# The Use of The Accelerated Schools Model in School Planning and Development: A Case Study

By

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# Abstract

It is acknowledged that in schools today it is necessary to develop a wider range of strategies in order to meet all the student needs. The requirements of society in the future appear to require people to obtain a solid basic education, and as well develop the motivation to engage in ongoing learning. At the same time, schools are able to identify more and more students who are at risk of failing to attain minimal literacy and numeracy skills.

The Accelerated Schools Model is a model that sets high but appropriate goals for all students, and as such is focussed on achieving improved learning for all students. In order to do this, it provides a framework for systematic school change. The framework defines a process that maintains a focus on academic achievement and involves three principles: (1) unity of purpose, (2) empowerment coupled with responsibility, and (3) a focus on strengths. Beyond this, it allows the development of unique components suitable to a particular school.

This is a case study of a high-needs school that used the Accelerated Schools Model in order to change and develop to meet the needs of its students. The study follows an implementation process over three years. The evaluation model for the project is one developed by Aoki. It is a model that includes three orientations for evaluation and as such includes empirical data as well as situational observations and reflections of stake holders.

The study concluded that the process defined by the Accelerated Schools Model is effective in addressing a wide variety of initiatives in school change process. At this school the model allowed all stake holders to participate in a meaningful way, and ensured that roles were defined and all voices were heard. The leadership role was identified as holding the responsibility for vision, facilitation, support and empowerment through the development of a culture in which staff feel trusted and supported in risk taking. Sufficient resources were seen as a necessity to the successful implementation of the model. Because it defined process rather than content, the model was suitable for an evolving environment. It was found that once the model was understood by stake holders, it could provide continuity through a change in administrators, and it could also be useful for addressing government mandates for parental involvement in school planning.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It would not be possible for a project such as this to be completed without the efforts of a great many people. During the process described in the three years of this study, there was a great deal of commitment on the part of a great number of people that enhanced the educational success of the children in this community. All of those who worked with me during this time, staff and community members, are people toward whom I feel a great deal of both professional respect and friendship, and I would like to thank them and acknowledge their contributions.

The experience of writing this thesis has been on of considerable personal investment and growth for me. I cannot bring this work to completion without including thanks some other special people who formed part of my support network. In particular, I would like to extend sincere thanks to my advisor Lars Janssen. Lars was patient enough to listen to me, provide ideas and advice and gently prod me along when I "lost the thread". I have always felt more committed after our discussions and have enjoyed our time together. As well, thanks to the other members of my committee, Denis Hlynka and Sheldon Rosenstock; Denis especially for the conversations that helped focus my ideas and keep my enthusiasm alive, and Sheldon for asking some of the "tough questions" to help ensure I was on track.

# DEDICATION

Dedication is certainly required to complete a task such as this, but it is not only the dedication of the writer. At this point, I would like to dedicate this work to those who are most important to me and who have, through the years dedicated so much to me - my family. To Kerry for his love, encouragement , incredible support and belief in me - even when it added greatly to his own load; to my mother for always believing in me; to Deloris for so much for so many years; and to Shannon and Daron for providing the ultimate reason for doing this - to show them, as they plan for their future, the satisfaction of working to make a dream come true.

Finally, I would like to recognize a special connection. I'm told that there is a study that has indicated that there is evidence that successful women often have in their backgrounds a particularly strong relationship with their fathers. My Dad was always there for me and showed me that energy, determination and hard work can make things happen that have never happened before. Some of the most emotionally satisfying times of my life have come as I've seen his pride in, and enjoyment of my accomplishments. His strength of character made a real difference in this world and it has also been his gift to me. Making a difference for people was my purpose in this project.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction and Statement of the Problem

It is acknowledged that in schools today it is necessary to develop a wider range of strategies in order to meet all the student needs. There is considerable research available in the area of best practice and effective strategies to effectively implement educational programming that can continue to change and evolve to meet the needs of students. This research, however, is not often systematically applied and considered in the development of overall school plans.

The consensus of "expert opinion" is that a systematic process is required (Fullan, 1982). This ecological approach recognizes that changes in one part of a system influence the other parts. Consequently, staff development both influences and is influenced by the organizational context in which it takes place. (Sparks, Loucks-Horsley, 1989, p.54). If school planning is to take place on an ongoing basis, it is important to have a framework or model that will allow for "keeping track" of what has happened in the past in order to be able to effectively build on it in future and to ensure that all issues that need to be addressed, have been addressed. There is a need for research into the implementation of such a process and the effect it has on the growth of students and staff. The goal of this thesis will be to report a case study of a school that has used such a model. The primary audience for this study is those in the education community who are involved in the planning and growth process in schools. Since it describes a process that involves several stake holders, including parents and students, it might also be of interest and

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use to parents or members of parent advisory groups who are trying to gain some insights into the components of school planning.

## HISTORY AND CONTEXT

The school project began as I assumed the position of principal of the school in September,1992. This was a school with a population of approximately 250 students in kindergarten to grade 9, in a community with many high needs students and families. As such, my viewpoint reflects a leadership perspective, but will also include evidence gathered from other sources to provide a view of what happened from other perspectives.

When I was assigned to the school, all of the stake holder groups were in considerable distress. The previous administrator had been away for some time due to illness. Several other staff members were also ill, and others were asking for transfers to situations they would find less stressful. Students were not particularly happy with their school and their achievement was well below average; parents were concerned that the school was not meeting their childrens' needs (Chapter 4 will provide further details).

My study is that of the three years I was at the school, from September, 1992 until June, 1995. The implementation of the model continues to date, and I will use some of the current information in my analysis, but the parameters of this document will be to look specifically at the change process over the three years - how it was led, what impact it had on student achievement, staff professional growth and community satisfaction. The implementation of the new model in the school was supported by a series of grant proposals that provided assistance, both in setting philosophy and providing time and other resources needed. The

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documentation of these grants provides the core material I will use to unfold the story. In my leadership role in the school, I was involved in their creation in a variety of ways that ranged from actually being the author, after consultation with staff and community, to being the facilitator and editor that supported these groups as they moved ahead independently. An important element of the philosophy I took to the school was a strong belief that leadership involved the creation of a vision, but also that the goal of an effective leader was to be involved ultimately in a shared vision with staff and community. During the first year of this project, the planning and envisioning of what might take place began as something that involved much more input from me as an initiator who involved others in the discussion necessary to plan for adoption and implementation of the goals developed. That is, the leadership role had a heavy component in the area of "keeper of the vision". As the first year progressed and the project moved into later years, the vision became very much a shared vision that was "owned" by all involved.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Given that the project that generated this report took place over three years, and involved comprehensive change in many areas, there is a significant amount of material to examine. As a result, my questions are broad and cover a wide range of inquiry. In the context described above, they are the following:

- What did the process look like in the school?
- What were the strengths of the ASM in this particular situation?
- What were the roles of the participants in this process? In particular in the area of leadership:

Is a plan only as good as the leadership of it?

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How is leadership translated into action?

How does it create a culture in the community?

Is that culture sustainable over time?

Is the culture visible to others outside the community?

- What were some of the resources that enhanced the potential for success of the model?
- Was the ASM a success? That is, did it have an impact on student growth and success, teacher professional development and community satisfaction?

## AOKI'S MODEL FOR ASSESSMENT OF THE PROJECT

When I speak of the project undertaken, I am referring to the overall venture as a "project". In fact, the project is a look at the use of the model to establish a process for operation that will meet present and future needs in the school. Given the comprehensive nature of an undertaking such as the implementation of a model to govern the operation of a school plan, it became obvious early in the project that there would be a need to establish a framework with which to evaluate the project. Aoki's model for evaluation was chosen because of the three perspectives for evaluation it provides. This was important given the variety of stake holders whose input would impact a decision as to the success or failure of the project. Aoki uses three orientations to examine what is happening in a particular situation. His technical, situational interpretive and critical theoretic orientations provide a voice for all of the stake holders. I believe that this type of reflection is appropriate and important in looking at school programming as an evolutionary endeavour as

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reflected by Cleo Cherryholmes (1986). The varying perspectives that this model will provide put forward data to answer the question of the impact of the project upon the stake holders involved, and as well will enable some reflection as to the flexibility of the model, its sustainability at the school and possible applications to other situations.

## DELIMITATIONS

Considering a project that involves as comprehensive a body of material as there is in school restructuring over a period of time requires choices as to the main areas of attention. The following areas are those chosen for attention in the study.

### Use of the Accelerated Schools Model in the Change Process

The accelerated schools approach provides a process model for the operation of a school. An accelerated school is a school that has been transformed through the Accelerated Schools philosophy and process to bring all of its students into the academic mainstream. The emphasis in this process is to establish a blend of theory and practice in which every dimension of the school is transformed, rather than focusing on incremental and piecemeal changes. (Hopfenberg, Levin & Assoc.; 1993, p.2).

In this study, I wished to undertake an examination of the use of this model to effectively implement an ongoing change process that would allow a school to implement new curricula, use best teaching practices, and combine these two factors effectively to meet individual needs of students. The use of the components of the ASM helps ensure that there is a process for evolution to happen as well as a means to assess, record and share it.

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It was anticipated that the effects of the implementation of the model would be quite evident, as its use was a significant change to existing practice. When the project began, the school was in a state of disarray. The divisional personnel who discussed my placement there with me described a situation where the former administrator had been ill for a long period of time, and many staff members were also being affected by the related stresses. In the words of one staff member, "An effective change was desperately needed" (Parsons, 1995).

Stake Holder Involvement

The Accelerated Schools Model is a model that sets high, but attainable goals for students with the intent of instilling in all students the motivation and support needed to achieve success (Hopfenberg, Levin & Assoc.; 1993, p. 17). The measure of success in all areas is the positive effects their implementation has on students.

In order to achieve the desired success for students, it was important for all community stake holders to be involved.

> Children who grow up sharing resources and knowledge,
> collaborating to reach common goals, helping and being helped,
> serving a community that gives them access to everything it has, and
> identifying across social boundaries will become empathic,
> compassionate adults. Also growing up empowered with choice and
> self-direction, convinced by this of their innate worth and capacity,
> they will feel their inner divinity, the highest form of self-esteem.
> (Moffett, 1994, p. xix)

In order to attain the above, there was also to be a focus on best practice for staff. This includes work in the areas of school structure and management as well as staff development.

The project occurred at a time when the climate in the school division encouraged solution-seeking to meet the needs of students and there was divisional and provincial government encouragement and support, both financial and managerial, for innovation to change the culture of particularly high needs schools such as this (i.e.. a low socioeconomic population with a high incidence of single parent families) where a plausible plan was presented. Such a plan would need to include a plan for the involvement of parents.

## Importance of Leadership

In this particular case study, as well as focusing on best practice through these themes, there was also an opportunity to look at the leadership component involved in the school. The challenge of collaboration is ultimately a challenge of administrative leadership: to facilitate, not to control; to show that kind of trust and respect for teachers which teachers are expected to show among themselves. (Hargreaves, 1989, p.23).

This study may offer pertinent information to others in a leadership position seeking to find effective strategies to create school situations that will meet the needs of children from low socioeconomic areas, and strategies that will overcome such issues as teacher dissatisfaction, student apathy, and parent hostility.

## Focus Components Identified

The study uses an examination of several themes and best practices and monitors their implementation using the ASM. For convenience, it would have been ideal to examine the implementation of only one initiative, and the use of the Accelerated Schools Model in monitoring it. The reality in schools is however, that

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initiatives do not often come in isolation. The move to implement a strategy that meets a particular need will most often create further needs in related areas that must be addressed; and in turn, addressing the new need will surface others. During the years of this project, it became necessary to look at a variety of areas within the school once the change process was started. At times the speed at which new priorities that could not be ignored arose was somewhat daunting. At these times, the availability of a model with which to prioritize and plan to handle these needs became essential in order to avoid chaos. I have listed the components that were identified by stake holders and considered as part of this project in figure 1.1 below. Although not all of these initiatives were cost items, all were framed by the various grant initiatives, and as such were important to the overall project.



| | | **At Risk Grant Supports** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| School Structure | Curriculum Investigation | Assessment | Community Involvement | Staff Development | Project Assessment |
| | | Parent Education | Collaboration | Reflection | |
| | Curriculum Integration | | | Action Research | |
| Multi-age Organization | Curriculum Implementation | Reporting | Outside Agency Resource Links | Individual Goal Setting | School Planning |

figure 1.1

Time line for the Project

This project took place over a three year period form September, 1992 to June, 1995 while I was an administrator at the school. An interesting advantage to my writing about this case at this time, is that I am writing as a participant in a

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leadership position, but also as an onlooker since I am no longer at the school. I feel this gave me a unique opportunity to look at what was accomplished from both an internal and external viewpoint. Also because this was written from a past perspective I was able to provide some more current material from the school in order to draw further conclusions about the sustainability and limitations of what happened within the project.

In summary, the study has been framed by decisions to examine those issues just described, and by my personal role in the project.

## LIMITATIONS

This project has limitations as to it how it can be generalized. The fact that it is process-oriented makes this project unable to be transferred to another setting as a finished product. It is not based on a predetermined set of instructions for a particular curriculum, but rather the use of the Accelerated Schools Model for the development of strategies and plans to help individual students meet appropriate outcomes.

The fact that there has been such a model used, and record keeping done, may allow others who are interested in what happened in this case, to determine a process for using the model in their own setting.

## ORGANIZATION OF THE THESIS

In the chapters to follow, the substance of the project will unfold:

- Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature that is important to the study. It will look at some of the literature on the change process itself, the literature of the Accelerated Schools Model, the Aoki model for evaluation as well as literature

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describing the multi age format for program delivery.

- Chapter 3 describes the procedure for the study and the data collection process to be used.

- Chapter 4 forms the main part of this work and describes the three years at the school during which the project unfolded. Included is a discussion of the grant support received by the school, and the roles of administration, staff and community as themes and practices are implemented. It is an account of how one step led to another, often more rapidly than expected, and how the use of the ASM facilitated successful implementation of these new processes.

- Chapter 5 looks specifically at the use of Aoki's model to evaluate the project. The model was used to evaluate the effectiveness of the project and draw conclusions as to its strengths and shortcomings from various perspectives.

- Chapter 6 provides a summary of the study, examines the conclusions that can be drawn as answers to the questions posed, and looks at recommendations as to possible further areas for study.

# Chapter 2

## Review Of The Literature

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>

This chapter will examine the various bodies of literature that were important in undertaking the project and seeking answers to the research questions. It begins by looking at some up-to-date literature on change processes involving schools that provided the impetus for the project. It then examines Aoki's model as an evaluation tool. Following that, it looks at literature describing the Accelerated Schools Model and also examines some other arenas where this model has been used.

<u>THE USE OF CHANGE LITERATURE</u>

The goal of this study was the documentation of the many steps, and the rationale behind these steps, that were taken to bring about change at the school over a three year period as recorded in reports, grant applications and presentations. The task began as the broad determination of a plan to restructure and reconceptualize a school to best meet the needs of its community. It started as an examination of the single area of restructuring to include a multi-age format in the primary classrooms. It grew to an integrated complexity that flowed from the needs of the community, and the professional commitment and teamwork of the staff involved in trying to meet those needs. It was based on a commitment to improving education for all of the students in the school. The first step was to determine a framework or model within which to work. The task was to look, with the staff and community, at the philosophy that would drive the school. The formation of the school's philosophy began in ongoing discussions with the stake holders involved, first staff and administration, then parents and students, and then

outside parties who could add to the information pool and provide feedback for further discussion at the school community level. Discussions were supported and influenced by research in the area of change and articles, books and presentations by a variety of current authors with expertise in educational applications. Monthly staff meetings, professional development days, team meetings and general school discussions of topics of interest began to reflect a culture where the discussion of educational issues and research was valued. Sometimes the focus of discussion at particular meetings was a particular book or article that seemed pertinent. At other times, books or articles were sought out by some team members when expertise was needed in a certain area, and then shared with other colleagues. Eventually the process of consulting literature became part of the culture of the project, and it was commonplace for team members to be seeking out literature related to what they were doing and either sharing what they had learned with colleagues or referring colleagues to sources they thought would be of interest. Included were the books and articles listed in the references section of this document as well as others, some of which are represented in figure 2.1.

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<u>Books And articles Pertinent to the Project</u>

- Bingham, A.(1995); <u>Exploring the Multi-Age Classroom,</u> Stenhouse Publishers

- Dyer, John; Agreement Management: Process Skills and Strategies for Collaborative Decision Making; <u>Administrators' Retreat, St. Vital School Division,</u> April, 1995

- Fullan, Michael: Teacher Leadership: A Failure to Conceptualize: <u>Written to appear in Teachers as Leaders:Perspectives on the Professional Development of Teachers; Phi Delta Kappan</u>

- Hart-Hewins, L. / Villiers, U.; <u>Multi-Age Groupings in the Early Years (1997);</u>

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Pembroke Publishers Limited

• Johnson, David & Johnson, Roger (1989); Leading the Cooperative School: Interaction Book Company

• Leithwood, Kenneth; Fullan, Michael; Heald-Taylor, Gail: School Level CRDI Procedures To Guide The School Improvement Process; Prepared for the Ministry of Education, Ontario, School Improvement Project, 1987

• Little, Nancy (1988); Student-Led Teacher Parent Conferences; Lugus Productions Limited

• Loucks-Horsley, Susan and Sparks,Dennis; Five Models of Staff Development for Teachers; Journal of Staff Development, Fall 1989, Vol. 10, No.4

• McGreal, T. (1983);Successful Teacher Evaluation; Alexandria, VA.; Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development

• Newmann, Fred. M.; Issues in Restructuring Schools. School Wide Professional Community; Centre on Organization and Restructuring of Schools; Spring, 1994

• PRINCIPAL; January 1993, Volume 72, Number 3; Special Report: Restructuring the Elementary School

• Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada. (1993). Edmonton, Alberta: Joint Advisory Committee

• Snyder, Karolyn; Acker-Hocevar, Michele; Snyder, Kristen M.: Principals Speak Out On Changing School Work Cultures: Journal of Staff Development, Winter, 1996, Vol. 17, No. 1

figure 2.1


## AOKI'S MODEL

A focus for this project was most definitely in the area of evaluation. The article

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on this topic that seemed most interesting was by Ted Aoki (1986), and was entitled

"Interests, Knowledge and Evaluation: Alternative Approaches to Curriculum

Evaluation". Using a variety of orientations, Aoki's model involves combining

evaluations from different perspectives to provide a complete picture of the effect of an

innovation. Aoki's model is based on the premise that school and curriculum

implementation are linked to curriculum evaluation, and as such can be measured through

the evaluation process. Such an evaluation must take into account three points of view in

order to ensure a thorough examination has taken place.

The framework of Aoki's model is based on a series of orientations for evaluation

that involve a more multi-faceted examination of a situation that includes both the

scientific gathering of data as well as components of reflection and metacognition.

The first of Aoki's orientations is the *means-ends* or *technical* orientation. This is

an approach that is consistent with the scientific approach of data gathering to determine

how well a particular approach achieves a defined set of goals. It is an evaluation that is

defined and controlled. It efficiently gathers facts, considers set criteria, and generalizes

from the comparison between the criteria and the results indicated by the data. The insight

it can offer involves examination of results that can be attained when certain aspects of the

situation being examined are controlled.

The second of Aoki's orientations is the *situational interpretive* orientation. This

is an evaluation that considers the interpretation of a situation as it is seen by the various

participants in the situation. Given that different people have quite different

interpretations of the same situation, this orientation considers the communication

between participants to discuss their experiences and determine common understandings

they may have. This orientation generates data that describes the quality of life of those in

the situation being evaluated, and provides information as to how each stake holder group

in a community perceives the relevance, meaningfulness and appropriateness of a particular curriculum, program or project.

Aoki's third perspective is the *critical theoretic* orientation. This orientation reflects on the underlying assumptions that influence how people approach and interpret a situation. In this approach, the evaluator is a part of the process as he or she attempts to engage participants in reflection. The reflections thus generated serve to help identify previously held assumptions and allow participants to move beyond them to surface further questions that may be addressed in ongoing conversations, investigations and reflections.

Aoki's multiple approach creates a rich collection of evaluative data that provides direct measurement of achievement, consideration of the interpretation of the stake holders, as well as reflection on the overall process. It can create dilemmas in that there may be many interpretations of a particular situation, depending on the position and experience of the observer, but the point is that the complexities that this creates are a better representation of reality than one "snap shot" assessment, and that curriculum assessment, curriculum building and school improvement are ongoing processes that will be best done by a variety of methods that include measurement, consideration of the feelings of the people involved, and an examination of the delivery of educational programming as problematic and always in need of the transformation brought about through the critical enquiry of those involved in the education process.

