvement with, and which decisions would be made by school administrators or senior administration in the school division. The Student Services Administrator noted that she would pay particular attention to a conflict in the school division when it would stop a process from moving forward. She reinforced that in School Division Z parents had typically come out if there was a conflict or if there was a need to advocate. However, she indicated that now there seemed to be no critical needs. She felt that parents of students with special needs felt a certain level of satisfaction and trust. The Student Services Administrator added that many challenges involving individual student planning were being handled at the school level where she believed they would be best addressed.

The Superintendent acknowledged that he was advising the Board of Trustees to remove themselves from day to day operations (and conflicts) in the school division. “We have been working on roles, and the board members are quick to say that they don’t want to be micromanaging. We are the school board and we can have an effect on student achievement. What we need to do is to find out, how we can do that in the best possible way.” The Superintendent recalled that when a detail would come up to the Board level that was clearly a school decision, Senior Administration would take the time to ask the question: “Trustees, do you really want to get involved in a decision at the school’s level?” He noted that each time, they would back away. In terms of planning and priority setting, the Superintendent explained that the work of the Board of Trustees was posted on the division’s website, in the form of minutes of their public meetings. The Purpose

Statement and Action Plan of the Board, and subsequently of the division, could also be found on the website. The Superintendent indicated that the website had been recently updated and enhanced, and gave the trustees and Senior Administration of the division an opportunity to highlight plans, initiatives and other school division priorities that the media would otherwise neglect. He added, “Media attitudes rub off on people. So what are the media always looking for and paying attention to? It is always the negative things. You have a bus accident, you have an assault, you have a pandemic happening. It is a huge, fear mongering, negatively-focused kind of industry.” On the other hand, he noted that many of the positive aspects of education that could be conveyed to the staff, students and the community were on the website, and the climate for communication and collaboration in School Division Z was clearly enhanced.

Structure

Once school staff had the opportunity to collaborate and communicate on their needs at the school level, information summarized in school profiles, and on the Pyramid of Interventions template served to inform outcomes for the school plans. School administrators also used this information to determine what they needed to do to support the quadrants of knowledge, skills, human resources, materials and facilities, based on the picture that they had developed. Again, the Trustee’s Purpose Statement and Action Plan were broad enough that each school’s planning outcomes could be aligned within the more general goals of the division. The Student Services Administrator shared that, as part of the planning process, members of the Senior Administrative Team in Division Z were designated to join certain families of schools. Hence, she believed that the dialogue occurring in the school groupings was intrinsically linked, and reflected back from the

grassroots to the senior administrative level of the division. She elaborated, “All we did was create a structure, a feedback loop. The collegiality in the Senior Administrative Team is incredible. The Family of Schools arrangement is very supportive.”

The Student Services Administrator advocated that school goals be kept broad, and then gradually move toward more specific targets. She explained, “While one school is finding out about the literacy level in grade five, that it is all they would do that year. The next year they might say, let’s get more specific. I do see a value in setting specific targets, but only when you are ready for that.” The Superintendent explained, “When it comes to indicators, I am going to say we are at the beginning stages. Last year, we spent almost the whole year saying, we think we are a good school division. We think our kids are doing well. How do we know that? What do we mean? So at our last admin conference, we spent time on (determining) what can we learn from the data, what data do we have, and how can we use the stuff that we already have.” The Superintendent explained that, in terms of the literacy initiatives, members of the senior administrative team and school administrators began wondering. “How are we going to know how they (students) are doing along the way, and how can we speak the same language?” He referred to a large literacy initiative in the division as an example of “a way to have the same language, talking about how a child is doing in reading, what level they are at and what level we expect them to be at.” He added, “We will see where we will go with that, but I want to affirm that schools have chosen the Fountas and Pinnell (method of leveling text). The division is behind it. It is a great tool for knowing where kids are at, being able to articulate, professional to professional, and giving general reports to the Board who are interested in terms of how our kids are doing.” The Superintendent explained that the data

from the literacy initiative provided another opportunity for a feedback loop to senior administration. The Superintendent affirmed that members of the Board of Trustees were now seeing literacy as an important part of the planning process across the division. He added that they even wanted to set literacy outcomes in a SMART format, within the Divisional Action Plan. Nonetheless, the Superintendent cautioned Board Members on becoming too specific in their planning practices and restricting the latitude of planning required to respond to the level of student diversity in the schools.

Strategy

The Director of Clinical Services believed that school administrators and staff were beginning to understand data and use it more effectively to focus on their priorities and outcomes for development. The Director of Clinical Services shared, “We have done a lot of work on what data indicates and what it means. I think that the Family of Schools Process has taken that deeper so that schools are really beginning to think about the number of kids in care, families who are second language learners, families in second stage housing and students with attendance and learning issues. The Student Services Administrator noted as well, that Families of Schools spent time discussing at-risk students, students with challenging behaviours in schools, and safe schools initiatives such as risk and threat assessments. The Director of Clinical Services concluded, “School staff are putting the whole picture together in a much more comprehensive way.” She added that division staff had also been working with schools to determine what data they had, whether there were gaps or missing pieces, and how to access or collect information that was required. The Superintendent cautioned that although divisional staff in general were initially engaged with data at the various levels, he was not certain that this

observation was consistent with the high school staff of Division Z. He explained for example, the process of providing provincial exam results to the senior years council. “They get the divisional results which are up on the screen, and they have their own results in hand. They are looking, and the instruction goes out. Please take these results and reflect on them with your staff and see what you think they mean, and what you think they do in terms of informing how you can improve your instruction at the school.” At this point, he paused. “We have resistance, I think. We have had no results, no initiatives (in the high schools) that show that they (high school administration and school staff) are using this data in any way!” On the other hand, the Superintendent described a K-6 school that was beginning to realize the importance of data collection. He recounted how the school decided to measure the reading level of all the students, to see what level they were at. He continued, “They (the staff) decided that they weren’t happy with the results and so they didn’t just measure them once, they put in some strategies to help them (the students) improve their reading, and then measured them three times over the course of the year. With the strategies and the extra effort, the data defined whatever they were working on and they saw a dramatic improvement.”

The Superintendent believed that he had seen various examples of data driven change in the division, over the past five years. He specifically noted changes in initiatives such as assessment of students, and reporting to parents. The Superintendent added, “We now have tri-conferences and students are involved in their own assessment from as early as kindergarten.” He also indicated that in spite of the lack of observable progress in the use of data at the high school level, a small group from one of the high schools was taking on the issue of assessment in the senior years, and developing a new

report card. The Superintendent felt that collaborative planning in general had informed the direction of major initiatives in the division, such as assessment. He shared, “We are going to learn more about it (assessment). We are going to develop principles. We are going to educate teachers, ourselves, and we are going to get kids involved. We are well down that path.” The Superintendent believed that professional development had actually improved because of planning. “I think we realize that this one-shot stuff doesn’t work. We know it doesn’t work and we have actually started to change it.” He was quick to add, however, “We are doing all kinds of measuring. What I worry about is that all those piles of data are sitting there and we are just scratching the surface on what it means, how to use it, how it informs instruction and how it can help us to improve student achievement levels.”

A Summary of Planning Perspectives in School Division Z

School Division Z was a moderately sized school division located in the City of Winnipeg. This was the only school division in the study that was involved in an amalgamation. Some areas of the Division had experienced rapid growth, while in other areas, growth was declining. The Trustees and Senior Administration of the Division had a highly inclusive continuum of supports for students with special needs. Information for planning was typically brought forward through a divisional needs assessment process. Divisional outcomes were then chosen as a result of the needs identified by school administrators, staff, parents and community members. Senior Administration of the division were working with the Board of Trustees to determine how the Board could best assist in meeting the divisional purpose of enhancing the success of all students. The Trustees selected assessment and literacy as their outcomes for their three-year action

plan. The trustees and administration used a collaborative planning structure known as the Family of Schools. Planning processes such as the development of school profiles and documents allowed for conversation, discussion and identification of key student needs and evidence of the continuum of supports. They were at the beginning stages of determining which data were available, as well as, how best to interpret, understand and use data to inform planning

Chapter Ten

Analysis of the Data

In Chapters four through nine, I provided the results of the research interviews and the interpretations that I made based on the data provided. Once the data for each school division was collated, a case study summarizing the planning practices in each school division was developed. I used an inductive approach to organize and identify patterns and relationships from the interview data, according to the themes of the conceptual framework derived from the Review of Literature. The following chapter contains a further analysis of data gained during the interviews with school divisions participating in this study. The next phase of the research involves determining the commonalities and variances of planning practices across participating school divisions. Once these factors are identified, they are described and defined, again using the conceptual framework as a guideline.

This phase of the research involves a systematic process of identifying similarities and differences in social phenomena across settings using a process known as analytic abduction (Charmaz, 2006). The process of analytic abduction is both inductive and deductive in nature. To begin the process of analytic abduction, I will infer similarities in school division planning practices, using the five-point framework derived from the Review of Literature. To complete the process of abduction, I will also generate a list of common practices that vary from the framework, yet were also identified by participating school divisions as effective to the planning process.

