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ABSTRACT

This document presents the proceedings of a symposium which featured 11 Illinois schools that were selected as successful in their school-improvement efforts and focused on the role of colleges of education in facilitating school reform. The schools included two accelerated schools, one magnet school, and several examples of school-based management. The schools had implemented a variety of activities--addressing community/school problems, expanding curriculum, and improving student performance. An introductory paper describes lessons to be learned from local schools: (1) clarify the terms used in school-improvement efforts; (2) pay attention to the organizational dynamics of school improvement; (3) develop meaningful timetables for evolutionary change; and (4) cultivate and celebrate collaborative opportunities to build better schools. Detailed program descriptions of the 11 schools are provided, as well as the discussants' commentaries. (LMI)

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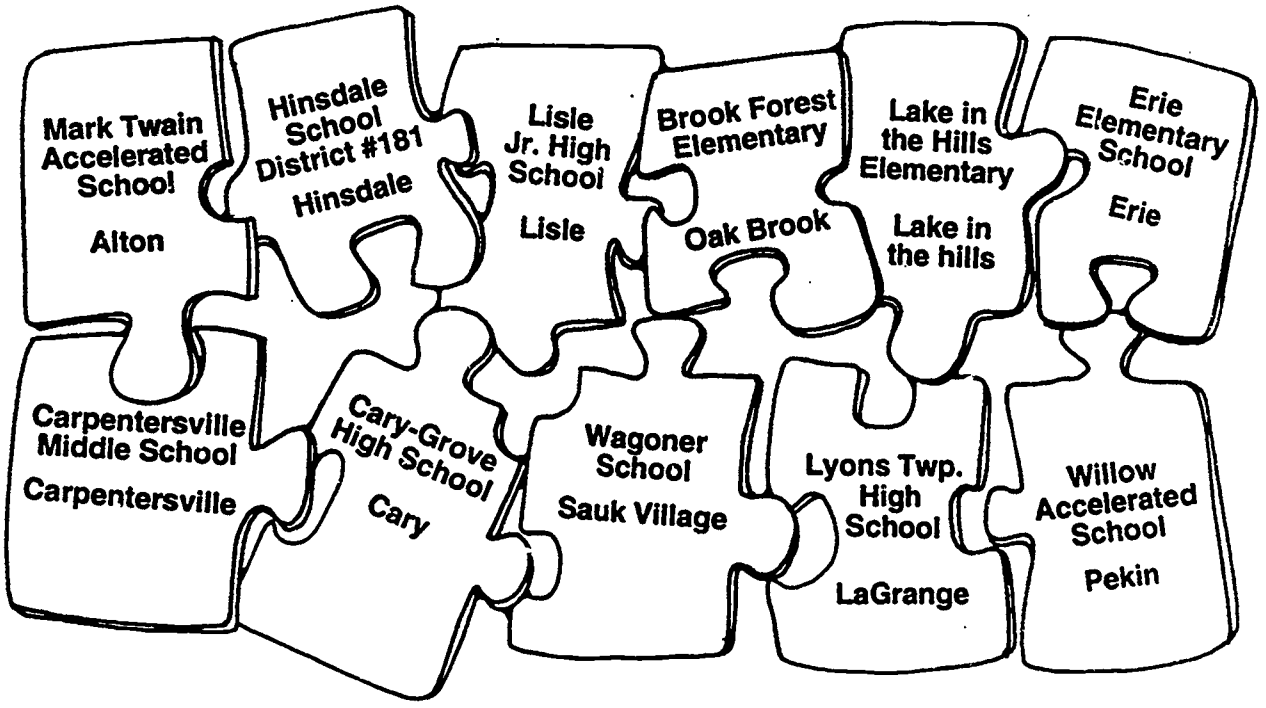
Building Better Schools Symposium
Proceedings

THE SEARCH FOR QUALITY IN ILLINOIS SCHOOLS



Held October 12-13, 1993
in Bloomington, Illinois

Sponsored by
The College of Education
Illinois State University

THE SEARCH FOR QUALITY IN ILLINOIS SCHOOLS

Proceedings of the Second Annual
Building Better Schools Symposium

Held October 12-13, 1993
in Bloomington, Illinois

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The College of Education
Illinois State University

Acknowledgments

The success of the Building Better Schools Symposium is a direct result of the work done by teachers, administrators, and parents on behalf of students. The saga of each of the schools is a tribute to their vision, commitment, and perseverance. Their stories provide direction and inspiration for others who are in the process of reforming their schools. They are our heroes, our agents for change.

The Proceedings of the Building Better Schools Symposium is the product of similar vision, commitment, and perseverance. Paul Baker's vision guided the development of the Symposium and the publication of the Proceedings. Don Kachur served as facilitator, making sure everything happened as planned.

Peg Hundley and Nel Wallace handled Symposium arrangements and prepared the Proceedings manuscripts. Pat Ryan edited the copy, taking great care to ensure that form was correct as well as constant. Each has our thanks and our admiration.

In the end, responsibility for any errors or omissions that may have crept into the final product is that of the editor.

Tom Ryan
Normal, IL
April, 1993

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Building Better Schools Symposium Proceedings

Prologue

School Presentations

Reactions to the Symposium

Building Better Schools Symposium: Accelerating Change by Networking
One Role for Colleges of Education in the Reformation of American Schools

Tom Ryan, Professor
Illinois State University

Introduction

The reformation of American schools is a matter of great interest to the College of Education. We are first concerned that the children and youth of Illinois received the benefits of the best education possible. We recognize our responsibility to be knowledgeable about the best practice available and to use that knowledge to shape our programs to prepare teachers, administrators and support personnel.

It is incumbent upon us to identify schools that demonstrate best practice and to celebrate their accomplishments. By celebrating the successes of practitioner colleagues we reaffirm our commitment to the schools, focus dialogue, and establish a process which may accelerate much needed change.

The Building Better Schools Symposium is a vehicle designed to celebrate schools that have accepted the challenge to restructure for the 21st Century. The first symposium conducted in October 1992, focused on the ***process of change***. Reactions from practitioners and faculty alike showed it to be an excellent vehicle by which schools that have stayed the course, achieved their goals, and have results to share may encourage innovation among others. A second symposium focused on the ***search for quality*** was held in October 1993.

The Concept & Its Origins

The Building Better Schools Symposium grew out of a continuing discussion within the College of Education focused on the issues surrounding school reform. Primary concern was directed toward the contributions which our college might make to accelerating the process. That concern had grown steadily among a group of faculty who commit a significant portion of their time to observing and working with teachers and building administrators to improve the quality of experiences available to students. Each of us had encountered schools where significant change had occurred. Each had learned a great deal about the substance of new programs as well as the process of change through direct observation and participation. Each was convinced that sharing the experience with representatives of schools contemplating change would accelerate the process, while at the same time increasing their probability of success.

The concept that emerged was that of a symposium in which schools identified as having achieved success would tell their story to those about to get started. The term symposium was selected to indicate that the event would include significant sharing between presenters and those who had come to learn. Early on it was decided that the amount of time provided for each story would be a key element in the symposium. To facilitate interaction, the number of presenting schools would be limited and the amount of time provided for each would be expanded. A format emerged in which each presenting school would have a three hour block of time. Experience during the 1992 symposium led us to revised the time allocated to two hours and fifteen minutes for the 1993 event.

The Selection Process

A steering committee composed of classroom teachers, school administrators and college faculty members guides the symposium. The committee reviews and redefines selection criteria. The criteria emphasize sustained effort and results.

Selection Criteria

- Sustained commitment to improve, minimally three years.
- Broad ownership in planning, implementation, and assessment by administrators, teachers, and others.
- Special attention to enhancing learning opportunities for students and staff.
- Specific provisions for results that individuals inside and outside the school can identify and appreciate.
- Broad applicability for other K-12 settings in Illinois and the nation.
- A firm grounding in educational theory and research.

The symposium concept as well as the selection criteria are reviewed by 40 school leaders. The focus group's positive response and continuing support is the signal to proceed. With that endorsement, the steering committee asks the dean of the college to seek nominations of schools to participate. Nomination forms are sent to superintendents of schools, presidents of professional organizations or associations, the state board of education, and assorted others. Over one thousand individuals are contacted. The process has yielded approximately one hundred nominations in each of the first two years of the symposium.

Each nominated school is invited to complete a detailed application. The process has been completed by approximately 50 schools each year. While some schools simply return the completed application, most add additional materials. Packages containing planning documents, newspaper clippings, evaluation reports, and videotapes arrive daily.

The steering committee reviews the applications using the six part criterion. Presenting schools must meet all six criteria. Conference calls with each school help clarify the status of the change process. At the conclusion of the conference calls, the number of schools still under consideration is typically 14 or 15.

The schools are visited by a team consisting of a teacher, a school administrator, and an Illinois State University faculty member. The team's one day site-visit verifies the data in hand and clarifies the nature and status of the innovation. Team members debrief each other during long rides home. Subsequently, the entire committee reviews the visitation team reports and selects the schools to present their stories.

Presenting Schools

It is important to note that the selection process is not designed to identify the best or the only schools worthy of emulation. Nor is the process meant to identify a sample of all the useful approaches to change which might be employed with good results. The intent is to identify schools whose stories would be of interest to peers about to embark on a change process.

The schools selected represent a cross section of Illinois schools. There are typically three high schools, three middle schools, and four elementary schools. In 1993, the group was expanded to 11 based upon visitation results. Geography and population ranged from inner city Chicago to rural

Illinois. The search for quality varied greatly among the 1993 presenters. The impetus to change and the way in which change was implemented, sustained, institutionalized, and celebrated varied from school to school. Several began the change process to address school/community problems. Others were focused on expanding curriculum or improving student performance. Innovative practices in the selected schools ranged from locally initiated and defined programs to adoptions of national models. There were two accelerated schools, a magnet school, and several examples of site-based management. Cooperative learning and the whole language approach were evident in several locations.

Mark Twain Accelerated School (Alton, IL). A Kindergarten and Grade One building affiliated with the Illinois Network of Accelerated Schools demonstrates a wide-range of program offerings involving parents in the school, increasing student achievement, and providing school-based governance.

Brook Forest Elementary School (Oak Brook, IL). Full inclusion is a demonstrated practice in this suburban elementary school building. The cost-effective inclusion plan saved the district significant fiscal resources while providing positive experiences for all children.

Hinsdale Elementary School District #181 (Hinsdale, IL) This non-text program provides hands-on learning opportunities which consist of four extensive science units per grade level representing a balance of life, earth, and physical science.

Erie Elementary School (Erie, IL) A strong parent/child program beginning with a neonatal component and continuing through kindergarten is evident in this school. Comprehensive parent involvement in the education of children, both at the home and school sites, is found in a variety of program elements.

Willow Elementary School (Pekin, IL) The latest developments in the field of educational technology, particularly in reading, math, and language arts, are featured in the school improvement efforts of this primary school.

Lake in the Hills Elementary School (Lake in the Hills, IL) With authentic site-based management as the centerpiece of their school reform efforts, this school has successfully incorporated whole language, technology, business partnerships, and an emphasis on problem-solving into their program

Wagoner Elementary School (Sauk Village, IL) An extensive program of parental involvement which breaks down the communications barriers between the school and the home and provides parents with baseline data on how to help their children with the learning process at home is presented.

Carpentersville Middle School (Carpentersville, IL) A member of the Illinois Alliance of Essential Schools, this middle school has utilized the IDEA model in developing an interdisciplinary teaming project for teaching the five curricular areas and virtually eliminating tracking.

Lisle Junior High School, (Lisle, IL) The design and implementation of a state-of-the-art technology program is featured along with a broad-based student-oriented approach to meet the educational needs of early-adolescents

Cary-Grove High School (Cary-Grove, IL) The Algebra Project is a school improvement effort which has eliminated all remedial math tracks at the freshman level and has led to the revision of the entire math sequence. The project is one of a number employing the Total Learning Commitment underway at Cary-Grove.

Lyons Township High School (LaGrange, IL) This high school is the first in Illinois to develop an outcomes accreditation system. This pioneering effort has led to several state-of-the-art practices in the use of computer technology, interdisciplinary teaching, and critical thinking.

The Symposium Format and Attendance

The symposium opens at noon on Tuesday and ends at 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday. Each school is allotted two hours and fifteen. Seven presented in two sessions on the first afternoon and five the following morning. A plenary session to highlight the current efforts of the Illinois State Board of Education to Assess Quality and to place those efforts and the presentations in a larger context closed the symposium.

No restrictions were placed on the methods of presentation. However, one individual who had participated in the earlier site visits augmented each presentation team serving as a *friendly critic*. The friendly critic commented in terms of theory and research.

Each school used a team, often including parents and community representatives as well as teachers and building administrators. While the panel discussion format prevails, most teams also used videotapes, slide presentations, posters, and/or photographic displays. Each presentation is videotaped.

Registrants for the symposium select one presentation during each of the three sessions. Symposium organizers have learned that this departure from the traditional conference format is generally well received. A small group of participants have indicated their discomfort with being locked in to one presentation. They seem to prefer the more traditional sampling of conference presentations. The vast majority of evaluations reinforced the belief that educators are interested in in-depth approaches to topics which occupy a central place in their professional lives.

Results

Feedback revealed that the symposiums have made a significant difference to those who have participated. Presenting schools have agreed to conduct a teacher exchange. Documents have been exchanged and a substantial number of visitations negotiated. A new network has been established.

As might be expected, the positive reinforcement provided to presenters by their peers was a primary payoff for teachers, building administrators, and parents. To commemorate their participation, schools are presented plaques identifying them as a Building Better Schools Symposium school.

For the college, there were many positive results. Approximately 30 faculty members participated in the symposium, adding to their understanding of the change process in Illinois schools. Their experience has resulted in increased school visits. The information has begun to find its way into their classes. The symposium has helped to focus college efforts. Many apparently independent initiatives are suddenly clearly related.

Conference Proceedings

Presenting schools, practitioner reactors, and academic respondents provided written commentaries. Dr. Paul Baker provided an overview of the process of building better schools. Dr. Gordon Cawelti added the national perspective. Those papers are presented here as the Proceedings of the Building Better Schools Symposium.

The New Illinois Accreditation Process and Local Schools: Preliminary Reflections from the Field

Paul J. Baker and Dianne E. Ashby
College of Education, Illinois State University

Introduction

This paper begins with the realization that the State of Illinois is in the early stages of a major innovation in educational reform that will be evolving for many years to come. The Illinois State Board of Education is to be commended for its bold initiative on behalf of better schools. The grand experiment has begun and it is now time to begin to sort out the complex process of planned change. This paper is our first effort to better understand a multitude of issues that will require years of hard work to gain any sense of mastery. Our initial investigation and reflections are truly preliminary--thoughts that come before crossing the threshold of genuine understanding.

Our project began in the winter of 1993 as we frequently met local administrators who were attempting to respond to the State's new Quality Review process. Most of our conversations were with principals who had worked hard to prepare for a Quality Review visit, but came away from the experience with frustration and unresolved feelings of confusion.

It was clear that something very big was happening in Illinois public education that required careful study. We began to read everything we could find on the State's new recognition system. To our amazement, this huge state innovation has generated very little literature. The key documents are the state statutes (HB 885 and HB 1890), various drafts of the regulations, and many sets of overheads by various presenters who try to simplify and interpret the official regulations. Our next step involved conducting a series of interviews at every level of decision making in the Illinois public education system--from the Associate Superintendent of the Illinois State Board of Education to directors of educational service centers, district superintendents, school principals, and classroom teachers. We traveled to educational service centers and schools in five counties to learn first hand how local schools are responding to the State's latest effort to reform public education. In September (1993), we interviewed 25 state and local educators, and we also collected questionnaire data from 24 local school leaders who served as a focus group for a comprehensive review of local perceptions of the new accreditation process.

Issues of Complex Ambiguity Confronting Local Schools

This generation of scholars who study school reform are indebted to Seymour Sarason's (1991) classic work, *The Culture of Schools and the Problem of Change*. Sarason provided a brilliant analysis of the limits of mandated change from the heights of the state capital, if teachers and other local people are not full participants in the change process. John Goodlad's (1984) massive empirical study, *A Place Called School*, and Michael Fullan's (1999) erudite synthesis of the literature on school reform, *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, reiterate Sarason's dictum: School reform can only occur if local school leaders are deeply involved in authentic change that makes sense to them. This dictum guides our inquiry. Our investigation is grounded in the realization that the success of state initiatives for planned change requires the involvement of local change agents who understand what the state has in mind and are willing to mobilize local constituents and resources on behalf of educational improvement.

Given our primary concern with local receptivity to state mandated changes, what have we learned in our preliminary study of the new Illinois Accreditation Process? Our preliminary findings provide

tentative evidence that the ISBE initiative is a case study in complex ambiguity at all stages of the process of planned change: articulating goals, communicating with constituent schools and school districts, ascertaining quality of local schools, reporting inspection results back to the local schools, and helping local schools establish an agenda for educational improvement. Local people find every aspect of the state initiative complicated and confusing. This observation holds for school leaders who are highly sophisticated about educational change as well as others who seem uninformed about current developments. In fact, some of the most sophisticated local leaders are the most frustrated and confused with the ISBE accreditation process. After studying thoroughly all state documents and consulting with experts from their regional educational service center, they found the Quality Review Specialists to be inconsistent and uncertain about crucial aspects of the State's new regulations.

From the local perspective, greater study and more thorough preparation for a Quality Review visit did not necessarily lead to greater clarification and understanding. It is not clear how long this ambiguity will linger. Many local leaders are caught in a dilemma. They are uncertain about the new regulations and would prefer to take a "wait and see" position, hoping further developments will help to clarify the situation. But the time of change has arrived and they must prepare for a Quality Review visit, respond to a report written by a Quality Review Specialist, or write a change grant. They need to act, but are not always sure what actions to take. In short, our preliminary investigation fails to identify any local school leaders who claim to fully understand what the ISBE expects of them as local change agents. And many who are trying to comply with the new regulations are not sure how compliance will lead to school improvement.

The lack of clarity about the new accreditation process can be illustrated from findings obtained in a focus group. Twenty-four participants (teachers and administrators) were asked to respond to the following question: "What is the essential issue ISBE wants every school to address in the new accreditation system?" If the school leaders believed there was more than one essential issue, they could list two items. Table 1 provides a summary of the local school perceptions of what ISBE has in mind.

TABLE 1 Focus-Group Findings: What is the Essential Issue ISBE Wants Every School to Address?