Evaluating a process as complex as the use of the ASM to implement processes to guide a school requires a comprehensive plan that considers all the perspectives suggested by Aoki. As evaluation is only one component of what is under investigation in this study, it has been decided to use the framework of Aoki in a less detailed manner than if it had been the main focus of the project. Throughout this study, as data is presented to

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answer the questions posed in chapter 1, the multiple perspectives of Aoki will be used to examine the data and reflect on its meaning. This will ensure that, wherever possible, evaluation provides the perspectives of the leader / evaluator and the participants (staff, parents, students, and community), and their reflections that impact on future planning.

## THE ACCELERATED SCHOOLS MODEL

The main model for this project is the Accelerated Schools Model (ASM). It is a structural model that began with the work of Henry Levin at Stanford University in 1986. It was originally a project designed to accelerate the skills of at risk elementary students to enable them to be in the mainstream by the end of elementary school . It has since expanded to be a model that has application at the middle and secondary school levels (Hopfenberg, Levin & Assoc., 1993, p. xi). It was during discussions with colleagues that the Accelerated Schools Model was first discovered. The school team quickly realized that it fit closely with the goals and needs that were being articulated (see following discussion), and the ASM became the basis on which we planned for the school.

The appeal of this model is that it is based on "an integrated approach to school curriculum, instructional strategies, and organization - a **process** by which parents, students, teachers, support staff, administrators, district offices, and local communities could work together to reach their shared vision" (Hopfenberg, Levin, & Assoc., 1993, p. xi). As such, it provides a framework within which one can work in developing an overall school strategy, not just implement a certain set of initiatives. In doing so, it involves all participants: students, staff, administration, parents and community; and allows all of them to participate in a leadership capacity. Instead of being a project for one facet of a school curriculum, or one that involves one portion of the staff or group of students, this model involves all stake holders in change. This overall participation and understanding is

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fundamental to achieving lasting change that will create a school that is able to continuously reflect and incorporate new strategies to meet the changing needs of its students. Hargreaves, 1994 (p. 8) suggests that "what is at work in the construction of current patterns of educational change is a powerful and dynamic struggle between two immense social forces: those of modernity and post modernity". He describes modernity as an application of a "wealth of scientific and technological understanding and experience to social reform" which creates a condition where there is structure, centralized control, and at times, results in failure to engage and motivate individuals. The movement to post modernity, which he characterizes as beginning in the 1960's, brings a loss of the credibility of scientific certainties, and "the need for flexibility and responsiveness is reflected in decentralized decision-making, along with flatter decision-making structures, reduced specialization and blurring of roles and boundaries" (p. 9). Cherryholmes (1988) states:

> The norm for curriculum, then, is not consensus, stability, and agreement but conflict, instability, and disagreement, because the process is one of construction, followed by deconstruction, by construction...of what students have the opportunity to learn. By explicitly adopting a post structural attitude, educators will avoid the false hope of structural certainty and be in a stronger position to deal with, anticipate, and sometimes, perhaps, predict the fate of the latest post structural era. Along with its uncertainties, ambiguities, and criticisms, there is the promise of understanding more fully how we and others around us have become who we are. The possibility of such power, increased freedom from existing social structures, and more power to create our societies and schools rather than the other way around.(p.149)

Framework Of The Model

The framework provided by the ASM allows for a post structural attitude that will not be a "set-in-stone" solution, but a process that is continuously reflective and responsive to community atmosphere.

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In their investigation of effective strategies for at-risk learners, the developers of this model realized that the approach that is most appropriate is the same approach that is used to provide enrichment for gifted and talented students; that is, an approach that involves the use of the knowledge, talents and resources of the community to provide an innovative and collaborative environment that encourages qualities like equity, trust, participation, reflection and risk taking among the participants. As such this is a model that heavily uses most current and effective strategies to determine high but appropriate goals for all students and strategies for achieving these goals. The creation of a school that will achieve this must consider the post modern conditions of the world today where "Roles and functions now shift constantly in dynamic networks of collaborative responsiveness to successive and unpredictable problems and opportunities" (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 9).

The Accelerated Schools approach started with two schools in 1986. By 1990, it had expanded to fifty-four schools in the United States, and at present, schools are collaborating through the internet in the use of this model in curricular, organizational and staff development areas. The ties between all of these schools are a set of shared values, beliefs and attitudes of the Accelerated Schools model that the authors of the model contend reflect the work of John Dewey and are outlined in the following figure 2.2: (from Hopfenberg, Levin, & Assoc., 1993, p. 31-33)
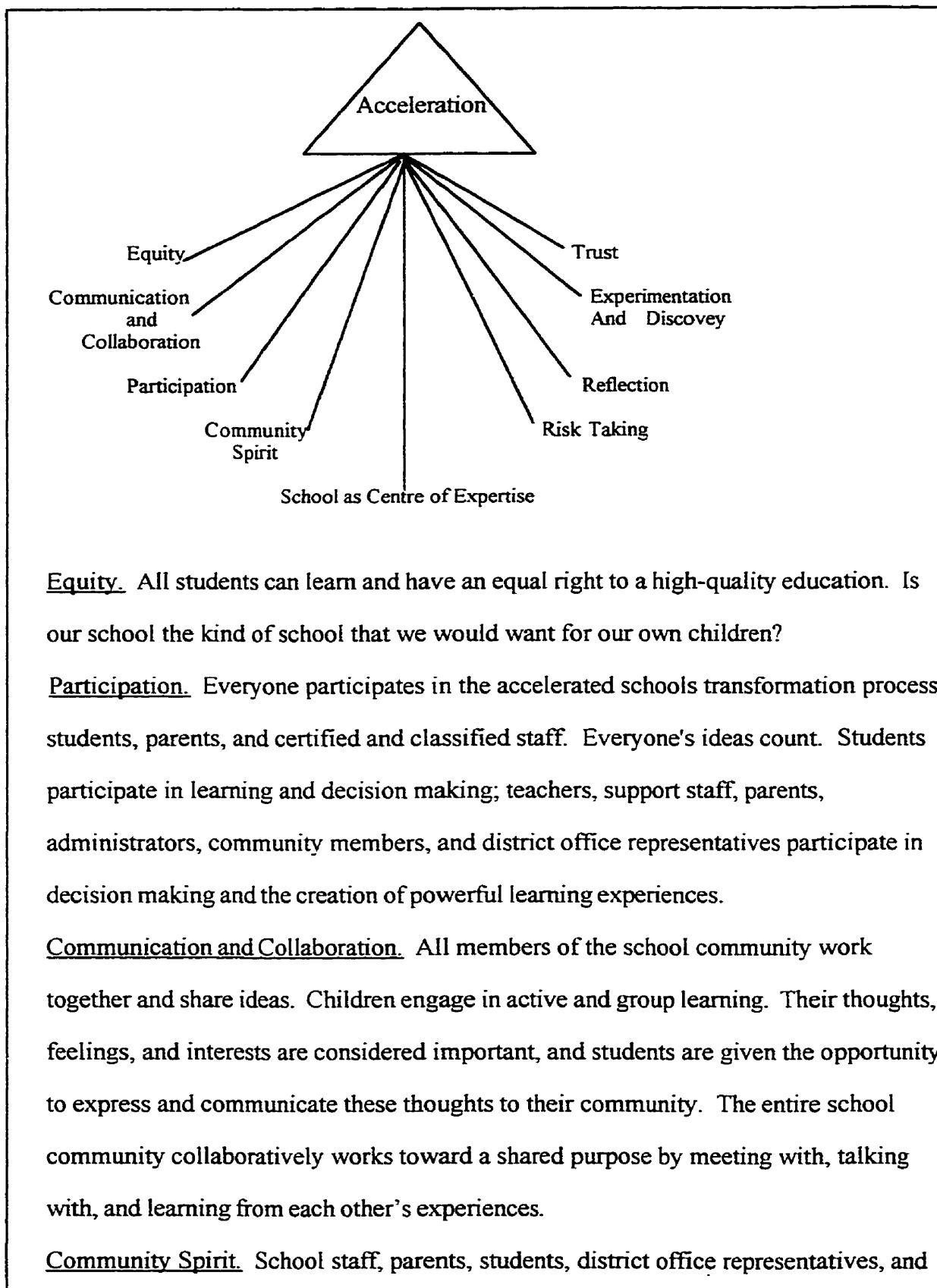
Equity. All students can learn and have an equal right to a high-quality education. Is our school the kind of school that we would want for our own children?

Participation. Everyone participates in the accelerated schools transformation process—students, parents, and certified and classified staff. Everyone's ideas count. Students participate in learning and decision making; teachers, support staff, parents, administrators, community members, and district office representatives participate in decision making and the creation of powerful learning experiences.

Communication and Collaboration. All members of the school community work together and share ideas. Children engage in active and group learning. Their thoughts, feelings, and interests are considered important, and students are given the opportunity to express and communicate these thoughts to their community. The entire school community collaboratively works toward a shared purpose by meeting with, talking with, and learning from each other's experiences.

Community Spirit. School staff, parents, students, district office representatives, and

the local community are all part of the school community. When they succeed, they do so together, because they've built strong connections with each other—all in the service of the children.

Reflection. In transforming a school, we need time to reflect, to do research, to work together, to share ideas. Children engage in problem-solving exercises that develop over time and require an interpretive approach to curricula. The entire school community constantly scrutinizes the world of the school and addresses challenges to school improvement.

Experimentation and Discovery. When members of a school community decide that what they are presently doing is not effective (either for themselves or for the children or both), they change. In changing, we have to take some risks and try some experiments, but they are informed risks and informed experiments. All staff, parents, and students explore, design, and implement experimental programs after communicating about and reflecting on the school's challenges and participating in discovery exercises.

Trust. Trust is essential. Teachers, parents, support staff, administrators, district office representatives, community members, and students come to believe in each other, support one another, and focus on each other's strengths.

Risk Taking. All parties are encouraged to be entrepreneurial in their efforts. While some new programs may fail, the ones that succeed are the keys to lasting school improvement.

School as Center of Expertise. The members of the school community recognize that they possess the vision and the talent they need to make their dreams a reality. The school is a professional community with the expertise to create the best programs for its children, staff, and parents. As a school uses the accelerated schools process, the community itself decides how to do research and when to hire consultants.

figure 2.2

These values were to become the cornerstone of what we were to do in considering the change process within the school. Our decisions were also based on the accelerated schools' belief in powerful learning experiences for all participants as described in the model.

> Powerful learning is complete and total emotional, physical, and intellectual involvement in what you're doing, the problem you're solving, etc. It's launching yourself fearlessly into risk taking because it's ok to try and perhaps fail. And it's lasting, because it affects every fibre of your being and changes your perceptions forever. (Hopfenberg, Levin, & Assoc., 1993, p. 34)

To achieve powerful learning, the Accelerated Schools Model proposes use of both "big wheels" such as taking stock, creating a vision and setting priorities, as well as "little wheels" that are the individual projects that are undertaken to make innovative change in the environment within the context of the big wheels. A powerful learning experience is a three dimensional, integrated process that addresses what we teach, how we teach it and the context (time, personnel, funding, materials, physical space) necessary for it to happen as illustrated in figure 2.3.

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                  /\
                 /  \
     WHAT       /    \       HOW
               /      \
              /        \
             /          \
            /_____\
              CONTEXT
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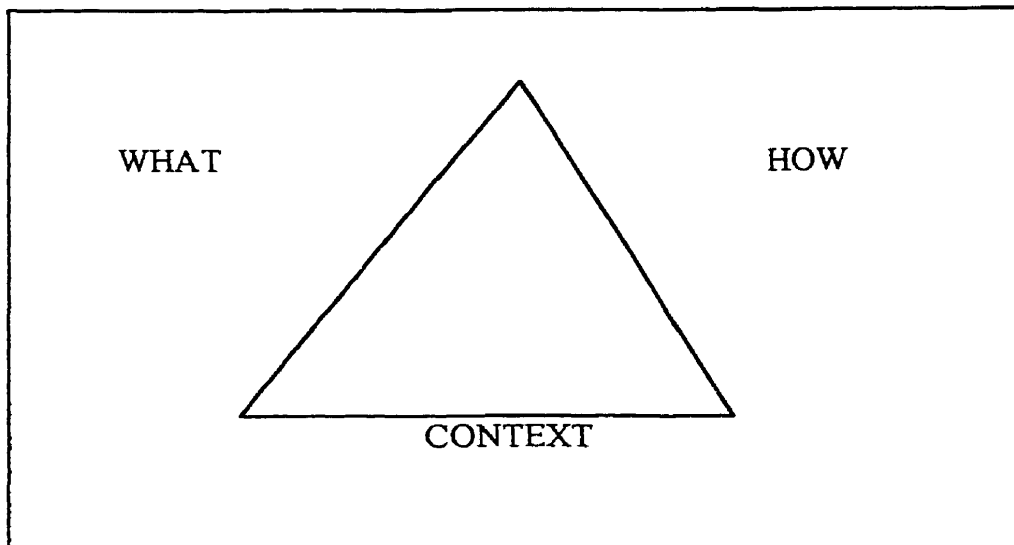
figure 2.3:   (Hopfenberg, Levin, & Assoc., 1993, p.161)


Beginning With The ASM Model

A belief of the authors of this model is that many of the changes that have been

attempted over time have only addressed one facet of powerful learning and therefore

have lesser impact on overall student learning and reduced opportunity for a long term

impact. The integrated approach became a very important part of the work we were

doing, as it became quickly evident that as we made changes in one area of the school, we

generated questions that would affect another area. For example, the multi-age format led

to a need to undertake new evaluation and reporting processes; changes to primary

affected intermediate and junior high grades. Having an overall view was important to all

participants as we worked to address both anticipated and emerging future steps.

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A very helpful model for reference to the staff and community was the following

(see figure 4.4, Hopfenberg, Levin, & Assoc., 1993, p.58):



## Accelerated Schools

### 1. Philosophy

The schools we want for children in at-risk situations should be the same schools we want for our own children.

Powerful learning experiences are provided for all children through the integration of curriculum, instruction, and organization.

Accelerated school communities share a set of values, beliefs, and attitudes.

Three principles:

| Unity of Purpose | Empowerment Coupled with Responsibility | Building on Strengths |

### 2. Systematic Process
(for year one)

**Take Stock**
- Begin to build unity of purpose by bringing everyone together.
- Empower participants to find strengths and challenges.
- Build on the strengths and ideas of people at school.
- Develop a sense of the "here"–baseline data.

**Develop Vision**
- Get everyone–staff, students, parents–involved in developing the vision–the "there."
- Imagine what kind of school you would want for your own child
- Celebrate your shared vision!

**Set Priorities**
- Start to get from "here" to "there."
- Realize that you can't work on everything at once.
- Prioritize differences between taking stock and vision.
- Set out 3 to 5 areas that will be the focus of your cadres.

**Create Governance Structures**
School as a Whole
Steering Com.
Cadres
- Include members of entire school community on all cadres through a self-selection process.
- Build a steering committee of cadre representatives, administrators, parents, students, and community.
- Empower School as a Whole to act as the decision-making body.

**The Inquiry Process**
Focus in on Challenge Area
Evaluate and Reassess
Brainstorm Solutions
Pilot Test and/or Implement Action Plan
Synthesize Solutions: Develop Action Plan
- Focus in on challenge area.
- Brainstorm solutions.
- Synthesize solutions and develop an action plan.
- Pilot test/implement the plan.
- Evaluate and reassess.

figure 2.4

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<u>Collaborative Inquiry</u>

An important feature of the accelerated schools model is its use of a systematic

approach to problem solving that the authors call the *Inquiry Process*. The focus of the

process is to create a school that is a "community of learners" using a collaborative

inquiry process. The process involves both an investigation of why a problem exists as

well as a process to harness the expertise and creativity of those in the school community

to propose a solution, develop an action plan and evaluate and reflect on the process.

Again, this process supports and encourages the values that are the foundation of the

project. (figure 2.5,Hopfenberg & Levin, p. 318).



figure 2.5

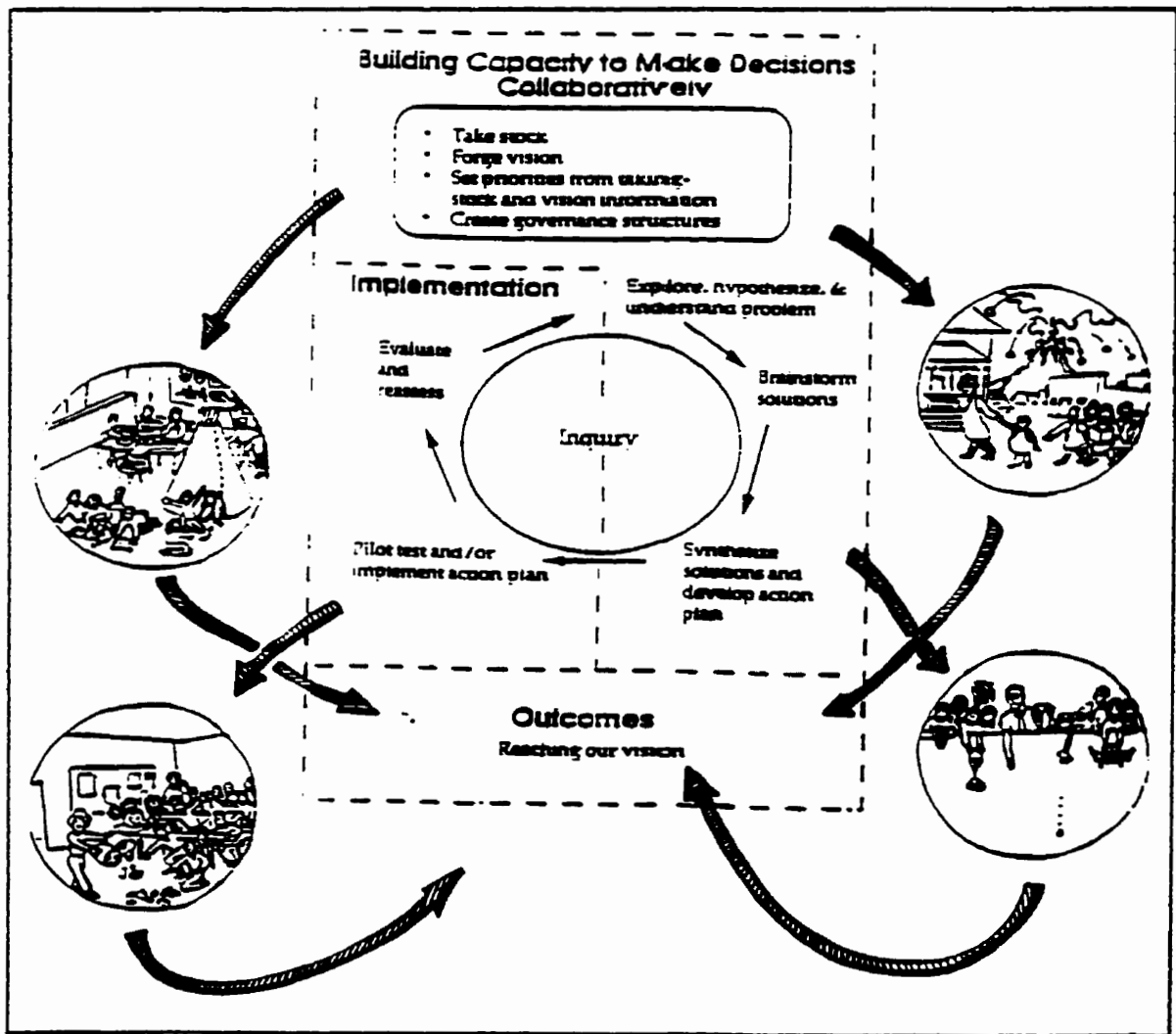A further important aspect of reaching the vision of the accelerated schools model is to consider the change in the roles of those in the school community. The changes can be visually presented by figure 2.6 (Hopfenberg, Levin, & Assoc., 1993, p. 264-265):
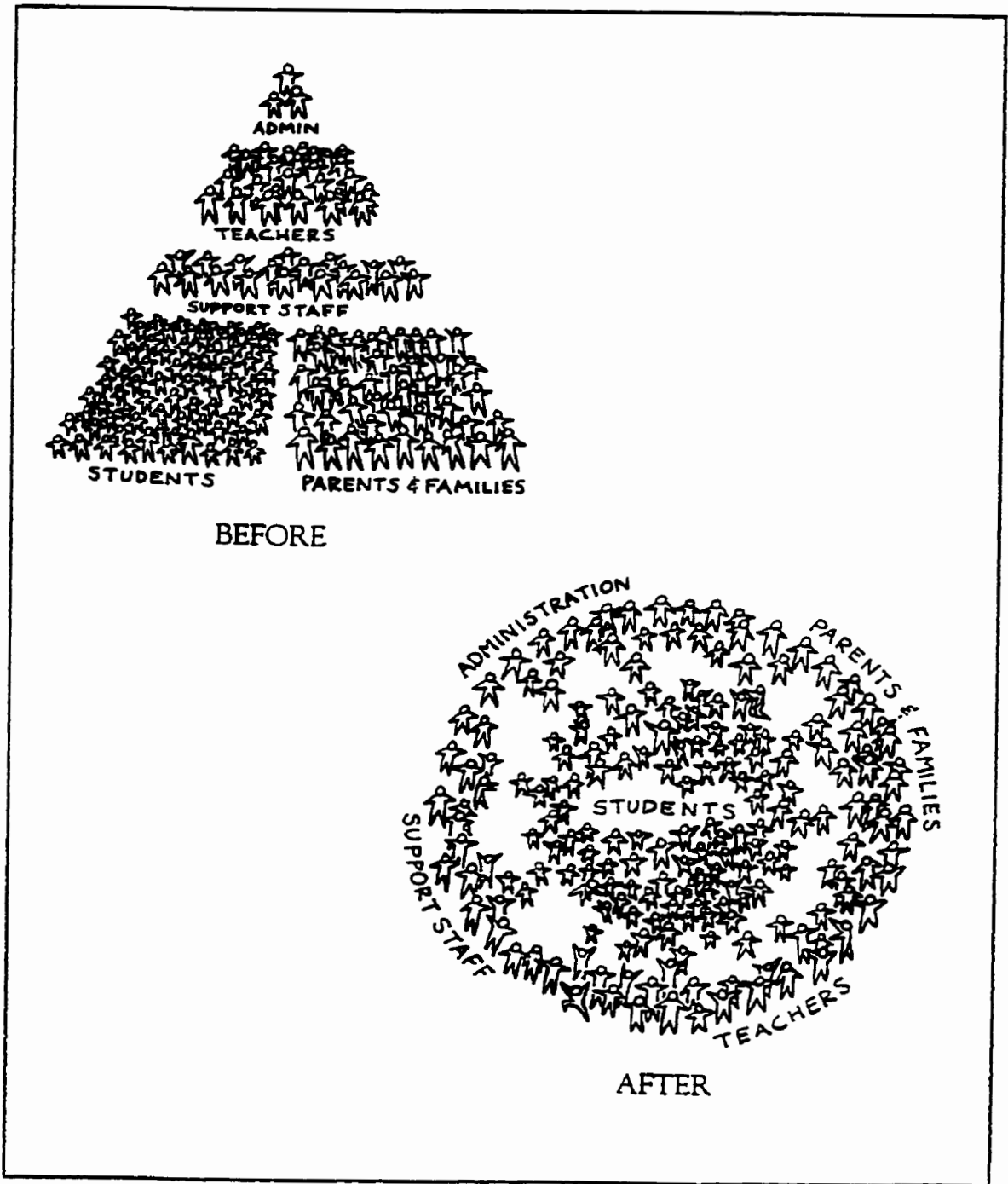
BEFORE