The conceptual or analytical framework links various concepts and becomes the impetus for the formation of qualitative theory (Seibold, 2002). The conceptual or

analytic framework, if you recall, includes the five categories of key features commonly associated with effective planning: Context, capacity, climate, structure and strategy. Each category contains three key features. I will begin the analysis by briefly reviewing each category. Following this, I will summarize the planning practices that school divisions have identified that are common to each category and the related features of the framework. After all factors common to the framework have been established, a summary of practices across school divisions that vary from the framework will be presented. Through the abductive analysis of data in this chapter, I will establish the basis of a new framework, detailing the archetypes of effective and functional planning practices at the school division level that will be revealed in the final chapter.

Common Planning Practices Aligned with the Framework

Context

In the category of Context in the Review of Literature, I referenced details surrounding the circumstances or events in each school division where planning would normally occur. From the literature, Owens (1998) acknowledged that social change was a process that could be actively approached and consciously directed. He added that, planning was generally more successful if the responsibility for its function was delegated to a group, or to an individual. As well, Caplow (1976) found that serious planning required a focus on details with contingencies in place, in cases of unexpected stress in or around the organization.

Conscious Direction and Active Approach

School division planning in all cases was an active process for the Board of Trustees, Senior Administration, and various levels of staff in the participating school

divisions. There appeared to be a definite shift from planning in isolation to planning more collaboratively. Nonetheless, most participants described collaboration as planning by various parts of the organization, and then informing others of the work of each unit. There was a clear demarcation of mission, vision and outcomes statements as part of the planning process at the division level, although differing terminology was used to describe similar processes. For example, a mission statement might be referred to as a priority, while an outcome might also be referred to as a priority, goal or action statement. In most cases, goals for the school division were established collaboratively, with divisional outcomes echoing the mission statements set by the Board of Trustees. In one of the school divisions, however, the Board of Trustees developed separate Board Priorities from the outcomes developed by the division. The mission, vision and outcomes statements of each school division were published, for the most part in conventional division planning documents and community reports. One school division illustrated the outcomes on post cards created at the early, middle and senior year levels. All of the division plans focused on improvement and Senior Administrators did not see them as outlining additional tasks, but rather as consolidating the work already happening in the division. Board priorities and school division outcomes of organizations participating in this study were established in the domains of Threat Assessment, Planning for Behaviour, Supporting Students, Planning for Divisional Supports, School Readiness, Inclusion, Teaming, and English as an Additional Language.

Designated Individuals and Groups Involved

Although divisional priorities were set in all cases by the Board of Trustees, there was evidence of participation in planning by other employee groups. The Senior

Administration of each school division (Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Secretary Treasurer and in some cases the Student Services Administrator), were most frequently involved in school division planning. However, other groups included less frequently were school administrators (principals and vice principals), consultants, directors, clinicians, classroom teachers, parents and students. In one of the school divisions, the Mission, Vision and Outcome Statements were developed in collaboration with a large group from business, industry, city council, municipal council, local ministry, parents and students. One other school division involved groups of parents and community members in division-wide consultations. Division planning more commonly resulted in dialogue with various sub-committees, community organizations, or employee groups such as resource teachers or guidance counselors, to narrow the gaps identified during the planning process. These same groups would often collaborate and participate in various initiatives to extend or enhance outcomes through community strategies or activities.

Emphasis on Contingency and Detail

Although participating school divisions did use the Manitoba Education template for purposes of school division planning, five of the six divisions found the documentation process less valid than locally developed practices. Divisions, with the exception of one, set very general planning outcomes as opposed to SMART goals. The collective sense was one of requiring a more global view at the school division level, which would offer a wider perspective on student achievement and would also allow the latitude within which schools could set a variety of diverse plans. From time to time, more specific outcomes could also be added as a result of the identification of gaps in

organizational planning mechanisms, however this appeared to be the exception as opposed to practice for the participating school divisions. The majority of interview participants agreed that the Manitoba Education template did provide a guideline for planning and that the process created some urgency to document the planning process. One interview participant suggested that the Manitoba Education model of school and school division planning would create a shift in thinking around the larger notion of moral purpose or school improvement, if there were a shift from an accountability perspective to an inquiry or improvement stance. There was also a suggestion that the interviews held between school divisions and Manitoba Education, as part of the categorical grant-planning model, would be more helpful if a connection was made and shared regarding effective planning practices in other school divisions.

Capacity

The second category to be analyzed in this chapter of the study involved the description of Capacity. Capacity by definition is the capability to perform or produce (WordNet Search 3.0, <http://wordnetweb.princeton.edu/perl/webwn?s=capacity>). From the review of literature, I described the importance of personnel internalizing the expectations of an organization in order to develop or build capacity. In the case of a school organization, both Elmore (2004) and Kanter (2004) reviewed that this was most effective through a series of face-to-face relationships and social groupings, rather than through traditional bureaucratic controls. Dent and Goldberg (1999) noted that if employers expected to collaborate, it was essential for them to feel valued and to have a sense of belonging in the organization (in this case the school division). I concluded in this section that change was more likely to occur through a deepening sense of

commitment at all levels of the organization (Kanter, 2006; Kleiner, 2003). Fullan (2006) described this phenomenon as having collective moral purpose.

Internal Accountability

It became evident through the interview process that school divisions identified varying degrees of planning capacity among their staff members. Extending the planning circle appeared to be a challenge for most school divisions although staff were making attempts to plan more deeply at various levels. All school divisions in the study referred to their struggles with how to embed planning into multiple levels of their organizations. Interview participants described the importance of developing capacity to plan at all levels of the organization, including the Board of Trustees, school division administrators, school principals, consultants, directors, as well as with resource teachers, guidance counselors and classroom teachers. Participants noted that once a division plan had been set, other partner groups could have opportunities to identify where gaps were located within the larger plan.

Feelings of Value and Belonging

In spite of the attempt to embed and extend planning into the organization, five of the six school divisions reported inconsistent involvement in the development of school division outcomes. Only one of the school divisions in the study described a process of holding regular, yearly strategic planning meetings with a wide group of individuals, ranging from trustees and school division personnel, to parents and community members. Another school division in the study was holding strategic planning consultations with communities in the division, however the intention of their process was to focus planning efforts for the new Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent. On the other hand,

interview participants from the remaining school divisions indicated that for the most part personnel in Senior Administrative positions (Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent/Student Services Administrator) were the individuals regularly involved in establishing outcomes based on the Board of Trustee's mission, vision and values. The division outcomes were then shared with staff in the school division for further refinement or development in other operational departments of the organization. Those in positions of principal, vice principal, consultant or director were generally not part of the grassroots, outcome development process. While there was a definite awareness that individuals in this group were not part of the process, they agreed with the choice of divisional outcomes once they were established. One of the school divisions deliberately involved school administrators and school teams in more detailed planning, through a Family of Schools approach. This approach was particularly helpful to engage schools in planning dialogue in a division that had recently been amalgamated. School divisions seemed very conscious of receiving input on planning from parents. Although parents had opportunities to participate in planning processes at the division level through various groups and consultation processes, input into developing school division outcomes was indirect at best. Interview participants in School Division Z gave the sense that , parents were more involved at their community schools, rather than at the division level. Interview participants shared that, if parents had individual challenges or concerns regarding their children, the majority of the situations were being addressed at the school level.

Collective Moral Purpose

Planning processes were particularly motivating for school divisions due to shifting student needs, increasing student diversity and changing student populations (increasing or declining enrollments). There was a collective sense that developing capacity in planning would help school divisions to communicate a deeper sense of why they were undertaking certain actions or why certain activities were worth doing. In order to determine this collective moral purpose, school divisions would often work backward from ideals, stated in mission and vision statements, to develop outcomes, strategies, indicators and data tools. There was a clear delineation made by School Division W on the difference between school division vision and school division outcomes. Interview participants in School Division X spoke about redesigning schools to look significantly better for students, especially for students with challenging learning behaviours. There was some concern as to whether collective moral purpose would move educational partners to feel passionate about their vision or compelled to act on their beliefs. In particular, school divisions in this study were planning with the following issues in mind: Assessment for learning; Early literacy; English as an Additional Language; Collaboration and consultation with parents and communities; Student engagement; Alternative education; Building relationships with staff, students and communities; and Working with students with Autism, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder and challenges in Mental Health.

Climate

The third category for analysis in this chapter involves the description of Climate, or the prevailing conditions and typical attitudes toward planning for change that occur in

school divisions. The analysis of climate includes details that interview participants shared on collaboration and open communication, particularly with regard to navigating the planning process in their school divisions. Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) described the importance of trust in the planning relationship. Isaksen et al. (2000) reinforced the importance of climate in the organization that sets the context for the establishment of trusting relationships. McCluskey (2008) reminded us that without the appropriate tone in an organization, a plan with the best of intentions could be rendered meaningless. The final aspect of the analysis on Climate includes a description of the various approaches that school divisions in the study have taken towards managing conflicts as they arise during the planning process. Deutshe (1973), Fullan (2005), Owen (1991), and Pondy (1967) related through their research that, conflict should be viewed as common and legitimate, and can strengthen an organization if managed positively and appropriately.