THEMES AND TOPICS		RESPONSES
Broad Themes of Learning	All children are learning	7
	All children are being served	3
	Effective learning	1
	Best learning possible	1
	Mastery of knowledge for all students	1
	Our students get a quality education	1
Bureaucratic Control	Accountability for learning outcomes	6
	Curricular alignment between what is taught and what is learned	2
	Document that all students are learning	1
	Improve performance on IGAP tests	1
	Show impact of curriculum on learning	1
	Greater uniformity among schools	1
Local Flexibility and Support	Individualized programs for all students	1
	Demonstrate wise use of funds	1
	What schools have in place, whether it works, how to fix it	1
	Develop local awareness of curriculum	1

	Assess district success in various areas	1
	Assists low achieving schools	1
Implementing Recent Curricular Trends	Higher order thinking skills	2
	Show improvement through whole language, cooperative learning, and critical thinking	1

The range of responses found in Table 1 regarding "the essential issue ISBE wants every school to address" suggests considerable ambiguity. Some responses are sweeping claims that are highly desirable, but extremely elusive--i.e., "All students can learn." Others suggest tighter bureaucratic controls through new mechanisms of curriculum alignment and assessment. Another theme reflects local flexibility as leaders determine the wise use of resources and demonstrate the capacity for problem solving. Finally, a few school leaders are convinced that ISBE wants to see a new emphasis on recent curricular trends such as higher order thinking, whole language, cooperative learning, and math manipulatives. Given the ambiguity and complexity in the new guidelines, one can only conclude that local practitioners have little sense of a comprehensive goal for the new accreditation system.

If one examines the recent school reforms in the United States during the past decade, one can identify a fundamental contradiction in the Illinois accreditation process. This problem stems from a basic ambiguity in the organization of all public schools. In Brian Rowan's (1990) terms, schools "are large bureaucracies without strict bureaucratic controls and highly professional organizations that lack collegial forms of collaboration and control." Numerous scholars have identified the same issue: schools are both bureaucratic organizations and professional organizations. These two modes of control create contrasting approaches to school reform. But neither control system is sufficient for successful school reform. Furthermore, no one has yet designed and tested an organizational arrangement that successfully combines bureaucratic and professional features which also incorporates the concerns of parents and other local constituencies. There are many fine schools in the United States, but they have not been able to transfer their organizational configuration of bureaucracy, professionalism, and communal support to other settings with any degree of success.

Reformers of all kinds seem to agree that the public school system invented during the first quarter of the twentieth century no longer works as it should. But they fail to find consensus on a new organizational image of the good school for the twenty-first century. During the past decade, two competing images of the good school have emerged. The first image is a restatement of the progressive vision of schools as well run factories. Much energy and ink has been devoted to this image by elite groups in each state who were commissioned by their governors to respond to the "Nation At Risk." These "First Wave" reformers were convinced that the problems of schools could be fixed by new bureaucratic controls: e.g., an elaborate specification of learning objectives to match an official list of state curriculum goals, mandated standardized tests tied to state curriculum goals, and new testing credentials and supervision requirements of the teachers. But critics quickly challenged these bureaucratic claims that more regulations would lead to better schools. By the middle 1980s, an alternative organizational image of the good schools was emerging.

The "Second Wave" reformers turned to the professionalism of teachers and the communal inclinations of parents as a new foundation to rebuild the public school in America. No single reform or blueprint captures fully the alternative image to the bureaucratically controlled school. One of the most articulate reformers in this new vision of the good school is Theodore Sizer and his Coalition of Essential Schools. Other reformers include psychiatrists (James Comer, William Glasser), cognitive psychologists (Howard Gardner, David Perkins), educators (Fred Newmann, Art Costa), and philosophers (Matthew Lipman, Richard Paul). These reformers propose various strategies to re-

organize schools, but they all share one thing in common: They are convinced that a larger dose of standardized tests, however reliable, valid, and free of bias, will never improve the quality of American schools. These authors call for new kinds of mindful engagement that allow greater creative opportunities for students and teachers to work together on tasks of authentic learning and authentic assessment. Mechanisms of control in these schools are generated through communal endeavors that stress cooperative learning, team work, and interdisciplinary collaboration among teachers, students, parents, and other adults. A new social bond between teacher and student is promoted through such alternative systems of assessment as portfolios, performances, exhibitions, and group projects. There is no single label that easily represents the many elements of the alternative to the bureaucratically controlled school. We suggest that the phrase that best exemplifies this perspective is the school as a learning community.

These two images of a good school are constructed types that are rarely found in pure form in the real world of classrooms and corridors. Virtually all schools in the 1990s have varying degrees of emphasis on bureaucratic and communal modes of control. It is a matter of emphasis. Realizing that schools can have a strong or weak emphasis in these two modes of control, one can construct a four fold typology (see Graph 1 below).

Space does not permit a full development of these four constructed types of schools. It is important to note that Illinois school reform began in 1985 as Wave I (Cell D). Illinois also funded a special program of Essential Schools for 20 high schools, and Chicago has foundation money to support several Comer Schools (Cell A). Many schools (it is difficult to estimate the number) probably have weak control systems of any kind. Operating schools becomes the private worry of staff people who rarely work together in any sustained and successful way (Cell C). The current reform initiative in Illinois asks school leaders to combine both control systems (Cell B). But there is no clear vision of what such a school would look like. Is it possible to have it both ways? At the moment, there is no answer to that question. But one can speculate that there may be the danger of creating a system of contradiction and overload. The unanticipated consequence may be burn-out and cynicism about "one more damned thing from the State."

GRAPH 1 Contrasting Images of the Good School

School as Bureaucracy/School as Learning Community

	Weak = Emphasis on Bureaucratic Control	**Strong** = Emphasis on Bureaucratic Control
	School As Bureaucracy	
Strong = Emphasis on Communal Control	**[A]** ***WAVE II*** Reform (e.g., Work of Comer & Sizer)	**[B]** NEW Illinois Accreditation Process
	School as Learning Community	
Weak = Emphasis on Communal Control	**[C]** Schools in Drift with Privatized Control by Each Staff Member	**[D]** ***WAVE I*** Reform High Reliance on Standardized Tests

One source of confusion for local educators is the tendency of the new accreditation system to commingle elements of both images of a good school with no clear articulation of the improvement process. The ISBE has not provided a coherent vision of a good school or the organizational dynamics of change that contribute to creating a good school. Rather, it has taken various bureaucratic and holistic elements of prescribed change from the past decade and placed them in the

same regulations with no clear sense of how they are to be integrated. The ISBE has brought together the forces of Wave I and Wave II reforms. The consequence is a clashing storm at sea with much noise and little chance of clear sailing for anyone.

Mandated Compliance and Mandated Opportunity

According to the ISBE guidelines, Illinois has a unique system of accreditation. "Unlike many other accountability and school improvement programs, Illinois has developed an integrated system . . . in which the state and local schools work in a partnership to meet both the requirements of outcomes-based accountability and the goals of school improvement." This metaphor of "partnership" suggests an impression that state and local leaders play on a level field as equal partners in the work of school improvement. Such impressions of equal participation are not shared by most leaders at the local level. To the contrary, they see the new ISBE regulations as a top-down mandated demand for change in which local people have little choice in the matter.

In contrasting terms, local school leaders have responded to the state's new regulations in one of two ways: mandated compliance or mandated opportunity. The first instance of mandated compliance is the attempt to comply with the state, even though there is little understanding or appreciation for the meaning of compliance. The state has new regulations that require new information from the local school; yet, local school people are not sure how they are to proceed with the bureaucratic paperwork. They want to comply, but need clearer instructions to carry out the task. In their frustration, they often plead with state representatives, "Just tell us what you want us to do, and we will do it."

Local leaders who respond in the spirit of mandated compliance are not irresponsible educators looking for an easy way out. Often, they are anxious about the state's new requirements and work very hard to learn all they can from colleagues in the field and representatives from the state. In some cases, they have spent hundreds of hours with their teachers generating thousands of pages of documentation. Yet, their visit with a Quality Review Team leads to further confusion and frustration. They complain bitterly about the whole process as a "waste of time." They know that they must do the paper work, but they see little value in the process. To quote one leader, "Tell us what you [ISBE] want. We'll write it up if you'll just go away."

Another group of local leaders recognize the state's mandate as a significant external force, but they respond in terms of local priorities that have been established independently of state formulations of school improvement. The new accreditation system is seen as an occasion to advance the local agenda for school improvement. These leaders define the state's reform initiative as mandated opportunity to further develop their own plans for curricular and instructional change.

Local leaders who define the situation as mandated opportunity devote much time to the additional paper work required by the state. But they proceed without anxious concern about satisfying a remote state bureaucrat. As they study the guidelines, it is apparent that they will be unable to fulfill all the new requirements. But they don't worry about the details. They are more worried about the local issues of building grass-roots commitment from teachers, parents, and other local citizens.

Leaders who emphasize opportunity have turned the top-down mandate up-side-down. Bureaucratic requirements from above are redefined as a new way to meet local initiatives for school improvement. As one leader explained, "We are working hard for breakthrough changes here in this district. If the state is doing some things that help us, we will use it." He went on to say, "I keep telling our people, 'the state is good,' even when I know they are often inept."

Every effort is made by leaders of opportunity to protect their teachers from unnecessary anxiety about state mandates. The teachers are told that changes will have to be made, but it is more important to continue to do good work. Administrators are buffering their teachers from bureaucratic demands from the state. Observations from one school illustrate this effort to control state imposed anxiety, while keeping the issues of school improvement on track. A principal shared the State's report on the school's quality visit. There were numerous official deficiencies that usually dealt with the school's failure to document assessment of learning outcomes. The principal informed the teachers, "There is not a lot here that you need to be concerned about. There are some things, . . . so keep the report in your files. We will return to it." The principal and teachers then turned to the district's strategic plan and the work of developing new instruments of authentic assessment. For these teachers and their principal, the big picture is not compliance with state regulations, it is finding resources and time to develop new strategies of assessment that make sense to them.

These two contrasting responses to the latest mandates in school reform represent polar experiences by school leaders who begin with the same ambiguity, but work out strikingly different strategies for planned change. The case of mandated compliance suggests that the center of control rests with the state. Local leaders are in a reactive mode attempting to cope with new regulations they neither understand nor appreciate. It is a problem they wish would go away. At the other end of this responsive continuum. school leaders are not always sure they understand the state regulations, but they do not allow a little confusion to stand in the way of local commitments to school improvement. They push ahead on their own agendas for change. The local people in these schools are convinced that they control the future of their schools. They see the accreditation system as one more opportunity to use the state to their advantage. The state initiative is not a problem. Rather, it is a friendly intrusion that creates a new opportunity to examine local practices and develop new strategies for improvement. Between these two polar extremes of defensive compliance and adaptive opportunity, one finds many varieties of coping and creating as the state of Illinois charts new directions for school reform.

Conclusion: Lessons to be Learned from Local Schools

Illinois citizens are witnessing a new chapter in the history of mixed governance of public school reform. Local schools share the power with the Illinois State Board of Education. Can they work together to build better schools? All reasonable persons of good-will search for a constructive answer. To quote one local leader, "Our system must be both top-down and bottom up. Perhaps we can meet in the middle and drive out fear." Is there a middle ground for collaboration that can facilitate meaningful school improvement? In the search for this middle ground, we conclude this paper with some lessons to be learned from the local schools. We limit our discussion to four pertinent issues.

Clarify the words we use to improve our schools. Many terms in the ISBE guidelines are confusing to local leaders. Until everyone finds a common vocabulary and concrete examples of exemplary work, there is little likelihood of a productive partnership between the state and local schools. The State's failure to clarify its terms is glaringly apparent in the confusion over their key concept: outcomes. The guidelines present curricular planning as a continuous and smooth transition from state goals, school outcomes, to classroom objectives. It is a linear converging model in which outcomes are "more narrow than goals, but more global than objectives." Despite several efforts to understand the language in the guidelines, we are unable to comprehend the nature and meaning of learning outcomes.

Within the last few months, the ISBE has recognized the difficulties schools were having with such terms as outcomes. In some of their presentations, ISBE representatives have distributed a sampling of outcome statements that illustrate the concept. This initial list of statements did not resolve this issue for us. For example, in the social sciences "students will be able to identify, chronologically order, analyze and evaluate events, trends, movements and personalities deemed significant in the development of the present world community." This outcome seems to be incredibly complex and obscure. Yet, high school teachers are expected to evaluate their students on such vague assignments. Further, assessment of the outcomes must adhere to rigorous standards of validity and reliability.

Pay attention to the organizational dynamics of school improvement. The ISBE guidelines have been designed as a curriculum audit similar to the work of Fenwick English. School leaders are expected to develop tightly aligned systems that demonstrate linear connections between state goals, classroom practices, and test results. Given the complexity of the model developed by the guidelines, it is not clear to us how teachers would have enough time to develop all the appropriate assessment tools and teach their classes. Will school systems driven by "detail complexity" (Senge, 1992) lead to the exhaustion of teachers? We have no answer to this question, but we see a potential problem for local school leaders. Interviews with some teachers support our concern.

Preoccupation with a curricular audit provides a distorted view of school improvement. Other key issues in building better schools are ignored. For example, the guidelines fail to mention the important work of building a positive school climate or establishing new networks of reciprocal support between parents and teachers. Will the important work of building communal networks of support be ignored, because teachers are too busy writing tests and principals are overloaded with the demands of managing huge data systems? The question is rhetorical, but it calls attention to issues that local leaders must address.

Develop meaningful timetables for evolutionary change. School reformers who are far removed from the local scene often have unrealistic expectations of educational improvement. Schools are complex systems with many interrelated parts. Change in one part may not correspond to change in another. For example, a staff development plan that introduces new methods of instruction will not necessarily create instant results during the first year. New systems of support for parents often change attitudes about schooling before new levels of academic achievement are reached.

We accept the urgent agenda for change in schools. But, many instances of success can be gradual, if they represent consistent changes that are moving in the right direction. Much attention needs to be given to the kind of change processes the new accreditation system promotes. Meaningful time frames must evolve among local leaders, if school improvement is to enjoy long term credibility.

Cultivate and celebrate collaborative opportunities to build better schools. Many local leaders have been frustrated with the manner in which the ISBE has implemented the new accreditation system. Nevertheless, many of these same leaders appreciate the need for change. They recognize the limitations of current arrangements that do not reach all students effectively. They know that "seat time" is not the same thing as "learning time." While they are not sure what the ISBE means by learning outcomes, they see merit in paying more attention to what students can know and do.

ISBE has succeeded in helping many local school leaders see the need to re-examine their curriculum and instructional practices. If this new awareness leads to local initiatives to design better schools, there is reason to be optimistic about the Illinois Accreditation process. Hopefully, the latest state initiative will stimulate an understanding of mandated opportunity to build better schools. On the other hand, if the response leads to various defensive strategies of mandated compliance, the outcome

may be better systems of data management, not renewed schools of mindful engagement. The state of Illinois has initiated a reform movement, but leaders of local schools will determine its fate.

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Outcomes Accreditation System
Lyons Township High School, LaGrange

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Introduction

Lyons Township High School, located in LaGrange, Illinois, was the first Illinois high school to develop an outcomes accreditation system. This pioneering effort has led to several state-of-the-art practices in the use of computer technology, interdisciplinary teaching, and critical thinking. This presentation focuses on the building blocks that provide the foundation for the system.

Mission Statement

Drawing from its long tradition and reputation for excellence, Lyons Township High School commits itself to making dedicated teaching and meaningful learning its highest priority and to creating an atmosphere of encouragement, trust, and mutual respect.

Within this environment, Lyons Township High School pledges to provide a comprehensive curriculum and extra-curricular options that foster the full intellectual, physical, moral, and aesthetic growth of each student.

To be successful, teachers and students need to empower one another. Each assumes the responsibility for mastery of the subject matter, development of critical thinking and problem solving methods, and recognition of personal growth through this interchange.

Through this mission, Lyons Township High School is reinterpreting our century-old motto, *Vita Plena*, the quest for the fulfilling life. This becomes possible as the entire high school community, in cooperation with family and the larger community, continues to encourage and assist each student towards a lifetime process of learning and an attitude of self respect.

Belief Statements

Ten educational belief statements were developed following an intensive Board/Superintendent retreat Jan. 17 and 18, 1992. The 10 statements, which were later refined and adopted in February, describe the Board's and superintendent's convictions about Lyons Township High School. The consensus-building process was held not only to develop the Board's fundamental beliefs for the 21st century but for the Board members, of which four were new members, to build effective relations among themselves as well as with the superintendent.

The Board believes that the belief statements crystallize what the school system currently has in place and are a guiding force for the future of LT. The following are the belief statements as adopted by the Board:

- Educational programs and educational developments need to be evaluated based on student needs.

- Each student should be provided equal opportunities to programs which will accommodate his or her needs and abilities.
- Schools must strive to foster and develop self-worth and self-esteem in each student.
- Students must attain the moral, ethical, and civic education and the basic skills necessary to function as responsible citizens.
- Schools must create learning environments which foster intellectual curiosity and develop lifetime learning habits.
- Educational excellence requires hard effort and a strong working relationship among student, teacher, and family.
- Community funds and resources are limited and must be judiciously allocated.
- High expectations are required for high achievement.
- Thorough communication with the community builds public confidence and understanding of the educational process.
- Family involvement is an important responsibility in the educational process and for providing high quality educational opportunities.

Board Strategies

Finance

We Will Judiciously Allocate Community Funds and Resources By:

1. Prioritizing programs in relation to the funds available.
2. Communicating the total budget process, including budget development, funding sources and allocations, to the entire community.
3. Exploring means of obtaining alternative resources.
4. Developing ways to save money from current operations, and considering the reallocation of these funds.

Involvements

To Create a Culture of Student and Parent Involvement Through:

1. Expanding the role of Lyons Township's "Road Show," or similar kinds of experiences, for feeder school students.
2. Expanding the use of cable television and WLTL in order to promote student and parent involvement.
3. Informing and encouraging parent involvement by presenting information at various locations and to various groups within the Lyons Township community.
4. Inviting, analyzing, and responding to parental feedback regarding the school.
5. Exploring ways to increase student involvement in planning and participation.

Student Performance

We Will Implement a Continuous Improvement Model for Student Performance. This Model:

1. Requires hard work by students and all other elements of the Lyons Township community.
2. Promotes self-esteem.
3. Develops citizenship skills.
4. Promotes student mastery of basic skills.
5. Incorporates the pursuit of excellence.
6. Instills habits of lifetime learning, including intellectual curiosity.
7. Requires high expectations for all individuals and programs in a supportive community.

North Central Association of Schools and Colleges All-School Outcomes Action Planning Process

Executive Summary

On February 17, 1992, the Board approved the NCA all-school outcomes and an implementation process for the outcomes. The four all-school outcomes, and their critical elements, are attached.

Using a modified Strategic Planning Model, all faculty, all building administrators, and representatives of the student body, the community, and the support staff are developing action plans to implement the outcomes. This involving process, similar to the process used to identify and define the outcomes, began with an overview of action planning held on August 26, 1992. Eight staff members, acting as action team leaders, have provided leadership for the more than 200 people who are working in planning teams of 5-15. The action plans will be detailed steps for the high school to achieve the outcomes to which we have committed. Some of these action plans address the Board's belief statements.