AFTER

figure 2.6

## OTHER COMPONENTS KEY TO GETTING STARTED

While I was working on the implementation of this model in the school, there were several documents that particularly influenced the work done by myself and the staff at the school within the Accelerated Schools Model.

To begin with, the material dealing with non graded classrooms was of great significance. In particular the materials by Robert Anderson and Barbara Pavan (1993) were of interest. In their article "The Return of the Non graded Classroom", they state that "nearly every other dimension of restructuring, including teacher empowerment, teamwork, site-based decision making, and providing more flexible alternatives for students, changes the dynamics of school practice in ways that make a non graded approach not only more meaningful, but also more attainable". Much of their work became the basis for beginning our journey into the formation of an Accelerated School. The implementation of a non-graded format clearly indicated to staff, students and community that the focus of the school was changing . In doing so, it encouraged all stake holders to enter into dialogue that would begin the teamwork needed in the Accelerated Schools Model. Villa and Thousand (1995) also speak to this area and indicate how they feel multi-age grouping focuses instruction on meeting the individual needs of students:

> Grade level grouping presumes that students who are the same age have like learning needs and abilities, thus benefiting from similar instruction. In contrast, a multi-age approach is based on the assumption that learning is a continuous and dynamic process. Student diversity is essential. Children are expected and , in fact, encouraged to learn at different rates and levels. The growth of the child is viewed in both biological and psychological time, rather than merely physical time, so that learning experiences are designed as developmentally appropriate.
> Many elements of multi-age grouping that work for students without disabilities are also advantageous for students with disabilities. The emphasis on heterogeneity requires a classroom organization flexible enough to accommodate children at different levels of maturity and with different levels of intellectual ability (p.97).

A second set of articles that were very important to those involved in this study were "Reframing the School Reform Agenda" by Linda Darling-Hammond (Phi Delta Kappan, June, 1993) ; "What Do We Understand Professional Development To Mean?" by Joan Irvine (1993), and "Why Teachers Must Become Change Agents" by Michael Fullan (March, 1993). Darling-Hammond looked at the impact of change on the act of teaching. She compared the technical application of 'teacher proof' curricula in past models to the need for effective teachers to be professionals able to make the judgments necessary to provide an educational program that is responsive to student needs. Both she and Irvine speak of a model that includes in its language terms such as inquiry, responsibility, negotiation, collaboration, reflection, empowerment. They also begin to examine the implications of this model on teacher education and professional development. Irvine (1993) refers to Darling-Hammond's view of the goals of schooling:

> There is little room in today's society for those who cannot manage complexity, find and use resources, and continuously learn new technologies, approaches, and occupations. In contrast to low skilled work on assembly lines, which was designed from above and implemented by means of routine procedures from below, tomorrow's work sites will require employees to frame problems, design their own tasks, plan, construct, evaluate outcomes, and cooperate in finding novel solutions to problems. Increasing social complexity also demands citizens who can understand and evaluate multidimensional problems and alternatives and who can manage ever more demanding social systems.(p.4)

and refers to their impact on the role of schools and teachers:

> ...a new mission for schools not merely to "deliver instructional services" but to ensure that all students learn at high levels. In turn, the teacher's job is no longer to "cover the curriculum" but to enable diverse learners to construct their own knowledge and to develop their own talents in effective and powerful ways.(p.8)

Irvine (p. 8) describes a transactional model of education that is "a view of schooling which values diversity, which accepts the uniqueness of all learners and celebrates the

differences among them. It expects learners to search for their own meanings and to share their views with others. From this sharing they learn to examine new perspectives and views different from their own. Also, this view recognizes that knowledge is not "fixed"; what is "known" now may change." She also states that :

> Teachers are themselves seen as active learners inquiring into and reflecting critically on their own practice and beliefs. They are constructing their own meaning and making decisions from their experiences as teachers and their interactions with learners, other teachers, parents and members of the community.

> In this vision teachers do have expert knowledge they not only have deep knowledge of the disciplines, of pedagogy but they have the knowledge of the specific contents in which they and the learners function. They are also experts in practice which is that special meld of knowledge, theory and action.(p.9)

and, she indicates that:

> Teachers need to take responsibility for collecting and sharing a different kind of evidence of learning in their classrooms. This evidence must be consistent with the broader goals of this vision need to set out the agenda and enter into conversations with the various stake holders (students, parents, and other community members) about what schooling is for, what learning is, how learning can be demonstrated, that learning is occurring.(p.11)

Along with the foundation established by these articles, I found myself reading as much literature as possible in the area of school change and restructuring and sharing and discussing it with other stake holders. Two works of particular significance were Schlecty's (1990) "Schools of the 21st Century" and Block's (1993) "Stewardship". Schlecty discusses why there is a need for schools to change, and then looks at the components of change. He says that:

> Changing the structure of schools - or any other organization - is no simple task. Social structures are embedded in systems of meaning, value, belief, and knowledge; such systems comprise the *culture* of an organization. To

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change an organization's structure, therefore, one must attend not only to rules, roles, and relationships but to systems of beliefs, values, and knowledge as well. Structural change requires cultural change. (p.xvii)

In describing how he sees this change taking place, Schlecty starts from a historical perspective of what exists now and then moves to describe the needs of the future. He suggests areas of importance to all participants:

> I will once again state what I take to be the most important *quality indicators:* The student can do what he or she is expected to do; the student is motivated to do what is expected by the work assigned; the student persists with the task when he or she does not meet with immediate success; the student finds sufficient satisfaction in the work or in the consequences of doing the work that he or she is motivated to pursue similar work in the future; and the cumulative effect of student success at doing school work (knowledge work) is that students learn things that are valued by the community, by parents, by teachers, and by the students themselves(p.60).

> If results are to affect decisions and actions, then school leaders must believe in the results, believe the results will make a difference, and believe they can make a difference in the results. Such a belief structure is the cultural bedrock upon which school reform must be based. It means that school leaders - and by this I mean teachers as well as principals and superintendents - must attend more carefully to developing and implementing alternative measures of results than many are now prone to do. And more than that, it means that schools must be organized to provide teachers and administrators time to think through the results they wish to achieve and alternative ways of measuring them (p.61).

> It seems unlikely then, that fundamental change can be implemented in school systems, especially large school systems, unless a developmental system - a change system - is invented and installed (p. 97).

> It is one thing to get people to tolerate change; it is another to get them to support change with their own time, energy and creative capacities (p.84).

> To encourage change, an improvement-oriented culture must be created. People who take risks and step out in front must be celebrated as heroes and heroines (p.108).

And the more powerful the leader, the more likely it is that subordinates have been empowered to lead (p.154).

Block looks at the governance of organizations and suggests using the concept of stewardship to empower those in an organization. In his words:

> Stewardship is the set of principles and practices which have the potential to make dramatic changes in our governance system. It is concerned with creating a way of governing ourselves that creates a strong sense of ownership and responsibility for outcomes at the bottom of the organization. It means giving control to customers and creating self-reliance on the part of all who are touched by the institution (p.5).

He explores how stewardship encourages empowerment, creation of partnerships and a focus on service and rewards that will encourage risk taking by members of an organization. The fact that Block is looking at organizations in general, and not schools specifically, makes this an interesting reflection on how schools fit within larger communities. Using these materials, conversations about change and growth became an integral part of the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Model. Williams (1996) speaks of the change facilitator role as encompassing process leader, skills trainer, resource consultant, and energy enhancer and describes these roles as follows:

> First, as a process leader, the school change facilitator launches the school on an unending process of moving from an educational institution to a community that involves all in the learning process (Costa, 1991).
> Second, as a skills trainer, the school change facilitator provides opportunities for the school staff to expand their repertoire beyond the instructional skills to process skills (such as skills in team building, consensus generation, planning and implementation, group reflection and processing, discussion leading, and conflict management).
> Third, as a resource consultant, the school change facilitator involves more and more stake holders in the change process, thus making more resources available for school change. As more people become connected to the change process, additional energy emerges to fuel the change. Finally, as an energy enhancer, the school change facilitator constantly reads the mood of the team and the school in order to renew and expand their motivation for change.(p.48)

Villa and Thousand (1995) also refer to the visioning / leadership aspect of the change

process:

> Visioners understand that change means cultural transformation, which can
> take many years; they stick around for the long haul and do not leave when
> times get tough.

> Visioners know their job is to create cognitive dissonance, discomfort,
> chaos, and a sense of urgency, perhaps even rage, in the school and
> community. This type of leadership by passion works to initiate change
> because, as others observe and feel the outrage, their own emotional
> potential is kindled within themselves. "Outrage tells people what is
> important (Sergiovanni 1992. p.74). So visioners "talk up" the vision and
> supporting innovations and innovators, persuade people to adopt the
> vision, and coach them to perform their daily work in accordance with the
> vision. Although they take every opportunity to build consensus, they
> know that no single "teaching strategy" or "learning style" is privileged;
> strategies will vary by community, reflecting that community's unique
> demographics, history, and current beliefs. Finally, visionizers know that
> change is a very personal process and that the best way to get people to
> risk the unfamiliar is to listen to their concerns, believe in them, and give
> them the opportunities, training, and support to try.(p.61-62)

Villa and Thousand also chart the pitfalls if a complex change process is not

managed using a model for process that ensures that all pieces needed are attended to

(figure 2.7).

```
                    FACTORS IN MANAGING COMPLEX CHANGE
   Vision  +  Skills    +  Incentives  +  Resources  +  Action Plan  =  CHANGE

              Skills    +  Incentives  +  Resources  +  Action Plan  =  CONFUSION

   Vision  +            +  Incentives  +  Resources  +  Action Plan  =  ANXIETY

   Vision  +  Skills    +              +  Resources  +  Action Plan  =  RESISTANCE

   Vision  +  Skills    +  Incentives  +              +  Action Plan  =  FRUSTRATION

   Vision  +  Skills    +  Incentives  +  Resources  +               =  TREADMILL
```
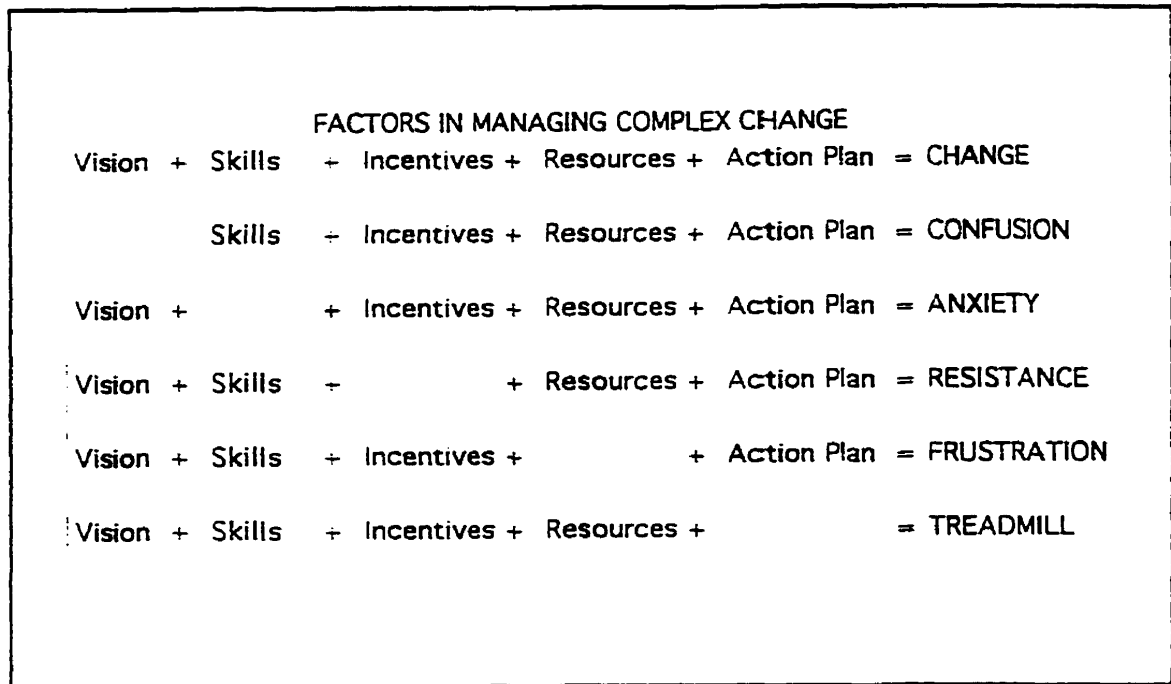
figure 2.7 (p.58)

Considering these descriptions of the enormity of the task required of teachers and leaders

to ensure the development of a school that will meet the emerging needs of students in the

world today, the need for a process model to "keep it all straight" is clear.

## APPLICATION OF THE ACCELERATED SCHOOLS MODEL IN OTHER STUDIES

One of the strong advantages of the ASM is the amount of support that is

available through the materials developed by the authors as well as through support

available from the network of universities and schools using the model across North

America. From 2 pilot schools that started using the model in 1986-87, 1997-98 numbers

include 1000 schools in 35 states (and now in one province) and 13 regional centres. The

regional centres are located in the states of New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon,

South Carolina, Texas, California, Colorado, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri,

and Nevada, and each site is available on-line as a contact and support.

The first findings published on the impact of this model came from within the project and described gains in participating schools in the areas of student achievement and learning, enriched curriculum and instruction, improvements in school climate, and family and community involvement. Wong (1995) reported that more students appeared to be working at grade level, there were increased scores in mathematics testing, there was an increase in mainstreaming and interdisciplinary curricula, there were fewer suspensions and retentions and increased attendance by students and by family volunteers. Specifics of the data and its origin can be located on the web site at:

http://www.stanford.edu/group/ASP/accomplishments.html.


In addition to the information cited within the ASM project, there have been numerous dissertations that examined various aspects of the implementation of the model.

In 1997, Saban at Ohio University looked at the topic "Systematic School Reform: A Case Study Of The Accelerated Schools Process". He describes the model as "...one of the nation's most comprehensive and systemic school reform efforts to improve the learning of all students and especially those in at-risk situations", and investigates the process at one school by examining the perceptions of the participants.

Enderle (University of Missouri - Columbia, 1997) investigated the topic "Decision-Making Involvement And Job Satisfaction Of Accelerated Schools Elementary Teachers" and looked at the relationship between job satisfaction of teachers in accelerated schools and a variety of indicators identified in literature. The study found that the most powerful variable for predicting intrinsic, extrinsic, and overall job satisfaction was developing and participating in professional growth activities.

Chaffe (University of La Verne, 1997) looked at "Initiating National Reform Projects in California Elementary Schools" and examined three models including the ASM.

She found that "School-site personnel tend to select for adoption those reforms that have a reputation for success, that are perceived to address the identified needs of the school, and whose philosophy is consistent with the school's philosophy." and that "Forming a school-wide team, developing a preliminary plan, and creating and/or modifying a vision or goals do not appear to be critical to successful initiation of change."

Also in 1997, LaBonte (Northern Arizona University) looked at the coaching role in her dissertation entitled "Skills and Processes of Successful External Coaches Who Support Whole School Change". Her study looked at Accelerated Schools coaches exclusively and examined the skills they had and the processes they used. The study concluded that skills in 'understanding the organization' was important to coaching, and that regular meetings were also important in order to motivate staff, model interpersonal and facilitation skills, and encourage consensus. The study also suggested that schools undergoing whole school change should recognize the value and need for external assistance, and when considering a coach consider the philosophical alignment required between coach, staff and change model.

Dissertations from earlier years of the Accelerated Schools Model appear to illustrate more of the beginnings of the use of the model and some of the difficulties encountered at this stage. In her dissertation "The Launching of an Accelerated School: A Case Study (Gifted and Talented)", Montgomery (University of North Texas, 1995), looks at the preparation of an elementary school to implement the ASM. The results of this research indicate that there was some difficulty in getting started at this particular school. The factors that were cited as possibly causing the delay were insufficient training and the bottom-up decision making model used by the administrator.

Morrison (Northern Illinois University, 1995) in "A Case Study of the Definition, Development, and Implementation of Barbour School (Rockford, Illinois, Accelerated

Schools), investigated the ASM as a vehicle for developing a vision for a school. Although it appeared that there was an attempt here to use the model to develop a vision, there were problems in that a lack of understanding of the change process resulted in a lack of focus.

In her dissertation "The Role of the Principal in Transforming Accelerated Schools: A Study Using the Critical Incident Technique to Identify Behaviours of Principals", Christensen (Stanford University, 1995) looked at the behaviours of principals that contribute to the implementation of the ASM for major restructuring of a school. This study also indicated a need for the principal to comprehensively understand, promote, and follow the ASM process. The implications of the study were focussed on the need for training and development programs for administrators who were to be involved in implementation.

In summary, the ASM appears to provide an efficient framework for the implementation of a school change process. The model developed by Aoki also seems to be an appropriate tool with which to evaluate this implementation.

# Chapter 3

## Data Collection, Analysis, and Procedures

This chapter looks at the specifics of how the investigation in the project was be tracked. It examines the various documents which were used to provide information that were of use in analysis of the project. The first of these are the various grant applications and projects that were undertaken by the school over the course of the three years of the study. As well, this chapter will provide a detailed look at the perspectives of Aoki and the specific questions that guide how the project is to be examined.