Collaboration and Open Communication

Collaboration and open communication was viewed as a critical aspect of planning by all school divisions in the study. Each school division, however, had a different way of collaborating and communicating with staff, students, parents and communities. All school divisions in the study were taking advantage of their websites to share mission and vision statements, as well as divisional outcomes. The division websites also provided access to monthly newsletters and community reports. In one school division, there was a link to an on-line blog to gain staff perspectives on planning, although staff were not entirely comfortable in using this media at the time of the interview. Another school division had a well-used link to a wiki containing examples and dialogue on data collection. Two of the divisions involved in the study had

consultation or focus groups directly involved in setting divisional planning outcomes. In such cases, the interview participants described that there was less need to obtain endorsement of divisional outcomes, as many staff, students, parents and community members were already involved in establishing the planning outcomes at the grassroots level. While the remaining school divisions described configurations of focus groups, and formal consultation structures in the planning process, involvement was less direct and occurred after divisional outcomes had already been set. Interview participants in Senior Administrative positions described the collaboration and communication in the latter approach as balanced and interactive, whereas those in consultant positions viewed it as hierarchical. Nonetheless, interview participants seemed genuinely satisfied with the choice of divisional outcomes regardless of their perspective on the approach to collaboration and communication.

Low Fear and High Trust

Interview participants generally felt that information provided by school divisions to staff, students, parents and community members needed to be clear and consistent. During the interviews, they expressed concerns that ambiguous or conflicting messages might cause processes and plans to collapse or deteriorate. Interview participants believed that being clear and transparent, establishing processes that were open and inviting, as well as allowing people to be heard and not criticized, were critical approaches to building trust and eliminating conflict later on. Interview participants were cautious to the fact that, although trustees were involved in establishing mission and vision statements, they were not involved in the day-to-day operations of the school divisions. Interview participants explained that this would require members of the boards to maintain trust

with the staff in the school division to carry out their direction. Additional areas of concern by interview participants in School Division V involved the need for transparency around the development of funding criteria and the distribution of categorical grants, as well as on the creation of funding formulae for special projects and staffing allocations. Interview participants across school divisions believed that efforts toward the improvement of student learning would provide the ideal, common focal point on which to build trust and move forward. They identified that having facilitators who could lead this conversation, listen, reserve judgment, and remain open to possibilities, was critical in order to pursue this important agenda. Interview participants in consultant positions, shared that, although the role of facilitator was often held by principals and school division administrators, this leadership could also be distributed to student services staff in schools or to classroom teachers.

Well-Managed Conflict

The role of facilitator was also deemed significant, especially in situations involving high conflict or tension. There was agreement among interview participants that conflict was an inevitable result when planning choices were set in an environment of competing goods and ideals. This was often the case in situations involving educational programming for students with challenging learning behaviours. Interview participants explained that an effective facilitator would help to ensure that, in spite of the inevitability of conflict, viewpoints could be expressed in both a focused and respectful manner. Interview participants described the importance of being heard and understood when a conflict arose, yet having a facilitator who would persevere through the conflict and be flexible or adaptable to potential solutions. A suggestion was made that it was

sometimes helpful for a group to consult the data or bring forward additional information in times of tension or conflict. Some of the interview participants provided examples of position facilitation through conflict and tension. One of the school divisions engaged in a process known as Planning Alternative Tomorrows With Hope (PATH) on a systemic level to prepare for a community challenge in a constructive and structured manner.

Structure

Structure in the context of this study referred to the organization of discrete parts involved in the process of planning for change. Elmore (2004) noted that school division planning gained greater relevancy with a focus on the real world. Kouzes and Posner (2003), Reeves (2006), and Schmoker (2004) indicated that by limiting the number of outcomes, plans would become more coherent, realistic and manageable. Nonetheless, Miliband (2004), and Schmoker (2004) concluded from the literature that outcome statements had far more impact when linked to student achievement, rather than to activities, programs or workshops.

Real World Context

There were a number of practical examples provided by interview participants on how planning structures influenced the climate and context of school divisions. One participant indicated that school divisions sometimes developed planning documents, but lost sight of how that document would be operationalized or how it would influence people's lives. He advocated that school divisions consider the environment for which they were creating the plans. In general, school division participants discussed the use of planning data for the purpose of informing practice and improving student learning. Participants used planning data to review supports for funded students, to determine

connections to educational resources after a threat assessment, to organize sustainable alternative programming for students at-risk, and to monitor incidents of challenging behaviour. A participant in School Division X emphasized that a parent or community member would not typically notice the bureaucratic objectives of the planning process, but would rather see the concrete and active representations of how planning outcomes would appear in real life. A participant in School Division U noted, however, that in spite of all the data that school division was collecting, she did not see living evidence of whether students were receiving appropriate educational programming.

Clear and Concise Outcomes

Interview participants spoke of the need to focus and consolidate their planning, by cutting back the number of outcomes that they initially established. They suggested a preference for performing well on fewer outcomes, rather than making haphazard efforts with more elaborate plans. Although interview participants suggested the need for clear and concise outcomes, they did not refer to planning that was discrete or narrow in scope. They indicated that there was an advantage to setting division outcomes that were broad in nature. Schools could then follow suit with outcomes that were more specific or SMART. In addition to clear and concise data, one of the interview participants advocated for the need to provide succinct data in order to make good evidence-based decisions. He advised that school division leaders should be making informed decisions, instead of acting on instincts or intuition.

Evidence-Based Decisions

Each interview participant either indicated directly or alluded to the fact that school divisions were collecting a lot of data, yet they believed that it was not necessarily

being used to inform practice. Three of the school divisions were in the early stages of data collection, indicating that they were attempting to gain baseline information at this point. There were common responses from all interview participants that school divisions were beginning to understand data and use it more effectively to focus on priorities and outcomes for improvement or development. They shared the types of data being collected including, information on senior years graduation rates, credits achieved, early years benchmarks such as reading and writing levels, numbers of students with individual education plans or behaviour intervention plans, and report card marks. There was agreement among interview participants that decisions would be stronger if data was gathered in a more consistent manner. One participant raised a concern about not wrestling enough with the data to create meaning or definable measures of progress. There was, however, a strong indication that following up on the data was non-negotiable. One participant argued that if the system were too data driven, it would move away from important educational standards such as critical thinking, getting inspired about learning, developing opinions, and thinking differently. Ultimately, all participants advocated for improved evidence based decisions in the planning process by considering available data, interpreting critical issues, identifying key strategies and evaluating ongoing progress. A remaining issue for School Division X, concerned the development of an electronic data collection system to assist in maintaining, accessing and using data on a more timely and accurate basis.

Strategy

The final aspect of the framework presented in this study involved a focus on strategy in planning. In the Review of Literature, Senge (2000), and Schmoker (2004)

noted that the empirical work of active groups, helping them to challenge beliefs, assumptions and expectations, was far more effective in the planning process than passively implementing someone else's script. Argyris (1978), Mintzberg (1996), Pascale (1996), and Schon (1978, 1983) indicated that, in the planning process, groups would generally establish goals and then reflect, adapt and learn from their experiences. Metcalf (1981) and Weick and Westley (1999) concluded that planning routines involving smaller, incremental changes would be more successful than larger, more disruptive agendas.

Socially Based Practice

In school divisions, socially based planning practice came in the form of professional learning groups, families of schools conversations, community consultations, critical friends (partners) and on-line professional networking through web logs and wiki pages. According to interview participants, a socially based planning process allowed for reflective feedback and provided input from various parties, in order to gain different perspectives. This process, according to participants, gave voice to individual knowledge. Whereas planning outcomes in school divisions were often set by the Board of Trustees along with the Senior Administration Team, a variety of professional learning groups in school divisions were then able to provide input and feedback into planning at specific points. Interview participants agreed that the power of planning came from building relationships, forming networks, working together in partnerships, conversing, reflecting and acting on new findings. While there was clearly a history involving school divisions and schools working and planning in isolation, interview participants indicated that division and school administrators were now more

willing to enter into partnerships and collaboration to support students, especially if they anticipated that the outcomes would be positive and possible. They explained that a variety of relationships had been created to facilitate collaborative planning, including partnerships among schools and parents, schools and community members, families of schools, teachers and students, administrators and teachers, schools and post secondary institutions, as well as schools and adult services. They shared that partnerships with others allowed them to see the operation of education through a different lens, often seeing the impact of their planning on the lives of others. An interview participant in School Division W summarized by stating that, she genuinely believed that the practice of thinking with others was perhaps the greatest link between knowledge and action, during the planning process.

Deliberate Planning and Emergent Learning

By reviewing data when planning, interview participants advocated that this was not just an opportunity to share with others, but also an occasion to learn. They indicated that school and division administrators needed to be aware that ideas and results that would typically emerge through the planning process could inform important initiatives in school divisions and eventually affect student learning. Interview participants mentioned that it would be critical for school divisions and consequently schools, to consider adapting outcomes of any planning initiative as a result of emergent learning. They reinforced that planning participants have the flexibility to make changes because of new knowledge and learning. Participants from two school divisions noted making changes in the area of professional development, student assessment and reporting. An interview participant from School Division Y cautioned that reflection on data, while

helpful to inform the planning process, should not ultimately drive it. Hence, emergent learning would assist to achieve the purpose of planning by allowing school divisions to refine and focus priorities and outcomes for development, while at the same time aligning resources in the appropriate areas to support action. This would be of particular importance to areas of Student Services where interview participants, in particular, identified the dilemmas of competing priorities.