A prioritization process for action plans will begin on November 30, 1992, when all involved persons prioritize the plans presented in four large group settings (one for each outcome). The NCA Steering Committee will review all action plans which receive high priority (1.5 or better on a scale of 1 to 3) for completeness. Plans will be distributed and discussed with all participants in the process and a final prioritization of all plans will occur on January 25, 1993. Plans which emerge from this process will be shared with the superintendent and brought to the Board Curriculum Committee in February, 1993. Approved action plans will include tasks to be assigned by the superintendent or his designee.

The strengths of this process of implementing the all-school outcomes have been the involvement of a broad range of staff, students, and community members; the investment of participants in the change/improvement process; and the insights gained from a variety of perspectives on the high school.

All-School Outcomes

Outcome #1:
All students will acquire and apply communication (reading, writing, listening, speaking), computational, organizational, and critical thinking skills.

Critical Elements: Students Will:

- Demonstrate writing skills in all disciplines.
- Demonstrate listening skills in academic situations.
- Demonstrate reading skills in all disciplines.
- Demonstrate speaking skills in all disciplines.
- Synthesize, analyze, compare, contrast, make inferences, and draw conclusions (critical thinking).
- Increase abilities to problem solve across the curriculum.
- Be life-long/independent learners.
- Demonstrate math computational skills across the curriculum.
- Demonstrate organizational skills.

Outcome #2:
All students will develop coping and interpersonal skills that will enable them to take responsibility for their social interaction.

Critical Elements: Students Will:

- Demonstrate cooperation among students and between students and teachers.
- Respect differences - ability level, culture, etc.
- Demonstrate courtesy, social skills, and politeness.
- Anticipate and be responsible for the consequences of behavior.
- Demonstrate effective coping skills.

Outcome #3:

All students will take part in a school community in which students and families share in the responsibility for student learning and behavior.

Critical Elements: Students Will:

- Be punctual.
- Demonstrate regular attendance.
- Be partners with their parents supporting school policies.
- Understand and accept their role in shared school outcomes.
- Be prepared for the learning activities.
- Participate in and support co-curricular activities.

Outcome #4:

All students will foster an environment in which they and their peers experience success and self worth.

Critical Elements: Students Will:

- Demonstrate positive self-esteem.
- Demonstrate internal motivation.
- Demonstrate a feeling of success.
- Demonstrate social responsibility, recognizing obligations to others.

Improvement Through Outcomes
Friendly Critic - Neil E. Sappington

Context for Change

Lyons Township High School has focused its improvement efforts through the use of student outcomes. As a pilot school in the North Central Association's Outcome Accreditation, Lyons Township High School chose to abandon the traditional NCA standards and criteria. This school initiated a pioneering effort to identify learning outcomes toward which all improvement efforts should be focused and by which all achievement would be measured.

As a member of the reviewing team, I identified three elements that were instrumental to the success at Lyons Township High School. I will briefly describe these and their relation to the total improvement effort.

Staff Involvement

The entire faculty was involved in the generation of student outcomes. Many would view the process as important as the final product, developing that sense of collegiality proposed by Roland Barth (1990) as essential to the school improvement process. The broad base of involvement helped strengthen the commitment of the Lyons Township High School faculty. Articulation of the improvement efforts with their student outcomes allowed this school to achieve a focus and direction. The "vision-driven" aspect was cited by Louis & Miles (1990) as being essential to the improvement effort. Such concentration allows the school to be "planful" rather than reacting to crises or pressures.

Staff Development

As Lyons Township High School initiated its journey for improvement, the need for staff development was not ignored. Michael Fullan and Andy Hargreaves (1992) identify teacher training as "...tantamount to transforming educational institutions"(p. 6). Lyons township placed staff development in the same high regard. The training offered to teachers was given over a number of years, dismissing the "one-shot inservice" concept and recognizing the ineffectiveness of fragmentary approaches (Joyce, Wolf, & Calhoun, 1993). Additionally, the training offered has been articulated with the student outcomes, providing the focus needed for improvement.

Specific Strategies Were Not Viewed as Solutions

Lyons Township High School has viewed the implementation of certain programs and/or strategies as support mechanisms rather than solutions. Specifically, technology was introduced as a means of supporting the reading, writing, and thinking of all students. The Discovery Centers, composed of 60 networked computers, are not touted as the solution to improved student achievement, but rather as another tool in accomplishing the goal. All too often such impressive displays of technology are seen as the solution as opposed to a mechanism to facilitate achievement. Such superficial additions will not produce meaningful changes.

Likewise, certain changes in instructional methodology have been employed as additional means of meeting student outcomes. The emphasis on interdisciplinary teaching is refreshing, in a climate that is all too often clouded with "content as king" (Vacca, 1981); however, instructional cooperation across subject areas is not being billed as an implemented solution. Instead, it is viewed as one more step in achieving focused, clearly defined outcomes.

The reduction of ability grouping offers the promise that Lyons Township High School will move away from the "ability-based model" and the practice of "sorting kids" for the future. In a similar vein, Lyons Township High School does not embrace the reduction of tracking as the solution, but another means to achieving locally developed goals.

The material they have presented today makes a good case for their improvement efforts. But from the practitioner's standpoint - does it "hold water" where it counts, in the classroom? As a part of the team that had the privilege of visiting both campuses, I can say that changes are occurring in the classroom. Interviews with teachers revealed not only a knowledge of the outcomes, but practical examples of strategies teachers were using to achieve these targets. A chemistry teacher described his thematic unit which was articulated with other subjects. He convincingly described how he met both student learner outcomes and the State Goals for Science. A major writing project, prepared in the Discovery Center, served as the final exam.

In the on-site interviews, as I reviewed their materials, and during their presentation today, Lyons Township High School has repeatedly demonstrated its commitment to a model for improvement, one locally developed by colleagues - not imposed from a higher authority. It has been stated time and again that there is no template for improvement. Each school is unique unto itself and must chart its own course for improvement (Sizer, 1992).

Lyons Township High School has remained unyielding to outside pressures with outside solutions. They have remained focused on achieving their outcomes sometimes using outside influences as "mandated opportunities" (Baker, Curtis, & Benenson, 1991). One such external pressure was Quality Review. Rather than dropping improvement efforts to "get ready" for Quality Review, Lyons Township High School staff members remained faithful to their efforts to build a better school. They knew that working toward their locally developed improvement initiative would satisfy the requirements of Quality Review. The end result was a favorable report from the Quality Review Team. Lyons Township High School can be proud that it was one of the few high schools to receive a favorable response from the new accreditation process.

Lyons Township High School's success both in its improvement efforts and the Quality Review analysis can be attributed to the child-centered focus of its outcomes. Alien to many secondary environments, Lyons Township High School has centered its targets around the whole person. Content has taken a "back seat" to students learning and becoming productive citizens. This is an approach that many secondary schools currently operating under the "mini-university model" should consider.

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A Collaborative Journey Through Uncharted Waters
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A Total Learning Community

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There are those who are engaged in a different vision regarding school reform. Those who take part in these and similar efforts seem to value and honor learning, participation and cooperation above prescription, production and completion. I see in these kinds of individuals a concept of the school as a community of learners; a place where all participants---teachers, principals, parents, and students--engage in learning and teaching. School is not a place for big people who are learned and little people who are learners, for important people who do not need to learn and unimportant people who do. Instead, school is a place where students discover and adults rediscover the joys, the difficulties and the satisfaction of learning.

--Roland Barth (1990, p. 27)

Introduction - 1988

Embedded within Roland Barth's description of what a school should be are certain core values, values which go so deep that in an institution which is value-driven, those values are the last things individuals will give up (Senge, 1991). Given that school reform is being mandated from many outside sources, the faculty of Cary-Grove High School chose in 1988 to embark on its own journey to make school what it could be before we were forced to make school a place which didn't necessarily value the same things we did.

At the heart of our values lay a fundamental commitment to **quality**--quality in all facets of all we stood for. Looking inside ourselves as individuals and as an organization has taken five years (a long time by some standards), and what we have surfaced forms the underpinning for our vision. Our vision of being a **Total Learning Community** lies anchored in the core values of **relationships, justice, change, responsibility, learning,** and **climate**. The journey we have taken toward defining these terms operationally follows.

As Michael Fullan (1992) told an assemblage of educators interested in school reform, "The only people who appreciate change are wet babies." Cary-Grove's faculty, though committed to quality in 1988, was no more interested in change of great magnitude than any other group of hard-working professionals who already saw themselves working as intensely as they could. Because the Cary-Grove faculty could be characterized as independent thinkers who don't take kindly to "cookie cutter" approaches, it was important to find evidence with which to respond to the familiar colloquialism, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." We found that evidence and a base for an improvement effort which could be custom-made to our culture in the Effective Schools research of the late Ron Edmonds and more recently, Larry Lezotte (Lezotte, 1987).

Lezotte has stressed that reform efforts must address two issues before anything else can happen: (1) all involved must have a common language, and (2) there must be a place for discussion to take place

(Lezotte, 1987). The first imperative simply means that we all had to speak the same language. That meant an entire first year educating faculty, staff, administrators, parents, and students in the language of school improvement--the actual vocabulary, and in the painful but most important part of the process, disaggregating our achievement data in terms of student sub-populations. We discovered that not all our students were doing nearly as well as our over-all impression had been.

The second imperative does not imply so much a space for discussion (although that may be a consideration) as a time for discussion. Lezotte points to the fact that real school improvement cannot be accomplished through volunteerism. On the high school level, the intensity and variety of extra-curricular commitments simply prohibit after-hours meetings. There must be time provided in the school day, an idea which makes the courageous statement to all that the school's primary mission is teaching and learning.

The issue of place has been addressed in High School District 155 through the incorporation of five altered attendance days into the calendar. On three days students arrive for class at 10:25 a.m. while the faculty meets from 7:30 until 10:15. On the other two days, students are dismissed at 1 p.m. and the faculty meets until 3 p.m.

Edmond's work reported by Robinson (1983), amplified later by Lezotte (1991), identified seven correlates of Effective Schools. These characteristics appeared repeatedly in schools which were identified as addressing the needs of all students. These correlates were:

- A Safe and Orderly Environment;
- A Clear and Focused Mission;
- High Expectations for Success;
- Student Opportunity to Learn and Time on Task;
- Instructional Leadership;
- Frequent Monitoring of Student Achievement;
- School/Parent Relationship.

The first generation of correlates focused on the school being seen as a safe, clean, business-like environment whose primary mission was teaching and learning. The correlates specifically address the importance of **all** students learning essential skills in an atmosphere where frequent assessment of that learning was the norm. The school also had a clear responsibility to communicate fully with parents to secure their cooperation.

With a common language and time to meet in place, we addressed the importance of process and collaboration in our journey. The first generation correlates of Effective Schools indicate the importance of the principal's instructional leadership, but did not specifically address shared decision-making. (The second generation of correlates does address that need, but the second generation correlates had not yet been formulated when we began our efforts.) With some trepidation, but with a firm commitment to collaboration, the ESP team was formed.

ESP actually stood for Effective Schools Project, but the play on mental telepathy was not lost on team members. This original 14 member team representing the breadth and depth of our then 70 member faculty, often was asked questions it couldn't answer. The common response, "That's up to all of us. We are all deciding where we will go," sometimes convinced us that Extra Sensory Perception was requisite to team membership!

The commitment to process has been at the heart of our efforts from the beginning. There have been times when the product of our improvement efforts might have been more impressive had

collaboration not been so fundamental to us; however, we have remained true to our belief that "all of us is smarter than any one of us." Our year-long faculty training (by unanimous vote) in cooperative learning strategies addressed what we saw as a need for improved interpersonal skills among our students, but also provided an important vehicle for all of us working together.

Just as our journey has not been "top-driven", it has also not been sequential or linear. Taking Michael Fullan's advice for managing complex change (Fullan, 1991), "Ready, fire, aim," we have launched well over 50 initiatives in the past five years to "do better." Some of those 50 initiatives were remodeling of existing programs, services, or activities in order to put those activities more in line with the mission statement we all so painstakingly crafted over a several month period anchored in Effective Schools research. Some of the initiatives were the result of our involvement in the North Central Association's Outcomes Accreditation process which we undertook in 1989. Why did we undertake the new O/A process at that time? We concluded that we were already trying to be more than we had been, so how much harder could it be to take on the O/A process!

Of those 50+ initiatives, all are still operational. In the spirit of the second generation correlate , **Instructional Leadership**, (Lezotte, 1991) we (individually, departmentally, and in *ad hoc* teams) have aimed our efforts most recently on those initiatives most in tune with the second generation of Effective Schools correlates. The second generation correlates speak well to a school which says, "We've done Effective Schools, now what?"

All the first generation correlates remain intact. All are still viable and fundamental to building the second story on our Effective School house. The emphasis in the second generation of correlates is a focus on **outcomes of significance, equity and excellence, and identity as a learning community**. Examining the second generation of correlates, it might be said that in terms of **Safe and Orderly Climate**, negative influences have been eliminated in the first generation and the emphasis in the second generation is on building positive influences. These positive influences include dignifying diversity, encouraging social responsibility, cooperation, and empowerment through collaboration. Cary-Grove's mission statement includes the terms "self-motivated" and "responsible", terms directly tied into second generation correlates. Nearly a dozen initiatives have addressed these terms in the past five years. Those initiatives range from recognition of student efforts, to an *ad hoc* Freshmen Team of teachers working to improve the 9th grade experience, to a Student Council which has become primarily a service organization to the community, to refocusing our Co-op work program.

In terms of **Clear and Focused Mission** and **Opportunity to Learn**, there is now a focus beyond teaching for learning of essential skills. The second generation correlates address higher order learning for all students. Over the past five years, Cary-Grove's departmental Teaching/Learning projects have sought to address this correlate in specific content areas. This correlate lies at the heart of Cary-Grove's mission statement which strives to create "thinking" and "knowledgeable" learners and citizens. The Algebra Project, detailed later, began as one of the dozen or so initiatives addressing those terms. This correlate also focuses on learning the content covered, rather than simply covering the content.

In terms of **High Expectations for Success**, the second generation focuses on regrouping and reteaching those students who don't learn. We have had to address the question, "What happens in this school when students don't learn?" and we have had to start finding a way to answer. The Algebra Project certainly addresses this issue, but so do at least eight other initiatives we've undertaken. Five years ago, we probably would have been forced to answer that we didn't really expect them to learn anyway.

In terms of **Frequent Monitoring of Student Achievement**, the second generation of correlates moves toward more authentic types of assessment in addition to pencil and paper tests. For Cary-Grove, that has meant drastically reducing machine-graded exams at semesters (Cary-Grove Final Exam Project, 1992-93) in favor of more writing. We are also working this year on a collaboratively developed, criterion referenced test addressing all 34 state goal areas, as well as an achievement portfolio tracking all students' development in all content areas for all four years.

Finally, in terms of the correlate regarding **School/Parent Relations**, we are working to involve more parents to a greater degree in projects involving study skills, parenting skills, college and career guidance, and finding financial aid for post-high school training for their children. We've just tapped into this powerful resource and ally.

At this point in our journey, the Algebra Project stands as the most courageous statement of commitment to Effective Schools research as well as to a willingness to examine our professional practice in an honest, pro-active spirit.

Cary-Grove Algebra Project

As anchored in the Effective Schools research and as a part of our improvement efforts, the Cary-Grove mathematics department examined its curriculum and methods of meeting student needs. As a result of our improvement efforts, we decided to focus on meeting the needs of all students, especially lower ability level students, through a de-tracking program. We implemented a program designed to eliminate Practical Math, Pre-Algebra, and Basic Algebra as freshmen level courses. Starting in the 1992-93 school year, all freshmen were enrolled in Algebra or above.

Change in the teaching of mathematics was and is needed, not because it has deteriorated, nor even because it has been bad, but rather because the world is changing. We realized the people who will be solving the problems of the present and future must have a far better grasp on mathematics than most people have at present or have ever had in the past. Driven by the research base of the second generation of Effective Schools correlates, the math department, with the support of the principal, the district administration, and the Board of Education, began the planning and training necessary in 1991 to implement the program in the fall of 1992.

Although the focus was on the algebra program, the ultimate goal of the department is to raise the mathematical achievement of all Cary-Grove graduates. All of the members of the mathematics department decided to seek extensive training in mastery learning and cooperative learning strategies. Courses in these two areas were being provided by our district through its commitment to the train-the-trainer model of staff development based in each school's improvement projects. Along with planning the new curriculum, teachers also organized and instructed a two-week summer "Algebra Camp" for students identified as potentially "at risk" by their eighth grade teachers. Funding for the camp was sought from and provided by the Coca Cola Company. The camp prepped students in the content area, provided positive reinforcement for effort, and set behavioral and effort expectations for incoming freshmen students.

Not all freshmen entering Cary-Grove have the same math skills. The teachers realized that the move away from Basic Math and Pre-Algebra as freshmen course offerings would increase the number of students needing assistance and the amount of assistance needed. The teachers created an "algebra assistance" program, making themselves available to help students before and after school hours. The math aide was also available at all times throughout the day. However, the teachers were keenly aware that they might not have been reaching everyone who needed help. It is inevitably true that

some students will fail due to their own lack of effort and interest in school. Thus, the teachers had to concentrate their real concern on the students who were making the effort but were falling short.

Because this a high school setting and because developing responsible learners and citizens is part of our mission, students are responsible for seeking extra help when needed. From the first day, the teachers in the math department have stressed the importance of responsibility and the student taking responsibility for his/her own learning and grades. Incentive programs were developed which would encourage this responsibility. For example, students who do poorly on tests are allowed to retake them for mastery. However, prior to retaking a test, the student must schedule time to be tutored so that learning is achieved. The guidance department also offers free student tutoring to students who request help. Teenagers, especially freshmen, are not very accustomed to or excited about taking responsibility, but every effort, from use of the assignment book to special after-school help addresses the students' needs.

Parental support has always been evident at Cary-Grove. The math teachers at Cary-Grove believe student success is greatly related to parental involvement and support. They have contacted parents and guardians in writing and by telephone asking for their support for the student and program believing that the majority of the parents will see that the benefits of the program outweigh the risks.

Finally, and of greatest importance is the effect that this program is having on students. The fundamental and on-going belief of this program since its inception is that eliminating tracking would have a myriad of positive effects on students. By no longer being labeled a "basic math student," self esteem would rise. Students who exhibited behavioral problems due to disinterest, lack of motivation, or lack of intellectual challenge would not be gathered in all of the same classes. These students would be in classes with successful students who could provide positive role models. The interaction with positive, involved, and engaged students lifts the uninvolved to a higher level of achievement. An added benefit was/is that these 'role models' began to see themselves in a better light as they saw their efforts to help rewarded.

The Cary-Grove math department is committed to raising the math skills of all students. This program has literally energized the teachers and truly seems to have raised the level of professionalism even higher than prior to the Algebra Project.