DOCUMENTS TO TRACK THE PROJECT

The data collected to support this investigation are of a variety of types. To begin with, the basis for all that has been attempted lies in research... "the accumulated, practical knowledge that has been gathered over the last few decades (that) gives us an added advantage as we seek effective, rapid change" (Schmoker, 1996, p. 64). As a result, many of the plans and events described are based on, and supported by, research. Throughout this project, significant literature, particularly in the areas of change, accelerated schools and multi-age classroom formats were accumulated and used. The availability of very current material on the Internet was a definite asset.

Over the three years I was at the school, the implementation of the Accelerated Schools philosophy was a framework within which to examine strategies for school change. Key to the data gathering process and the overall project plan, was the use of grant dollars. The school was eligible for provincial government "at-risk" grants, and these were used as vehicles to engage stake holders in planning for the project, as well as in gathering data for reflection and planning of future phases of the project. The

requirements of the grant application process required that stake holders be involved in the original creation of the project goals, including a plan to gather evaluation data, in the spring of the year before the project began. In the following spring terms, there were also requirements for submitting an analysis of the data collected as well as plans for the future year in order to obtain further funding. It was clear that each grant was to provide funds for a three year period if the criteria were adhered to, and that further grants could link to the first if a project widened its scope into new areas.

At the outset, it was evident to all stake holders that there was a need to introduce new strategies to meet the needs of the community. The writing of grant proposals, proposals that would enable much needed professional development opportunities to take place at the school, provided the necessity for discussion as to possible new strategies to be employed. The need to plan for gathering data for an end of year report also provided impetus for conversations as to what this data would look like, how to best gather it, and how to discuss it with all stake holders and analyze it. The accelerated schools model created a framework for the discussion, and over time, a pattern emerged as a part of the school's culture. As Schmoker (1996) indicates "Outside research cannot be installed like a car part - it has to be fitted, its effects studied so that we can make necessary adjustments (p. 65)". This thesis provides a detailed description of the practice that took place to fit the model and research to the school situation.

## SPECIFIC AREAS UNDER EXAMINATION WITHIN THE GRANTS

As the conversations among stake holders progressed, plans emerged and became clearer and clearer. A first grant for a multi-age format was continued and other grant proposals were submitted that were linked to it. Grant reports included data gathered about observed student progress, school division reports, interviews with staff, feedback

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from parents and students and data written by staff members and report cards generated during this period.

The grants that formed a part of this study are listed in the following figure 3.1 in order to help the reader attain an overall sense of the components of the project and the time framework.

| GRANT / PROJECT | FUNDING SOURCE | 91/92 | 92/93 | 93/94 | 94/95 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Multi-Age Primary Grouping | Mb. Ed. & Training | 04/92 | Year I | Year II | Year III |
|  |  |  |  |  | Final Report |
| Community Liason-Early Years | Mb. Ed. & Training | 04/92 |  |  |  |
| Early Intervention |  |  | Year I | Year II | Year III |
| Cooperative Learning / Best Practice | Mb. Ed. & Training |  | 04/93 | Year I | Year II |
| Implementation Of Principles of | St. Vital School Div. |  | Intro. |  | Final Report |
| Teaching and Learning | (in-school P.D. funds) |  |  |  |  |
| Lavallee Lapidary | Federal Gov't.-Stay |  |  | Year I | Year II |
|  | in Schools Initiative |  |  |  |  |
| Community Action Program - St. | Federal Gov't.-Brighter |  | Applied but not received |  |  |
| Vital Interagency Cooperative | Futures Initiative |  |  |  |  |
| Curriculum Integration Planning | Mb. Ed. & Training |  |  |  | 04/95 |
| (Follow-up to Multi-Age) |  |  |  |  |  |

## AOKI'S PERSPECTIVES ON EVALUATION

In addition to the narrative description of the events at the school, what has happened at the school was examined by employing some reflective tools to attempt to provide an analysis of what happened through a variety of eyes. In a post modern analysis, the use of Aoki's (1986) model of looking at ends-means, situational interpretive and critical theoretical orientations examined the program implementation that took place.

Data provided by all stake holders was used to attempt to answer Aoki's (see chapters 1 and 2) questions in each of his orientations. Aoki's questions are as follows.

I. Ends-Means (Technical) Orientation

1. How efficient are the means in achieving the goals and objectives?
2. How efficient are the means in predicting the desired outcomes?
3. What is the degree of congruency between and among intended outcomes, the content in the instructional materials and the teaching approaches specified?
4. How good is curriculum A compared with curriculum B in achieving given ends?
5. Of given curricula, which one is the most cost-effective and time efficient?
6. What valid generalizations can be made for all schools in a district?
7. How well are inputs organized to achieve organizational goals?
8. What are the principal means used to achieve goals? How do we know that these means are actually enacted, with what frequency and with what intensity?

II. Situational Interpretive Orientation

1.How do various groups such as teachers, the ministry, parents, students and administrators view Curriculum X?
2. In what ways do various groups approve or disapprove of the program?
3. How do the various groups see Curriculum X in terms of relevance, meaningfulness and appropriateness?
4.What are the various groups' perceived strengths and weaknesses of the program?
5. What questions do administrators and significant others have about Curriculum X?

III. Critical Theoretic Orientation

1. What are the perspectives underlying Curriculum X?
2. What is the implied view of the student or the teacher held by the curriculum planner?
3. At the root level, whose interests does Curriculum X serve?
4. What are the root metaphors that guide the curriculum developer, the curriculum implementor, or curriculum evaluator?
5. What is the basic bias of the publisher/author/ developer of prescribed or recommended resource materials?
6. What is the curriculum's supporting world view?

These questions will be applied to the project. The analysis this will provide will form the substance of chapter 5. The feedback from stake holders necessary to do this analysis was gathered in basically two ways. The first was from within the discussions

with staff, parents and students that formed the planning for what was to be done at the school and the reflection on practice, that is through the ongoing inquiry process outlined in the ASM. The second method through which data was gathered was the use of questionnaires to various stake holders at times during the process and administrative observation. The questionnaire documents can be found in the Appendix and the information gathered from them is discussed beginning on page 54. All of this data is reflected in the plans and summaries that exist in the grant documents.

# Chapter 4

## Three Years In The Life Of A School

### Year One (1992-93)

The case study being presented took place in a school of approximately 200 to 250 students, in a community with a high number of "at risk" families. It is a school that includes students from kindergarten to senior 1 (grade 9), with traditionally one class per grade level. This situation led to students moving from grade to grade with one another, and left parents and school personnel with no placement alternatives when faced with behaviour patterns that were not positive or productive. The result was that problems followed students from year to year without resolution; teachers were reluctant to come to the school to assume responsibility for dysfunctional classes; staff who were at the school suffered a high burn out rate; parents felt powerless to effect change for their children and dissatisfied with the school; and students felt little pride in their school or themselves and were generally unmotivated to engage in academic endeavours. An example of the discouragement that existed among students was an overheard conversation where students felt so academically unempowered that they used report card time to joke about who could achieve the most failures as the measure of what they could get from the process. An examination of student participation in classrooms and student marks supported their beliefs.

When I was assigned to the school (in March of the preceding school year-1992), I began by interviewing staff who were currently in place. In actual fact, there were a number of staff members, including the principal, who had been away from the school for a considerable period of time due to illness and were not interested in a return. Shortly

after I was named as principal of the school, I was contacted by a group of parents to meet with them. These were parents who had a reputation for being supportive of the school and giving considerable time to the school. At this meeting the distress in the community became very evident. Parents clearly felt that the school was not meeting their children's' needs, and concerns that included lack of academic progress, as well as an atmosphere where uncontrolled behaviours on the part of many students were taking a toll on student individual pride and self confidence. They expressed grave concerns at the climate in the school, and indicated that their desire to meet with me was to determine my goals for the school and decide whether or not to move their children out of the school. Fortunately, they decided to stay and continued to support the situation carefully.

During these meetings, it became clear that , in order for this school to successfully meet the needs of its community in the future, positive change would have to happen and be very visible in the short term. There were serious areas of concern regarding student achievement, both academic and social. Without measurable and observable growth, the most concerned and supportive families would leave the school rather than sacrifice the quality of their children's education while they waited for some change. Fortunately, in some of the staff discussions I had, there was reference to the fact that the former principal and some staff had traveled to visit a school in British Columbia and had come back impressed with the multi-age primary format being introduced there. Unfortunately, the idea had never been pursued and the staff involved in the investigation were no longer there, but the idea provided the nucleus for a discussion as to how we might achieve the positive, visible change we needed in a short period of time. Coincidentally, I had also done some research in the area of multi-age groupings where it was being implemented in areas of Winnipeg, and the student services teacher shared the interest. Also fortunately, I was informed that we were eligible to

access grant dollars from the province, and that the deadline for application was a short one. This spurred on the discussion with the division, staff and community. To do this we accessed the expertise of divisional staff who had already been involved in such groupings to talk with both staff and parents. It soon became evident to me and a significant number of staff and some community members that the multi-age format would provide several advantages:

- It would provide an increased ability for students to move from teacher to teacher or class to class, if needed. In past years, with the school only having one class per grade, students moved through the school in the same group with no ability to facilitate positive groupings that would resolve conflicts that caused behaviour eruptions. As well, with a wide range of academic needs, such mobility could also provide an ability to group and regroup students to ensure that the best academic groupings could be facilitated to meet the various student needs.

- It would create a staff grouping that would facilitate positive collaboration on the most effective pedagogical practices for their students. In past years, there was only one classroom per grade and teachers felt very isolated. With the multi-age format, there would now be three classes with year 1, 2 and 3 students and this would facilitate teachers working together to develop curriculum implementation plans for this model. The grant dollars provided significant support in this area and a plan for regular time to release team members for planning was implemented.

The rationale and plan for the grant were stated in the application as follows:

# MULTI-AGED PRIMARY GROUPING

## PRIMARY RESTRUCTURING GRANT PROPOSAL

### 1992-93

(Submitted March , 1992; Developed by a school team consisting of administration, student services staff and classroom teachers. Proposal writers were student services staff)

It has been determined, from a list of criteria developed by the student support Branch of the Department of Education, that this school qualifies as one of the high need schools serving at-risk students in the school division. From the attributes established, those that best describe the school and the community it serves are.

1.      a high incidence of low income in the community

2.      a high percentage of single parent households in the community

3.      a significant percentage of students in the school who are two or more years

        behind their age group in reading and numerary skills for the 1991 - 1992

        school year.

Along with these statistical attributes, there are other characteristics that exist throughout the school that have an impact on the learning environment of every classroom. These can be grouped into three areas:

1.Social Concerns

    a)   lack of effective parenting skills

    b)   poor social interaction skills

    c)   low level of tolerance of differences in others

    d)   issues from home brought to school

2.Behaviour Concerns

    a)   lack of respect for adults and peers

    b)   verbal aggression

    c)   physical aggression

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3. Academic Concerns

    a)    lack of preschool experience

    b)    low self-esteem

    c)    limited readiness skills

The 1992-1993 school year will begin with many changes having taken place at the school. There will be a new administrator, as well as many new teachers. Due to budget issues, all program areas will operate with cut-backs from the previous year. Of major concern to the present staff at the School is the area of staff cutbacks, especially in student support programs. It will mean reduced manpower to deliver the existing programs, plus deal with the concerns, stated above.

It is time to look at a change in the delivery or programs, at this school. What is needed are some new approaches to program delivery that, along with enhancing academic achievement of the students, will also address the concerns in the areas of social skills and behaviour. Family Groupings (multi-age) would integrate the grade one to three years for the students. The classes would be made up of students of different ages and levels of maturity. This would eliminate the need for annual promotions within the guideline of a set curriculum, as well as remove the stress of deadlines. Both the teacher and the children are free to let learning evolve naturally.

This does not mean that discipline would be abandoned or that an "anything will do" approach will be adopted. What It does mean is shift away from the curriculum to the learners. The curriculum will still be used as a general guideline and resource for goal-setting, but the children will determine the sequence and pace of learning.

Teachers involved in Family Grouping environments find that the mix of children working at different levels becomes the stimulus for greater Independence of learning, a lot of peer modeling, and good social integration among children of differing ages. The spirit of cooperation that is an important element of teaching the learners' way has a greater chance of developing. Establishing a positive climate for learning Is crucial to making family grouping successful.

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## Family Grouping Proposal

This is a three year- proposal. The purpose of the proposal is to provide assistance with the implementation of Family Grouping in the primary grades the school.

Family Grouping nurtures the continuing growth of children's knowledge and understanding of themselves and their world. The program recognizes that acquisition and use of language is what facilitates thinking and learning in young children and that it also accommodates the broad spectrum of children's learning styles and rates, knowledge, experiences ,and interests. Instruction integrates content and process, concepts and attitudes, and works on the understanding that children learn through active involvement

In a school where Family Grouping is used, a child remains in the same class with the same teacher, for all three years in the primary level. This system gives the children a valuable sense of security and stability, and to the teacher, a better insight into the all-round development and character of each child, which results from two to three years of close and intimate association

In Family Grouping, a child benefits because, once the adjustment from home to school life has been made, the child can go steadily forward, growing in confidence, and physical and mental stature. This is achieved in a more relaxed atmosphere because the teacher and child do not have the pressures to prepare for the next 'move up'.

Some periods of regression occur in every child as a result of absence, illness, jealousies, domestic instability, or inadequacies within the school. In a Family Grouping environment, these are minimized, because the teacher has a longer acquaintance with each of her pupils. Knowing a pupil better and being aware of potential difficulties, she can help him through unstable periods, and be more tolerant of fluctuations of behaviour.

The effect of the help which children consciously and unconsciously give to each other Is immeasurable. It has a major impact on the social and intellectual development of each child; it stimulates the development of spoken language; it ranges from the half-conscious absorption of knowledge through incidental overhearing to the deliberate teaching of

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younger by older children of skills such as reading, or of training, in putting out and clearing away equipment. Responsibility and independence developed in the older children are transmitted to younger ones, who in their turn pass the benefits they have received to newer arrivals.

Family grouping would also help to reestablish the concept of "teaming" in the primary pod, as well a provide for some flexibility in program delivery.Teachers would be able to work together to plan curricula and share materials. They would be able to bring successes and concerns to the group and share them, rather than trying to operate in isolation. As this program will make an impact on the entire school, it will also be important to establish times for these teachers to share with the rest of the staff.

Although the basic plan of this program is for a child to remain with the same teacher while at the primary level, there are more opportunities to build flexibility into this type of program than in the present, one classroom per grade set up. If it were decided after a period of time that some students needed to be transferred to a different room, it would be possible. Also, students could be regrouped for certain activities. Teachers could organize and work in there areas of strength. this may make it easier to schedule in the support people that would be involved in the program, mainly resource, counseling, teacher librarian, gifted, the speech / language pathologist, etc.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of this proposal is to request funding for the development, implementation and on-going support of a Family Grouping program in the primary level at the school.

## GOAL

The goals of the staff include developing a professional staff with a strong theoretical and practical base in multi-level, family groupings.

## OBJECTIVES

1.      To provide a variety of professional development opportunities for staff to support the implementation of family grouping in the primary pod of the school.

2. Develop curricula that will foster the learning of primary aged children in a Family Grouping setting.

3. To focus on "best practice" strategies to deliver curricula: activity -based learning, cooperative learning, whole language, math manipulatives.

4. To develop a stable learning environment; one that will promote positive social interaction and appropriate social development.

5. To develop skills in students that would enhance their achievement, especially the low achieving students and those identified as being at risk.

6. To increase parent / community involvement in the school

## GENERAL PROJECT OUTLINE

The project would involve the development , implementation, and on-going evaluation of Family Groupings in the primary pod of the school. Initially, the teachers involved, including Student Services Support Personnel and Administration, would work together to prepare a program to implement in September, 1992. Program development, material preparation, and on-going evaluation will continue for a three year period.

## IMPLEMENTATION

Phase I: 1992-1993

1. The selected school team would be involved in visitation, training, and planning in preparation for September, 1992.

2. The parents will be informed about the program.

3. Family Groupings will be established for each of the three classrooms.

4. Curricula development will begin. Materials will be researched and purchased (focus on Math / science).

5. Regular meeting / planning times will be established for ongoing curricula development and evaluation.

6. The team will implement the program in September, 1992.

7. The team will monitor the implementation and evaluation of this project as well as identify needs for resources (professional development, materials, etc.).

8.     Development and organization of special events for parents / community to

       attend, to further inform them about the program.


TIME LINE - Year I

Until the team of teachers is selected and in place, decisions regarding teacher needs,

plans, etc., cannot be finalized. What is presented below is a time line developed to

outline in general terms, how this program will l be developed, planned for and

implemented.


May-June 1992    -Selection of Family Grouping teachers

                 -Presentation of program to parents in the community


June 1992        -Team building - explore literature, establish meeting/planning

                 needs, early visitations

                 -Examine and order materials.

                 -Establish in service needs for staff


Sept., 1992      -Develop Family Grouping lists for each teacher.


Sept. - Oct. 1992  -Finalize needs, in service days, visitations.


Sept. 92 - June, 93 -Implement program.

                 -Share concerns.

                 -Plan curricula

                 -Incorporate support areas

                 -Initiate any necessary shifting of students.

                 -Material preparation.


Nov - Dec. 1993  -In services/workshops to assist in program implementation.

                 -Regular planning/sharing sessions.

                 -Share progress with rest of staff.

                 -Plan and host first activity for parents/students.

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|---|---|
| Jan - Mar. 1993 | -In service/workshop to assist in program development/implementation. |
| | -Regular planning/sharing sessions. |
| | -Plan and host 2nd parent activity night |
| | |
| Apr. - June, 1993 | -Regular planning/sharing sessions. |
| | -Preparation of Year I report. |
| | -Development of detailed implementation plans for Year II. |
| | -Plan and host third parent activity night. |

ROLE OF PARTICIPATING TEACHERS

1. Participate in the planning and preparation of the Family Grouping Program.
2. Implement the program in their classroom with support from team (including support staff).
3. Participate in professional development activities provided within the project.
4. Maintain data for evaluation of students' achievement and progress.
5. Work cooperatively with other members of the team.
6. Provide ongoing feedback to the team and to the entire school on the progress of the program.

Once the plans were articulated in the grant proposal and shared generally, there was a new wave of interest in the school. Staff were focused on what impact the plan did or did not have on them, and even more parents became interested in learning more about the new format. For the first time in recent history, some teachers expressed an interest in moving to the school to become involved in the project. The school division administration were supportive of the project and helped facilitate this. This interest provided an important opportunity to encourage discussion and begin to create an

atmosphere where dialogue and learning were highlighted and valued. Consistent with the values of the Accelerated Schools Model, this began the process of addressing the acceleration components of equity, communication and collaboration, participation, community spirit, school as center of expertise, risk taking, reflection, experimentation and discovery and trust building that would become the foundation of how the school would operate. To engage students in the process, it would be necessary to model and demonstrate these principles immediately.

The first day of classes in the 1992-93 school year was a certain indication of a change in the school. Formerly, one characteristic of the school was the relative lack of parent involvement, interest, and presence in the school. The primary pod of classrooms was oriented in a circular fashion with four classrooms in the pod. The three classrooms in use were situated with the outer two having large windows into the main school and hallway areas. Along these windows parents were crowded to watch, as if spectators at a popular sporting event. It was a wonderful opportunity to welcome them and encourage them to continue to drop in, but was a bit like teaching in a goldfish bowl for the teachers. The preparation they had done and the commitment they had to the format allowed them to use this as an opportunity to begin to build positive community relationships as parents watched their children being welcomed into classrooms that were well organized and quickly engaged them in interesting activities.

Another important opportunity during the first year of the implementation was that of being able to introduce a "community liaison" position to the school staff. This was again made possible through grant support that was provided rather quickly and unexpectedly due to surplus funds being available. The discussions of the team in determining the content of the first grant and at the same time developing goals for the future had provided the idea for this proposal. The writing was done by administration

with support from student services staff.

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**STUDENT SUPPORT GRANT APPLICATION**

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES.

To focus on parental involvement within the school. We feel that children learn best when parents are directly involved in their school life. Since the 1989-90 school year, the school has been introducing new programs designed to get the community more involved in the education of the children who attend the school At the time, it was felt that there was very little parental involvement at any level within the school. The staff had worked hard to gain the support of the community for what was going on within the walls of the school, but there was no direct involvement of parents in the school programs that their children were taking part in.