Incremental Adaptive Change

Interview participants described the importance of following established planning procedures by providing evidence in order to gain resources or supports. In school division X, one of the interview participants indicated that the school division would not provide resources by simply jumping the queue, or creating a perception of crisis. He encouraged planning partners to work from a basis of integrity and provide solid data, as evidence of need. An interview participant from school division W explained that data was essential in the construction and reconstruction of meaning. In other words, schools would often be asked to make sense of their data and to interpret it on a larger scale. He concluded that divisional planning was a matter of looking more broadly and framing the outcomes around larger policies or procedures. More specific school plans could then be designed to respond to local needs. Interview participants from School Division V agreed that the planning process was ongoing and continuous, rather than a one-shot deal. Regardless of the type of the plan, interview participants described that decisions were made incrementally, based on the evidence that was collected. Interview participants indicated that being adaptable through this process allowed for innovation, creativity, emergent learning and ultimately ownership of a plan.

A Summary of Divisional Planning Practices Common to the Literature

Table 13

Effective Planning Practices Similar to the Framework from the Review of Literature

Categories of Analysis	Key Features Commonly Associated with Effective Planning (According to Interview Participants)
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move from planning in isolation to a more active and collaborative approach • Increase the number of designated individuals and groups involved at various planning points for a variety of perspectives and attitudes • Plan for global outcomes at the division level with allowances for contingencies and detail at the school, unit or student level
Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend or embed the planning systems and plan more deeply with a greater number and variety of partners and stakeholders • Develop alignment (vertical fluency) and congruency (horizontal accordance) in planning practices throughout the system • Communicate a deeper sense of why planning is being undertaken
Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain open and transparent communication regarding planning through websites, newsletters, community reports, community consultations, families of schools, and various professional learning groups • Approach planning with a positive and appreciative stance with a future directed orientation and solution focused approach • Use a structured approach to challenging and conflictual situations
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep planning as relevant and authentic as possible • Ensure that the planning process has a link among research, theory and practice • Generate consistent and definable measures for data collection
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish socially based relationships and partnerships and networks for planning • Create opportunities to share, reflect and learn • Align resources to support action based on evidence provided

The characteristics of planning, summarized in Table 13, are key practices that

participants from school divisions identified in their individual interviews. The practices

outlined in this table are similar to the categories of effective planning that I originally identified in the conceptual framework derived from the Review of Literature.

Planning Practices that Vary from the Framework

As mentioned at the outset of this chapter, the process of analytic abduction involves not only identifying similarities but also highlighting differences in social phenomena. Thus far, in Chapter Ten, I have summarized the social phenomena of school division planning practices that were similar to the categories and related features of the five category framework derived from the Review of Literature. At this point, I will outline a number of ideas that school divisions identified as effective, yet varied from the framework.

Student-Centered Focus

One of the prevailing ideas that emerged from the interview process involved the discussions about why school divisions engage in planning. While on the surface interview participants shared their ideas on establishing elaborate or detailed visions and directions or roadmaps as a means to consciously direct and monitor change, interview participants ultimately revealed that their primary purpose for planning was to make a difference in the lives of children. Interview participants described their child-centered approach to planning with the phrase, "It's all about the kids." There was consensus from all school divisions during the interview process that participants were planning and making decisions with a focus on students. The strong relationship-focused strategy that educators had in regard to visioning a better future for children and improving learning opportunities was far more evident through conversations with them than through the references to educational planning in the literature. One of the interview participants

emphasized that, by keeping the focus on students, there could be very little to dispute regarding intention of a plan.

Alignment and Congruency in the System

School divisions were also challenged on how to narrow the gap between planning outcomes and daily practice. In this regard, interview participants in School Division U, V, and Y identified the critical role of school principals within the process of school division planning. They believed that the degree of change in a school division would depend on the capacity of school principals to execute school division outcomes through alignment of their school plans. Interview participants elaborated that school division plans should relate to school plans, which in turn connect to classroom or unit plans, with the goal of linking with individual education plans. Although the literature on planning did speak to the importance of this type of alignment in a system, it did not refer to the critical nature of congruence occurring at the same time. In this regard, interview participants advocated that even if not all those involved in establishing or executing a plan agreed with its contents or direction, they understood the importance of supporting the plan in order to bring a vision to fruition. There was also mention of congruence in terms of agreeing on critical issues. Again, while individuals might not have agreed how the items were prioritized in the plan, it was necessary for them to agree that the items were important and that they would be addressed. In this case, interview participants recommended that planning needed to have clear ground rules so that everyone would understand that this was not an area to carry forward personal agenda items.

Connecting Research to Practice

Interview participants in all of the school divisions noted the importance of connecting research to daily practice. This was accomplished for the most part through book studies, article sharing, professional reading in areas of choice, learning excursions, and through the benefit of guest authors and professional development facilitators. While the literature and resources used may not necessarily have been directly on the topic of school division or school planning, participants noted that the material was chosen to highlight related areas such as vision setting (Fenstermacher, 2000), ethical leadership (Starratt, 2004), and resistance to change (Davies et. al, 2008), to name a few.

Focus on Skill Building

Similarly, school division participants identified the importance of practical skill building opportunities among their staff. Typical examples included involvement in and provision of summer institutes, regular professional development sessions throughout the school year, skill building prospects at staff meetings, as well as various professional learning communities such as the resource teachers' or guidance counselors' study groups. Interview participants shared that capacity building on the topic of planning also came in the practice of setting outcomes, writing SMART goals, and in reflecting on or interpreting data. Participants in two school divisions shared that there was an expectation that staff keep current with their professional learning through reading divisionally and personally selected material, engaging in dialogue with other staff members and reflecting on new ideas and challenges. Interview participants in three school divisions were either involved in travel to various destinations to meet with researchers and engage in experiential learning, or had invited the researchers to work directly with them in their school divisions.

Flexibility and Creativity

One of the ideas that came through quite clearly through the interview process was that of the need for flexibility and creativity in planning. Interview participants suggested the idea of providing choices and thinking creatively in planning for responses to student behaviour. In particular, a participant in School Division Z noted the importance of developing a continuum of possibilities that demonstrates more than one way to respond to a situation appropriately. Another area of choice and creativity cited by participants involved the use of categorical student funding to reduce class sizes or pupil-teacher ratios. In the examples provided, school divisions had the ability to shift resources where they were most needed, based on evidence and data. One participant identified that the hallmark of planning surrounded the ability to sort through situations critically, and not take offence to others looking at things in a diverse or creative manner.

Positive and Appreciative Stance

The majority of interview participants emphasized the importance of taking a positive stance when engaging in dialogue or planning with staff. One participant suggested the use of an appreciative stance, adopted from Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, 1990). This approach helped their staff to set a positive tone when engaging in challenging dialogue on planning. One participant advocated that the appreciative approach would create less defensiveness, especially during a critical conversation. Interview participants suggested that a positive and appreciative approach to dialogue would keep the planning process future oriented and solution focused. They added the importance of working from a base of integrity and prioritizing the needs of students based on evidence and data. Interview participants related that while not everyone needed

to agree on a particular plan, there needed to be one aspect of a plan identified that everyone could support.

Non-Linear Approach

One of the interview participants, summarizing the ideas of Margaret Wheatley, indicated that planning might appear quite orderly on paper, but in actual practice was quite disorderly. The collective understanding of interview participants in this study surrounded the fact that planning was not at all linear in nature, but was influenced by stakeholders or partners who regularly approached their plans with differing attitudes or perspectives. The other significant idea that came from an interview participant involved the practice of establishing causal or leading indicators in order to meet division outcomes. The interview participant in this example suggested setting indicators that were not directly aimed at reaching the criteria of the outcome. Rather, the criteria of the outcome would be achieved because planning participants were working to be successful in areas that supported the eventual attainment of the goal. For example, instead of planning to improve provincial exam scores, partners would instead work to improve relationships with students in hope of providing the context and environment through which they would be successful. The notion of community and a focus on students was critical in order for this idea to be realized.

Opportunities for Student Voice

Participants from four school divisions spoke to the importance of including student voice in school division planning. By asking students for their input, one participant suggested that this would bring a school division plan to life at the student level. Students were able to provide input in a variety of modalities, including the

creation of artwork that adorned the walls of schools and the division office, and through service learning opportunities in various school communities. Students were also involved, where appropriate, in their assessment and educational planning through triad conferencing and individual education planning, and were able to provide input into planning responses challenging behaviours. One school division involved students in the on-line survey, *What Did You Do In School Today*. By providing input in this manner, the school division was able to gain critical information from students on engagement in school. One of the school divisions urged that student activism and student voice play a role in planning for educational change.

Added Considerations that Vary From the Literature

The process of analytic abduction involves not only identifying similarities but also highlighting differences in social phenomena. While I had summarized the social phenomena of school division planning practices that were similar to the categories and related features of the five-point framework derived from the Review of Literature, I then outlined a number of ideas that school division participants identified as effective, yet varied from the framework. The additional considerations shared by participants are outlined in Table 14. While these planning practices varied from the conceptual framework, the information contained in this table will serve to inform the findings, conclusions and recommendations of this study.