Conclusion

Cary-Grove High School's mission statement asserts: **Cary-Grove High School empowers all students to be responsible, self-motivated, thinking, and knowledgeable learners and citizens.** Implied are all the core values which drive our school and which drive us as individual members of our learning community as we seek quality in relationships, justice, change, responsibility, learning, and climate. In the past five years, fundamental, fabric level change has taken place in our school. It has not been without pain, frustration, and confusion from time to time; however, when a grass-roots proposal like the Algebra Project becomes a reality, something important has happened in how we, as a school, see ourselves and our role. For the first time in a long time (maybe ever), we have taken charge of a situation and taken the pro-active stance that we will affect positive growth for all students. This sense of efficacy is a trademark of an effective school.

In the spirit of the last five years, we have journeyed toward our vision of being a Total Learning Community. We have believed that commitment to improvement had to take place in the heads and the hearts of all of us. We have reached that point in our journey where that much of the challenge has been achieved. Our efforts thus far have been recognized through Outcomes Accreditation via the

North Central Association, and we now take on the challenge of the School Improvement Plan as mandated by the State of Illinois. We believe the last five years' interdependent experience journeying toward outcomes of significance, equity, and excellence will see us through anything--even this mandate for reform dictated from outside.

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Total Learning Commitment: The Algebra Project

Friendly Critics - Cindy Helmers and Barbara L. Nourie

Context for Change

Cary-Grove High School, a suburban school with a total population of 1,118 students in grades 9-12, has a staff of 118: 65 faculty, 10 administrators, 6 counselors, and 2 librarians. The school population is 97% white; 116 students receive special education services, 81 of whom are students with a specific learning disability. Estimated per pupil expenditures are $6,800 for the 1993-1994 school year, higher than the state average, but certainly not the highest expenditures in the Chicago suburban school districts. However, as the staff noted in the 1992 Freshman Special Newsletter: "We may be the smallest school in the Fox Valley Conference, but we make our presence known." And, indeed they do! The Total Learning Commitment projects are making big differences in the quality of education offered to students at Cary-Grove High School.

Explicit School Goals

One of the stated school goals is that Cary Grove High School empowers all students to be responsible, self-motivated, thinking, and knowledgeable learners and citizens. The administration and staff have concluded that achieving those goals can best be accomplished through implementation of specific strategies garnered from Effective Schools Research and from the theory and practice of cooperative learning. Interestingly, Effective Schools Research originated in urban schools, typically serving socioeconomically disadvantaged children. Most of the research and practice in cooperative learning techniques come from elementary classrooms. Cary-Grove High School is neither urban, poor, nor elementary! Through creative adaptation, however, the staff seems to be using both Effective Schools Research and cooperative learning successfully.

Specifically, the school determined to measure its success in achieving Total Learning Commitment through evidence of reading comprehension and listening comprehension (and presumably writing skills, for a complete literacy profile) as well as by gauging development in interpersonal skills. The administration points with pride to its outcomes based accreditation target areas, citing improvement in grade point averages, numbers of honor students, improved attitudes toward school, as well as to the implementation of the Algebra Project.

To accomplish these goals, various programs exist. For example, there are "cooperative study halls" and pull-out study skills programs for at risk freshmen (a ten-week program). There is a writing lab run with the assistance of honor student volunteers, and there are mentors to assist transfer students and freshmen. There is an active, up-to-date, and well-equipped computer laboratory, and the library/media center has information databases including Info-Trac and Newsbank.

In addition, the faculty takes an active role in self-improvement. For example, many faculty members engage in peer coaching; several have conducted in-service workshops on cooperative learning as well as on the use of particular computer software. There seems to be active engagement throughout the school, from students to faculty to administration. Total Learning Commitment appears to be a reality. There is something very real about the "spirit" at Cary-Grove High.

Effective Schools Research

The faculty and administration have looked carefully at the work of Ronald Edmonds and Lawrence Lezotte for theory and research on Effective Schools. Some of the earliest collaborative writing of these two educators appeared in *Remedy for School Failure to Equitably Deliver Basic School Skills.* This represents what some scholars refer to as "first generation" Effective Schools Research (Hannaway 1993). It is important to note that the earliest Effective Schools Research focused on urban schools, particularly those which served children from socioeconomically disadvantaged homes. The goal was to make a difference through effective schools, to identify those components which made real changes in the possibilities for these children.

Edmonds (1979) acknowledges the work of Coleman (1966) in *Equality of Educational Opportunity* as the cornerstone for his own research. Edmonds notes Coleman's essential concern: ". . . equality of educational opportunity must imply a strong effect of schools that is independent of the child's immediate social environment, and that strong independent effect is not present in American schools."

As of the 1987-88 school year, "42% of U.S. school districts were establishing some type of Effective Schools program and another 17% planned to implement one within the next two years" (Hannaway & Talbert, 1993, p. 184). This widespread implementation cuts across types of school districts: urban, suburban, and rural, thus the second generation. The latest research indicates that what works "effectively" in one context, may not work at all in another. For example, Hannaway and Talbert discovered that size is a contradictory factor: large urban districts are so heavily bureaucratized and politicized that productive work relationships among professionals are encumbered. On the other hand, "large suburban districts . . . may be distinguished . . . by expanded support services and professional development opportunities. . . " (Hannaway & Talbert 1993, p. 180). There simply has not been enough research on ESP in rural areas to make definitive claims.

Lezotte (1990) has contributed also to the "second generation" of Effective Schools Research. He has identified certain trends or themes which are present in schools which have implemented Effective Schools Research programs: "A focus on quality and equity, on seeking measurable results, on the school site as the critical unit for...change..., on the empowerment of school board professionals..., and on data-driven monitoring and analysis of current organizational functions" (p.). Further, he suggested ten lessons.

Lesson 1 Planning and implementing programs of school improvement does not follow a recipe or formula.

Lesson 2 School improvements based on Effective Schools Research has been successfully demonstrated in a variety of organizational settings.

Lesson 3 The participating districts have outcome evidence to substantiate their claims that their schools and the district are improving.

Lesson 4 While school improvement occurs school-by-school and one school at a time, support from a central office (that itself is restructured toward school improvement) significantly increases the likelihood of sustained positive change.

Lesson 5 Ultimately, personnel evaluation systems must be aligned with the values of the school improvement program and they should be growth-oriented.

Lesson 6 Teacher improvement can work if the mission is clear and if time and other resources are available to support school-based planning and training processes.

Lesson 7 Perceptional surveys of the characteristics of Effective Schools when coupled with other indicators of strengths and weaknesses provide a valid basis for school-based planning and school improvement.

Lesson 8 Schools and districts need to explore more and better ways of bringing research into the school-based discourse on school improvement.

Lesson 9 School improvement is a complex and ongoing process that requires patience and persistence.

Lesson 10 The Effective Schools process works best when schools and districts disaggregate and publicly display their student performance data.

Levine (1991) notes several guidelines for Effective Schools implementation: staff development, issues of instruction improvement, and general awareness rather than specific training. He further finds that districts which avoid overloading teachers and schools with too many changes too quickly meet with greater success. In addition, technical assistance (specialized personnel) greatly enhances ESP. The entire process must be data-driven, with evidence of improved performance, typically generated by informed individuals rather than with simple checklists. He also suggests that staff members engaged in Effective Schools Programs will probably do some creative "swiping," borrowing from programs which are acknowledged in the literature as well as in practice. One such program he notes is TESA. Finally, he suggests "directed autonomy," meaning that leadership must be in place, but that staff members must also have a meaningful "vote" when decisions are made. Without full staff ownership, school improvement programs are almost always doomed before they begin.

Cary-Grove appears to have many of the characteristics cited by Lezotte and Levine as necessary for success in this second generation of effective schools. Cary-Grove High School has an ESP (Effective Schools Program) team comprised of faculty and staff. This team spearheads the Effective Schools Research strategies which are implemented at the school. In conjunction with the ESP team, an auxiliary council, called GOMAD (Go Out and Make A Difference) lends support and advice. This group is comprised of faculty, staff, parents, community representatives, and students. Together, these two groups put into action the projects which lead to accomplishment of school goals. Taylor and Levine (1991) note that "a well-designed Effective Schools project has a significant likelihood of success because it reflects two decades of research, whereas most approaches to teacher empowerment and school-based management are still in their infancy." (p.) Working from such a well-founded theoretical and research perspective seems to be a wise approach; however, schools need to be aware of the importance of context. It is not possible to generalize from one setting to another, particularly when comparing urban, suburban, and rural districts.

Cooperative Learning

A second driving force in the Cary-Grove Total Learning Commitment program is that of cooperative learning. To illustrate the administrative commitment to this component, there have been four shortened days and three institute days provided for staff in-servicing on cooperative learning. These workshops are typically conducted by faculty members who have pursued graduate work specifically on cooperative learning techniques.

There are many cooperative learning models available in the literature. Cary-Grove has chosen to base its programs on Johnson and Johnson's "Learning Together" model. Just as many aspects of cooperative learning receive almost universal praise, Johnson and Johnson are highly regarded in the literature. The programs they describe are typically geared to grades 2-6. Further, Johnson and

Johnson are also widely known for their focus on techniques to improve students' social skills. One might wonder whether Cary-Grove should now look again at the literature and research available to consider cooperative learning models specifically geared to the high school level, or even better, develop its own unique cooperative learning model to share with other high schools.

Slavin (1989) suggests that research on cooperative learning points to two essential elements for student achievement: group goals and individual accountability. Slavin further notes that the vast majority of research done on the success of cooperative learning has been done in grades 2-9. Cary-Grove could well contribute significantly to the literature with well-documented research data regarding the success of cooperative learning at the senior high levels.

In addition, most cooperative learning studies have dealt with basic skills in math, language arts, and reading. Those which have focused on higher order thinking skills are limited. Again, Cary-Grove could add significantly to the literature/research with information on its success with cooperative learning across the high school curriculum. Studies further show gains in social/affective skills. Particularly, much research points to students from various racial/ethnic groups gaining greater tolerance and higher social acceptance for mainstreamed students.

Regarding the specifics of cooperative learning, Furtwengler (1992) suggests categories and criteria for evaluating a cooperative learning situation: classroom organization, classroom management, presentation of content, group facilitation, monitoring, and lesson summary. The specifics of each of these components might be useful to the Cary-Grove staff as it evaluates the success of its cooperative learning program.

As a result of the work the staff has done on Effective Schools Research and cooperative learning, one specific program which evolved is the Algebra Project. Essentially, students have been "untracked" in their algebra classes; everyone takes Algebra and everyone takes Advanced Algebra. According to Wheelock (1992), there are certain essential characteristics that successfully "untracked" schools share: a belief that all students can learn, a belief in change as a process, high expectations for all, a partnership of leaders and teachers, the value of parent involvement, a hospitable policy context, a multi-year plan, purposeful professional development, and phase-in implementation. Cary-Grove seems to exhibit each of these traits!

The Algebra Project

The Algebra Project is just one example of a Cary-Grove project where they were ready, fired, and aimed at enhancing learning opportunities. To meet the needs of all students, especially lower ability math students, a restructuring of the high school math curriculum included de-tracking the freshman-level classes by eliminating Basic Math and Pre-Algebra. As of the 1992-1993 school year, nearly all freshmen were involved in an Algebra or higher level math course.

When most students are using their summer time for basketball, volleyball, or baseball camps, or otherwise involved in the usual fare of non-academic camping experiences, students at Cary-Grove have the opportunity to experience Algebra Camp! In order to make math accessible and achievable, math instructors were given the chance to share techniques, strategies, and motivational support to a group of students identified as potentially "at risk."

A wide range of activities including computer simulations and explorations, motivational videos, calculators, manipulatives, and problem-solving activities utilizing cooperative learning techniques and mastery learning, provided the basis for a unique camp curriculum. The opportunity to experience

math, a subject these students have been less than successful in mastering, may have for the first time allowed these students to see math from a different perspective. This breakthrough may be just the impetus many of these students need to make the connections necessary to integrate math into their list of educational priorities.

Algebra Camp, through funding from Coca Cola, provides a foundation for building success in the algebra class. The teacher-created "Algebra Assistance" program includes math instructors as positive role models, more accessible to students' needs, and a math teacher's aide who is available to students throughout the day. Her assistance in cooperation with the classroom teachers' commitment to the "at risk" population of algebra students has allowed the students the freedom to seek and receive the one-on-one or small group tutoring on an as-needed basis, without the limitations of the regular teacher/student schedules. Her involvement in the classroom, as evidenced on the site visitation, has provided the instructional support needed by the algebra teachers.

Questions and/or Concerns:

1. How did the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics standards effect the restructuring of the math department? The NCTM has provided an excellent guide for building quality math education priorities.
2. How has the Algebra Project been able to provide more emphasis on problem-solving, or has the program become more skills and concept-based?
3. Did the demographics of Cary-Grove suggest a population more suited to all students taking Algebra or above at the 9th grade than is present at most high schools?
4. Cary-Grove is adamant that the "regular" Algebra program has not been "watered down" to allow for the inclusion of the "at risk" students. What steps are taken on a continuing basis to insure that curricular standards were upheld or increased?
5. Are the teachers involved in interdisciplinary approaches, applying the math to real-life situations? To what extent has this made an impact on math teaching and learning?
6. Is there a model for continued improvement in the math department and the school as a whole? If so, to what degree is staff development and staff input a priority?
7. Are the students in the project followed throughout their high school educational experiences to track their progress and success, in an effort to evaluate the success of the program and student success?
8. What role is assessment playing in the program? Are attempts being made to increase alternative forms of authentic assessment?
9. The curriculum is vertically articulated with the feeder schools at the junior high having an input on curriculum. How about the elementary schools? What kind of feedback is received by the feeder schools and how has that affected curricular decisions?
10. The statistics for the first quarter grades actually showed slightly lower grades after the project started if one considers the A,B,C's (80.5% versus 76%). Is the increase in the C-D range due to the struggling of the former basic math and pre-algebra students included in the present Algebra curriculum? Will these increase as the students become even more acclimated to the math program?
11. There is reference in the materials about "Talking the Talk" and "Walking the Walk." How do the building outcome statements transfer into curriculum development and student learning?

12. What do the mission statement and the Effective School correlates mean to the high school teacher or student in the safe confines of the classroom? Is it a process allowing for curriculum development and critical reflection?

With a mastery learning program in effect, the belief that all students can succeed if given the extended opportunities and appropriate time has come to mean students taking responsibility for their own learning; teachers with a shared commitment to cooperation, risk-taking, and growth; a guidance department providing the kind of instructional and emotional support needed to ensure a positive learning environment; an administration fostering a dedication to excellence and equity for every student; parents taking an active role in their student's curricular and extra-curricular experiences; and a school with a **Total Learning Commitment.**

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Inclusion, The Brook Forest Experience
Brook Forest Elementary School, Oak Brook

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Demographics

Butler School District 53 is located in Oak Brook, Illinois, which is a west suburban community of approximately 10,000 people. Butler School District 53 consists of Brook Forest Elementary School, grades K-5, and Butler Junior High School, grades 6-8. The total enrollment in the district for the 1993-94 school year is 536 students. There are 300 students at Brook Forest Elementary School, and 236 students at Butler Junior High School. This year the district employed 47 staff members and 4 administrators. District 53 has a culturally diverse ethnic population consisting primarily of 62% Caucasian, and 35% Asian. Thirty-seven different languages, in addition to English, are spoken as the primary language in the homes of students who attend our school.

The Concept: Inclusion

is a belief that all children have the same needs for acceptance, friendships, and the feeling of being connected.

will enhance student attitudes of natural acceptance, foster relationships among students, and create new opportunities for students to learn from one another.

is a system of education in which children with quite diverse heterogeneous needs are educated in the same classroom.

is a modeled, restructured ordinary system that will be designed in such a way that all children and young adults regardless of abilities or disabilities be accommodated and will be provided with every opportunity to reach their full potential.

is a merger of special and regular education resources, a team approach emphasizing creativity and problem solving.

Thus, there are no prerequisites for inclusion. Standards vary with each child. All educational staff share responsibility for all students. All children attend their local, neighborhood school. There are no self-contained special education classrooms in that school. All children, regardless of disability or functioning level, are placed in an age-appropriate regular classroom with non-disabled peers.

The Aim

The aim of inclusion is to respect and respond appropriately to the diversity of each learner.

Background Information

In 1988, the Board of Education and superintendent of Butler School District 53 unanimously voted to allow students with disabilities to attend their local, neighborhood school beginning the next school year, 1989-90, rather than be bused to a special education, self-contained classroom provided by LADSE, our special education cooperative. A commitment was also made to provide the structural

supports that were needed to make this transition successful. The superintendent's philosophy was that any students with disabilities could attend their home school, provided we could offer an education that was at least equal to, or better than what was provided in his/her self-contained special education placement. The elementary building was made handicapped accessible, which meant adapting a bathroom and installing a chair lift. One new position was added to the staff, an inclusion facilitator, who would coordinate the services which were needed for each child with special needs. Support teachers, or teacher's aides, are hired as they are needed. It is a child-centered approach in which the needs of each individual child are determined by a multidisciplinary team consisting of the parents, principal, classroom teacher, teacher aide, inclusion facilitator, counselor, and any therapists servicing that child with special needs.

Strategic Plan: The First Steps

Following the school board's decision to implement inclusion the next year, the remainder of the 1988-89 school year was spent in preparation. The administration asked the staff for volunteers to serve on an inclusion task force/committee. Every teacher volunteered, so the administration decided to have the entire staff serve on the committee. Every staff development, early dismissal, and institute day was committed to inclusion for the remainder of the year. The administration and staff from LADSE, the special education cooperative, facilitated these meetings. Since Brook Forest School was one of the first in the country to implement inclusion, there wasn't much to study on the subject. The video tapes "Regular Lives" and "I'm a Lot Like You" were shown. Information was shared by Jennifer York and Teri Vandercook, University of Minnesota; Alison Ford, Syracuse University; and S.E. Gruber, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. The teachers then compiled a list of their greatest concerns, and time was spent addressing them. Issues such as grading, supervision, and discipline were discussed. Information pertaining to each category was shared, such as autism, and mental handicaps.

There were seven students with special needs, K-3, who would be attending Brook Forest in the first year of inclusion. The classroom teachers who would be having these students in their classrooms were assigned early, to allow them the opportunity to visit these students in their current special education self-contained classrooms. The superintendent, school board members, and parents also visited the students in their special education classrooms.

The guidance program that year chose the theme "Celebrating Differences." During the weekly visits to each classroom, the guidance counselor began to sensitize the students to accepting individual differences.

In the spring, an all-school picnic was held in which these seven students and their parents were invited to attend with the classroom teacher they would have in the coming year.

An extensive job search and interview process resulted in the selection of the inclusion coordinator in August of 1989. Three support teachers were also hired.

The week before school began, an orientation was given to the students with special needs and their parents. They toured the building and became familiar with their particular teachers and classrooms.

On the first day, a "welcoming coffee" was held at 9 o'clock for the parents of these seven students, after the students had begun school. This was a strategic attempt to support the parents, and to help alleviate the trepidation they were feeling.

For further training, during the summer of 1989, the district sent the inclusion coordinator and resource teachers to McGill University's Summer Institute on Integrated Education.