To continue and expand some of the community liaison objectives originally developed as part of the grant proposals for our primary and preschool reading program. To try and create more of a "partnership" with the community and get them actively involved in their children's education, the school has introduced some programs . The Home Reading Program encourages parents to sit down on a regular basis and read with their children. The books are brought home from school. The Preschool Reading Program gives the parents of preschool aged children an opportunity to bring these children into the school to be read to. Over the last two years, a parent volunteer program has begun to develop.

To research, acquire and make available materials relating to community education in order that the school, personnel and building are seen as a resource to the whole community and in this way foster a co-operative atmosphere in which parents, students and staff work together to meet the educational needs of our students.

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION.

Program will be coordinated by a community liaison worker who will work with school personnel, parents, parent association and outside agencies to gather and provide materials to these groups and coordinate liaison between them. this position will be developed to ultimately follow the school division's position description description for a community liaison worker. the first stage of this program will involve gathering materials and working with staff to develop the methods to best provide productive liaison between school and parents. Once staff have an understanding of the process of community liaison , the outreach to the community will begin. The building of materials to form a parent education centre and encouragement of a parent volunteer program will be a part of the program. We intend to network with neighbouring schools who have successfully implemented such a program.

EXPECTED OUTCOME.

The partnership between the home and the school will be enhanced. Parents will find resources within the school that will enable them to become effectively involved in their children's education. In turn, these parents will be empowered to become a support to the school.

This grant provided support to the primary multi age project in making links to the community and as well supported overall school direction that kept the community actively informed of school initiatives by giving them increased ease of access to the school. It also facilitated the involvement of the staff at all levels in dialogue and professional development in the area of community interaction. Staff became committed to the notion that this was a component of the education process at this school. The community liaison position had a social work focus as outlined in the grant that allowed a component of assistance to parents to empower them in their interactions with other agencies who might assist them and their children. It was not long before the community liaison worker was known on a first name basis in the community and receiving a steady

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stream of visits and calls.

We had ongoing discussions with support personnel from the provincial Department of Education to point out the emerging vision for these grants as an integrated approach by stake holders to facilitate the best possible achievements for children. As we indicated our goals and steps to develop a coordinated system to track our progress,it was pointed out that the model we were developing fit well with the Accelerated Schools Model. We realized that we were using "big wheels" that included taking stock, creating a vision and setting priorities and implementing "little wheels" with our implementation of grant projects. The Accelerated Schools Model provided a process model that allowed the flexibility for the incorporation of unique initiatives to meet school needs, but provided guidelines that defined process. Its use also provided pieces of the framework that we had not yet developed and as such moved us ahead in our project. When stake holders could be shown what the process looked like, it became easier to frame current positions, desired goals and a plan to move from one to another. This articulation of vision kept it a part of the school's dialogue and ensured that it was clear and not lost over time or between stake holder groups.

As the year progressed, it became important to devise a process for data collection. In keeping with the model proposed by Aoki, the process included collection of data from a variety of perspectives.

Teacher data was collected in a number of ways. Ongoing dialogue at regular planning meetings was kept in minutes that were stored in the office and could be accessed by all stake holders.

A further source of data was collected as part of a university course report (later incorporated into a grant) by recording interviews with each primary teacher in the school to ask:

1. Does a multi age program effect the teaching process? In what way?

2. Are there benefits to a multi graded primary program?

Comments from teachers indicated that they were committed to and excited by the program. They felt it was enabling them to meet the needs of their students, that they were growing professionally as a team and as individuals. They indicated advantages to children that included increases in the areas of risk taking, problem solving skills and self confidence. They also indicated benefits from better programming resulting from the more child centered approach and the fact that some of the children were with a teacher for a second year (this applied to only one teacher in year one, and would emerge as a positive from teachers, students and staff in future years). The opportunity to gather extensive data as a part of a university course became part of the leadership strategy to involve the staff in the area of research and record keeping around what was happening. A high point in the school process came when a primary teacher suggested that she become a part of the presentation of the project at the university level to help effectively indicate staff involvement and commitment. This became an opportunity to reflect on what had been implemented; celebrate what we had discovered, both through successes and failures, and in the trust that had developed between partners; and take a risk in sharing it with others outside the school. This resulted in a commitment to further sharing of what was happening with others and the beginning of a commitment to "give back" the expertise that had been developed to benefit others. From that point, there was work done by staff members to develop a formal public presentation first for a divisional board meeting and then for other opportunities such as provincial department displays and professional development sessions. Certainly the development of presenting to others brought the staff to the level of powerful learning where they were able to articulate the "what", "why" and the "context" and recognize that they could do so.

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Teacher data also emerged at a staff meeting where the primary staff were asked by the other staff to present regarding their program. When the program was first implemented, some of the staff at other grades felt that it was an initiative that did not affect them. Early in the process, it became obvious to me and many visitors as we toured the building that there was a difference in the primary area. Although in the previous year there had been significant problems that resulted in many disruptive and non-productive behaviours, this year visitors' feedback to me indicated they were visibly impressed with the focus, interest and activity in primary classrooms. It was such an obvious difference, that when visitors moved from that area into another area of the school where students still worked in a more traditional grouping I could see they were visibly taken aback by the observable differences in on task versus disruptive behaviours . As the staff and community saw and discussed the difference, a dialogue between areas began. Questions such as "what will I do when those kids get to my grade?" resulted in the request for the staff meeting presentation. The presentation included information about thematic teaching, about the research base for the multi-age class groupings, a comparison between this year and the previous one and a discussion around issues of continuity for students. The follow up to this meeting was that staff members volunteered to visit schools involved in multi age groupings at the junior high level, and some staff who taught at the level following the primary grades began to investigate the use of thematic teaching to provide for continuity for students coming out of primary.

Another source of data was observations by administration. These observations offer the additional data that the classrooms are employing flexible groupings, an integration of curricular areas around themes, and that the three classrooms all appear quite different and reflect the strengths/interests of the teachers in them. Discussing ongoing observations became a part of team meetings throughout the year. Interestingly,

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this was a much more important facet than was anticipated. At a January meeting, I shared the above observations regarding the differences between the classes and the strength that these differences brought to the team. This began a conversation that included honest sharing by the teachers regarding their reservations and concerns. Individually they had wondered whether or not the differences meant that someone "had it right" while the others didn't . The end result was a discussion of the notion that there was no "right way" and that the strength of the approach was to use all of the strengths of the team, be willing to take risks and value the initiatives that didn't work as well as those that did for the learning they offered. This was a key meeting in developing trust between all participants and the element of positive risk taking within the school vision became one that was promoted and celebrated from within. Given the magnitude of this development, and the spontaneous, unpredicted manner in which it emerged, the importance of time for dialogue and reflection was underscored for all.

The final data was feedback from parents. To solicit this feedback, documents were sent home in February, 1993 and March, 1994 (see appendix) that once again summarized some of the important points involved in this model in order to continue to provide a parent education component that would empower parents as participants in the process. Parent responses indicated early reservations about the program, but significant levels of satisfaction as to its impact on their children's self esteem, interest and teamwork skills. As well, feedback indicated growing parent understanding and a feeling that their child was receiving programming that was suited to them. Concerns were expressed, particularly by those whose children were in year 3, about the format for the following year. Quite interestingly, it was these parents who suggested that we move the multi age format into the intermediate level for the following year. This pace of implementation was not anticipated when we began the year, but with the success of the

programming that was observed with students, both the parent and staff feedback caused an investigation of the possibility. The parent association joined with the staff to form committees that would visit schools that had a multi age format in grades 4 to 6. One concern did emerge from the parent survey. That was that some parents had difficulty in responding to the numbers of questions being asked. This information would be used in future design of instruments to gather parent input.

The investigation of the move to a multi age format for grades 4 to 6 involved considerable planning and professional development for the staff who would be involved. Some of this was able to be provided by the primary staff as well as by administration and student services staff; others were accessed as needed. The availability of grant dollars to provide release time for the investigation was a tremendous asset. The final Year Two Action Plan, submitted with the Year One Report, was to include the extension of multi age programming throughout the elementary grades. The focus of this project was to look at strategies for practice in the area of cooperative learning, and to use the accelerated schools model as a framework to do so.

## Year Two (1993-94)

Year two began with an extension in the multi age format. There was still much to be done in the primary project, and another new expansion was beginning. This might not have made any sense on several levels, but where it made perfect sense was when one considered the importance of not losing the momentum gained for the students who moved from primary to intermediate grades. An important component of this venture was the continued support of the divisional personnel in ensuring that staff members who had invested considerable effort in the project, and in whom had been invested considerable resources, could remain at the school (some were or had been on term contracts, and as such could have been vulnerable).

The restructuring in year 2 remained focused to a great extent around the implementation of the multi age format. With the realization that the inquiry process being followed was articulated in the Accelerated Schools Model there was a beginning sense of familiarity with what was to happen. The framework for taking stock became very useful in guiding the process as movement was made to continue taking stock and developing the vision while setting priorities that supported our identified needs. The literature from the accelerated schools documents became a real asset in easily identifying and providing written documentation to facilitate professional development for staff and parents and to communicate with outside agencies.

The priorities in the multi age implementation included initiatives in areas of practice, program implementation (the introduction of the new mathematics curriculum, another indication that the model allowed for the introduction of appropriate "little wheels" that were a fit with the school vision and provincial and divisional initiatives),

reporting (a huge task that involved a parent education component and resulted in much positive feedback from parents), and communication (a visible piece of evidence regarding primary teachers' understanding of the program and interest in sharing information was their creation of a brochure that included student and parent comments and was available for distribution as needed). These are outlined in the project report as follows:

**GRANT REPORT FOR MULTI AGE PROGRAMMING SUPPORT**
**APRIL, 1994**

SCHOOL PERSONNEL INVOLVED IN THE MULTI AGE PROGRAM:

Classroom teachers

Student Services Staff

Administration

Final report compiled by administration from component materials generated by the team members

YEAR TWO SUMMARY

We are pleased to have been able to implement the plans we set out to achieve in last year's proposal. Our major new venture was to continue the multi age format into the intermediate grades and now offer primary (ages 6 - 8) and intermediate (ages 9 - 11) classrooms at this school.

The following outline shows our major initiatives

PRIMARY

-Yr. 2 of 3 yr. restructuring to a multi age format.

-Focus on:

  -theme development

  -co-operative learning

  -assessment (continued implementation and development of new report as

well as investigation of portfolio assessment)


-introduction of new mathematics curriculum

-development of brochure describing program to parents and others

-parent information meetings


## INTERMEDIATE

-introduction of multi age restructuring at grade 4 - 6 level

-team building with the addition of new staff and new range of assignment to existing staff

-focus on:

- -theme development

- -co-operative learning

- -assessment ( continued implementation and development of new report as
  well as investigation of portfolio assessment)

- -introduction of new mathematics curriculum


## MATHEMATICS OBSERVATIONS

Our multi-age staff has embraced the new math curriculum and see it as a vehicle to reinforce the child centered philosophy of the multi age classroom. Students in a multi age setting are exposed to a variety of mathematical concepts beyond a set grade curriculum. This provides them with the opportunity to extend themselves naturally. Conversely the older child in a multi age setting is given the opportunity to revisit concepts taught in a former year but which may not have been mastered.


Just as children listen and acquire language through modelling, we have found the same to be true in the area of mathematics. Some students in grade one are successfully attempting multiplication and many are telling time to the minute. The classroom settings are such that all students feel comfortable in using a variety of manipulatives wherever they are needed.


Students have a thorough understanding of concepts, due in large part to the continual use of concrete materials in our multi age classroom. This benefits the older child who still

requires the hands on approach to complete and solidify his/her understanding of a concept.

BUDGET

1) PROGRAM SUPPORT MATERIALS

-theme related materials

-continued support of language related materials, as well as significant expenditure on mathematics materials related to implementation of new curriculum. This was the second year of support to primary, but the first to intermediate classrooms. There is still a need to continue to acquire support materials for the program. We are still developing primary themes to provide a range of materials that will cover a child's three year stay in a classroom, and are just in the first year of acquiring support materials for intermediate themes.

-multi age professional development / teacher planning books & materials.


2) RELEASE TIME

-1 / 2 day per month for planning / collaboration / visitation supplemented by out of school teacher time.


3) P.D. TIME

-Major Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development conference on multi age format attended by 2 intermediate and one primary teacher. This conference gave out teachers an opportunity to confer with colleagues and support people from across North America. It was also a real bonus to find that we have begun to be considered a resource for others, both locally and at a distance.

-Department of Education science conference at Hecla Island to provide teacher support in the area of science.

-Workshop with Colleen Politano on portfolio assessment as well as upcoming in services on portfolio assessment.

-Lorraine Fox workshop on Reducing the Risk of Violence in Schools
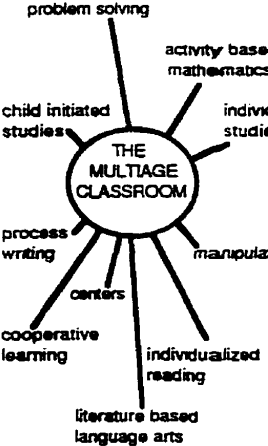
-Robert Fletcher Writer's Workshop

-Diane Burnett & Claus Eisenbrenner - Hands On, Minds On Math

-Multi age support group at the Divisional level

-Mathematics in a Multi-age Setting workshop

-Workshop on Developing a Theme Using the New Math Curriculum

-Visits and use of the Grove Street teachers' centre

-Visitation by one of our staff during March Break to classroom of Colleen Politano in Vancouver.

## 4) BROCHURE DEVELOPED FOR DISTRIBUTION as follows (folded in thirds for distribution)

### HOW STUDENTS BENEFIT

-continuity with classroom teacher

-flexibility to regroup students

-allows children to progress at their own rate

-allows teacher to adjust the learning environment to accomodate the needs of the students.

-students strive to improve their own performance.

-emphasis on the process of learning.

-opportunities to interact in a variety of social groups.

### PARENT & STUDENT FEEDBACK

"I like the grade one because we can help them learn. I have friends in grade one and two."
　　　-student, Year III

"I like it, it's like a normal class."
　　　-student, Year III

"I like it so, so, so, so, so, so, so much!"
　　　-student, Year I

"I like the class mixed in 1, 2, and 3 because new people come into our classroom."
　　　-student, Year I

"It is easier to meet people that are in Year 1 and 2."

### . SCHOOL .

**MULTIAGE
PRIMARY
PROGRAM**

### PHILOSOPHY

We believe that our school must be a welcoming, child centered environment that promotes the goal of developing lifelong learners.

We believe that each child in an Individual with unique interests, abilities, and needs.

We believe that children should be provided the opportunity to work with materials on the level appropriate to their present attainment and move as their abilities and desires allow them. We believe that multiple learning alternatives should be available.

We believe that evaluation is both a formal and informal process which relies upon accurate information based on a variety of on-going and frequently used measurement tools.

### WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

thinking strategies and problem solving

activity based mathematics

child initiated studies

individual studies

THE MULTIAGE CLASSROOM

process writing

manipulatives

centers

cooperative learning

individualized reading

literature based language arts

### LONG TERM DATA MANAGEMENT

-ongoing observations
-individual assessments
-student interviews
-student samples
-formal and informal interviews
-student feedback- oral and written
-portfolios of children's work

> **YEAR 3 ACTION PLAN**
>
> During Year 3 the plan is to continue with the implementation of the program and enter stage 3 at the primary level and stage 2 at the intermediate level. Continued planning time, important to the program, will remain in place. In addition, teachers need to offer a high level of commitment and personal time, and this supports their contribution. This was especially important in the implementation stages of the program, but it is emerging that it is an important piece of building and maintaining a strong program. This year, an increase in enrolment resulted in splitting of classes in October. The team strength was a definite asset here and ensured the staff and classroom placement changes were smooth. We will continue to use P.D. activities to develop skills that will be of benefit to our students. Areas of focus include continuation of the implementation of the new math and science curricula and portfolio assessment (our present report cards are in their second year of use and we have plans to review and update them where appropriate as well). We will continue to develop themes for our programs and purchase support materials for these themes.

There was also that year, an opportunity to develop and access funds from another grant. This grant focused on the area of cooperative learning and best practice and would piggyback on the multi age grant. This was a focus identified as a next step within the multi age grant when it began for the primary. With the addition of another three grades to multi age and the corresponding impact on funding to support the release time for planning, team building and professional development, there was some concern as to the resources available. This grant allowed the extension of the multi age grant across all grades involved and introduced the notion of best practice and cooperative learning as a school wide initiative. This finally tied everyone in the school into the restructuring and best practice movement and began the dialogue that made the notion that student centred programming would happen throughout the school. Although the multi age format did

not move into the junior high, the classrooms there were structured to provide an integrated homeroom delivery rather than a departmentalized one at the grade 7 and 8 levels. With the senior 1 level having been identified as the first level of high school, it remained a departmentalized delivery.

This grant proposal is as follows:

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SPECIAL PROJECT GRANT PROPOSAL

SUBMITTED JUNE 11, 1993

NAME OF PROJECT: COOPERATIVE LEARNING / BEST PRACTICE

DESCRIPTION OF NEED:

By way of introduction, we are proposing this project as a supplement/extension to our multi-age primary project which began during the 1992-93 school year.

As we outlined in our summary report, we feel our year was very successful; that our primary staff received much needed and well used professional development opportunities and used their knowledge to implement the first stage of a multi-age program that was of definite advantage in meeting the varied needs of our students.

We are pleased that students in this program remain with their teachers for a three year period. The stability of this format is an advantage to students and has been welcomed parents and staff. Because of this, the project will truly be a 3 year project, with a need for ongoing program development by our team of teachers. This will continue to be covered by the original grant.

Our next initiative came as we began to address the needs of year three students leaving our program. As the year progressed, the advantage of the primary program in meeting individual needs became obvious as one observed both it and our "traditional" intermediate program. We have had strong input from our primary team and a "grass roots" movement from some parents whose children were involved that has encouraged us to consider continuing this format into the intermediate grades.

As a result, we are planning an extension of our program into the intermediate grades.

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We have considered the students who will be involved and feel it will be the best format we can offer to meet their individual needs. Again, this move will require funding in all areas - P.D., supplies and planning / professional development - in order for such a program to be implemented.

Because we felt that this move was a natural extension for the year 3 students, it could not be put off. Although it was not part of our original project, we felt it certainly fit in to become an integral part of where we wanted to go at the school and as such felt it must be included.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES AND DESCRIPTION:

An original part of our planning for the multi-age proposal was to include professional development in the area of "best practice" for the classroom. In our first year, we devoted one P.D. day to an in-service on learning styles that involved our whole staff. As we moved into the multi-age format, teaching styles and strategies became an important topic to consider and we began to explore as a staff (and with our parent group) the Accelerated Schools concept upon which to build an overall philosophy where school and community would work together to set goals and determine the best possible programming options for students. We had hoped to be able to begin to explore P.D. opportunities for the 1993-94 school year that would follow and ongoing plan to upgrade skills in classroom strategies. Ideally, we would like to focus on the broad theme of co-operative learning. We would however, like to explore a variety of instructional best practices that would compliment both our multi-age programming and the integration of curricula at the junior high level (where we are currently feeling a real need to find ways to deal with at-risk students). To explore our theme of "co-operative learning/best practices" to the depth we would like, we would need to be able to engage the services of facilitators to deliver our program. We have examined programs in other schools that involve the use of P.D. days throughout the year as well as use modelling within classroom time. We feel that this kind of approach would be what we would like to explore as well. Some of our teachers have had short sessions on co-operative learning or other strategies, but the feedback they give is that they feel a need for ongoing training and feedback in their own classrooms if they are to truly be able to use these strategies to effect change and meet the individual needs of many of our at risk students. We would foresee structuring a program to provide

this depth of involvement for our teachers. It would involve the majority of P.D. days we have allotted for next year as well as classroom work on days adjoining the P.D. days.

EVALUATION / ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

Evaluation will be ongoing, based on feedback from staff, trainers, parents in the community, as well as on observations within classrooms to determine effectiveness of the new strategies.

As more accelerated schools "little wheels" were added with additional grants and projects, it became more and more important to attend to the "big wheels" and keep the conversations about the vision and philosophy of the school and how each project fit into the whole. Leadership planning became important to insure that discussion of philosophy and vision issues became the norm during staff meetings. The need for a discussion of how to implement grant projects and how to gather data to report on these projects certainly continued to help facilitate these discussions, but in Year 2 there was much more initiation from staff as a result of the groundwork laid in Year 1. Staff meeting agendas reflected many items concerning planning or discussion of plans related to school goals rather than the management items that were more prevalent the year prior.