The foregoing chapter contained the case analysis of data gained during interviews with key participants involved with planning in school divisions. This information has now set the stage to respond to the research questions initially raised and

to inform the development of a new conceptual framework, detailing the archetypes of effective and functional planning practices at the school division level.

Table 14

Effective Planning Practices that Varied from the Literature

<p>Effective Planning Practices (Additional Considerations of Interview Participants)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow for locally developed planning templates and processes, with the use of the provincial planning template and process as a guideline• Shift from an accountability perspective to an inquiry or improvement stance• Establish the desire to plan in order to improve learning and redesign schools for all our students• Focus on practical skill building opportunities among staff (professional development, experiential learning etc.)• Designate leaders who can facilitate challenging planning dialogue• Expect that planning may be quite disorderly in process and practice• Provide data/evidence to inform rather than to drive the system• Allow for student voice in a variety of forms within the planning structures of school divisions• Be creative, innovative, flexible and allow for choices through planning variables in the change process• Set causal indicators that will support the eventual attainment of planning outcomes
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Chapter Eleven

Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations

In this chapter, I will complete the documentation of this study by revisiting its original purpose and by reviewing the methods and design of the research. I will respond to the research questions initially posed, and present conclusions regarding the impact of effective planning practices on educational improvement and change. I will describe how the findings of this study have informed the development of a new framework, detailing the archetypes of planning, which are both effective and functional for Student Services at the division level. I will conclude the chapter with recommendations and areas for further exploration and study pertaining to the problem I initially identified.

Review of the Purpose

At the beginning of this study, McEwan (1995) identified that education is a social enterprise with a shared priority of developing citizens with the ability to lead productive lives and thrive as equal and contributing members of society. I noted, however, that this massive undertaking exists within a context of fundamental political, economic, social and cultural change. Hence, concerns have arisen around educational inadequacy to meet the demands of change, and there has been a perceived need for educational reform and accountability to ensure that the system is preparing students effectively for the future. Stringfield et al. (1998) revealed that, provincial departments of education across Canada have translated the need for accountability into pragmatic models, cycles and frameworks for planning, in an effort to guide educational improvement. Meyer and Rowan (1973) indicated, however that, according to the literature, accountability mechanisms sometimes exemplify a rationalized myth whereby

planning structures exist because they are a requirement of bureaucracy rather than being a functional link between organizational intention and action. As a result, I proposed that the purpose of this qualitative study was to narrow the gap between the “myth” of planning cited in the literature, and the reality of engaging in concrete activities in a school division. Therefore, the general questions that I raised in this study in order to fulfill my purpose were as follows:

1. What are the characteristics of educational planning acknowledged in the literature that link organizational intention with action, effectively recoupling the system and dispelling the myth of bureaucratization?
2. According to the perspectives of key individuals in school divisions, how do planning practices relate to, or differ from the examples cited in the literature and summarized in the analytical framework established in this study?
3. Are there planning practices of the school divisions participating in this study, which are effective and functional, and will serve to construct a new framework for organizational improvement and change

Review of the Methods

The data collection and analysis of this study took place in three distinct phases. In the first phase, I identified potential school divisions for the study sample, by reviewing the planning templates of divisions that included systemic outcomes for students with challenging learning behaviours. While fifteen Manitoba school divisions were invited to participate in the study, six responded favourably and agreed to engage in

individual interviews regarding their planning practices. The second phase of the study involved individual interviews with selected personnel in school divisions. Participants in the interview process in each school division, included persons in the position of Superintendent/CEO, the Student Services Administrator and one other key person involved in planning in the school division. Interview participants were free to respond to the questions, and to supplement the structured questions with ideas and additional documentation. I recorded the interviews on an external memory device and later transcribed them for analysis. Once the interviews had been completed and transcribed, a comprehensive member check was used to allow interview participants to evaluate the fairness and validity of my interpretations of their interview responses (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). The third phase of the research involved the development of case studies based on the interviews in each school division. Information gained from the interview process was categorized according to a conceptual framework (Reichert & Ramy, 1987; Guba & Lincoln, 1989) created from the review of literature in Chapter Two. The information found in the case studies of planning practices from each participating school division was then analyzed by a method known as Analytic Abduction (Charmaz, 2006). Analytic Abduction was used to identify both similarities and variances in planning practices of school divisions participating in the study, compared to the conceptual framework. I then summarized this information and developed a synthesis of effective planning practices to track and measure the success of educational outcomes. In proposing the synthesis, it is important to note that the effective planning practices identified in this study were not equally evident across school divisions. They were, however, uniquely applied depending on the variety of factors shared by divisional jurisdictions. In the section following, I will

detail the findings of this study. The findings will then inform the questions originally raised, including the development of a new framework, detailing the archetypes of effective and functional planning practices for student services at the school division level.

Findings

Linking Intention to Action

The challenge in education acknowledged in this study illustrates that the practice of strategic planning in education has had questionable impact on accountability and improvement of student learning. As a result, I posed the first question as to whether there were characteristics of planning in the literature, which could link organizational intention with action, effectively recoupling the system and dispelling the myth of bureaucratization. In response to this first question, I found that there were common threads that ran through the literature that suggested various approaches that would otherwise strengthen planning practices, improve organizational learning, and enhance the change process. The suggested approaches from the literature reviewed in this study, were organized into five categories of a conceptual framework, namely: Context, Capacity, Climate, Structure and Strategy. Within the category of context, Owens (1998) identified that change could be actively approached through teaming or in social groups. Caplow (1976) noted that planning was generally more successful when organized or delegated to specific individuals or groups, and added that school divisions would need to focus on details or contingencies in case of unexpected stress or events occurring in their environments. In the category of capacity, Elmore (2004) and Kanter (2004) indicated that capacity with planning was most effective if personnel involved in planning were

able to collaborate in their planning situations. Fullan (2006) Dent and Goldberg (1999) Kanter (2006) and Kleiner (2003) identified that if people were expected to collaborate, they would be more successful if they felt that they belonged and had a deepened sense of commitment to their organizations. In the category of climate, Elmore (2004) and Fullan (2006) acknowledged that an emphasis on collaboration and open communication would achieve more of a balance between bureaucratic structures such as planning formats and templates, and the loosely coupled nature of school organizations. Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) highlighted that low levels of fear and high trust would have positive effects on productivity. Deutsche (1973) Fullan (2005) Owens (1991) and Pondy (1967) also noted that, although conflict was a common and legitimate occurrence in organizations, it could actually strengthen the organization if managed properly. Isaksen et al. (2000) revealed that leadership, creativity and planning depend largely on the tone of the organizational climate. McCluskey (2008) affirmed that appropriate tone in an organization could ultimately determine the success or failure of a plan. Under the category of structure, Elmore (2004) Kouzes and Posner (2003) Reeves (2006) and Schmoker (2004) emphasized the importance of being current and relevant when planning, as well as having fewer, more concise and coherent goals. Miliband (2004) and Schmoker (2004) also suggested that effective planning needed to involve measurable statements rather than indications of commitments or activities. In the final category of strategy, Senge (2000) and Schmoker (2004) acknowledged the importance of planning in active groups with opportunities for input, rather than passively implementing plans designed by others. Argyris (1978) Mintzberg (1996) Pascale (1996) and Schon (1978, 1993) emphasized how groups could set goals, then monitor, reflect, adapt and learn from their experiences

in planning. Accordingly, Metcalf (1981) and Weick and Westley (1999) noted that smaller, incremental changes were recommended as opposed to large scale, disruptive shifts in organizational agendas. It is understood that in actual practice, school divisions do not possess ideal conceptual elements, described in the Review of Literature that would assist in recoupling their systemic practice, and dispelling the myth of bureaucratization. If, however, planning were approached in the manner similar to that suggested in the literature, indications are that there would be a greater link between organizational intention and active, more authentic (less bureaucratic) planning experiences.

Participant's Perspectives and the Literature

In the second question raised in the study, I attempted to determine how the perspectives on planning practices held by key individuals in school divisions, either related to or varied from the examples cited in the literature, and summarized in the conceptual framework. In order to respond to this question, I referred to the analysis of the data that I undertook in Chapter Ten. Through the process of analytic abduction, I was able to summarize the ideas of interview participants that were similar to the categories and related features of the conceptual framework. As well, I outlined a number of ideas that varied from the framework. Therefore, while some of the suggestions shared by interview participants were similar to the literature, other perspectives varied from that information. Nonetheless, the variations did not alter the essence of the original categories that I created to summarize and structure the Review of Literature. Hence, I was able to compare the original ideas from the literature that informed the development of the conceptual framework, with the new information shared by study participants

through the interview process. In so doing, I could demonstrate the similarity of participant perspectives with concepts from the literature, and the corresponding nature of new and varied ideas shared in the interview process. In each category, participants in this study were able to expand and enhance the concepts originally identified from the literature, as well as provide additional ideas that were not originally considered from the Review of Literature. Consequently, in response to the second question raised in this study, I found that the perspectives of interview participants were similar, or related to the information in the literature on effective planning practices. While the participants added new ideas that were not originally considered in the Review of literature, and while the perspectives of participants varied somewhat, the new ideas and variations expressed did not change the spirit or intention of the categories I had developed to summarize and structure the literature.