The Major Components of Inclusion:

1) Students with disabilities
2) Non-disabled peers
3) Regular classroom teachers
4) Special education teachers
5) Guidance counselors
6) Therapists
7) Support staff
8) Administration
9) Parents
10) Local school community
11) School curriculum for each grade, K-5
12) Curricular adaptations
13) Adaptive technological devices, (i.e., Cannon Communicator, computer touch-screen, echo voice, etc.

Core Elements of Successful Inclusion

There are several key elements to successful inclusion in District 53. One has been the structured support of the full-time inclusion coordinator and support teachers. Also, the continuous financial support and encouragement from the school board, superintendent, and principal. Another key element has been the weekly scheduled collaboration time between the classroom teacher and the inclusion coordinator. Daily in- servicing time between the support teachers and the inclusion coordinator has also been very valuable. The use of adaptive technological devices such as the Canon Communicator, computer touch screen and echo voice have also enhanced instruction. All major decisions are team-based. We are continuously striving to improve our teaming skills so cooperation, trust, and support will be given and received by each team member.

Community Involvement

A preschool in a local center in Oak Brook was receptive to accommodating a child with physical disabilities, who otherwise would have had to travel a great distance from home to attend a special education preschool class.

In 1990, the Oak Brook Park District also began accepting and accommodating children with special needs into all of its regular park programs and summer day camps.

Assessing Progress

Curriculum-based measurement, portfolios, and informal observations all validated the progress each of the students with special needs has made. By the end of the first year of inclusion, the I.E.P. goals were met, and in some cases surpassed. Greatest gains were noted in self-esteem, social skills, and language development.

Outcomes

The results of our initiative have been substantial for teachers, students, and their parents. Teachers have expressed that they feel they have become better teachers as a result of having a child with special needs in their classroom. They adapt the curriculum to meet the needs of the students and have found that many assumed limitations become invalid as these children often achieve beyond goals and expectations.

From an administrative perspective, one of the greatest outcomes of inclusion is that the entire school population benefits. Classmates of the children with disabilities are also getting assistance from the support teachers, as well as benefiting from the expertise of the occupational, physical, and speech therapists. It also has been observed that these children have become more caring and supportive of all peers, with or without disabilities.

Parents of children with special needs are cognizant of their child's self-awareness and identification as a person, not necessarily a "disabled" person. Because the child is attending a neighborhood school, friends tend to be neighborhood children. Being invited to a birthday party is a thrill for both the parents and their child.

Individual students with disabilities are directly benefiting from inclusion. They are placed in regular homeroom classes in their neighborhood school; they spend substantial portions of the day in regular classes with age-appropriate peers; they receive needed support in regular classes; they are able to gain special skills and communication skills; they can gain self-confidence and a positive self-image; they have the opportunity to gain academic skills. Simply stated, inclusion enhances the opportunity for students with disabilities to learn in, and belong to the community in which they live.

Summary

Our experience with inclusion in District 53 has taught us that schools can change, teacher practice can change and improve, attitudes can change, and everyone can learn to respect and respond appropriately to diversity. Over time, acceptance of inclusion grows with experience.

Finally, it is important that those responsible for implementing inclusion resist being dogmatic or defensive. The team needs to be open and receptive to constructive suggestions to improve. New ideas need to be continuously incorporated into each student's plan. The opinions of each team member must be respected and given honest consideration as the student's plan is revised to deal with new situations. Inclusion must be seen as a means to provide a better education for all students.

Inclusion and Special Education: A Value, Not a Place

Friendly Critic - R. Kay Moss

As I was preparing for today's Building Better Schools Symposium, I began to collect curricular stories from people who knew that inclusion was one topic being explored today.

There is the story of James of Huntsville, Texas. For him, inclusion means that his teacher has a teaching assistant and half the regular number of students. His classroom also has three students with extensive special needs. His speech therapist comes into the classroom to work with him during part of the morning two days a week, and his physical education class includes special recreation with a peer. The school James attends has placed a priority on including every child in the regular classroom and has implemented many of the supports necessary to make that happen in ways that are beneficial to students, to staff, and to the larger community.

There is the story of Danny. Danny is blind and attends some of his eighth grade classes with his regular education peers. Three or four of his eighth grade peers, however much this may churn your stomach, imitate and ridicule Danny daily after their technology education class where Danny is learning to touch type. The school has acknowledged that although the disabled peers are present, they are still absent in terms of the benefit that comes through caring interaction with nondisabled peers. The school is piloting a curricular project this year to help integrate the kids with special needs into the social fabric of the school community.

There is also a young woman named Margaret who will soon graduate from a state supported school in Indianapolis for children and youth who are deaf. Many people would interpret this placement to mean that she is not in an "inclusive" setting. Margaret, however, would argue otherwise. She has a long list of extracurricular activities, including the school play for which she has worked on costumes, painted sets, designed programs, played in a variety of roles, and been student director. Margaret believes that this kind of experience has given her the knowledge, skills, and attitude to help prepare her for the university she plans to attend next fall. Who, then, is to say that this is not inclusive education?

The stories serve to make my point: Inclusion is not a place, but a value. "It transcends the idea of physical location and incorporates basic values that insist on participation, friendship, and interaction in all aspects of education and community life. And it embraces children and adults by providing necessary support systems" (Davila, 1992, p. 2).

Arguments for Inclusion

Federal Law

A compelling civil rights argument exists in support of inclusive education. "Segregation is the way in which society tells a group of human beings that they are inferior to other groups of human beings in that society" (Brown v. Board of Education, 1954). In our culture, a segregated education is inherently unequal and is a violation of the rights of the children who are segregated.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act requires that "schools make a significant effort to find an inclusive solution for a child" (Rogers, 1993, p. 2). Recently, courts are interpreting the law to mean that children with severe disabilities should be included in the classroom they would

otherwise attend. This interpretation includes children who cannot do the academic work of a class if there is a social or linguistic potential for the disabled children. In recent cases the courts have placed a child with a tested IQ of 44 in the regular classroom (Board of Education, Sacramento City Unified School District v. Holland) and have placed a child in a regular classroom that the school argued would be disruptive to the point of impairing the education of the other children (Oberti v. Board of Education of the Borough of Clementon School District).

Special Education Research

The second line of reasoning in support of inclusion is grounded in the research of the outcomes of special education, (Rogers, 1993).

> Empirical analysis of the outcomes from established special education programs indicate that they just haven't worked. In spite of the steady expansion of a costly special education bureaucracy, the children served in special education programs have not shown the expected benefits in the development of academic, social, or vocational skills. (p. 3)

In an inclusive school system, special education students:

1. Meet an increased number of their IEP goals.
2. Are more motivated to learn.
3. Are provided appropriate peer models to facilitate learning and appropriate social behaviors.
4. Encounter the expectations and diversity of society.
5. Are more successful as adults.
6. Develop more friendships with nondisabled peers. (Davis, 1992, p. 4)

The presence of an included classmate also provides opportunities for growth for the entire class. Classmates develop a sense of responsibility, encounter the diverse range of human experiences, benefit from having disabled classmates as role models who are coping with disabilities, and develop more friendships with disabled peers.

In spite of these compelling arguments, inclusion cannot be viewed as a way of downsizing special education programs or cutting the costs of the programs. Instead, inclusion must be considered an alternate model of special education service delivery: rather than pulling out the special education child to deliver services, the school is delivering the special services to the child.

Qualities for Success

Schools exploring the inclusion model of special education services are generally those that already embrace a curricular model which supports diverse learners. Such schools may already use such practices as heterogeneous grouping, peer tutoring, multi-age classes, middle school structures, "no-cut" athletic policies, and cooperative learning groups. Schools that are ripe for a successful inclusion program have three important qualities:

1. The school has a commitment to the development of a caring community. This community encourages the full participation of children with disabilities in all parts of the school experience.
2. The staff individualizes the instructional program for all children and believes that all children are capable of learning.

3. The administration supports the team of general education and special education teachers and support personnel in their efforts to provide support for all learners.

Schools like Brook Forest Elementary demonstrate that inclusion is not just a place, but a value. Their inclusion program embraces the values of participation and friendship while honoring all children as learners.

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The Essential Schools Experience
Carpentersville Middle School, Carpentersville

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Introduction

Carpentersville Middle School is located approximately 45 miles northwest of Chicago along the Fox River. It is bordered by the communities of Elgin, Barrington, Dundee, and Algonquin. The school was established in 1983 in response to declining enrollment and declining revenues. Dundee Community High School was closed, and its students were sent to the newly created Dundee-Crown High School. Two middle schools, Perry and Lakewood, were closed, and their combined students and staffs merged to form the new Carpentersville Middle School housed in the former Dundee Community High School building.

Our school has approximately 1100 students in grades six through eight. We have an ethnically diverse population with a minority enrollment of approximately 30 percent. Roughly one-third of the students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The administrative staff is composed of one full-time principal, one full-time assistant principal, two part-time assistant principals, and two advisors (deans). The instructional staff consists of:

- 36 Classroom Teachers
- 6 Exploratory Teachers
- 6 Physical Education Teachers
- 1 Media Specialist
- 1 Guidance Counselor
- 3 Part-time Instrumental and Vocal Music Teachers
- 3 Learning Disabilities Resource teachers
- 3 Self-contained Learning Disabilities Teachers
- 1 Behavioral Disorders Teacher
- 3 Bilingual Teachers
- 3 Chapter I Teachers

When the school opened in 1981, its organizational structure was a "school within a school" with an emphasis on certain staff members having both instructional and administrative roles. The full-time principal and one part-time assistant principal had building-wide responsibilities. Each grade level had its own administrative team composed of a part-time assistant principal, a part-time advisor (dean), and a part-time guidance counselor. Each was responsible for teaching three academic classes. These classes, however, were often at grade levels other than their administrative responsibilities. The academic program featured ability grouping in each subject area, and teachers often taught more than one grade level. Several staff members taught in more than one building. Teachers knew very little about the students in their classes and had little or no contact with them once they had left the classroom. The educational program was impersonal and each teacher taught "his subject" with little concern for the total child. There was a limited elective program for those students of higher academic ability. Those students who needed two full periods of language arts had less opportunity to be involved in the elective program. Students who were not able to be scheduled

into the elective program were assigned to study halls.

Community Unit School District 300 became actively involved in restructuring activities in 1987 when Perry Elementary School explored the concept of site-based management. The impetus for viewing each individual school as the unit of change came from the Superintendent, Dr. Joseph Scime, and the Assistant Superintendent, Dr. Norman Wetzel. This initial endeavor evolved into a district-wide school improvement effort. Each elementary and secondary school received one week of training in the school improvement process through the Institute for Development of Educational Activities, Inc. (IDEA). The IDEA model stresses the importance of the development of a shared vision within the school community. A team of stakeholders, consisting of an administrator, a parent, and a teacher received one full week of training in the IDEA model, and a second week of training was held during the next school year.

Restructuring activities began at Carpentersville Middle School in 1988 following a presentation by the Illinois Alliance of Essential Schools. Seventy-five percent of the staff voted to join the IAES. The IAES is based on the ideas of Ted Sizer and features nine common principles:

1. The school should focus on helping adolescents learn to use their minds well.
2. The school's goals should be simple: that each student master a limited number of essential skills and areas of knowledge.
3. The school's goals should apply to all students, while the means to these goals will vary as those students themselves vary.
4. Teaching and learning should be personalized to the maximum feasible extent.
5. The governing practical metaphor of the school should be student-as-worker.
6. The diploma should be awarded upon a successful final demonstration of mastery.
7. The tone of the school should explicitly and self-consciously stress values of unanxious expectation, of trust, and of decency.
8. The principal and teachers should perceive themselves as generalists first and specialists second.
9. Ultimate administrative and budget targets should include total student loads per teacher of 80 or fewer students, substantial time for collective planning by teachers, competitive salaries for staff, and an ultimate per pupil cost not to exceed that at traditional schools by more than 10 percent.

Our staff explored the nine common principles, and brainstormed what we would like our school to be like. We attended staff development activities that focused on the creation of a middle school. We provided summer inservice programs dealing with cooperative learning, interdisciplinary teaching, and application of coalition principles.

In the summer of 1990, a building steering committee was formed and a concerted effort was made to connect the three strands of restructuring: the Essential Schools philosophy, the IDEA model for school improvement, and the middle school philosophy. The steering committee consisted of an approximately equal number of parents and teachers. The inclusion of parents on the steering committee was important because parents had previously been involved only with fundraising. It was critical that the parents become stakeholders who were actively involved in the restructuring process. During the initial meetings of the steering committee, we stressed team building activities, development of a consensus decision making model, and the formation of a mission and goal

statements. The mission and goal statements were shared with the entire staff and school community prior to their adoption by the steering committee. Following their adoption, they were formally presented to the Board of Education, and we officially became a site-based school.

Steering committee membership has changed over the past four years with some members being recycled each year. The steering committee has played a critical role in our restructuring efforts. It is a viable, working committee, not just a rubber stamp. It adopts an annual school improvement plan and develops design teams with individual goals. The design teams study problem areas and recommend solutions to the steering committee for approval, modification, or rejection. The steering committee has truly developed a shared vision and is consistent in trying to meet our building goals.

We kicked-off the 1990 school year with an extraordinary two day inservice program featuring Elliot Merrenbloom. This two-day inservice provided the foundation for future changes and our movement from a junior high structure to that of a true middle school.

During the 1990 school year, we focused on team building with the faculty, building a common knowledge base, and developing a consensus decision-making model. Late arrival days and faculty meeting times were devoted to building a vision of what we wanted for our school, ourselves, and our students. We have revisited these "wants" several times over the past three years, and our "celebration lists" show that we have made these things happen.

Birth involves pain, and we experienced our share. Some staff members felt we were moving too fast, while others felt we were moving too slowly. There was a genuine concern for the feelings of those who were reluctant to change, and efforts were made to accommodate the feelings of these staff members. The "no changes" faction became more vocal at staff meetings, yet those committed to change held their ground. We learned that reaching consensus was difficult. Despite the emphasis on developing a consensus decision-making model, some individuals continued to talk about voting on the changes that were being suggested.

By February, 1991, a proposal for interdisciplinary teams at sixth grade only and an advisor-advisee program at all levels was presented by a design team. While it did not go as far as some staff members wanted, it did result in significant and fundamental changes in our educational program.

This proposal was a litmus test for our entire school improvement process and the role that the steering committee would be allowed to play. With the acceptance of this proposal, we realized that we had developed a shared vision and that the school improvement process worked. The staff saw that parents would support change that was in the best interest of their children, and parents saw that the staff did care about creating a better school. The process was difficult for some individual staff members and one staff member commented, "In the past the principal made the decision and we focused our anger on him. Now that we are making the decision we are making people angry with us." Staff members learned that they must participate in the change process, or changes would occur without their input.

The sixth grade teaming project was a success, and the process of creating seventh and eighth grade teams the following school year was much easier. We opened the 1992-1993 school year with:

- Interdisciplinary teams of four staff members at each grade-level;
- Common planning time for all teams, exploratory classes for all students;
- A building-wide advisor-advisee program;
- Elimination of all study halls;

- No bells;
- Block scheduling; and
- Elimination of tracking in all academic areas except mathematics.

Mathematics is an instructional area that helps illustrate the process we have used to bring about change. Our staff spent almost two years analyzing our math scores and our math curriculum. We studied the NCTM standards and compared our math curriculum with what we were being asked to do on the IGAP. We reviewed textbooks from major publishers and piloted two textbooks at each grade level during the 1992-1993 school year. The design team recommended that one publisher be selected for sixth and seventh grade and the other publisher for eighth grade. It also recommended eliminating the three or four math levels that had previously been taught and replacing them with an at grade level group and one accelerated group for each team. The math texts that we selected fit the needs of our students and are not the books adopted by other middle schools in our district. We have the responsibility of developing curricula that best meets the needs of our students.

Our goals apply to all students, and over the past two years we have devoted considerable attention to current research and practice regarding the best way to serve students who receive bilingual, special education, and Chapter I services. Special education teachers, bilingual teachers, and Chapter I teachers have been moving away from pullout models and spend at least part of their day providing services through an inclusionary model.

Increasing student achievement is at the heart of our restructuring efforts, and it is dependent upon changes in the way in which we provide instruction and the way in which we assess student learning. There is an increased emphasis on cooperative learning, development of interdisciplinary units, portfolio assessment, and content area reading and writing skills. We have demonstrated gains in our local assessment and IGAP scores with the greatest progress being made in writing.

A key ingredient to our restructuring efforts has been the personalization of our educational programs. Teachers and students have developed stronger bonds, and there is a true feeling of belonging between teachers and students. Fewer students slip through the cracks because there is a core of teachers who are responsible for their success.

Staff development activities have been an integral part of our school improvement program. Staff members have visited other middle schools within the state to see how their programs could be adapted at our school. For the past two years we have had one building level staff development activity each month. We use Wednesdays for this activity and combine our regularly scheduled faculty meeting with a late arrival day for students to create a 7:40 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. time frame for staff development activities. These activities have been devoted to interdisciplinary teaming issues, computer education, cooperative learning, portfolio assessment, special needs students, and grade level meetings between teams and exploratory teachers.

The increased use of technology is an essential part of our restructuring efforts. Three years ago we were using 25 Apple IIE computers to teach word processing as an elective, three periods of the day. Today, we have two computer laboratories, an Apple IIE lab and an IBM LAN lab. Our parent group has made a commitment to technology and has entered into a five-year lease/purchase agreement with IBM. Each sixth and seventh grade student receives nine weeks of computer instruction. The sixth grade program stresses word processing, while the seventh grade program stresses advanced word processing, spreadsheet, and database. Several of our classrooms have stand-alone computers on networked computers for student use. Our computer labs are open to students from 8:00 a.m. until

4:30 p.m. each day and are manned by a full time instructional aide. The labs are used for drill and practice, computer-assisted instruction, and writing. We have made significant gains in writing because of technology.

Our school improvement effort is part of an on-going process, and we do not envision that we will ever be finished. Schools must develop a self-examination process which involves each shareholder within the school community. We have been able to weave the IDEA strand, the Middle School strand, and the Essential Schools strand to create an educational program that best meets the needs of our students. It is imperative that the school improvement process be a broad community effort and not just the work of the instructional staff. Parents, students, support staff, and community members are stakeholders in our schools, and they must play a leadership role in all school improvement activities. Our focus must be the creation of "ideal" schools and these must be created through diverse visions of what the "ideal" should be like.

Interdisciplinary Teaching In An Essential School

Friendly Critic - Cindy Daly

Carpentersville Middle School (CMS) has embraced and accepted the challenge of personalizing school improvement. The staff has created a vision for its community of learners which includes a middle school philosophy, the Nine Common Principles of Essential Schools, and the IDEA process for initiating and facilitating change. This is cultiviated by a school board which encourages and rewards site-based management and shared decision-making.