Another opportunity presented itself as we sought a facilitator for the cooperative learning project. Another neighbouring school was also interested in the topic. The school division had made an investment in the training of a resource person at the divisional level to provide this facilitation, but the facilitator could only provide time for one group. The divisional senior administrator suggested that there were perhaps possibilities for teaming between the two schools. The school administrators were able to work together to define a possible process. As the second school had a clientele that had fewer at risk social indicators, they were not able to access the same grant dollars. With

the provision of a facilitator at no cost, the grant at our school contained dollars that could be used to provide release time for staff at both schools to provide another avenue for collaboration and visitation. Through several professional development days the staffs worked together and another type of teaming developed. The schools were to work together on a variety of projects. The administrators dialogued and benefited from their collaboration, thus modelling teamwork for the two staffs. Staff members who did not work together on a daily basis were able to meet and discuss issues and visited one another's classrooms as they learned to implement cooperative learning strategies. The other school had also moved to implement some multi age classes on a somewhat different plan, but there were enough similarities for productive discussion. There was also some limited planning that involved dialogue between parents from each school with the goal of building a wider parent support network.

The best practice / cooperative learning grant also provided the ability to explore in directions for the future. These included:

• Support to a staff member at junior high who wished to implement an initiative in the area of portfolio assessment and reporting,

• Professional development in providing music programming to students with special needs (as there is a significant special needs population at the school), and

• The beginning of exploration of cross curricular and multi age formats at the junior high level.

A survey of staff to provide their feedback and allow them to set future goals.


The cooperative learning project also included a parental education component. Parent association meetings were a vehicle for updating parents, and as well parent information meetings were held around this topic and information was gathered at parent

teacher interviews. Activities at Christmas and a special event to celebrate the Olympics in February used and exhibited cooperative learning strategies and garnered very positive feedback from parents.

The community liaison project continued to grow. Key to its operation was the development of contact with a variety of community agencies. Some key connections were with Child and Family Services, Public Health and Parks and Recreation and resulted in collaboration to provide additional programming for students and parents beyond school time. As well, the community liaison worker was instrumental in the provision of professional development opportunities for staff and students.

There were several initiatives during year 2 that again were discussed and accessed within the philosophy, goals and priorities of the school:

* A program was developed for junior high students at the grades 8 and senior 1 (grade 9) levels that provided a hands on situation for students to access remedial programming in the area of mathematics and language arts. The vehicle for this was a lapidary program that provided a real world opportunity for students to learn to work with their hands and to learn marketing skills. A special feature of this program was that of providing mentors to work with the students in the program. Consistent with the philosophy of the school and the accelerated schools project, this program helped students develop a sense of pride, ownership and responsibility for the program, and an enthusiasm for school that many of them had not previously experienced. The access to a Stay in School Initiative grant for this project was facilitated by the community liaison program.

* A grant proposal was developed for a Brighter Futures grant with the federal government. Although this grant was not successful, it provided a focus for considerable networking and relationship building between community agencies.

Involved as major participants were the schools, Child and Family Services, the YMCA, and Public Health. As well, the grant proposal was regarded as a favourable initiative by many who read it, and it remained as a seed for future development, including the the recognition for the need and support for a community health facility in the community (now existing as Youville Centre). The initial contacts to group members in the community were facilitated by the school community liaison worker.

- The inquiry process became the vehicle for the exploration of other issues that emerged within the school. An example of this was a staff discussion regarding prioritizing expenditures to be covered with fund raising dollars. A committee solicited input from stake holders. Using this information, they were able to formulate a statement of beliefs that reflected the feedback and would govern decision making as to priorities for support. The process and results were well received as they had a strong foundation (as follows).

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ADMINISTRATION STAFF MEETING REPORT

RE: BUDGET / FUND RAISING PROPOSAL

OCTOBER 25, 1994

Our thanks to the fund raising committee for their commitment to a difficult task as they gathered data concerning priorities for fund raising dollars. Thanks too, to everyone who spent time discussing the issues and providing feedback to the committee. The committee forwarded the information gathered to Terry and me and we met to reflect on fund raising and other budget dollars and how they might be distributed for this year.

We began by constructing a statement of beliefs which reflect much of the feedback we obtained from you and which we feel represents how we at Lavallee must govern decisions as to how we prioritize initiatives and allocate dollars.

We believe that:
- equality does not necessarily look the same at each level (in activities, program or $)
- fund raising is a total school effort. The focus can't be on which area generates the most funds as this

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doesn't address issues such as large families choice of who sells, family selling opportunities, "cute-ness" of younger students, etc.

- the focus for fund raising priorities may change from year to year. In each year there should be areas supported that are classroom based (e.g. field trips) and some that are long term, overall school expenditures (e.g. library).

- two very important areas of need which require significant support are the library and computer area.

- field trips are an important part of programming. In early years they meet the goal of providing an experiential base that is lacking for many students, at junior high they are extensions of curriculum - helping to link it to the real world and attempting to empower our students to survive when they move beyond the somewhat protected school community.

- in our planning there must be an overall focus on providing a well-rounded experience for students as they move through K-S1 at the school. Although some activities are most beneficial and appropriate at some levels than at others, we must keep in mind they are all part of the total picture for kids that we are all working on.

Fund raising considerations / questions for future:

Should cheese sales be turned over to parent association?

Camp Stephens. Should it happen? How should it be funded? What grade level should access the program?

BUDGET ALLOCATION SOURCES FOR THIS YEAR FOR SPECIAL EXPENDITURES

| AREA OF EXPENSE | SOURCE OF FUNDS | | | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Instructional | Textbook | Fund raising | Parent Group | Savings |
| One bus / classroom | X | | | | |
| Science | X | | | | |
| Phys. Ed.(also$ from div.) | X | | | | X |
| Library | X | | X | | X |
| Computers | X | X | | X | X |
| Music | X | | X | X | |
| Drama | | | X | | |
| Preschool drop in | | | | X | |
| Art | X | | | | |
| $ per pod for field trips & classroom activities | | | X | | |
| Snack program | | | | X | |
| Patrols | | | | X | |
| Outdoor education | | | X | X | X |
| Prizes | | | X | | |
| Office "pot" (approx. 14%) | | | X | | |
| French | X | | | | |
| Special Ed, | X | | | | |
| Parent / school community liaison | | | | X | |

In addition to ongoing involvement throughout the year, parents were surveyed in March to determine whether student growth in identified areas was observable at home, and whether parents felt it was consistent with their goals for their children. With what had been learned by the previous year's process, the questionnaire instrument was significantly clearer. The parent feedback indicated observable growth and a general satisfaction with the direction that both the school and their children were taking. The survey document and a summary of comments received are found within the report in the appendix to this document.

There was an overall sense of progress within the staff of the school at the close of the school year. Some staff representatives had attended a major conference in the U.S. to access a workshop on multi age groupings. On their return, they were able to share that they had been able to offer a great deal to the discussions, and that we were in fact further along in our implementation than many of those at the conference. This was a huge confidence builder for the staff, and they were empowered to seek opportunity to be involved in all aspects of the project, from designing feedback instruments for parents to synthesizing data and formulating direction for the upcoming year. Project plans, reports and discussions were all beginning to reflect a sense of past history, current goals and plans to achieve them. By their choice, the presentation to the board of trustees included involvement by all staff involved, not just representatives.

# Year 3 (1994-95)

The third year of this project was a year in which it was not planned to introduce any major initiatives, but rather to continue and support the implementation of those that had already begun.

This was the year when junior high staff began to take an active interest in the teaming necessary to look at some multi-age groupings at the grade seven and eight levels. They initiated an investigation of sources of information that would enable them to develop a proposal for the use of this type of programming in a way that would be suitable for junior high age students and for the school's context. By the end of the year, there had been significant identification of a plan for this investigation, and it became a part of the next year's grant.

With the classroom based teachers well into the task of creating and implementing programs, and secure in what they wanted to do, the student services team began discussions to clarify the role they would play into the future. To do this, an outside facilitator from the division was invited in to work with the team and engage them in dialogue around identifying the needs and priorities of the school and their role in achieving them. With the data generated from this work, the team worked to create a collaborative model for the vision and delivery of support services that would be consistent with the vision and priorities of the school. Again, consistent with the Accelerated Schools Model, the process followed the inquiry model and involved feedback from stake holders.

In staff discussions, it was agreed that our project had proceeded due to the support of others in education. Key to our success had been the support of those at the divisional level who had worked to meet our needs at that level, and those at the

provincial level who had provided both grant dollars and their own expertise and encouragement. In keeping with this level of commitment which was so important to us, it was determined that the school would make a commitment to "give back" some of the expertise that had been gained in order to assist others. Throughout the year, the staff engaged in activities such as hosting visitations, delivery of professional development sessions (often in other divisions), and sharing of materials in displays and on an individual basis. These contributions not only assisted others, but helped to develop a sense of accomplishment and satisfaction among staff members.

Dialogue with parents also reflected a comfort level, sense of team, and showed evidence of the language of the Accelerated Schools Model as indicated in information solicited for the grant reports that year. A copy of the questionnaire to parents used to gather information regarding portfolio assessment is in the appendix to this document. Although there was still considerable work to be done in order to increase the level of parent involvement to the level hoped for, there were definite signs that progress was being made. Perhaps the most successful area in which to observe this was assessment and reporting. A junior high staff member was the first to research and develop a model for portfolio use in parent teacher conferencing. Many families had traditionally found parent teacher conferences to be intimidating, and as a result attendance had been low. It was amazing to find that attendance for the portfolio format exceeded 90% of families. In addition, it was clear that parents liked the format, felt that it told them a great deal about their children and allowed them to be involved in supporting their children's goals for the future. Student reactions included real pride in being able to share their work with their parents. For those who had not achieved at a level of which they were proud, they certainly observed the pride in their peers and additionally had a clear understanding of what strengths they had shown and how they could pull them together in the near future.

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Overall there was a commitment and an interest being shown in the positive role of parents in the school.

During the third year, there was also considerable ownership taken by staff in all of the areas of the school supported by grants. The type of data to be gathered to frame a report in each area was determined early in the year through consultation with the staff. Staff teams also determined who would collect the data throughout the year. Administration undertook the task of assimilating the data into a framework for reporting. This was the first year where the framework was presented to staff in order for them to organize the data they had gathered. This process allowed for considerable reflection throughout the year as to what was being accomplished, as well as a discussion process to surface suggestions for future initiatives. The final document became an integrated summary of all of the initiatives taken to date and showed clearly how they were all interwoven. It identified future goals that included written articulation of integrated curriculum implementation documentation that had been developed within the multi-age program. The written record of what had been undertaken at the school had become an important piece of making the work meaningful in future to both this school and others who might be interested in a similar undertaking to meet the needs of their population. The data gathering process clearly defined the role of leadership in framing the process, encouraging and applauding it , and bring it all together. Equally clearly observable was what the role of the leader was intended to foster - caring, ownership, commitment and hard work on the part of all stake holders.

In reflecting on the overall impact of the implementation of the Accelerated Schools Model during the three years of the study, one must rely on a variety of quantitative and qualitative evidence.

Regarding its impact on staff, the evidence became clear as the grant documents

were examined. There was a great deal of professional growth on the part of individual staff members and the staff as a whole. The year before the project began, most teachers on the staff were either in the process of leaving the school or in the process of planning to leave. Over the course of the three years, the school was described by staff as the division's "best kept secret", and the commitment of staff to the project was clearly observable.

The growing commitment of parents was also observable. From being a school where few parents were in attendance at parent conferences, parent association meetings or during the school day, it became a school where parents visited freely and were not hesitant to talk with staff about their children's progress. The best example of growth in this area came in the years following those described when the Board of Trustees implemented a process for parent involvement in the budget process. Although it is a relatively small school, this school's parent participation in the process was one of the most noteworthy in the division.

This project also had an observable impact in the community. Community agencies had built strong relationships through collaboration with teaching and clinical staff, administration and the community liaison worker. This resulted in much more of a team approach in order to support families and thus support students. The local Child and Family Services Office began a project to offer service to families in the school neighbourhood. Public Health worked to offer prenatal classes to the community within the school. Parks and Recreation and the local community club offered a drop in evening at the school as well as grant dollars to subsidize attendance of students at summer programs. A parent and child drop in was established through community liaison with the help of parents. It was not unusual for visitors to the school to comment on the positive feeling they received within the school walls.

The students in the school also began to show signs of change. At the start of the first year of the project, the most notable student features were that of behaviour problems and apathy. Teachers had left the school the previous year, frustrated at the behaviours they were faced with and the impact these behaviours had on their ability to teach. With only one class per grade, students moved through the school with little change to the classroom makeup. This served to accentuate problems, and in fact caused some students to withdraw into apathy by junior high. By the end of the three years there were certainly still problems, but overall there had been an observable change. At the end of the first year, the staff began a series of new awards for junior high level students. The focus was on celebrating achievement and rewarding not only good marks, but also improvement, outstanding contributions, and completion of junior high programming. In spite of considerable coaching and teaching in preparation for this, the first year's awards brought guffaws from some of the students when improvement or recognition awards were presented. These awards were however, positively received by parents who welcomed the opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of their children. Names of award recipients were on plaques in a main hallway of the school, and students knew they would remain there as part of the history of the school. By the next year, students began asking earlier in the year about the possibility of achieving an award, and we were well on the way to developing a tradition of celebrating achievement. This advancement in the area of academic achievement was evident again in the future. Several years after I left the school, the province implemented the standards testing process for students at the grade three level. It was very interesting to notice that the results for the students at this school were comparable, and in some cases better than other schools in the Division. Such success was indeed quite different from the academic progress in evidence at the school before the implementation of the changes such as multi age

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grouping, cooperative learning portfolio assessment and parental involvement brought about through the use of the ASM.

The leadership component was another piece of what was important in this project and in the school. Again it is apparent in the grant reports that leadership in the direction to be taken was an important facet of what happened in this project. Ironically the final grant report, in which it had seemed so important to tie all pieces of the past and future together, became more that a symbolic tie. At the end of the year a new principal and vice principal were appointed and the documentation that had been created was of the utmost importance in the transition process. Interestingly, this also provided an opportunity to observe whether or not this project was sustainable under new leadership. The project has continued, now into its third year, beyond the leadership change. The new administration has been able to work within the model and continue to fit it to meet their needs and the needs of all of the other stake holders, and has moved to the formal affiliation with the accelerated schools project that has been described elsewhere in the document.

In reflecting on this study, perhaps the most difficult area for me to objectively assess was the importance of the leadership component. Certainly there has been much written to substantiate the importance of the leadership in successful schools. Although I was aware of this, it is in the writing of this document that I have been able to most clearly see the importance of the role. In the document there is also evidence that supports the philosophy that "The ultimate leader is one who is willing to develop people to the point that they surpass him or her in knowledge and ability" (Fred A. Manske, Jr. / Winnipeg Scottish Festival Program, 1998, p. 6).

# Chapter 5

## Evaluation Using Aoki's Model

This chapter will use the questions posed in Aoki's model (as outlined in chapter 3) to analyse and evaluate the project. It will attempt to reflect on the questions as well as present supporting evidence from the various materials collected during the project and from personal observations. These mainly are comprised of grant reports and other reports from work done by the administrators or other team members. These reports include data gathered through interviews with and questionnaires from various stake holders.

### Ends-Means (technical) Orientation

1. *How efficient are the means in achieving the goals and objectives?*

To begin to reflect on this question, it is important to look at the objectives set out in the first grant proposal of the project (as cited in chapter 4). These objectives were broad and ultimately required further grants and planning to achieve them, and as such they stand as the overarching objectives of what the entire project was planned to achieve. The objectives were these:

> 1. To provide a variety of professional development opportunities for staff to support the implementation of family grouping in the primary pod of the school.
> 2. Develop curricula that will foster the learning of primary aged children in a Family Grouping setting.
> 3. To focus on "best practice" strategies to deliver curricula: activity - based learning, cooperative learning, whole language, math manipulatives.
> 4. To develop a stable learning environment; one that will promote positive social interaction and appropriate social development.
> 5. To develop skills in students that would enhance their achievement, especially the low achieving students and those identified as being at risk.
> 6. To increase parent / community involvement in the school.

Perhaps the best measure of how well the project moved to achieve these objectives

comes from data produced at the school during the years following the project. A

newsletter entitled "Creating an Accelerated School", written by the new administration in

the 1995-96 school year (the first year following the project of this thesis), shows a

strong correlation with the objectives above in its summary:

Over the past four years, with the help of "Student Support" grants, through two
sets of administrators, several staff changes, and the expected student migrancy,
the school has relentlessly pursued its vision - the creation of an accelerated
school. Achievements shared by all stake holders have included the following:
- creation of 3 primary multi age classrooms
- creation of 3 intermediate multi age classrooms
- establishment and maintenance of the continuity of these learning groups
  for a minimum of three years
- development of integrated curricula and thematic teaching in all multi age
  classrooms
- significant reduction of violent behaviour and unacceptable language
  through prevention strategies, provision of support material and
  continuous follow up with appropriate consequences
- establishment of parent support programs
- significantly increased parental and community participation in goal setting
  and in support programs
- establishment of whole school, student led portfolio sharing sessions at
  which learning is shared with parents and goals are collaboratively set
- academic gains have been documented
- ongoing staff development and support is established
- provision of teachers and parents with specific strategies to assist our
  students in dealing with conflict, aggression and problem solving
- implementation of "Best Practice"strategies including cooperative learning
  strategies, whole language strategies and the usage of math manipulatives
  as an integral part of daily instruction
- staff development to support the incorporation of technology, including
  the internet, into student learning and school life

In a grant report from March, 1996 (Curriculum Integration, Year I Evaluation),

the committee involved in the curriculum integration grant referred to time lines generated

at the conclusion of the three year period of this thesis project and indicates the following:

"One of the rather unusual, yet delightful observations we have of this grant is that there

"One of the rather unusual, yet delightful observations we have of this grant is that there have been virtually no barriers to implementation. The time lines and objectives laid out in the initial proposal worked perfectly". The fact that this statement can be made in a year where this was a new step in the implementation plan, and had been planned under one administration and implemented under another, speaks to the success of the ASM in achieving a collaborative culture at the school with a high degree of staff ownership and commitment to the process.

In the second year of the project, the staff worked together using the ASM principles, to examine how a School Board mandate to address a Board adopted set of "Principles of Teaching and Learning" looked within the school setting. The Principles of Teaching and Learning, and the ensuing school plan that had evolved through the ASM process follow:

### School Division Principles of Teaching and Learning

1. The expectations of the learners and the activities in which they are engaged are reflective of their needs, abilities and interests.
2. Learning experiences are deliberately structured to take into account the social nature of learning.
3. Open-ended experiences are provided to enable the learner to construct his/her own meaning.
4. Learning experiences are deliberately designed to enable learners to make connections between the curriculum and the real world.
5. The learning environment supports risk taking by giving the learners responsibility for their learning and by providing them with experiences in problem solving and decision making.
6. Learning occurs through all of the senses.
7. Administrators, parents, teachers and support staff are also active participants in the learning process.
8. Evaluation is an integral component of the teaching / learning process.
9. Partnerships among home, school, and community are encouraged.

The development of the school based structural format by staff and its consistency with Divisional goals indicated the value to the school of the processes

within the ASM (see following flowchart).

**BELIEFS**

**Cultural Mission**
Creation of a collaborative community to focus on student needs – cognitive, affective & physical in a positive problem solving environment.

Clearly defined channels of communication for decision making, problem solving, conflict resolution.

**Elements of Philosophy**
-Focus on learning
-Relationship based
-Empowerment through collaboration
-Restorative justice

**PRACTICES**

**Pro-Social Programming**
-Code of behaviour focussing on rights responsibilities & roles of
Parents        Staff        Students
-Clearly articulated rules, consequences, behaviour plans & or re-entry process.