Tables 15.1 through 15.5 exemplify the original concepts from the literature alongside the perspectives of interview participants from the study. Each table corresponds to the original category used to structure the Review of Literature and summarize the related ideas. On the left side of each table, the three original characteristics of effective planning identified from the literature are listed. On the right side of each table, I have included the corresponding participant perspectives that were similar to the concepts from the literature. I was also able to categorize the variations in ideas that I identified as additional considerations gained through the interview process.

Tables 15.1 – 15.5

*Concepts from the Literature and Participant Perspectives**Table 15.1 – Context*

Concepts from the Literature	Participant Perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social Change can be consciously directed and actively approached • Planning can be more successful if responsibility for it is delegated to designated groups of individuals • Serious plans need to have an emphasis on contingency with a focus on details 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move from planning in isolation to a more active, collaborative approach • Increase the number of designated individuals/groups involved at various planning points for a variety of perspectives and attitudes • Plan for global outcomes at the division level with allowances for contingencies and detail at the school, unit or student level • Allow for locally developed planning templates and processes, with the use of the provincial planning template and process as a guideline • Shift from an accountability perspective to an inquiry or improvement stance

Table 15.2 – Capacity

Concepts from the Literature	Participant Perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal accountability is established through face to face relationships, as opposed to the implementation of bureaucratic policies and procedures • If people are expected to collaborate, it is essential for people to feel valued by and have an increased sense of belonging in the organization • Change is more likely to occur through a deepening sense of commitment toward collective moral purpose at all levels of the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend or embed the planning systems and plan more deeply with a greater number and variety of partners/stakeholders • Develop alignment (vertical fluency) and congruency (horizontal accordance) in planning practices throughout the system • Communicate a deeper sense of why planning is being undertaken • Establish the desire to plan in order to improve learning and redesign schools for all our students • Focus on professional learning opportunities and practical skill building activities for staff

Table 15.3 – Climate

Concepts from the Literature	Participant Perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on collaboration and open communication achieves a balance between bureaucratic structures and the loosely coupled nature of educational organizations • Low levels of fear and high levels of trust have a positive effect on organizational productivity • Conflict is common, legitimate and ultimately strengthens organizations if managed properly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain open and transparent communication regarding planning through websites, newsletters, community reports, community consultations, families of schools, and various professional learning groups • Approach planning with a positive and appreciative stance with a future directed orientation and a solution focused approach • Use a structured approach to challenging and conflictual situations • Designate leaders who can facilitate challenging planning dialogue • Expect that planning may be quite disorderly in process and practice

Table 15.4 – Structure

Concepts from the Literature	Participant Perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning needs to focus on and emphasize the real world of educational organization in addition to documents and procedures • The number of goals in a planning document should be limited to create more coherent and realistic plans • Effective planning goals are measurable statements linked to student achievement, rather than commitments to implement programs or offer workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep planning as relevant and authentic as possible • Ensure that the planning process links research, theory and practice • Generate consistent and definable measures for data collection • Provide data/evidence to inform rather than to drive the system • Allow for student voice in a variety of forms within the planning structures of school divisions

Table 15.5 – Strategy

Concepts from the Literature	Participant Perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empirical work of active groups helps them to challenge beliefs, assumptions and expectations rather than passively implementing some else’s script • Groups strategically set goals then reflect, accommodate, adapt and learn from their experiences • Planning routines involving smaller, continuous, incremental or adaptive changes are more successful than major, disruptive changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish socially based relationships, partnerships and networks for planning • Create opportunities to share, reflect and learn • Align resources to support action based on evidence provided • Be creative, innovative, flexible and allow for choices through planning variables in the change process • Set causal indicators that will support the eventual attainment of planning outcomes

Synthesis of Effective and Functional Planning Practices

In response to the third question in the study, I attempted to determine whether there were planning practices of school divisions participating in this study that were effective and functional, and would serve to construct a new framework for organizational improvement and change. In order to respond to this question, I reviewed the analysis of participant perspectives.

Participants from school divisions identified that effective planning involved an active and collaborative approach with a focus on improvement. It became clear through the interview process that the primary purpose for planning was to make a positive difference in the lives of children. The groups or individuals most frequently designated to set school division visions or outcomes were the members of the Board of Trustees, and members of the Senior Administrative Teams. Members of other partner groups, including parents, school administration, school staff and students, were involved more

often in narrowing the gaps in the planning process. Extending the planning circle, or planning more deeply was identified as a challenge by participants. Although other partner groups were invited to have input into setting divisional outcomes, their involvement in divisional planning was not consistent across school divisions. According to participants, parents had more involvement in planning at local schools than at the division level. Several school divisions highlighted student voice as a critical aspect in planning for educational change. Examples of student voice in planning ranged from the creation of artwork and participation in service learning, to involvement in divisional consultations and contributions to Individual Education Plans.

In this study, planning was centered on the consolidation of school division processes and development in the areas of, Student Behaviour, Threat and Risk Assessments, Divisional Supports for Students, School Readiness, English as an Additional Language, Inclusion and Teaming. Participants placed emphasis on practical skill building in planning through various professional learning opportunities with resource teachers' and guidance counselors' study groups, summer institutes, or professional development components at staff meetings. School Division administrators in the study shared examples of initiatives to connect research to practice, through book studies, article reviews, professional reading, study trips, as well as, developing relationships with guest authors and facilitators. Areas of focus in the research described in this study, centered on vision setting, ethical leadership and the change process.

Public communication regarding school division goals was most often shared through division websites and more recently through wiki pages and web logs. Participants shared that clear, consistent and transparent messages were critical,

especially in the areas dealing with provincial grants and divisional or student funding. Participants expressed concerns that ambiguous messages could create confusion or could cause a plan to collapse. As a result, a common suggestion involved having a facilitator who could listen, reserve judgment and remain open, flexible and adaptable to possibilities. Participants from one school division suggested that a positive and appreciative stance would keep planning directed toward the future and solution focused. The idea of distributing the leadership role beyond administration, to include those in Student Services positions, or to include those with a particular interest area, arose as a solution to facilitating the challenging planning conversations that might arise. Nonetheless, there was consensus that conflict was inevitable when planning was set in a context of competing ideas and resources. Interview participants suggested that the use of a structured process or framework to approach planning might also assist when challenge or conflict was present.

Interview participants believed that while planning was quite organized in theory, it was far more disorderly in practice. They reinforced the importance of keeping planning current, relevant, and not losing sight of how a plan would be implemented in people's lives. Participants recommended that school divisions concentrate on developing fewer outcomes as opposed to working haphazardly on more elaborate plans. One participant believed that by not aiming directly at outcomes, planners would be more successful at eventually attaining their goals. Planning participants suggested the establishment of broad outcomes at the division level with more specific, SMART outcomes at the school level supporting classroom or individual planning endeavors. They also spoke of the importance of alignment among divisional outcomes, school

plans, unit plans, lesson plans or individual education plans. Most planning participants preferred to use locally developed planning processes, but enacted the Manitoba Education planning template and process for the most part as a requirement and a guide.

There was concern among school divisions participating in this study that data was not necessarily informing practice. Planning participants noted that many school divisions were at the early stages of data collection and were simply establishing baseline data, rather than interpreting it and challenging the findings. School division staff reported that they were also in the early stages of development regarding data management, storage and related technological systems. In the end, participants agreed that the planning process should be data informed rather than data driven. They identified creative thinking and provision of choices as critical to success in planning. Several school divisions in the study, for example, were creatively using resources and funding to adjust traditional configurations of staffing based on evidence provided by the data.

There was consensus across all school divisions that planning was most effective as a socially based practice. School division participants indicated that professional learning communities came in the form of families of schools, community consultations, critical friends, and on-line involvement in wiki pages and web logs. Participants noted that the power of planning came from building relationships, forming networks, working in partnerships, reflecting and acting on new findings. Planning partners needed to work from a basis of integrity and provide solid data and evidence in response to particular requests. Planning participants also indicated the need for flexibility to make changes because of new learning. They added that the process of thinking and engaging in dialogue with others was likely the greatest link between knowledge and action.

Effective and Functional Planning Practices

Given the foregoing discussion and, in light of the question as to whether there are planning practices of school divisions participating in this study that are effective and functional, it is helpful to review the terminology in order to respond. In Chapter One, I indicated that, by definition, planning would be effective if it had an intended or expected effect. I also described that planning would be functional if it could be of practical utility in the planning framework or process. Therefore, according to the perspectives of school divisions in this study, planning is most effective and functional when school divisions:

- a. Engage in a *context* of active, collaborative planning, with designated individuals involved, consider global perspectives, allow for locally based processes and shift to an inquiry or improvement stance.
- b. Build *capacity* to extend and embed planning systems, develop alignment and congruency of practice, communicate collective moral purpose, plan in order to improve learning, and focus on practical skills.
- c. Maintain a *climate* with open and transparent communication, a positive and appreciative stance, a structured approach, appropriate tone, designated leaders to facilitate planning dialogue and an expectation that planning may be quite a disorderly process.
- d. Establish a *structure* to keep planning practices relevant and authentic, ensure a link between theory and practice, generate consistent and definable measures of data, provide data to inform the system and allow for student voice.