CMS began its school improvement plan after being chosen as a member of the Illinois Alliance of Essential Schools. The commitment was to create a school that subscribes to the Essential Schools Philosophy: "Good schools are thoughtful places. The people in them are known. The units are small enough to be coherent communities of friends. Amenities are observed. There are quiet places available as well as places for socializing. No one is ridiculed. No one is the servant of another. The work is shared. The entire place is thoughtful: Everything in its routines meets a standard of common sense and civility. At such places do adolescents learn about the thoughtful life" (Sizer, 1992, p. 128).

The affiliation with the Essential Schools Alliance afforded CMS extended resources to be allocated for staff development. This money supplied administrators, parents, and teachers time to develop a plan and a process for change. CMS has progressed beneficially with its school improvement plan because the leadership of the district recognizes that the education and training of staff members is directly correlated to the success of school improvement efforts. Staff development is an essential component to successfully implementing change in any organization. The message at CMS is clear to all - if it is worth doing, it is worth doing well.

CMS developed its vision but needed an avenue to get there. IDEA provided the structure to help ideas become realities. The system of initiating change was defined and communicated to parents, teachers, and administrators through formal training workshops. The IDEA process prevented the school improvement plan from becoming a **"done to"** process; it mandated that school improvement be a **"done by"** process.

The decision to move to a middle school concept was realized in 1991 with the 6th grade teachers and students organized into interdisciplinary teams. The following year, the 7th and 8th grade teachers and students were included in the middle school model. The middle school philosophy seems to be integral with the Nine Common Principles of Essential Schools. The creation of an environment that fosters connectedness and personalization of learning can only take place when teachers, parents, and administrators work collaboratively toward a shared vision. In Workplace 2000, Boyett and Conn (1991) describe the need for education to adapt itself to the needs of the future in developing learners. They contend that "the most valuable commodity will be knowledge and the pulsating flow of ideas exchanging, interacting, and expanding. . . . The basic skills for workers of the future fall into seven categories: learning to learn; competence (reading, writing, and computation); communication; personal management; adaptability; group effectiveness; and influence" (p. 278). A middle school environment creates a climate which develops and nurtures these skills.

The Community Unit School District 300 School Board promotes and practices site-based management. Mr. Russell Ballard, principal of CMS is empowered to create the best school for his community. Mr. Ballard, following the school board's example, empowers his parents and teachers to create what they consider to be the best school . CMS confronts the same issues in education

today as all public schools. They face challenges of inclusion, cultural diversity, and limited resources. They have not resolved all of these issues, but they do have an identified process for change and problem solving which is inclusionary in its structure. This is commonly called shared decision-making. Teachers, parents, and students at CMS feel they have a voice that is heard at their school.

There are reasons that suggest CMS staff members could not be successful in their school improvement endeavors. The facility is a 40-year-old, two-story high school that is not conducive to an interdisciplinary and teaming approach to learning. The district does not allocate any extra resources for the school to implement its school improvement plan. The community is not affluent. CMS's achievements can be attributed to leadership which promotes and practices site-based management with a strong commitment to staff development and training; however, when the funding from the Essential Schools is not available, CMS will face one of its biggest challenges - how to maintain its level of commitment toward staff development while operating within existing resources.

School improvement is an on-going process. The intent is that no school ever "gets there." The leadership and staff at CMS recognize their limitations and the need for continual improvement. This improvement is able to take form each year as issues arise because there is a shared decision-making system in place to address these issues and implement solutions. Carpentersville Middle School can be proud of its accomplishments in providing an exemplary role model for schools committed to developing, initiating, and continuing a school improvement plan.

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Parental Involvement and Learning Improvement
Wagoner Elementary School, Sauk Village

Presentation Team
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Friendly Critic
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Introduction

The idea of parental involvement that began in 1988 with the prekindergarten home-based programs and continued with the 1990 needs assessments and parent interest surveys has grown each year in Sauk Village.

The focus in School District 168 for the past three years has been on parental involvement. A great many programs for parents are offered such as: Saturday School; Family Study Institute; Evening Social Events; Career Days (where parents share their careers with students); Open Houses; Fine Arts Festival; Craft Fairs; Grandparent's Day; Parenting Classes; evening classes and programs with speakers; evening parent/teacher conferences to encourage working parents to attend; a Family Resource Room (housed in one elementary building) offering a toy, book, and video lending library with an area for informal support/discussion groups to meet; and GED and Adult Basic education Classes.

Beginning in 1989, the administration was hearing from parents and staff that it was necessary to reinstate some of the extracurricular activities that had been canceled and to get the schools functioning at a higher academic level. That was also the first year the IGAP was implemented, and District 168 scores were very low. It was felt there was a need to let parents know the schools cared about them and their children. An advisory committee, open to any community member in Sauk Village, was formed in January. This committee began with about 25 people. The group collected information concerning the needs and wants of the district's parents.
Superintendent Dr. Thomas E. Ryan's doctoral dissertation, Parents As Partners Program, states that School District 168 wished to implement Joyce Epstein's model of parental involvement in conjunction with Parent Effectiveness Training. These five components include:

1. Develop parents' skills by suggesting strategies for creating a home environment that supports learning behaviors at each grade level.
2. Design effective forms of communication which reach all parents.
3. Use parent volunteers and encourage all parents to work as volunteers at school or to attend and support events and meetings.
4. Encourage children's learning activities at home by providing ideas, materials, and training to parents through a coordinated effort by school staff personnel.
5. Encourage parent participation in decision-making and help to establish parent leadership.

Current research supports the fact that children do better in school when they have a parent who is involved in the school in some way. Studies done by Gordon (1978) and Henderson (1987) on parent programs found that the more parents participated in a sustained way, the better it was for student achievement. Gordon's research established that implementing parent programs in the schools improved a child's learning more positively and consistently. This impact on achievement was more

positive for children whose parents were directly involved over a period of years, beginning in preschool. Their scores on achievement tests were higher; and even greater gains were observed in second children than on the first child in the same family.

In 70% of the research done by Leler (1983) on programs where there was collaboration between the home, school, and community, a predominant influence showing positive effects on student achievement was identified. Powell's (1989) research further substantiated the fact that children's IQ scores increased when parents were involved in their schools. In addition, children showed an increase in self-esteem when members of their family took part in their school life in a positive manner, even for a brief or infrequent period of time. The more children viewed their parents' approval of their school world, the more likely they were to respect that world also.

The Homework Lab

Keeping this research in mind, a Homework Lab concept was begun in one of the elementary schools to give one-on-one instruction to students and also to show parents that the schools did care about their student. Intramural programs were begun the next year. Both of these programs were supported by private funding.

In the spring of 1990, a needs assessment was put together and mailed to all parents of the elementary students in the school district. From these responses, it was clear that parents were not ready to volunteer in the schools at this point. Parents did indicate, however, an interest in knowing how to help their children at home to improve math and reading skills. They additionally wanted to know how to communicate more effectively with teachers and to learn better parenting skills. Many parents indicated their willingness to come to school on Saturday and to have their children participate in after school homework labs. The homework lab served to "open the door" of communications between the parents and teachers. To further improve this communication, parents are notified via the Individualized Improvement Program (IIP) if their child was a year and a half below reading level. The parents sign this sheet and return it to the school. During the first Parent/Teacher Quarter conferences, parents then sign an agreement as to what optional programs they would like their child to attend such as Homework Lab or other extra services.

A communication policy was also developed to help teachers keep in close contact with parents through the use of portable telephones that are found throughout the buildings, Friday folders, "friendly" phone contacts and note cards before a student is having any problems, and personal contact when there are concerns. Through these programs, the parents were given a vehicle through which they could become empowered by being encouraged to share constructive criticism with the administration. Parents felt they could voice their concerns about the schools. Since these policies have begun, student's test scores have risen each year, not only on the IGAP but also on the CTBS, and finally the parents now believe that we really do care about their children.

Parental outreach had begun in 1988 through a prekindergarten grant that started as a home-based program and has grown and changed over the last several years. There is now a strong parental involvement component that includes not only the prekindergarten (three-, four-, and five-year-old) students but also reaches out to the birth through age three and the kindergarten through 3rd grades. Parenting programs are provided through the district teaching staff, which tends to have better rapport with the parents and is less intimidating than outside consultants.

Breaking Down Barriers

The whole focus of the parenting programs is to break down the communication barriers between the school and home and to provide the parents with baseline data on how to help their children at home in the learning process.

The Board of Education approved the concept of the parent advisory board from the beginning. The advisory group then set the goal of getting the parents into the schools in a way that would break down the intimidation barriers. Each year, the board helps redefine what will be done to keep the parental involvement programs moving forward.

The teachers were brought into the parent involvement effort by forming communication, discipline, homework, retention, promotion, and school support committees. These are things that grew out of the comments made by parents and from two years of implementation of programs.

The parents also wanted some type of formal mechanism to deal with rules and policies or regulations set up by the school. A discipline handbook and a calendar was developed to share this information and it also includes the phone numbers of the district schools.

The teachers and administration voluntarily take part in a yearly parade on the Sunday before Labor Day to show community involvement and support and to let parents know, once again, that they care about the families in Sauk Village.

Outside funding was sought through donations from some of the businesses in Sauk Village and also from businesses from which the school district ordered supplies and products. Private donations were also given by various community leaders and business associates. The amount raised to support programs have more than doubled in the past year. A consultant was hired with prekindergarten grant money, from Governors State University, to help in developing some of the parenting programs to which all district parents were invited. A Model Parental Training grant was funded for the 1992/93 school year to further expand the parental involvement programs.

These original programs are still being implemented and refined, while new ones are added each year. A yearly review takes a close look at what we have done, if it's working, what changes need to be made, and if it is what the parents really want and need.

The Future

The vision for our school district over the next few years is to continue to elicit more parental participation directly in the schools, to get more involvement from the senior citizens, and to promote the social events while putting more of an academic emphasis on them. We intend to provide more parenting books as well as a calendar of daily activities for the parents and children to use during the summer months when school is not in session. We are currently working on a grant to fund the development of a computer lab where parents and children can work and learn together.

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Improved Communications & Learning Through Parental Involvement

Friendly Critics - Karen Munz and Gayle Flickinger

Introduction

Community Consolidated District 168, Wagoner Elementary School, Sauk Village, is in Southern Cook County, Illinois. The community is comprised of a diverse basically middle class population of about 11,000 with family incomes in the medium to low range, and it is classified as racially integrated.

Wagoner Elementary School parents are involved in one of the most comprehensive parent education programs in the state. For any given activity, 30-50% of the parents participate, a percentage considerably higher than many comparable schools. Research has shown that parent involvement is necessary to the education of students and to the effectiveness of teachers (Foster & Loven, 1992). Wagoner parents are involved in two-way communication and involvement with the school, and test scores have improved, as have student attendance, and parent involvement.

Traditionally, communication with parents has been seen as a limited one way communication with the teacher providing information through the use of notes home or classroom newsletters to parents. Unfortunately, many of the traditional ways of communication do not take into consideration the changing life styles and needs of families in the 90s. Non-traditional family composition, varying socioeconomic status, and differences in ethnicity are reflected in personal views and values that have a direct effect on parent involvement between the school and home. Communication is a two way activity, one in which feedback received is as important as information given.

What We Learned

On our visit to Sauk Village we became familiar with several of the parent involvement programs. The Parent's Advisory Group welcomes any parent to its monthly meeting. Parents in the original group, which began in 1990, stated they would like to help in parent-school partnerships, but they would also like to be more accepted by teachers and administrators. The school district hoped to take advantage of this attitude by offering programs in which parents could participate. The group developed a needs assessment and sent it to 1400 families.

Positive parent programs began developing out of the survey. Even with a high mobility rate, which changes the composition of the group each year, Sauk Village has not had any problems with parent participation. One of the positive parent supported programs developed in 1990 was the Homework Lab. The PTO makes the largest contribution to the labs as do approximately 20 businesses and civic organizations.

Saturday School is designed to help parents become more involved with their child's education and to become a partner with the school. Parents and students both attend the Saturday workshop activities. Teachers design the Saturday curriculum around special areas of interest and volunteer to teach a session.

Early Childhood Parent Outreach Programs are supported by additional grant monies. Expectant parents and parents of young children are involved in Home Based Programs, Parent Training

Sessions, and the kindergarten through third grade programs. The planning and development of many of these programs have been the responsibility of the Early Childhood Coordinator.

Conclusions

After visiting the schools at Sauk Village, we feel the Parent-Partnership program has increased self-esteem among both students and teachers. There is an increase in the number of parent volunteers, with more fathers becoming involved than ever before, and there is an improvement in the IGAP scores and school attendance.

This success has lead to the additional programs , such as a computer lab and a writing lab. The school has plans for involving more of the community by calling upon senior citizens and the community- at-large to become part of the partnership as well.

Concerns

Other schools wishing to create a parent's advisory group may question whether parents should be selected for the group or whether all parents interested should be included.

Depending upon the community, a school might anticipate parents signing up for the Advisory Committee who do not have a positive attitude; there should be a plan in place to handle that parent tactfully or to select a parent with a more positive attitude toward change.

Other schools wishing to create a Homework Lab similar to the one described would need to have good relations with the areas businesses in order to persuade them to make contributions to the program. Or, the school district would have to have an alternate plan for raising the money.

In Sauk Village, Saturday School offerings are determined by the teacher's own personal areas of interest. A greater variety of topics could result from giving parents an opportunity for input into the selections they feel would be of interest to the students. Parent attendance might increase as a result of this interaction.

Grant funds would have to be available to support the Early Childhood Coordinator who oversees the variety of Early Childhood programs for parents and children.

New physical space or extra classroom space that could be dedicated to the pre-school parents for a lending library with room for books and toys as well as space for the play group to be set up would be needed.

Accelerated Education and Early Intervention Equal Student Success
Mark Twain Accelerated School, Alton

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Introduction

Mark Twain Accelerated School, Alton, Illinois, is one of 12 elementary schools in Alton Community School District #11. Our school district is a unit from Early Childhood through 12th grade. In addition to the 12 elementary schools, District #11 includes three middle schools (grades 6-8) and one high school. The district also has one special school, one alternative school, and one pre-school "at risk" learning center. The district's total enrollment is 7,300. The poverty level of the district enrollment is 33.4%. Drop-out rate for the district is 2%.

Beginning in 1976, the elementary schools were placed in attendance areas described as corridors. The elementary schools are divided into corridors in an effort to maintain racial balance. Each corridor presently has from two to three schools serving the student population. Mark Twain School is assigned Corridor V and houses all the K-1 students that live in that area. Literally and figuratively, the students in Corridor V have been called the "other" students in the district. Schools in this corridor have been "thought to be the worst in the district". Historically, teachers who were not performing up to central office expectations were sent to Corridor V. However, the teachers thought they were the best. The present contract prohibits that out-of-date procedure. The teachers now think this is the best school in which to teach.

1989-90 statistics show that Mark Twain School had an enrollment of 322. The low income enrollment was 57.8%. Mark Twain's mobility rate was 34.4%. The attendance rate was 91.8%. The minority percentage was 41.4%. Lovejoy School had an enrollment of 351. The low income enrollment was 55.8%. Lovejoy's mobility rate was 40.1%. The attendance rate was 93.8%. The minority percentage was 39%.

Today the Mark Twain student body includes 310 students in grades K-1 and three primary special education classes. We have an urban population drawn from a rather large area within the city of Alton. Of the 310 students, busing is provided for approximately 240. Our mobility rate is approximately 40%. Over 65% are from low socio-economic families as determined by free or reduced price lunch applications. Between 65-75% of the students are considered to be at- risk.

Implementing the School Improvement Process

A need for change and improvement in the educational process was recognized. The staff met to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the students. Staff members visited other schools to observe and evaluate curriculum and programs. They attended workshops and conferences to explore and develop teaching techniques and strategies to better meet the needs of the "at risk" population.

Steering committees were developed in each building. Representatives include: facilitator, principal, each grade level, and special areas. Their function is to guide planning and implementing accelerated school policies.

Staff members met at a summer retreat to form a strategic plan. Problems and possible solutions were discussed and brainstormed. An outline was formulated. A committee was appointed to take the outline and suggestions and design a three-to-five-year strategic plan. This plan addresses concerns with open communication, staff development, decision-making procedures, student evaluation, curriculum, instructional strategies, and involvement of families and the community.

Annual standardized testing will be used to monitor student progress. Other areas will be monitored through an ongoing, in-house evaluation by the staff.

Funds for these two schools are those available to Alton Community Unit District #11. Staff are also pursuing additional funding through grant applications and community sources.

School Improvement: Where We Were to Where We Are

When the Illinois Network of Accelerated Schools (INAS) was originated in January, 1989, the purpose was for a group of schools with high enrollments of at-risk students (such as Chapter 1) to adopt a philosophy to accelerate, not remediate, with the goal of having all students performing at grade level by sixth grade. The purpose of an accelerated school is to create a learning organization which focuses on continuous school improvement that meets the needs of all students. The schools follow three guiding principles:

> **Unity of Purpose** (i.e., develop a school vision/mission)
>
> **Shared Decision Making with Responsibility** (i.e., set up a governance structure with a steering committee and principal as facilitator)
>
> **Building on Strengths** (i.e., increasing community and parent involvement to augment the school's resources.)

During the 1991-92 school year, a more formalized approach was taken when significant school representatives signed a Statement of Commitment. However, this signed paper brought no penalty for non-follow-through. Prior to this time, expectations for these schools were not clearly identified or carried out.

During the summer of 1992, State Board of Education staff received training on a more clearly defined **Accelerated Schools Process** (taking stock, developing a vision, setting priorities, establishing a governance structure, using inquiry for problem solving) from Stanford's Midwest Consultant Dr. Brenda LeTendre, through a grant from the Smart Foundation. Staff also attended a week-long workshop at the Missouri Accelerated School Summer Academy for further professional development and networking with that state's initiative. SBE staff and Dr. LeTendre then trained the whole building staffs of two accelerated schools and three to five-person teams from another six schools.

Beginning in January, 1993, the remaining 16 accelerated schools were scheduled for whole building training on a first-come, first-served basis. By the start of the 1993-94 school year, all 24 accelerated schools will have received what is being called **Self-Renewal Training for the Accelerated Schools**. Since the 24 schools were already well into the process after 3.5 years, a more appropriate training

focus was to reflect, review, refine, revise, and revisit their prior successes and challenges and make course corrections in light of new knowledge, training, and experiences.

In the Fall of 1993, ISBE Program Initiatives staff will follow up on the whole building self-renewal training through on-site consultations with the school leadership and negotiate technical assistance needs for the individual school. The school staff and the ISBE staff will reach consensus about the current progress of the school (benchmarks, expectations, strengths, and challenges) and re-establish the relationship between the state agency and the local school as partners in changing/improving the learning situation for the students in the Illinois accelerated schools.