**Academic Programming**
-Inclusive – focusing on strengths & needs of all children at all levels.

Partnerships with the community

| Conflict resolution for parents | Second Step | Student Council | Conflict mediators program |
|---|---|---|---|

| Work experience | Volunteers | Comm-Unity Liaison | Parent Programs | At-Risk program -ming | Problem solving skills |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

| Multi-Age Grouping | Activity based learning |
|---|---|

Curriculum

| Centres | Themes | Buddy Systems | Activity Programs | Cooperative Learning | Technology | Learning Styles |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|

Developmental Assessment

Student Guided Interviews

Reporting

| Portfolio Assessment | Self-Evaluation |
|---|---|

**Principles of Teaching and Learning**

2. *How efficient are the means in predicting the desired outcomes?*

The efficiency of the means in predicting the outcome desired is rather difficult to assess. Given that what is being studied is a process that in part develops goals and outcomes as it progresses, there are limitations to what can be concluded here. If, however, it is assumed that the main goal of the project was to change the process and appearance of how curriculum was delivered to students at the school as outlined in the objectives above, there was a definite efficiency in the prediction of this outcome as will be shown through test results and feedback from stake holders.

3. *What is the degree of congruency between and among intended outcomes, the content in the instructional materials and the teaching approaches specified?*

There was a high degree of congruency between the intended outcomes, the content of the instructional materials and the teaching approaches specified. The goal of the change contemplated at the start of the project was to look at improving the progress of students toward curricular outcomes. The connection between curriculum content and teaching approaches was a close one. The project began by beginning to move students into a multi-age organization pattern. Part of the challenge of doing this was the examination of the curricular outcomes to develop themes that would fit both the multi-age format, the curricular outcomes desired, and the individual needs of the students for appropriately challenging work. As the project continued, the reflection of the congruency between these components actually played a role in identifying and prioritizing the steps in the project.

4. *How good is curriculum A compared with curriculum B in achieving given ends?*

The comparison that can be made here can be made in two different ways. The first comparison that might be made is the comparison of the school before the project and after it. As earlier stated, the school had many difficulties before the beginning of the

project, including poor academic achievement of students, high burn out rate for staff, lack

of parent involvement, and many social problems. A grant application following this

project (March, 1997) describes the school and its practices, and shows quite a different

picture. It describes the use of the ASM to address the following practices:

**Curricular Practices**
- enriched approach
- critical thinking
- social skills
- application of concepts to current real world situations
- problem solving
- interdisciplinary approach
- common curricular objectives
- full range of elective course work, including arts, career exploration and phys. ed.
- universal access to extra-curricular activities

**Instructional Practices**
- active and discovery learning
- literature
- personal community and real world experiences
- hands on activities
- projects
- educational technology
- cooperative learning
- peer and cross age tutoring
- student responsibility
- heterogeneous grouping
- increased reliance on alternative assessment and self assessment

**Organizational Practices**
- Parents as partners
  - offer parent meaningful roles in school governance
  - keep parents informed
  - offer families opportunities to support the learning process at home and at school
- use community resources
- staff development - develop expert teachers

The other way of looking at a comparison, might be to compare the operation of

this school to that of neighbouring schools with a similar population. In particular when

considering placements of new students it became evident as the project progressed that

divisional support staff recognized the expertise of the staff at the school in developing

programming to meet student needs. This often resulted in requests to have students, in

particular those who had not been successful elsewhere and were at risk of failure without

individualized programming considerations, placed at the school.

5. *Of given curricula, which one is the most cost-effective and time efficient?*

Cost efficiency is always a consideration in any program. Certainly, the changes

instituted in this project could not have been undertaken without the grant dollars that

were available to the school. As at the start of any program there were some significant

investments of dollars necessary to begin the new programming model. In some cases,

mathematics in particular, some material costs were covered from another source when a

new curriculum was introduced. The interesting observation here was that it appeared

that the mathematics curriculum, which introduced some rather new strands and

methodologies, was more readily accepted in this school than in some others. It would

seem that this was at least in some part due to the fact that the culture of reviewing

approaches, planning for and implementing change, and then evaluating the change was

already in place.

Time spent in working to implement new strategies was definitely greater than in

more traditional delivery models. The multi-age format in particular required that the

team involved work together closely. Again, the grant dollars, along with school

professional development budgets, allowed for the provision of regular blocks of planning

time. It was quickly observed that, once they were committed to a task, the staff on a

team were also very willing to volunteer additional time to the endeavour. With these

ongoing discussions, it could be observed that the planning done was utilized in the

classroom and results were brought back for further discussion. In spite of the time

commitment, it was also clear that these staff members felt significant support from one

another as well as satisfaction from their work. (quote from interviews).

In terms of the cost efficiency of the multi-age format in particular, there are two considerations. The common planning time for three classes in each of the primary and intermediate areas resulted in considerable amounts of programming material being developed that was useful in a broader sector than the traditional single grade. This appeared to those involved as a significant cost efficiency. There was a further efficiency in that all three classes at a particular level could be maintained at approximately the same size. The ability to move students between classes, at any point in the year, in order to solve problems and find the best fit to meet their individual needs, represented another kind of time efficiency for students.

6. *What valid generalizations can be made for all schools in a district?*

Because of the specific nature of this project, generalization to other schools in the division is limited. The standard of setting high but appropriate educational goals for students is definitely appropriate for any school. In work done by the author with other schools after this project was completed, the "taking stock" spreadsheet ( figure 2.4)was found to be useful in several settings for both staff and parents as they began to work together.

7. *How well are inputs organized to achieve organizational goals?*

Ongoing discussions within the team meant that there was a high degree of commitment to professional growth. Within the reflections on practice that formed a part of these discussions, there was significant data gathered that was used in future planning. The use of the ASM helped create a culture that had within it an expectation that these kinds of discussions would take place with all stake holders. This framework provided the organization needed to keep the focus on the organizational goals.

8. *What are the principal means used to achieve goals? How do we know that these means*

*are actually enacted, with what frequency and with what intensity?*

The principal means used to achieve the goals set are the processes of the Accelerated Schools Model. The fact that this project was implemented with grant support, ensured that there was a significant amount of data gathered and the various grant reports provide a lasting evidence of the use of the model. The constant care taken within the grants to ensure that all initiatives meshed with one another and with provincial and divisional policy also points out the rigour of the staff's attendance to the process of achieving goals. The need for the documentation in order to gain funding was an important part of the professional development of staff as well. Their involvement in the planning implementation and evaluation of the various grants brought about significant professional development and commitment. This became an important factor in the continuity of the project and smooth transition from one administrative team to another. The ability of the school to attract new funding sources after the first three years of the project documented here also speaks to the attention to task exhibited.

Situational Interpretive Orientation

1. *How do various groups such as teachers, the ministry, parents, students and administrators view Curriculum X?*

2. *In what ways do various groups approve or disapprove of the program?*

3. *How do the various groups see Curriculum X in terms of relevance, meaningfulness and appropriateness?*

4. *What are the various groups' perceived strengths and weaknesses of the program?*

Feedback from others formed a very important part of the project. Each group of stake holders will be considered in the section to follow to provide information regarding the above questions.

Feedback from provincial officials came in the form of support for the various

grant applications submitted. In monitoring these grants, the school was visited by provincial consultants, and these people provided encouragement and often were able to direct us to sources of information that were helpful. One venue for sharing information about the various initiatives being undertaken was yearly display / presentation sessions sponsored by the province. The verbal support and feedback following these sessions was both positive and encouraging.

The support from the divisional office was also important to the project. In the beginning stages, the school was given the freedom to seek out staff members who were interested in and had the skills and experience needed to begin such a major restructuring. At the end of the first year of the project, there was continued support from the division when some key new staff members were moved to permanent contracts to avoid interruption of the initiatives that had been begun. In addition, the division has recognized the multi age format and been supportive of it. In a single grade setting, variation of the population at individual grade levels could conceivably allow for reduction of classes with the use of different split grade combinations each year. In the multi age setting, the combination of three grades allows for the class sizes to be balanced, no matter what the numbers are in any one grade. This tends to preserve the need for three classes to serve a multi age group for three grade levels, and as well has resulted in class sizes staying quite low. The advantage is that there is increased amounts of individual assistance available to students and continuity in their placement. As well there is support for the teamwork in curriculum development and planning being done by staff. This is particularly important with a population of students who have often had many disruptions in their lives already, and this contributes to their overall ability to build and maintain positive relationships and maintain continuity and stability in their programming. If the school division were not in support of this programming, this could be seen as a significant financial disadvantage at

the divisional level.

One of the notable features of the use of the ASM is the significant involvement of parents in the educational process. Parents were included at all phases of school planning from development of the vision to planning for evaluation and reflection. This contact included many presentations and discussions, both at large meetings and in small or even individual conferences. Parent presence in the school was encouraged as a means of changing the atmosphere in the school, and it was not uncommon for parents to be present on a regular basis to pick up their children, volunteer, or drop in to discuss an issue with school staff or see their child at work in their classrooms. Given that before the project there had been many parents who were "frustrated and angry, causing home-school communication to break down" (Parsons, 1995), this was a definite change in the culture and represented significant progress. One of the interesting disadvantages of the program, from a parents' point of view, was that the multi age format looked different than what they were used to having school programming look like. In spite of the fact that parents in general were not pleased with what had been happening at the school, and many of them had not had a positive experience themselves in schools, they were fearful that if a program looked different, it might not be good. The original move to a multi age primary program began with parents being involved in discussions and provided with research information. In a February, 1993 survey of parents (see appendix), the question "Did you have any concerns when your child entered the program in September?" yielded comments like:

• Yes many. I was worried about learning her grade 3 work. Will she be ready for a conventional grade 4 class?

• Yes, I was concerned about how three different grade levels could learn in the same classroom.

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When asked "How do you feel now?", a sample of representative responses indicated:

- I am still worried. I think her class is wonderful, but I worry about adapting again to a conventional classroom.

- I am understanding it better.

Finally, when asked about their desires for programming format for the children as they move beyond the primary grades, responses included:

- I think it would be in the best interests of my child to be in a multi age class. I would really like to see multi age teaching expanded to the grades 4-6 only if there are teachers who wholly support the idea, are willing to put out the extra effort to get started and have the understanding to meet the needs of such a varied age group. I would like to see a number of meetings between parents and teachers to fully discuss all aspects before undertaking such a project, so that the parents will be fully informed (in detail) about how a multi-age class will operate. Last, I would like to see one or all of the primary teaching staff be involved in setting out curriculum and motivating the 4-6 in the same direction they have taken so that there will be continuity from one level to the next for our children. Would it be beneficial to have one multi age class and then three regular classes?

- I feel it would probably help my child, as they are doing work that applies only to their level, without going on to harder work or having to repeat the grade. I think meetings for the multi age in grades 4-6 would be helpful.

The staff felt supported by the fact that these responses indicated parent support for and increasing understanding of the programming to date, as well as a desire to continue. One of the disadvantages of the size of the school was the fact that we could not run both a multi age and single grade format at the same time, however, the multi age format provided much more flexibility than did the single grade.

In March, 1994, parents were again surveyed following the introduction of the use of cooperative learning strategies. Responses indicated parents were noticing growth in areas that included cooperation with others, respecting others' opinions, self-esteem, enjoyment of school and sharing. Comments from parents included:

- Can see a real improvement with him in school.
- Seems to enjoy it more.

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- More willing to join things.
- We definitely see growth in all areas.
- I wish this course had been in the schools years ago. I think it's helpful to my son.
- I believe my son should be bringing more homework now.
- Yes, there is a wide range of growth in the skills mentioned above. My son enjoys school and I find he is becoming more sociable with his brother and cousins and friends around the house. It is great that I can see the social skills that he learned at school can spill over into our home life.
- We have had a discussion and my daughter says she doesn't have self esteem for herself.
- My daughter's math skills are very good for the grade level she is in. Keep up the good work.

Again staff were pleased with the progress for children and the growth in knowledge of the program shown by parents. Perhaps the best example of this knowledge empowering parents was observed at a parent association meeting during the second year of the project. There had been considerable talk in the community about the parents of two children who were new to the area and whose children had just entered kindergarten. These parents were very vocal about their desire to have their children enter a program format they were more familiar with (single grades) and were suggesting a petition to demand the end of the multi age format. Their arrival at the parent association meeting was their first contact with the school regarding this. They verbalized their case in a very confrontational manner. The administration and staff present took a moment to begin to formulate a response in their minds. Before they could speak, the other parents present took over. In a calm manner each of approximately ten parents explained what the program was all about and how they saw it as benefiting their child. The new parents were encouraged to visit classrooms and talk with others involved. By the end of the meeting, bridges had been built that would continue to grow. The meeting was powerful evidence of the ownership parents felt for the school and the program.

The staff at the school had a key role in the project. They were on the front lines each day along with their students. In addition they were responsible for the program

planning and for coordinating communication between stake holders. At the start of the project, the leadership role of the administration was to provide information to staff and motivate them to become involved with the project. As the project moved along, administration needed to ensure that resources were available. These included professional development, planning time and classroom supplies. Also as the project evolved and the culture of the school changed, the staff took more and more ownership for what was happening. In order to track the process with staff, there were again many strategies employed. There were many hours spent in discussion with the whole staff, with particular staff groups and with individuals. Pod meeting records were kept to enable the school to create a written record of progress. Discussion took place as to the data that would be gathered to formulate grant reports and plan for the future. Interviews with staff members and staff questionnaires also contributed to this data collection. A discussion surfaced the belief that, since the school had been able to grow due to the contributions of funds from outside sources, that there was a commitment needed on the part of school staff to share what they had learned with others. Visitors were welcomed to the school and staff committed to presentations to outside groups. Preparation for these presentations also helped collect data that tracked the project progress. Some staff members wrote about portions of the project as they pursued further post secondary education.

Interviews with the primary staff took place at the close of the first year of the project. Their comments included the following:

Teacher 1:
Benefits seen:
- Meeting needs of kids. With the multi age format, the teacher is not the only one helping students. Flexible groups allow more capable students to be grouped with less in activities where this is appropriate.
- Felt that the choice to move to a multi age program delivery was the right one for

the school. In previous years, this teacher felt she was working alone to implement a child-centred, activity-based program. This project provided colleagues who were striving to achieve the same goals and could provide support. She can share her experiences and ask questions of others.

- Observed changes in children. In September they were not used to taking risks and taking chances to solve problems. Significant changes have been observed and students now feel safe enough to take a chance even if they make a mistake.

Concerns:

- Math most difficult. Problem is how to be activity-based and still meet needs without all doing different activities. New curriculum provides many more kinds of activities to address a particular concept. This is helpful.
- Early concerns were that community might not give the program a chance. Year 3 parents were very skeptical to start. By year's end felt they were showing a real change and expressed confidence in teacher.
- Concerns for future placement of students who leave this setting.

## Teacher 2
Benefits seen:

- Students can follow through as far as they are able in a particular topic.
- Can use a variety of teaching formats from large group formal lessons to various flexible groups.
- Thematic teaching fits well with curriculum.
- Opportunities for every child to be an expert in some situation. Pointed out that often kids in the middle get the least attention at school. With flexible groupings and multiple levels, all children can be put into situations that highlight their strengths.
- Extra time was spent on getting set up and started in this format. This will be of benefit in future as relationships and procedures developed will continue into the next year for a large part of the class who will remain. This provides significant advances in continuity and stability for students.
- Collaboration with colleagues important. Becoming an ongoing learner increases one's classroom effectiveness.

Concerns / Disadvantages

- Before you could plan a single year and repeat it. This requires planning for a three year block.
- Concerns for follow up for students who leave primary.

## Teacher 3:
Benefits seen:

- Benefits seen for students this teacher had the previous year. One student who is ready for enrichment is able to move ahead. Another student who had significant delays is able to work within class groups instead of being isolated. His progress is exceeding goals set the previous year. Both children's needs are able to be met

while keeping them a part of the class. Previous year both had been socially isolated due to their differences. Parents of both children are noting the changes.

- Feels program is meeting student's needs. Also is becoming confident herself in the area of program development.
- Noted change in atmosphere of the school. Common goals allow sharing with colleagues for the first time. It is beneficial to be able to go to others for assistance in theme development.
- Planning time has been very valuable and has led to further commitment of time on the part of team members.
- This program does not preclude/cramp the individuality of a teacher. There is not a "stereotypical" multi age teacher.

Concerns / Disadvantages:

- In September had concerns regarding change of administrator, change of staff and difficulty in collaborating with people she didn't know. Also had concerns about dealing with curricula that were new to her.
- Concerns re: future placement of year 3 students moving out of program. Felt that continuation of multi age would continue to offer more opportunity for students to develop needed social skills.

A journal kept by the administrator also documented the following observations:

- that students are not observable by year in the program.
- That groupings change as the activities change. Groupings include cross age as well as single year groupings.
- That the three classrooms appear quite different and reflect the strengths/interests of the teachers in them.
- That students appear to be confident learners who are willing to participate and take ownership in their learning.
- That teaching is occurring around themes with integration of disciplines in them.

At a staff meeting, the primary staff responded to growing interest on the part of the other staff members and made a presentation. A resource teacher who had been at the school the previous year noted an increased stability and an increase in the amount of teaching and learning taking place. Questions raised included the following:

- What are the disadvantages you have found?
- What about applications to other levels?
- What affect does this format have on phys ed. and music programs?

The conclusions drawn were that this program:

- allows for individual differences of students since child-centred, activity-based programming can be applied to suit the levels of all children.

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- allows for differences between teachers.
- builds strong relationships between teachers , students and parents.
- builds self esteem, decreases discipline problems.
- increases teacher confidence, collaboration and creativity.
- provides additional flexibility to a small school.

While primary staff worked together on the initial implementation of the program, they evolved into a strong team. This was visible to other staff members and created an interest in them. Ultimately the observations of success in the primary classrooms, the positive presentation of the research and their own experiences by the primary staff, and the positive feedback from students and parents encouraged other staff members to become involved in the expansion of the program and implementation of other changes at the school. A collective focus such as this developed a passion for best practice within the staff that became a part of the school culture and staff satisfaction. It was an important leadership responsibility to continue to encourage and support this staff commitment.

Students also provided positive feedback regarding changes that were taking place. As they built strong relationships with their teachers, they were able to engage in discussions as to their own preferences and interests and how they felt about particular approaches. A young man in a primary class was able to tell his teacher that he now felt there were always others at his level to work with and that he didn't feel so alone. As students became more confident they built better relationships with one another. Recess was a classic example of where this worked. In the first year of multi age implementation, there were significant reductions in the amount of violence at recess at the primary level, while it remained a larger problem at the intermediate level. With the implementation of this format at the intermediate level, and the growing experience of the students, similar gains began to be observable. Students in junior high began to take more interest in and

ownership for their academic success as they developed knowledge that they had strong caring relationships with their teachers and they became aware of strategies they could use to achieve success. Among these were strategies in the areas of cooperative learning , research, technology and conflict resolution. The culture of the school embraced recognition of student effort and accomplishments, and this was clearly supported by students. Celebrations such as award ceremonies, graduations and others became important events to recognize the accomplishments of all students. Pride in the school resulted in a decrease in vandalism. Although there were still many students who presented serious difficulties, it was well known that the culture was one of high expectations that supported the seeking of solutions to provide opportunities for all to attain success.

*5. What questions do administrators and significant others have about Curriculum X?*

There are many questions asked about the use of the ASM at this school and its possible applications in other locations. The areas most commonly identified in questions deal with costs involved and resources available, development of the process and support resources in existence, communication of philosophy, continued consistency with provincial directions, fit with other levels of the system in order to ensure smooth and effective transitions for students, maintenance of planning time, and provision of ongoing professional development for new staff. One of the advantages of the ASM model is that there are so many resources available to answer questions. The resource book cited in the references is a very comprehensive planning resource. As well, the internet provides excellent, up-to-date information from the authors of the project and links to other locations in North America that are using the model.

<u>Critical Theoretic Orientation</u>

1. *What are the perspectives underlying Curriculum X?*

To see the perspectives underlying the processes followed at the school, one must

look at some of the belief statements that have been articulated at the school.

As part of the grant report of March, 1995, the following beliefs were included:

1. The ultimate school goal is to develop self-directing autonomous individuals.
2. Development of the child is considered in many areas; including aesthetic, physical, emotional and social as well as cognitive.
3. Teachers are the facilitators of learning. They aid in children's development by helping them formulate goals and diagnose problem areas. They suggest alternative plans of action, provide resource materials, and give encouragement and support.
4. The curriculum is organized to develop understanding of concepts and methods of inquiry, more than retention of content learning.
5. Different people learn in different ways, so multiple learning alternatives should be available.
6. Children work with materials on the level appropriate to their present attainment and move as their abilities and desires allow them.
7. Children strive to improve their performance and develop their potential rather than to compete with others.
8. Instead of only letter or numerical grades to summarize student progress, multiple sources of documentation are utilized for the reporting process.

In addition, the following vision statement has been developed by the community

and circulated to the community in the 1997-98 school calendar.