- e. Create *strategy* to establish socially based relationships and networks, generate opportunities to share, reflect and learn, align resources to support action, become creative, innovative and flexible, and set causal indicators to support the attainment of planning outcomes.

The information from this discussion has been transcribed into the framework located in

Table 16

*Archetypes of Effective and Functional Planning
To Maximize Organizational Improvement and Change*

Categories of Analysis	Key Features Commonly Associated with Effective Planning (According to the Literature and Interview Participants)
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to an Active, Collaborative Approach • Increase the Numbers of Designated Individuals Involved • Consider Global Outcomes at the Division Level • Allow for Locally Based Processes and Structures • Shift to an Improvement or Inquiry-Based Stance
Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend and Embed Planning at All Levels • Develop Alignment and Congruency of Practice • Communicate Collective Moral Purpose • Plan to Improve Learning and Redesign Schools • Focus on Practical Skill Building Among Staff
Climate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain Open and Transparent Communication • Approach Planning with a Positive and Appreciative Stance • Use a Structured Approach When Conflicts Arise • Designate Leaders to Facilitate Challenging Dialogue • Expect that Planning will be Quite Disorderly in Process
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep Planning Relevant and Authentic • Ensure a Link Between Research and Practice • Generate Consistent and Definable Data • Provide Evidence to Inform the System • Allow for Student Voice as a Data Source

Participants from school divisions in this study shared that the information in the new framework consolidated the archetypes of planning at the school division level, particularly from the perspective of educating students with exceptional learning needs. By implementing the suggested effective and functional practices contained therein, personnel in school divisions were more likely to move from intention to action, a process more favourably associated with organizational improvement and change.

Suggestions for Further Research

The findings of this study are intended to increase the connection between strategic educational intentions and resulting actions, with the objective of rendering the planning process more effective and functional for school divisions. The findings of this study, however, also point to the need for further research on school division planning in specific areas. Examples of the areas that require further attention and exploration include the following:

1. School divisions indicate that students are being given the opportunity to take a more active role in planning. Further research needs to occur to determine how they can incorporate student voice to contribute to and inform school division planning.
2. Interview participants noted the importance of practical skill building and professional learning opportunities among staff. It would be helpful to determine the ramifications of school division professional development models and funding structures, and their impact on school division planning.

3. An idea that came through quite clearly involved the need for flexibility and creativity in planning. More information is required on how various models of creativity impact on the effectiveness and functionality of planning.
4. Some interview participants emphasized the importance of taking a positive stance when engaging in dialogue and planning. One participant suggested the use of an appreciative stance, adopted from Appreciative Inquiry (Cooperrider, 1990). Further exploration is required as to whether Appreciative Inquiry can provide an enhanced vehicle for the planning process and critical planning dialogue.
5. There was a collective understanding by study participants that planning is complex and non-linear in nature. One participant discussed the advantage of setting indicators that were not directly aimed at reaching the criteria of the outcomes. More research is required to explore how the establishment of causal or leading indicators can assist in strengthening the link between educational intentions and related actions.
6. It is challenging to determine from the results of this study whether planning practices, as suggested by the literature, actually result in improved programming outcomes for school divisions. I acknowledge that, although it was not the intention of this study, that a more critical view of the literature would be helpful in this regard.

The purpose of this study was to narrow the gap in the loosely coupled context of education, between the myth of planning cited in the literature, and the reality of engaging in concrete educational activities. Despite the need for additional research in specific areas of school division planning, the results of this study demonstrated that there

are key features of school division planning identified from the literature, and from the perspectives of educators in participating school divisions, that will improve the linkages between strategic educational intentions and related actions. By engaging in the archetypes of planning suggested in this study, educational planning may not be viewed simply as a rationalized or bureaucratic myth, but rather as an active and authentic process that will set the stage for organizational improvement and change.

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Appendix A

Template of Planning and Reporting (Manitoba)

STUDENT SERVICES PLANNING REPORT 2008-2009			
Fully describe the Student Services planning process. Detail the involvement of your planning team (students, staff, families and the community) in the planning process.			
Report on previous years outcomes. Please comment on successes and progress towards meeting previous student services plans.			
Step 7	Outcomes targeted (from previous plans)	Results (end of year status, data or anecdotal evidence)	Enter First *D*iscontin *O*ngoing *M*ile
	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
	5.		
2008-2009 Student Services Plan			
Step 8	Expected Outcome (What specifically are you trying to improve for students? (Observable, measurable))	Indicators (How will you know you are making progress?)	Strategies (What actions will you take?)
	1.		
	2.		
	3.		
	4.		
	5.		
Date: Division Contact:			
School Division Planning Report 2008-2009, including Student Services Report, Categorical Grant Report and Budget Report			

Appendix B

Sample School Division Interview Questions

1. What are the Divisional needs and priorities?
2. What are the desired outcomes and the strategies to meet them?
3. What data was collected and what is it telling us?
4. What are the growing needs? How can they be addressed?
5. What are the successes? How can they be shared?
6. What are the areas that require different approaches?
7. What are the lessons learned from your work?
8. What will you monitor? What will you notice is different?
9. How have students benefited? How do we know?
10. Comment on how school division planning is aligned with the categorical grants.

Appendix C

Sample Consent Form – Superintendent/CEO

Statement of Informed Consent for the Superintendent/CEO

Research Project Title: From Knowledge to Action: Defining Effective and Functional School Division Planning Practices to Maximize Organizational Improvement and Change

Researcher: Lesley Eblie Trudel, Ph.D. Candidate in Education

Dear Colleague:

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I am writing to request the participation of your school division in a research study on the topic of educational planning at the school division level. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with a brief description of the research, the procedures and relevant details. Participation in this study is completely voluntary, and any involvement, first, requires your informed consent.

The practice of education planning across Canada is established for the manifest purpose of guiding school improvement. In Manitoba the planning process is reportedly intended to improve linkages that will increase efficiency and enhance communication, thereby improving educational outcomes for all students (Manitoba Education, 2004; 2007). The problem arises in a practical sense, however, in determining whether the education planning process creates the necessary linkage between strategic intentions and activities, or whether the planning process exists simply as a bureaucratic requirement or condition (Meyer and Rowan, 1983).

This research study is designed to determine whether there are systemic features of school division planning for Student Services, which will result in improved linkages between educational intentions and related actions, making the process more effective and functional. With the assistance of selected school divisions participating in this study, I will create an archetype or model which will capture the essential characteristics and practices of Student Services planning, a process that is more likely to set the stage for organizational improvement and generate future change. This study will take place in selected school divisions both in the City of Winnipeg and in rural areas of southern and central Manitoba.

My research plan with participating school divisions is to collect data through an interview process. Interview questions on the topic of school division planning will be forwarded in advance for purposes of consideration and preparation. In order to best respond to the interview questions, I am asking that participants focus on the concrete aspect of school division planning for students with challenging behaviours. By defining one aspect of planning as a focus, participants will be able to offer their perspectives on planning practices within a familiar and identified context.

Three, separate, one hour interviews will be conducted at a location of your choice, to complete the research plan with your school division. I am asking for one interview with you as Superintendent/CEO, one interview with your Student Services Administrator, and one additional interview with a key person involved in divisional planning for students with challenging behaviours. Should you consent to participation in this study on behalf of your school division, an additional consent form will be forwarded to you, prior to participating in the individual interview process. I am also asking for your assistance in distributing a letter of invitation to the other potential interview participants that I have identified, with information on how they can contact me regarding their willingness to be involved in this study.

With the consent of participants, I will transcribe each interview on a laptop computer and then save the information to a password protected, external memory device. Simultaneously, each interview will be audio taped for future clarification, assurance of accuracy and authenticity in transcription. Permission will also be obtained from participants for audio taping. A comprehensive member check will be used after the interviews have been completed in order to allow participants the opportunity to evaluate the fairness and validity of my interpretation of interview responses (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Transcripts of each individual interview will be forwarded to participants with a cover letter, one page response form and self-addressed, stamped envelope. Participants will be asked to specify any additions, deletions or changes to the transcript, and will be asked if they have any final comments. . As well, at the end of the study, I will provide an executive summary of the research results to all participants.

All information will be held fully confidential. I will not document the actual names of the school divisions, nor participants involved in the study. I will simply identify each by an unrelated pseudonym. Only my advisor, Dr. Zana Lutfiyya and I will have access to any raw data collected as part of the study. The data will be maintained in a locked filing cabinet located in my home, and will be destroyed after the completion of my dissertation.