Change at Mark Twain

Twenty certified and fifteen non-certified staff members bonded with students and parents in an endeavor to improve Mark Twain Accelerated School. The following comments were made by State Superintendent of Schools, Robert Leininger, in an article in the March 1993 Illinois Principal:

> The philosophy behind Accelerated Schools is to accelerate rather than remediate learning by offering at-risk students more appropriate and relevant learning experiences. Principals and teachers of Accelerated Schools possess innovative foresight and a relentless desire to make a difference in the lives of their students.
>
> At Accelerated Schools, educators, students, and parents are learning what well-planned change can bring to the doorsteps of schoolhouses. Change is the operative word for Accelerated Schools. These schools, located in urban, suburban, and rural settings, have enrollments which range from 200 to more than 700 students. They are operated around three principles: a unity of purpose, empowerment--shared decision making with responsibility, and building on strengths.

Through a collaborative effort, Accelerated Schools are exploring different strategies to provide students with learning atmospheres which nurture excellence in education. A preliminary study (Illinois Principal) comparing INAS to non-participating schools was conducted by the National Center on School Leadership (NCSL) and the University of Illinois. Among its findings were the following:

1. Principal and teacher cooperation appeared to facilitate teacher satisfaction and a renewed commitment to helping students learn at high levels of expectation.
2. INAS teachers saw the school as stressing shared decision-making, experimenting with new ideas, holding high expectations for students, and involving parents to a greater extent than teachers in the control group did.
3. INAS students perceived a greater stress on accomplishment and the importance of doing well, and showed a stronger sense of affiliation than students in the control group did.
4. INAS teachers showed a greater degree of satisfaction and commitment than the teachers in the control group did.
5. The State Board and INAS will work together to replicate the success of Accelerated Schools in other schools across the State. Administrators and teachers will be provided technical assistance and workshops to learn how the philosophy of Accelerated Schools can address the unique needs of their students and schools.

Mentioned in the article was the comment: "**Change** is the operative word for accelerated schools." Leadership is very important in this process. Former Secretary of Education Bell's comments indicate the need for very high quality leaders in our schools:

> Leadership, especially at the school level, has begun to attract more attention as a key ingredient in any successful school reform. In the next decade, school improvement initiatives will require increasingly more sophisticated and insightful principals and superintendents. In the next four to five years, teachers will also be central as leaders and as pioneers in school improvement and innovation. Studies of our most successful school principals are beginning to yield practical information than can be applied to the training and recruitment of outstanding school leaders. Parents and business officials alike are becoming impatient with the mediocre performance of some of our school leaders. As public pressure continues to mount, there will be massive turnover in the ranks of school principals and superintendents. After ten years of trying to make our schools more effective, we are learning at last that we must begin with bright, dynamic, and persuasive school leaders. It is futile to even begin to try to improve a school if the leadership is lackluster. We also know that teacher leadership of and involvement in school improvement must become a more integral part of our plans. (Illinois Principal)

Prior to the "growing pains" of February, 1989, our staff wanted the status quo; committees for regular needs, was cliquish, no one can tell me what to change -- I'm doing the best I can. Everyone made excuses or blamed others, for a situation caused by a great many factors, but primarily caused by a top-down philosophy of administration. The history of the central office from 1975-84 was like that of a Little Hitler. It was easy to say "no" if it meant more work. From 1984-86, the attitude of the superintendent was, "Don't make mistakes." But from 1986 on, change in the form of strategic planning and accountability building was implemented. It became okay to fail, provided that you evaluated the failure and moved on with a more focused plan to prevent a repetition of that failure in the future.

Parents were invited to school, and some even came. The corridor plan broke up the so-called established close association with the neighborhood school. We now control what happens in the school environment and take full responsibility for it. Among our responsibilities are: instructional materials, budget (how we spend our money), teaching strategies, and testing and interpreting the results. We can change or alter pilot programs with what we know is best for the students in order to maintain focus on improving student achievement. We have a diversified staff with many interests, talents, and ways to assist students. In the process of change, a great many risks must be taken in order to achieve success (within reasonable limits, of course!).

School Improvement Time-Line

- **Jan./Feb. 1989:** Joined INAS. Attempted to find out what we wanted to do, could do.

  Fall 1989: Attended first INAS conference .

  1989-90: Facilitator attended several INAS steering committee meetings and training sessions.

  June 1990: Wrote and received ISBE grant to develop school strategic plan. Mission developed in Feb. 1990. From mission, strategic plan developed.

  1990-91: Urban Ed Grant, March '91 presentation. Focused development of what is best for the students to improve achievement: after school clubs, family night, attendance, behavior, student assessment, parent training, staff development.

1991-92: Urban Ed. Part II, Chapter I after school academics, ISBE Team Training.

1992-93: Staff development, 4-Mat Training for staff, Serve America Grant, Scientific Literacy Grant, facilitators training session.

Our building staff is not told, "No." We work through our ideas to see if they can be done. The entire staff is felt to be involved and honored, even though individual members may not have been singled out. Concentration is on the long range instead of "band-aid" approaches. When something has to be done, ways are found for it to be accomplished. Our staff has changed a lot since 1989, but the flexibility of our staff has remained the same. New staff members are accepted into our program and endeavor to find new ways for us to continue our improvement. They are important "cogs" in the continuos development of our plan at Mark Twain Accelerated School.

Among the accomplishments so far have been: Summer school 1992, Science literacy grant 1992-93-94, Urban Ed. grant 1990-91-92, Serve America Grant 1992-93-94, and hosting the INAS state conference in May, 1992.

Vision Statement

Lovejoy and Mark Twain are schools where a cooperative effort among staff, families, and the community will bring about social, emotional, and academic growth, enabling students to be productive, healthy, responsible, citizens.

Characteristics to be Achieved

- Joint leadership by the principal and instructional staff.
- Clearly defined goals and objectives.
- School staff have high expectations for all students.
- Student progress will be monitored and evaluated continuously.
- Curriculum and instructional strategies will be developed to meet students' needs.
- Families, community, and school share the responsibility of meeting students' educational needs.

Overall Goals

- Develop and implement a three-to-five-year strategic plan.
- Improve academic performance.
- Increase family and community involvement.
- Increase positive interaction with peers and school personnel.

Indicators of Success

- Smooth implementation of the three-to-five-year strategic plan.
- Data from standardized achievement tests given annually to all students and the Illinois Goal Assessment Test.
- Student grades.
- Referrals to Chapter I programs.
- Student attendance.
- Student, staff, family, and community attitudes.

Improving Attendance

As we evaluated the needs of our student body at Mark Twain Accelerated School, it became evident that student attendance was an area that needed to be addressed and it was determined that a goal to increase attendance was needed. Therefore, in 1991, attendance incentive programs were put into

place. Mark Twain Accelerated School is a K-1 building, with children experiencing a formal school environment for the first time, making regular attendance vital to success. This is also a period when the normal childhood diseases are experienced: chicken pox, measles, rubella. In addition, immunity to colds, sore throat, ear infections, and flu has not yet been established.

State regulations require that children entering kindergarten have a physical examination. Parents are notified of these requirements at kindergarten registration in the spring, and through articles and ads in local newspapers. A high percentage of our children are excluded from classes on Oct. 15 of any given year because they have not had a physical examination. Many students do not return to school for two weeks or more because no prior appointment has been made to receive these services.

Because of the socio-economic background of a large percentage of our school population, the need for regular school attendance is not a high priority for many of them. Nevertheless, we felt that while our attendance was remarkably good considering the circumstances, there was still considerable room for improvement. Several programs were instituted to improve attendance.

From January 1st until the middle of April '93, we have had very few students leave or enter. Our attendance is approximately 93%. In February 1993, our attendance was excellent -- 95-96%. Our staff misses very little school other than various emergency situations which come up and cannot be anticipated in advance. We celebrate our accomplishments as a school, a group, and as individuals, by caring, sharing, and maintaining a focused group. If it needs to be accomplished, we'll find a way to do it!

One of our main thrusts to improve attendance was the initiation of our breakfast program. Mark Twain Accelerated School was very pleased and proud to be the first school in the Alton District to offer students such a program. Our faculty felt the need and importance of this program was so great that it was supervised entirely by faculty volunteering their time and efforts to make it a success. A great deal of planning and commitment was needed to work out the feasibility, logistics, and details for such a program.

With the cooperation of ARA Food Service, we began serving breakfast in February, 1992. During our 3.5 months of operation, 8487 meals were served. This represents 40-50% of our student body eating on a daily basis. Due to a surplus of funds, we were allowed to hire a parent to supervise the cafeteria from 7:45-8:45 daily. Staff volunteers continue to be used, as well as parent volunteers.

A staff survey indicated that the breakfast program has had a very positive effect. Our student attendance has improved, tardies have decreased, and the children are more alert and ready to learn. We feel there have also been social needs which this program has addressed. Under our program, breakfast is a time period for talking quietly with friends and teachers. It is a transition period which helps our children move from a home to a school environment more smoothly. Our students look forward to breakfast and we realize now how important this program is. With 70% of our students on free or reduced price meals, we definitely see the correlation between nutrition and achievement in the classroom.

Another means used to stimulate interest in improving attendance is our After School Clubs. Children want to be a part of these activities and they have served as rewards to stimulate better attendance. The clubs have used a wide variety of activities to enrich the lives of our children, whether it be recreational, social, or academic.

Other attendance incentive programs which have been used include badges, Mark Twain pencils, "cookie club", and field trips. Badges are awarded at the end of the month on "Badge Day". Field trips to various forms of recreational and educational activities are enjoyed by those students having perfect attendance. These field trips were funded through the 1990-91 Urban Education Grant Funds for the improvement of student attendance. In addition, any student having perfect attendance for the entire year received a Mark Twain bear. We felt that due to circumstances beyond the control of anyone, perfect attendance is not always possible. Therefore, we felt any student with "almost perfect attendance" (less than six days of absence) should receive encouragement and know that good school attendance is important. These students were rewarded with a Mark Twain Accelerated School pennant.

In 1989, our average student attendance was approximately 91.5%. In the school year 1992-93, our attendance leveled off at approximately 93% and remains at that level. Nevertheless, we continue to strive for improvement.

Curriculum Enhancements

Another one of our school goals was to increase academic and social growth opportunities for students. A variety of extra curricular activities was made available. Some of these experiences occur during the school day and others take place immediately after school or in the evening.

After School Clubs were available for all students during the fall (first grade only) and the spring (kindergarten only). The clubs, which were led by Mark Twain teachers, assistants, the principal, custodian, parents, or middle school students, offered many choices. Clubs included computers, environmental activities, sewing, aerobics, litter patrols, drama and theater, literary groups, and basketball. Clubs were held twice a week for four weeks beginning immediately after the end of the school day. The clubs offered many opportunities to promote school spirit and self-esteem as well as provide enrichment activities. Salaries and transportation were provided by the Urban Education Grant and the Serve America grant. Snacks were donated by McDonald's.

In order to meet the academic needs of some students who were not receiving other tutorial services, an after school academics program was set up. The activities in this program focused on academic skills, self-esteem, and appreciation of reading through the use of Big Books. Kindergarten and first grade students participated in three 20-minute sessions, twice weekly for six weeks. The sessions were held at the end of the regular school day. Transportation and salaries were paid for through the Urban Education grant, and snacks were again provided by McDonald's.

Scientific concepts were the focus of many of the activities conducted at Mark Twain. In October of 1992, two staff members received training from the St. Louis Science Center in the set up and use of the portable planetarium. Later in the year, the planetarium was set up in the gym and each class participated in 30-minute presentations. Students were able to view the night sky, learn about the constellations, and carry this hands-on learning and increased enthusiasm to additional classroom lessons. The staff training was paid for by National Science Foundation grant money, and the rental of the planetarium was free that year through the staff training.

While the portable planetarium was in the building, a "Science Night Out" was held for parents and students. Students took their parents into the planetarium for a short program and then went to several classrooms for related activities. The stations were manned by volunteers from Alton High School biology and field ecology classes. Students were given a packet of additional activities to share at home with their parents. Science Night Out provided opportunities for parents and children

to interact in an informal educational atmosphere and for parents to see that they can be successful science teachers for their children. Materials for the stations and take home packets were paid for with Parent Club Funds.

Science Night Out was held in 1992, with its focus on hands on science. The program included a large group demonstration and small group experiments shown by a teacher and then tried by the child with assistance from a parent. Take-home packets were available for each family. The packets contained a description of the experiments done that evening as well as the materials necessary to do the experiments at home. Science Night Out--1992 was paid for with National Science Foundation grant funds.

On Earth Day, Mark Twain School went to the Wetlands area on the Missouri side of the Mississippi River. Twenty stations dealing with environmental themes were set up for the students. Activities at each station were led by high school field ecology and honors biology students. The station activities were developed by the Wetlands staff. Mark Twain students were the only primary students attending.

Earth Day activities continued in the following days. Each classroom emphasized the importance of the earth and preserving it. Given the question, "What can you do to help the Earth?", students wrote stories and/or drew pictures. A panel of judges selected two winners from each classroom. At a school-wide assembly, winners were announced, their entry was read or shown, and earth day theme books were awarded. All students who completed an entry were given a packet of seeds. Students developed an interest in caring for our earth and realized the importance of their individual contribution.

Transportation and a donation to the Wetlands were provided through a State of Illinois Scientific Literacy Grant. Lunch was donated by Jack in the Box and the Coca-Cola Company. The books awarded as prizes for the Earth Day contest were paid for by the Parents' Club.

Because Mark Twain teachers are using more hands-on science in their classrooms, a workshop was arranged through the St. Louis Magic House to provide activities and inspiration. Two Mark Twain teachers wrote for and received a grant through the Alton District Elementary Curriculum Council. With monies from the grant, they were able to provide a workshop for all Mark Twain teachers and two representatives from each primary building in the district. The Magic House instructor demonstrated a number of activities that could be used in the classroom and provided a manual for these activities and others. Each attendee was given a packet containing a description of one of the activities, materials to conduct this activity in the classroom, and a children's book related to the theme.

A program on the five senses was provided during the 1991-1992 school year with National Science Foundation grant monies. This program was conducted by staff members of the St. Louis Science Center. Because this program was enjoyed by the students and enhanced science learning, it was repeated during the 1992-93 school year. Some activities from the previous year were repeated, but others were refined or replaced with others the teachers felt would be more beneficial. Each class attended a 30-minute session with 10 stations--two for each of the five senses. Each station was manned by one or more middle school students. Costs (which were minimal) were paid for by the Parents' Club.

Because of contact with our children on Earth Day at the Wetlands, one high school student asked to do mini-stations with kindergarten students as a project for her biology class. She brought four of her

classmates and set up five stations on the school grounds. The high school students set up all the stations and brought the necessary materials, and there was no cost.

As a result of a State of Illinois Scientific Literacy Grant, Mark Twain was able to continue science experiences into the summer. Students completing their kindergarten year at Mark Twain were eligible to attend a summer science camp. Camp S.M.A.R.T. (Scientists and Mathematicians Are Really Terrific) was conducted at The Nature Institute Camp facilities in Godfrey, Illinois--on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River--for three hours a day for a total of eight days . Children were able to develop an awareness of their natural surroundings and to participate in a wide range of hands-on science activities, including ponding, trail hiking, and nature study. The grant has been renewed for the 1993-94 school year, with camp in the summer of 1994 open to all students completing the year at Mark Twain. Teachers at the camp were chosen from Mark Twain staff and other district primary buildings. They were assisted by high school Minority Excellence in Science and Math and biology students. A total of $38,750 dollars for the two years paid for salaries for the teaching staff and high school assistants, transportation to and from the camp site, and additional supplies and materials.

Behavior Management

Another of our school goals was to investigate the way we managed our students. A committee was established to review the whole process of behavior management. It found that school rules were reasonable and expectations should not be lowered. A letter was written to parents informing them of school-wide rules and consequences of inappropriate behavior. A time-out form was revised to reflect this information. The faculty strives to be consistent in giving time-outs, but if a parent has a problem, he/she meets with a group of teachers to discuss a solution. Brainstorming sessions identify "hot spots" and possible ways of resolving problems in those areas. For example, before school, students were once required to sit on benches in the gym before school began. Since many of these children had already been on a bus for 30-40 minutes, they were very noisy because they didn't want to sit any longer. To solve the problem, students were allowed to play outside for 10-15 minutes before school started. This may seem like a simple solution, but it helped improve the tone for the whole rest of the day.

Rewards & Incentives:

Daily -- If a staff member observes a student exhibiting appropriate behavior, the child receives a ***Caught Being Good*** ticket. The tickets are put in a "room can" in the office. One person from every room is selected daily and the names are announced over the intercom. Tickets are dumped at the end of the day. Those whose names are drawn receive stickers and note-pads.

Weekly -- A form is put in the teacher's mailbox on Friday. The teacher designates the number of good behavior items needed for the week and picks them up during lunch, for distribution on Friday afternoon. Most items are donated by McDonald's. We are very fortunate to have a partnership with McDonald's. They assist us in a variety of ways.

Monthly -- Reward Assemblies are held monthly for students who have exhibited good behavior. Any student who has zero or one time-out is eligible to attend. Any student with two or more time-outs goes to a designated room and is given seat work. In the past we tried to do conflict management/self-esteem activities, or just had the children sit, but seat work seems to be more effective. The assemblies are educational with a fun format. Some are free, and some are financed by the Parents' Club. The first assembly of the year is attended by all students so they get a taste of the fun things that will occur monthly.

Not everything we've done is something we'd like to repeat. Some activities have been too time consuming, or not rewarding for the kids. One of our most successful was a quarterly reward incentive called Watermelon Day.

Quarterly -- First Grade Big Bucks Program. This is used as an incentive throughout the quarter. Students may earn a total of six Big Bucks per week. One is given each day for attendance and one per week for homework. A teacher may use Big Bucks as a special incentive or reward. A Big Buck can be taken away for inappropriate behavior. At the end of the quarter, a store is set up in which students can spend their money. Items for the sale are donated by parents, teachers, and businesses. Students may purchase such goodies as pencils, pads of paper, toys, McDonald's coupons, puzzles, soda, and snacks. The first grade teachers feel this program is a successful motivator for their classes.

Parent Involvement

The Corridor V Parents Club has provided Mark Twain Accelerated School with many programs that foster parent involvement. The first of these was The Family Study Institute. This program was offered through a Parent Education Program of the Academic Development Institute of Chicago, Illinois. Mark Twain Accelerated School participated by having 30 parents meet in small groups one night a week for three consecutive weeks, learning how to help their children acquire the important habit of studying at home. The following year, these parents became group leaders who taught other parents the skills needed to set up study times and a quiet place for their children to study. The program started after the school received a state Urban Education Partnership Grant, and the training of parents is now being done by the school district. Parents will continue to use the techniques they learned throughout their children's school years.

Twice a year, a Family Fun Night is held to give parents and teachers of Mark Twain Accelerated School, and its partner school, Lovejoy Accelerated School, the opportunity to interact socially. The activities include making educational games for home use, seasonal decorations, recreational activities, and the serving of dinner meals. We also have an All School Social once a year. The renewal of the old-time school social and the family fun nights has done much to renew the interest of parents in their children's schools.