This is a school where students, staff, parents and community work together to:
- Achieve the highest academic standards.
- Find success with each educational challenge.
- Develop and achieve mutual goals.
- Demonstrate awareness and understanding of cultural strengths.
- Promote pride and respect.
- Ensure teaching styles reflect diverse needs and abilities.
- Take ownership and responsibility for life long learning.
- Create a centre of opportunity for personal growth.

Commitment to all of these beliefs on the part of all stake holders has been

developed using the principles of the ASM.

2. *What is the implied view of the student or the teacher held by the curriculum planner?*

The assumption here is that the term 'curriculum planner' refers to the creators of the model. The view of the student seems to be that he/she will willingly engage if the curriculum is appropriate, and that success will bring a desire for more. Also, that this will have an effect on the student's overall focus and result in reduction of discipline issues. Teachers are clearly seen as professionals who are empowered within a collaborative process to work to provide their students with the most appropriate programming. There is a belief that teachers who are part of a team that develops programming that works for kids will find satisfaction in their work.

3. *At the root level, whose interests does Curriculum X serve?*

The advantage of the process defined by the ASM is that it creates a win-win situation for all stake holders. Ultimately it is set up to put the interests of students first. In doing so however, it acknowledges the fact that the support of students comes from the others on the team and recognizes the importance of providing human resources by building strong relationships among team members.

Students clearly benefit from a more individualized approach. They have increased opportunities to work with staff and parents as they set goals, assume the responsibility for achieving them (knowing they have a support network around them), and become involved in evaluating their progress. At the start of this project, most of the students of the school had little chance of completing high school. A recent awards program from the adjoining high school showed numerous graduates of the school receiving some form of recognition at the high school level.

Staff at the school also benefit from the use of the model. The school moved from one that had one class at each grade, and as such no opportunities for collegial

collaboration for staff, to one where there were teams of three classes at every multi age level. There was increased collaboration and support among staff members. As well, the focus on inquiry and best practices laid out in the ASM developed staff interest in research and exploration of their own practice. The level of interest in professional growth in the school was very high. This was an asset in a school such as this where many students arrived less than motivated and less than prepared to learn. Before this project, it was very easy to focus most closely on the discipline problems that this created and end up in an adversarial position with student and parents that was very stressful. This also did little to further gains in academic areas. With planning time provided, colleagues to work with and a focus on practice, it was now easier to move into a critical examination of what student needs were, how to adapt curriculum to meet these needs, how to engage and empower the student and his or her family, and how to evaluate progress. When something did not work, it became a challenge to analyze the situation to determine why, and to try to develop a creative solution to move beyond the problem. Risk taking was encouraged and enjoyed, and the result was that there was much more discussion than before as to how to deal with and solve or minimize particular problems. The role of administration was important here, as risk takers needed to know that someone would be there to "pick them up" when a strategy did not work out. Staff confident that they would have support in finding creative solutions became supporters for students and parents who needed to take risks of their own to be successful. In a school where in years before staff were doing all they could to leave, there was now a high degree of professional satisfaction in seeking best possible solutions to enable students to achieve as much as possible.

Parents and community members also benefit. They feel much more involved in and informed about their children's education. They are recognized as contributors to the

process as well. In this community, many parents had not had successful or positive school experiences of their own, and as such really valued a chance to have a successful interaction with an educational institution themselves while at the same time benefiting their children. In addition to discussions about their children's school progress, they were able to access supports such as parenting courses and preschool drop in opportunities, and some who began as participants eventually became able to deliver the programs themselves and provide support to their own community. Some of the school programs also involved mentorship from retirees in the community. This provided a real benefit to the students, particularly those who did not have extended families, and it also provided satisfaction to the senior participants.

4. *What are the root metaphors that guide the curriculum developer, the curriculum implementor, or curriculum evaluator?*

The most important principle that guided those involved in the project was a belief in people . Specifically this was the belief that the goal of the ASM is the creation of schools in which every child has the opportunity to succeed as a creative, critical, and productive member of society.

5. *What is the basic bias of the publisher/author/ developer of prescribed or recommended resource materials?*

It would seem that the bias of the authors of the ASM is that all students can be engaged in programming that is appropriately challenging to them, that is that an approach most frequently believed to be appropriate for gifted children, will actually engage all students with learning in a manner that will enable them to be successful. The belief of the authors is a belief that the use of their model will provide increased opportunities for children to engage in, and achieve success in educational endeavours.

6. *What is the curriculum's supporting world view?*

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The view of the curriculum developed at this school, using the ASM is that there will be increased success for children at school when the programming at the school involves input from all of the important stake holders within a framework that provides for ongoing discussion, reflection and revision as needed. There is a need for: curriculum to be available that is developed outside of the school (by provincial government stake holders), parents and community stake holders to be able to have input as to the specific needs of the children in the community that the school can assist in addressing, students themselves must be involved in discussions regarding their needs and interests and how the school curriculum can help to meet these, and school professionals must use their expertise to create a blend of all these needs that govern the day to day operation of their classrooms. They must be able to gather information, develop plans, gather observation data and take it to other stake holders for reflection and future planning.

Overall Reflections

Since this project began, there has been an evaluative model developed within the accelerated schools project. It also considers a variety of aspects when evaluating the program. In a further project, it would be of interest to also use this model to examine the ASM implementation at the school.

Aoki's model was chosen because it provided an opportunity to reflect on what happened at the school from a variety of different perspectives that included specific measurement, input from those involved and a reflection on the overall agendas being presented. In such a comprehensive project as this, it did not seem that there would be sufficient data from any one of these dimensions to provide a thorough reflection on successes and concerns that have arisen. As the reflection moved from one of Aoki's perspectives to another, it was interesting to note that there existed data that consistently

pointed out positive achievement using the ASM model within the school. Certainly there were also difficulties that surfaced. The amount of actual empirical test data was limited. Conclusions using what was available were positive, but there was not a lot of data that would have allowed for a conclusive statement as to the measurable success in this area. Gathering data from the various stake holders was also sometimes difficult. There were a variety of levels of understanding in such a high needs school, and as such the discussions as to input, reflection and planning were not always easily facilitated. Although this created some problems, it also pointed out the importance of ongoing work to keep the conversations between all stake holders meaningful. Finally, the underlying perspectives of the model involved achievement of success for all students. In the implementation process, this remained a main perspective, however in three short years it would be difficult to make a definitive statement about the measure of success for every student. Overall, as all of the evaluative perspectives were examined in light of the objectives of the project, there was progress observable in virtually every area. One is left with an ongoing interest in future evaluations as the project continues. Finally, in observing that the use of the ASM contributed to the creation of a positive, professional, collaborative, culture at the school, its use is clearly of benefit to the staff, the students and the community.

# CHAPTER 6

## Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

This study was framed to investigate a number of questions. As indicated in chapter one, these were:

- What did the process look like in the school?

- What were the strengths of the Accelerated Schools Model in this particular situation?

- What were the roles of the participants in this process? (And in particular in the area of leadership:

> Is a plan only as good as the leadership of it?

> How is leadership translated into action?

> How does it create a culture in the community?

> Is that culture sustainable over time?

> Is the culture visible to others outside the community?

- What were some of the resources that enhanced the potential for success of the model?

- Was the ASM a success? That is, did it have an impact on student growth and success, teacher professional development and community satisfaction?

The answers to these questions were addressed descriptively as details of the process at the school and analysis using Aoki's model unfolded in the preceding chapters. A picture was painted of the process that took place in the school. Given the complex nature of the numbers of initiatives that were undertaken that affected all parts of the ten year program offered to students, it would appear that the ASM's process model was

suitable to address a wide variety of initiatives, and that this was certainly a strength of the model. The model also allowed all stake holders to participate in a meaningful way, and ensured that roles were defined and all voices were heard.

Examination of the data gathered lead as well to the following conclusions and reflections.

- Meaningful change can be achieved over a relatively short period of time. In order for this to happen, it is important that there be supports in place from the stake holders and from the funding levels in both the division and province.

- Change achieved over such a short time can be sustainable, even through a change in administration, as long as there continues to be some support from all of the stake holder groups involved for the philosophy that drives the change.

- Planning time is essential in the change process. An investment of professional development resources to provide this planning time is a wise investment. It tends to motivate teachers to commit many additional resources through donation of their personal time.

- A culture must develop that encourages risk taking. Dialogue and collaboration are an important part of the culture.

- Risk taking and professional growth can be a very stimulating experience for staff.

- Support agencies will add resources to shared initiatives, but there must be a facilitation of communication between involved parties. This facilitation includes parents. In particular, parents with reservations about school must be helped to build bridges. Once this has happened, parents are able to become a support to school initiatives and the school is better able to support parents.

- Resources are important. There must be a willingness on the part of funders to invest in our schools if meaningful change in education is to take place. Investment in

opportunities for professional growth empowers stake holders to make changes.

At the fore of these conclusions is the importance of the leadership role in the evolution of a school. At the beginning and throughout the process, the leader is responsible for vision, facilitation, support and empowerment. It is within the leadership role to support staff to develop trust and take risks. This involves creation of a culture where both successful and not so successful initiatives are valued for what is learned from them.

Certainly in this study it became evident that the leadership began from the "front", but evolved into "leadership from within". In order to achieve this, it is important that the leader is able to clearly articulate important components of the vision to the various stake holder groups. This is where the use of a model is essential. In this study, the ASM provided assistance in creating the information about how the school would operate to both staff and community. The wealth of reference material facilitated the ability to provide information regarding any question about the framework being used that surfaced. It facilitated discussions and newsletters to parents. In these communications, everyone involved became cognizant of the fact that there was a process followed with all initiatives within the school, and that new initiatives could be introduced through this process.

The advantage of the Accelerated Schools Model to this school lay in the fact that it was a model to describe process and inclusion of stake holders, rather than a model that defined particular initiatives. This meant that, with the process clearly articulated by the model, the specific initiatives could be developed to meet the particular needs of the school and all stake holders knew their roles and how they could contribute.

As the projects developed over time, the structure of the model became very

important to the leadership role. When there only a few initiatives underway, and they are in the early stages, everyone easily remembers what the intended outcomes are. Once time passes, the number of initiatives increase, and those underway evolve and change, it becomes much more difficult to track the entire process. The use of a model provides a conversation tool, reference point, and reinforcer that ensures that there remains a focus to school initiatives. In this way, the model becomes a very important leadership tool. Using a model, the need to record the activities of the school is accentuated. Over time, it is always possible to trace the history of where the school is at, share it with others, and ensure that all initiatives fit with one another and with the overall school goals and plan. Growth and development of the school, the community and the staff are noted and celebrated and are more likely to be shared with others.

The exact outcomes of this study are likely not directly transferable to another setting, as they are the end product of a process that was driven by particular identified needs. Hopefully, components of the study will be of use to those who may be in a position to contemplate some similar components within their own process.

The Accelerated Schools Model was an excellent fit for this school because of its flexibility and consequently its suitability to frame and organize the exploration and implementation of a wide range of initiatives. I have had the opportunity to see several other schools use the "taking stock" idea in their own unique settings, and would suggest that the model would seem to have something to offer in other educational settings. Most importantly however, is the evidence presented here as to the importance of using any suitable model to maximize the effectiveness of school planning.

This project took place over the course of three years. During this time, the school involved undertook many initiatives that involved changes to the philosophy and practice in the building. With the implementation of a reflective inquiry model, the

changes made in three years were the groundwork for others to come. In three years, it was certainly possible to observe a great deal of change. What was not immediately evident was the long term effects and sustainability of the philosophy. Questions remain as to long term effects of the changes on staff, students and community. As well, questions remain as to the influence of leadership in the school. Certainly, there was an indication of the importance of leadership in the implementation of the model to begin with. There was also evidence that the model involved a shared leadership that encouraged involvement of all stake holders, but questions remained as to the effects of a change in leadership.

The advantage of a model like the Accelerated Schools Model that is based on process rather than content, is that there is a constant evolution possible in the content area while remaining true to the philosophy of the model. This has happened at this school. In the three years following those described in the study, the school has had a new administration. The model provided opportunities for the new administration to continue to work to involve all stake holders in the accelerated schools model in a way that provided a comfortable fit with their own personal style. The growth of the internet has provided a positive impetus and an opportunity for the new leaders and staff to build a connection to the originators of the model at Stanford University (http://www.stanford.edu/group/ASP/index.html). This communication has resulted in a formal connection for the school, making it the first school in Canada to gain affiliation with the greater network as an accelerated school. Support for this venture has come from grants offered from new sources interested in pursuing this philosophy and ascertaining its benefits for children.

There are many questions to be answered as to the measurement of the impact of the model on the school. One opportunity to look at data on student results at the school

came with the provincial grade three mathematics testing program. Certainly one of the benefits desired with the implementation of the multi-age grouping was the collaboration that could take place and the resulting focus on curriculum that was possible. The first new curriculum implemented in the format was mathematics. There was considerable time spent by staff on discussing how best to achieve curricular goals of this program within the child centred, multi-age format. The results of the provincial testing placed the school ahead of other schools in the division whose students would likely have had many more advantages in the area of entering preparation.

The connection with the accelerated schools network will assist in providing ongoing professional development that will continue to support the implementation and evaluation of the model. In reviewing their format for evaluation, one is left with a feeling of anticipation for the systematic attention to data gathering that is to come.

A final question lies in the area of applicability to other arenas. We have entered an era where school planning has been highlighted by our government as a vehicle to involve all stake holders in the setting of school goals. The involvement of parents has attached to it an education piece of its own. Parents must learn about the process and their ability to contribute to it. It is becoming more and more important to attend to the development of a model that will help facilitate this, a model that can be communicated to and understood by staff and community and will be of use to the development of a school plan on an ongoing basis. The Accelerated Schools Model is a model that has potential in this arena. There is significant support in the area of professional development in the use of the model. The model is based on process and therefore offers flexibility to attend to specific initiatives at provincial, divisional or school community level. It has been my experience that several of the schools I have worked with have found the flowchart for getting started to be of particular value in working with staff and

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communities. With this in mind, there are certainly questions to be answered as to the usefulness and applicability of the model on a wider basis, first in the area of its usefulness in another school site, and considering the movement in the U.S. to district wide application, its potential for application in other Manitoba Schools.

In discussions of this project with others, it is clear that there were several major influences within this school that brought about change. The Accelerated Schools Model was key to defining process and recording the progress of the project, as well as framing the development of future initiatives. The leadership component was essential for the development of the climate in which the ASM could be used effectively. In addition, the implementation of a multi-age format to complement the introduction of new curricula and new teaching strategies was a large step. I believe there would be merit in future research, in looking further into each of these components. A particular focus of such study would be to explore the relative importance of the components to the achievement of school programming that most effectively meets student needs.

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# Appendix

Survey Forms Used to Gather

Feedback from Parents and Staff

MULTI-AGE PRIMARY PROGRAM
PARENT FEEDBACK REQUEST
FEBRUARY, 1993

Dear Parents,

This year we have begun to use a multi-age grouping in our primary classes. We chose to use this approach based on a review of the research in this area. Our decision was based on the following:

-Such child centred programming is based on a guided-discovery/hands-on approach that we felt enabled us to best meet individual student needs. Learning is encouraged through the use of a developmental approach appropriate to the particular students in the program.

-The multi-age program has allowed us flexibility in grouping of students. It allows grouping of students who work positively together.

-There is the possibility in this grouping, that the teacher/student team may remain together for the 3 primary years. This increases the opportunity for teachers, students and parents to get to know one another and work effectively as a team.

-With three primary classes, teacher teamwork increases and this impacts positively on students. Research shows that there are definite positive effects of such a grouping in the areas of social development and development of positive self esteem as well as in academic areas.

A recent article describes "authentic nongradedness" in schools as practice that meets or comes close to meeting the following criteria:

-Replacement of labels associated with gradedness, like first grade and fifth grade, with group titles like "primary unit" that are more appropriate to the concept on continuous progress;

-Replacement of competetive-comparative evaluation systems (and the report cards associated with them) with assessment and reporting mechanisms that respect continuous individual progress and avoid competitive comparisons;

-All groupings to include at least two heterogeneous age cohorts;
-Groups assembled for instructional purposes to be non-permanent, being dissolved and reconstituted as needed;

-Organization of the teaching staff into teams, with teachers having maximum opportunities to interact and collaborate;

-Development of a flexible, inter-disciplinary, whole-child-oriented curriculum, with grade-normed books and tests used only as resources (if used at all);

-Adoption of official policies consistent with nongradedness in the school and at the school board level, even where waivers of policy may be required (eg. reporting enrolments by grades).

At this point in the year, we would appreciate some feedback from you regarding the primary program.

We are pleased that our primary students have been provided with an opportunity for a consistent approach with the same teacher throughout this year. Our staff feels that the support they have been able to provide to one another in the multi-age setting, as well as the support of parents, has helped to make this possible.

Are you pleased with your child's program to date this year? What benefits has the multi-age primary program provided for your child? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Did you have any particular concerns when your child entered the program in September?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How do you feel now? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

We are particularly concerned with the fact that year 3 students are leaving the program after one year, when research shows increased positive benefits from increased time in such a program. One option we are currently researching is the possibility of extending the child-centred multi age approach into grades 4 to 6. In the Wpg. School Division #1 where multi age primaries have existed for some time, primary programs have been extended into the intermediate, partly to respond to parent requests. How do you feel this would meet your children's future needs? (year 1 & 2 parents please respond as well to enable us to plan for the future.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you have any other comments, suggestions, or questions?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Parent Signature (s):_____

Thank you for your input. We appreciate your support and assistance. Please return this

survey to your child's teacher by March 1.

COOPERATIVE LEARNING PROJECT
STAFF GOAL SETTING SURVEY
1994

STAFF SURVEY INFORMATION FRAMEWORK:

Staff input and feedback has been a part of planning for our co-operative learning in-service

sessions and the development of our guiding flowchart. To plan for the future, staff have begun

to develop plans for future use of co-operative learning. These include classroom projects to try

or continue to try to achieve goals in the area of implementing co-operative learning strategies, as

well as visitations to other classrooms where teachers have been working for a longer period of

time in this area. The following survey was used to gather information regarding staff goals.

# STAFF GOAL SETTING (1994)

NAME:_____

NAME OF PARTNER(S):_____

IDENTIFY ONE OR TWO GOALS:

_____

_____

IDENTIFY ENTRY SKILLS LEVEL:

_____

_____

SUGGESTED INCENTIVE PLAN (WHEN EVERYONE HAS ACHIEVED THEIR GOAL,

WE WILL HAVE A STAFF PRIZE!)

_____

_____

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES (WHAT YOU NEED TO DO, RESOURCES, TIME, $,

PEOPLE YOU WILL NEED TO WORK WITH, INTEGRATION TO TAKE PLACE WITH

OTHER CURRICULUM).

_____

_____

TIME LINES:

_____

EVALUATION PLAN:

_____

_____

PARENT SURVEY, MARCH, 1994

Dear Parents,

This year marks the second year of a reorganization at the school. the most visible change at the school is the movement to multi-age classrooms at the grades 1-3 and 4-6 levels. The goal of this reorganization is to be able to deliver child-centred programming that will best meet the needs of our students. We feel this will ultimately provide them with the best opportunities for learning and development of learning habits that will be of benefit to them in today's society.

To help us move in this direction, we have planned our staff professional development for the year to provide opportunities for teachers to learn more about classroom strategies and practices that are good for kids.

This year, our focus has been in the area of co-operative learning. Co-operative learning uses a variety of classroom methods to ensure that students learn to:
- work together (and use each other's contributions to complete a task)
- use clear verbal interactions (explain themselves clearly and listen to others)
- make sure that they understand all the parts of a group exercise (each student in a group must be able to show this understanding when questioned or tested)
- develop social skills (including leadership, trust, decision-making and conflict management) that will help them function effectively at school and in the world. These skills will also enable them to support one another in achieving goals.

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At this point, we would like you to provide us with some information from a parents' point of view. We would ask that you read the following list of skills and check of whether or not you see your child showing these co-operative learning skills.

**DO YOU FEEL YOU CAN SEE GROWTH IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS:**

**Check box to
indicate 'YES'**

**Co-operation with others**  ☐

**Respecting others' opinions**  ☐

**Self-esteem**  ☐

**Enjoyment of school**  ☐

**Sharing**  ☐

**Comments:**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

# PARENT RESPONSE TO PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCE - 1995

What we liked about the conference:

_____

_____


What we need to know more about:

_____

_____


Two suggestions for the next conference:

_____

_____

_____


Other comments:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____