On a practical level, this study will assist educational leaders in considering the discrepancies or similarities between the theoretical implications presented in the literature on planning for change, and the actual planning processes in their school divisions. Those involved with Student Services planning will have an opportunity to compare and gauge their own perceptions of the divisional planning process with that of other examples in the study. The findings of this study on Student Services planning practices will assist in narrowing the gap or increasing the connection between strategic

intentions and resulting actions. In this way, the planning process might not be viewed simply as a bureaucratic requirement, but may be regarded as an effective and functional practice which has the potential to generate organizational improvement and eventual change. In addition to the executive summary of research that will be shared with participants, the results of this study will be documented to complete my dissertation. I plan to write a short article summarizing the research for publication in scholarly journals and intend to present this research at education conferences.

There are no identifiable risks associated with participation in this study. While it is unlikely that I will hear of or see abuse during the course of my study, should this occur, I am required by law to report my finding according to The Revised Manitoba Guidelines on Identifying and Reporting a Child in Need of Protection.

Your signature on this consent form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participation on behalf of your school division. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

If you have any further questions regarding this research study, please contact me, Lesley Eblie Trudel, at XXX-XXXX, or my advisor, Dr. Zana Lutfiyya, at XXX-XXXX.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (REB). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at XXX-XXXX or e-mail XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Signature of Superintendent on behalf of _____ School Division

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix D

Sample Consent Form – Participants

Statement of Informed Consent for Interview Participants

Research Project Title: From Knowledge to Action: Defining Effective and Functional School Division Planning Practices to Maximize Organizational Improvement and Change

Researcher: Lesley Eblie Trudel, Ph.D. Candidate in Education

Dear Colleague:

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I am writing to request your participation in a research study on the topic of educational planning at the school division level. Consent has been gained to conduct this study in your school division. As participation is completely voluntary, however, any further involvement requires your informed consent. The purpose of this letter is to provide you with a brief description of the research, as well as information on the procedures and relevant details for you to make an informed decision regarding participation.

The practice of education planning across Canada is established for the manifest purpose of guiding school improvement. In Manitoba the planning process is reportedly intended to improve linkages that will increase efficiency and enhance communication, thereby improving educational outcomes for all students (Manitoba Education, 2004; 2007). The problem arises in a practical sense, however, in determining whether the education planning process creates the necessary linkage between strategic intentions and activities, or whether the planning process exists simply as a bureaucratic requirement or condition (Meyer and Rowan, 1983).

This research study is designed to determine whether there are systemic features of school division planning for Student Services, which will result in improved linkages between educational intentions and related actions, making the process more effective and functional. With the assistance of school division leaders in this study, I will create an archetype or model which will capture the essential characteristics and practices of Student Services planning, a process that more likely to set the stage for organizational improvement and generate future change. This study will take place in selected school divisions both in the City of Winnipeg and in rural areas of southern and central Manitoba.

My research plan is to collect data through an interview process. Interview questions on the topic of school division planning will be forwarded in advance for your consideration and preparation. In order to best respond to the interview questions, I am asking that you offer your perspectives within the familiar context of planning for students with challenging behaviours. An interview of approximately one hour will be conducted with you, at a location of your choice.

With your informed consent, I will transcribe the interview, on a laptop computer and then save the information to a password protected, external memory device. Simultaneously, the interview will be audio taped for future clarification, assurance of accuracy and authenticity in transcription. A comprehensive member check will be used after the interview has been completed in order for you to evaluate the fairness and validity of my interpretation of your interview responses (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). Transcripts of each individual interview will be forwarded with a cover letter, one page response form and self-addressed, stamped envelope. You will be asked to specify any additions, deletions or changes to the transcript, and will be asked if there are any final comments. As well, at the end of the study, I will provide you with an executive summary of the research results to all participants.

All information will be held fully confidential. I will not document your actual name, nor the name of your school division. Names will be identified by an unrelated pseudonym. Only my advisor, Dr. Zana Lutfiyya and I will have access to any raw data collected as part of the study. The data will be maintained in a locked filing cabinet located in my home, and will be destroyed after the completion of my dissertation.

On a practical level, I believe this study will assist you as an educational leader, in considering the discrepancies or similarities between the implications presented in the literature on planning for change, and the actual planning processes in your school division. Those involved with Student Services planning will have an opportunity to compare and gauge their perceptions of the divisional planning process with that of other examples in the study. The findings of this study on Student Services planning practices will assist in narrowing the gap or increasing the connection between strategic intentions and resulting actions. In this way, planning processes might not be viewed simply as a bureaucratic requirement, but may be considered to be an effective and functional practice which has the potential to generate organizational improvement and eventual change. In addition to the executive summary of research that will be shared with you, the results of this study will be documented to complete my dissertation. I also plan to write a short article summarizing the research for publication in scholarly journals and intend to present this research at education conferences.

There are no identifiable risks associated with participation in this study. While it is unlikely that I will hear of or see abuse during the course of my study, should this occur, I am required by law to report my finding according to The Revised Manitoba Guidelines on Identifying and Reporting a Child in Need of Protection.

Your signature on this consent form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participation on behalf of your school division. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

If you have any further questions regarding this research study, please contact me, Lesley Eblie Trudel, at XXX-XXXX, or my advisor, Dr. Zana Lutfiyya, at XXX-XXXX.

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (REB). If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at XXX-XXXX or e-mail XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Signature of Interview Participant

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix E – Interview Questions

i. Interview Questions for Superintendents

The following questions will be addressed in the individual interview with the person in the Superintendent - CEO position of each school division involved in this study. Interview participants will be asked to consider their responses within the context of school division planning for students with challenging behaviours. Interview questions will be forwarded to participants in advance and participants will be invited to bring any documentation which they believe will help to support their responses to the questions. This may include but not be limited to information on, student placement in the school division, behaviour intervention plans, categorical funding, student suspensions and incident reports.

1. Can you describe what motivates you about planning in your school division?
2. If one were to describe the planning process in your school division what would be said?
3. How are parents or guardians included in the planning process?
4. How do you inform and involve your community?
5. What are the planning priorities of your school division and how would a person become aware of them?
6. What is the role of the board of trustees in setting priorities for the school division?
7. Describe the process of setting school division outcomes. How are stakeholders involved?
8. How are school division planning strategies developed? Indicators?
9. What role does data play to inform the selection of outcomes, strategies and indicators?
10. Which characteristics of the planning process do you perceive to result in a greater link between what you know and what you do? How come?
11. What personal attributes do you believe are important to the planning process?
12. How do you approach conflict when it arises in the planning process?
13. What aspects of the planning process have worked well for you?
14. How do you measure what you have achieved through planning in your school division?
15. How has the school division planning process informed your discussions about the direction of education in your school division?

ii. Interview Questions for Student Services Administrators

The following questions will be addressed in the individual interview with the person in the Student Services Administrator position of each school division involved in this study. Interview participants will be asked to consider their responses within the context of school division planning for students with challenging behaviours. Interview questions will be forwarded to participants in advance and participants will be invited to bring any documentation which they believe will help to support their responses to the questions. This may include but not be limited to information on, student placement in the school division, behaviour intervention plans, categorical funding, student suspensions or incident reports.

1. Can you describe what motivates you about planning in your school division?
2. What are the priorities of your school division and how would a person become aware of them?
3. If one were to describe the Student Services planning process or structure in your school division what would be said?
4. How are parents or guardians included in the Student Services planning process?
5. How do you inform and involve your community in Student Services planning?
6. What is the process of setting outcomes for Student Services in the school division plan? How are the outcomes related to school division priorities?
7. How are Student Services planning strategies developed? Indicators?
8. What role does data play to inform the selection of outcomes, strategies and indicators?
9. Which characteristics of the Student Services planning process do you perceive to result in a greater link between knowledge and action? How come?
10. What types of supports are most helpful to you in the Student Services planning process?
11. What personal attributes do you believe are important to the planning process?
12. How do you approach conflict when it arises in the planning process?
13. What aspects of the planning process have worked well for you?
14. How do you measure what you have achieved through Student Services planning in your school division?
15. How has the school division planning process informed your discussions about the direction of education in your school division?

iii. Interview Questions for Key Personnel Identified by the School Division

The following questions will be addressed in the individual interview with the key person identified by each school division in this study. Interview participants will be asked to consider their responses within the context of school division planning for students with challenging behaviours. Interview questions will be forwarded to participants in advance and participants will be invited to bring any documentation which they believe will help to support their responses to the questions. This may include but not be limited to information on, student placement in the school division, behaviour intervention plans, categorical funding, student suspensions or incident reports.

1. Can you describe what motivates you about planning in your school division?
2. What are the priorities of your school division and how would a person become aware of them?
3. If one were to describe the Student Services planning process or structure in your school division what would be said?
4. What is your involvement in the Student Services Planning Process?
5. Do you provide any resources to assist in the planning process? What have you found useful in this regard?
6. What is the process of setting outcomes for Student Services in the school division plan?
7. How are Student Services planning strategies developed? Indicators?
8. What role does data play to inform the selection of outcomes, strategies and indicators?
9. Which characteristics of the Student Services planning process do you perceive to result in a greater link between what you know and what you do? How come?
10. What types of supports are most helpful to you in the Student Services planning process?
11. What personal attributes do you believe are important to the planning process?
12. How do you approach conflict when it arises in the planning process?
13. What aspects of the planning process have worked well for you?
14. How do you measure what you have achieved through Student Services planning in your school division?
15. How has the school division planning process informed your discussions about the direction of education in your school division?