For the past three years, Mark Twain Accelerated School and Lovejoy Accelerated School have participated in making a float for the annual Alton Halloween Parade. This has meant several hours of work for the schools' parents' groups. We are very proud that every year since entering we have placed, and last year's float entry won first place honors. We will again participate with a float entry and this year Corridor V students will select a title for the float.

Parents also serve as volunteers and participants in the following activities:

- **Play Day** -- making and serving snow cones, manning booths, and painting faces.
- **Computers** -- monitoring students in their use of computers.
- **Good Behavior Assembly** -- making products for rewards and monitoring students as they go through the various booths set up for special activities.
- **Kindergarten Library** -- parents help students become familiar with library skills.
- **Breakfast Program** -- parents assist students in seating and learning correct table manners.
- **Sharing Life Experiences** -- parents have come to lecture and show material and supplies used in their occupations.
- **Tutoring** -- parents have helped students practice academic areas of study.

- **Field Trips** -- sponsored by Parents' Club to provide students with additional learning experiences and also as rewards for good behavior.
- **Instructional Materials** -- such as Weekly Readers are provided to supplement regular classroom materials.

Academic Achievement

Our most important area of interest is academic achievement One of our school goals is to evaluate the academic achievement of all students annually using a standardized achievement test which will provide data to develop teaching strategies which address these results. Results of this evaluation will provide comparative data for refinement of teaching strategies.

As a K-1 building, Mark Twain School has no IGAP scores, since the state assessment occurs only at grades 3, 6, 8, and 11. However, during the 1990-91 academic year, testing of first graders was begun using CAT Level II. These results will provide baseline data for tracking students through Mark Twain School and then on to Lovejoy School which is also an Accelerated School.

The teachers and principal realized they can only affect what they can control, namely, what happens to the children while they are physically at the school. Herein lies the first challenge: getting the children to school so they have the opportunity to acquire and demonstrate their achievements.

The ultimate achievement goal within this school was to decrease the percentage of pupils who were either retained or academically assigned and also to decrease the percentage of students referred for Chapter 1 services.

Attention was focused on three areas that research has shown have a positive correlation with student achievement: 1) parental involvement, 2) teaching strategies, and 3) school/classroom climate. Some aspects of these are addressed in more detail in various other parts of this paper.

The principal and teachers at Mark Twain School have taken advantage of a number of opportunities for staff development during the past three years. They have used information from these experiences in regular discussions about instructional effectiveness. They have begun the process of creating a "community of learners" where a traditional elementary school once existed. What has resulted is an impressive list of innovations which the staff has undertaken on its own initiative. Some are identified here:

1. A consistent move toward "hands-on" experiences in math and science.
2. A concentrated effort to learn about and appreciate the value of the variety of cultures that make up our society.
3. A more integrated/holistic approach to instruction.
4. A comprehensive series of efforts to involve parents and the wider community in achievement of their school's mission.
5. The development of a shared responsibility for school governance and planning so that student learning will be facilitated.

Teachers were given the freedom to teach in ways that maximize individual student learning. Math Their Way and Whole Language are recent changes in the curriculum. More hands-on and developmental instruction is occurring, and language development is emphasized. Thematic units have helped teachers focus on the developmental aspect of learning as well as the academic goals.

Training has begun on recognizing and teaching to various learning styles in conjunction with the relationship between cognitive and affective development.

Teachers have higher expectations for their students and communicate to the students three things:

a. What the teacher expects the student to learn
b. What the student will do to learn
c. How the student will demonstrate that the expectation has been accomplished.

Sixty-four percent of the teachers report they have changed their instructional techniques since becoming an Accelerated School. This is not to say the other 34% are not in agreement with the developing philosophies of the school, but rather, that they were already utilizing these strategies.

Some results are beginning to be identified:

1. Transition classes have dropped from two to one.
2. There are fewer referrals to Chapter I.
3. The median achievement for first graders at Mark Twain is equal to that of the district, even though this school has the highest percentage of "at-risk" students.

The parent involvement has increased from 70.4 % in 1991-92 to 83.4% in 1992-93. This increase of parent involvement in school activities has given Mark Twain students a large boost.

The mobility rate was 35.8% in 1990-91, 30.8% in 1991-92, and 33.1% in 1992-93. With the clientele of this school, we expect to have high mobility. However, we now have parents who move and provide the transportation necessary to be able to keep their students at our school.

Our attendance rate, 91.2% in 1990-91, was the lowest in the district. During the past two years, the rate has risen even though we are confronted with many obstacles. In 1991-92, the rate was 92.8%, 11th of 14 buildings. In 1992-93, the rate rose to 92.2%, 10th of 14. We are improving attendance at a significant rate.

Even though it is difficult to track these students after they leave Mark Twain, we have examined the knowledge of skills these students have demonstrated. More and more of these students are focused and are performing at or above our expectations.

At the first grade level, math scores (CAT) have risen. Reading and language scores have risen as demonstrated by the fact that the 4th quartile has a smaller and smaller number of students in it.

The test scores of these students when they attend our sister school, Lovejoy, indicate a rise in reading, science, social studies, and math. We can somewhat conclude that our focus - Improving Academic Achievement - is occurring, but somewhat slower than we projected. However, we will continue to increase activities and strategies to increase achievement.

References:

Illinois Principal, (1993, March). Springfield: V24:7.

Friendly Critic Response

Sarah J. Booth

Introduction

Mark Twain Elementary School has been working over the past few years to transform its school to one of shared leadership, parent involvement, and child centeredness. This has been achieved through strategic planning as a team of teachers and administrators and by adopting the concepts of the Accelerated Schools Program. The mission statement truly depicts Mark Twain School today. It reads:

> Lovejoy and Mark Twain are schools where a cooperative effort among staff, families, and the community will bring about social, emotional, and academic growth, enabling students to be productive, healthy, responsible, citizens.

Mark Twain Elementary School has adopted the beliefs of the Accelerated Schools Program. They believe that they are to create school as a learning organization that is continually improving. They have a unity of purpose and shared decision making with responsibility, and build upon the strengths of children and of their faculty and parents. These are the fundamental elements of the Accelerated Schools Program.

Our visit to Mark Twain left us with an indelible impression of a school in which teachers, parents, and administrators all work together for the good of the children. Children were clearly the focus. Teachers work together in a collaborative effort to address the needs of individual children. They all take ownership in solving problems. If one child in a grade level is having difficulty, all the teachers in that grade level work together to generate solutions and help that child succeed.

What We Learned

During the change process, retreats, monthly meetings, and technical assistance from the state were used to facilitate communication. During this time, continual growth was seen in the area of shared beliefs and teacher collaboration. The faculty achieved unity in its beliefs and vision for Mark Twain School. "No" was not a common response the teacher received for requests or suggested programs. Faculty are no longer using problems as an excuse for low achievement of students. They are now looking for ways to attack a problem and work together to develop and implement solutions that help the many needs of their students.

Many programs have been developed to help meet the needs of students. These include a Parents as Teachers Program, a summer science program for children and parents, monthly special events for children with the support and assistance of parents, an after school academics and self esteem program, and many more. Mark Twain's faculty, administration, parents, and community members work in a collaborative effort to make a positive difference for their children. This is a "we" project. You will not hear individuals at Mark Twain School talk in "I" statements about successes or problems. They are a "we" school in which everyone has ownership of the problems and successes.

The song you would hear the children sing during a visit to Mark Twain School best articulates the feeling the children have about Mark Twain School. That is "I Like School and School Likes Me." Mark Twain School has created a successful school by building partnerships between parents, the school, and the community. They are a school that is continually working on Building the Better School through team work, shared visions, and positive attitudes toward children and their needs.

Questions To Be Addressed

1. Why weren't parents involved in the early planning stages? Would you recommend that other schools take the chance and involve them right away to set the tone for sincere parental involvement?
2. Many of the programs you have implemented have been very successful. They are however on soft funding. It is my recommendation that the district assist you in having permanent funding of these successful programs. What steps are you taking to insure long-term funding of the successful projects you have implemented?
3. It has been shared with us that there is now a unified faculty working with the building principal in a shared decision-making model and in a very supportive environment. What will be done to insure that this supportive, caring, collaborative culture continues with the upcoming change in leadership? How will the many positive changes being made continue?
4. In any change process it is recommended that all changes be evaluated and new plans formed. Successful change processes are cyclic. What plans are there to continually evaluate successes, update the plan, and continue additional implementations?
5. Over the past few years, several new staff members have been added and all have been through extensive inservice training. What will be done to bring the new members on board should any be added?
6. You have done many wonderful things in your school. When we visited we got an immediate feeling of caring, high expectations, and collaboration. How are your successes being shared with the other schools in your district?

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Mark Twain Elementary School has been working over the past few years to transform its school to one of shared leadership, parent involvement, and child centeredness. This has been achieved through strategic planning as a team of teachers and administrators and by adopting the concepts of the Accelerated Schools Program. The mission statement truly depicts Mark Twain School today. It reads:

> Lovejoy and Mark Twain are schools where a cooperative effort among staff, families, and the community will bring about social, emotional, and academic growth, enabling students to be productive, healthy, responsible, citizens.

Mark Twain Elementary School has adopted the beliefs of the Accelerated Schools Program. They believe that they are to create school as a learning organization that is continually improving. They have a unity of purpose and shared decision making with responsibility, and build upon the strengths of children and of their faculty and parents. These are the fundamental elements of the Accelerated Schools Program.

Our visit to Mark Twain left us with an indelible impression of a school in which teachers, parents, and administrators all work together for the good of the children. Children were clearly the focus. Teachers work together in a collaborative effort to address the needs of individual children. They all take ownership in solving problems. If one child in a grade level is having difficulty, all the teachers in that grade level work together to generate solutions and help that child succeed.

What We Learned

During the change process, retreats, monthly meetings, and technical assistance from the state were used to facilitate communication. During this time, continual growth was seen in the area of shared beliefs and teacher collaboration. The faculty achieved unity in its beliefs and vision for Mark Twain School. "No" was not a common response the teacher received for requests or suggested programs. Faculty are no longer using problems as an excuse for low achievement of students. They are now looking for ways to attack a problem and work together to develop and implement solutions that help the many needs of their students.

Many programs have been developed to help meet the needs of students. These include a Parents as Teachers Program, a summer science program for children and parents, monthly special events for children with the support and assistance of parents, an after school academics and self esteem program, and many more. Mark Twain's faculty, administration, parents, and community members work in a collaborative effort to make a positive difference for their children. This is a "we" project. You will not hear individuals at Mark Twain School talk in "I" statements about successes or problems. They are a "we" school in which everyone has ownership of the problems and successes.

The song you would hear the children sing during a visit to Mark Twain School best articulates the feeling the children have about Mark Twain School. That is "I Like School and School Likes Me." Mark Twain School has created a successful school by building partnerships between parents, the school, and the community. They are a school that is continually working on Building the Better School through team work, shared visions, and positive attitudes toward children and their needs.

Questions To Be Addressed

1. Why weren't parents involved in the early planning stages? Would you recommend that other schools take the chance and involve them right away to set the tone for sincere parental involvement?
2. Many of the programs you have implemented have been very successful. They are however on soft funding. It is my recommendation that the district assist you in having permanent funding of these successful programs. What steps are you taking to insure long-term funding of the successful projects you have implemented?
3. It has been shared with us that there is now a unified faculty working with the building principal in a shared decision-making model and in a very supportive environment. What will be done to insure that this supportive, caring, collaborative culture continues with the upcoming change in leadership? How will the many positive changes being made continue?
4. In any change process it is recommended that all changes be evaluated and new plans formed. Successful change processes are cyclic. What plans are there to continually evaluate successes, update the plan, and continue additional implementations?
5. Over the past few years, several new staff members have been added and all have been through extensive inservice training. What will be done to bring the new members on board should any be added?
6. You have done many wonderful things in your school. When we visited we got an immediate feeling of caring, high expectations, and collaboration. How are your successes being shared with the other schools in your district?

Trust, Teamwork, and Vision: A Community Culture Committed to Growth
Lake in the Hills Elementary School, Lake in the Hills

Presentation Team
Helen Moore, Principal
Rosalie Johnson, Teacher
Sharon Winkelman, Teacher
Sheryll Benacka, Parent

Friendly Critic
Cyndy Diederich, Elementary Teacher
Unit School District #5
Normal, Illinois

Introduction

Facing change is inevitable; choosing to grow is optional. At Lake in the Hills School we have consciously confronted change and chosen to grow, individually and collectively. Our organizational structure, as a site-based school with strong district support, gives up optimal opportunities for growth. This is the fifth year we have been working through our IMPACT Team to realize a vision and goals set by staff, parents, and community members. Stakeholder representation is a fundamental tenet: those affected by decisions have input. Following a consensus model has built a foundation of mutual trust. We are able to examine what we are doing well and work together to continually strengthen learning opportunities for children and adults.

The Investment

In 1989, Community Unit School District #300 offered training to administrative, teacher, and parent facilitators from each of its schools. After training, each school determined its own school improvement process. The 20 staff, parent, and community members of the Lake in the Hills School improvement team, named the IMPACT Team, spent 30 hours together building trust, skills, and an information base. Then they went on retreat for two days to write the school's vision and goals. Design Teams of staff, parents, and community members were formed to implement each of the school's goals. Our vision drives all school processes: budgeting, scheduling, hiring, staff development, and program development.

In subsequent years, IMPACT and Design Team members and all staff members have attended our annual retreats. We celebrate our progress, develop ideas for goals for the following year, and continue to build our skills in group processes. The IMPACT Team and Design Teams meet throughout the year to make decisions and implement their ideas. Extensive staff development and program evaluation allow optimal use of scarce resources to make maximum impact.

What Does School Improvement Look Like at Lake in the Hills?

<u>Students</u>

- Working together in cooperative groups
- Writing to learn in all subject areas
- Using thinking and problem solving skills
- Learning applied to the real world whenever possible
- Reading real literature for real purposes
- Composing at computers (5 computers in each room, grades 3 through 5; fewer in grades K through 2)
- Using manipulatives in math and hands-on science materials
- Recycling
- Working on thematic, cross-curricular units

- Raising money for the Heart Association through the annual jump-a-thon
- As patrols, Kindergarten buddies, referees
- Setting goals and making educational choices
- Improving on objective and subjective assessment measures
- Mostly mainstreamed and heterogeneous
- Working in a range of inclusionary programs

Staff

- Developing a new philosophy for teaching reading and mathematics, participating in in-service, adopting new texts, choosing supplementary materials
- Integrating curriculum
- Developing a technology program
- In-depth studying of problems, such as inclusion and affective education
- Developing and providing support groups and mentors.
- Working collegially on observations and evaluations
- Making a long-term commitment to training ourselves, students, and parents in thinking skills
- Learning and sharing; participating in and conducting staff development in thinking skills, portfolio assessment, inclusion, math manipulatives, cooperative learning, technology, whole language, and developmentally appropriate practice
- Developing new primary report cards that reflect curricular changes
- Engaging in reflective practice

Parents

- Working as partners in decision-making
- Volunteering to work with students on computers, planning and presenting art projects, coaching student groups, helping individual students, freeing up teacher time, working at home
- Giving feedback to staff
- Participating in parenting classes
- Using the parent library
- Providing financial support for school improvement
- Teaching after school programs like Hands-on Science, First Aid, Home Alone
- Cleaning and repairing computers

Community

- Police sergeant teaching DARE in classes
- Firefighters teaching fire safety, monitoring drills
- Emergency personnel developing an ice safety program for students and providing CPR classes for adults
- County Family Services Association providing training and materials for staff in BABES and support group
- Community members and parents working as student mentors
- American Lung Association teaching smoking resistance classes
- Junior Achievement high school students teaching 5th grade business classes

Physical Building

- Bulletin boards highlighting student work, our school improvement process, school projects
- Halls lined with student work
- New landscaping (from Design Team 6)
- Morning announcements to build our sense of community
- Display case for student collections
- Painting done by a local youth group

Everyone

- Working toward our vision and goals
- Building on strengths
- As decision-makers, and then revisers of those decisions
- Taking risks, trying new things, making mistakes, succeeding, being change agents
- Problem-solvers, thinkers, dreamers, what if . . .

What Does School Improvement Feel Like at Lake in the Hills?

Lake in the Hills School is a good place to be for students, staff, parents, and community members. A family atmosphere prevails where growth and progress are expected and celebrated. Each individual is important and makes a difference. Teamwork, mutual support, risk-taking, and problem-solving are part of the culture. We feel empowered to make changes to improve.

We acknowledge that making mistakes is part of everyone's learning process. We can disagree and be heard. We know that when we are overwhelmed, we can talk about it and slow down. We recognize that personal concerns need to be recognized. The school community supports individuals, as learners and as persons.

Positive Returns on Investment of Time and Talent!

Four points highlight the broad applicability of the school improvement process at Lake in the Hills School. First, and most important, is the development of school community ownership of the school improvement process. Closely tied to ownership is tailoring the vision and goals specifically to a school's identification of its own needs. Third, the successes at Lake in the Hills should encourage others to develop their own school improvement process. Fourth, limited initial and ongoing costs of our school improvement efforts make our process attractive and transferable.

Our school improvement efforts mirror the National and State Goals for Education. Perhaps, most strongly, we demonstrate taking responsibility for our own problem-solving and ongoing improvement. This is seen individually, in both students and adults, and collectively by classes, staff, parent groups, and our IMPACT Team. We have developed trust and teamwork to realize our vision. We have built a community culture unafraid of change and committed to growth. We have seen what a difference a dynamic school improvement process makes in the lives of children and adults. Lake in the Hills is a good place to be!

Site-based management Centerpiece for comprehensive school reform

Friendly Critic - Cyndy Diederich

Our visitation team had spent about two hours talking with Helen Moore, principal of Lake in the Hills Elementary School, some staff members, and some parents. We had taken a tour of the school building and were now settling down for lunch before we visited the individual classrooms. As Helen was sitting down next to me, I stated in a most blunt and inquisitive way, "You obviously don't have a problem with ego or control."

She laughed and said just as straight forwardly, "Why in the world would I want to control all this? And as far as ego is concerned, it all works so well and everyone is so involved and satisfied, it does wonders for my ego."

As I reflect on this brief exchange and what I observed during our visit, several key words come to mind. They are: control, trust, partnership, ownership, and empowerment. I would like to discuss each of them as they pertain to Lake in the Hills.

Obviously, control, or giving up control, is a major factor in site-based management. Simplistically put, the superintendent gives up control of all the schools in his or her district. The schools become autonomous. The principal then gives the control over to the teachers and parents. Scary thought for some. This could mean insurrection, or worse - test scores could go down. But this school district looked at the vast area it covered and the uniqueness of each school and took a chance. They offered autonomy. They offered them control of their own school. They offered them a chance to make educationally sound decisions. They offered training to get the job done. They offered trust.

So, with the trust, Lake in the Hills embarked on some trust building of its own. The principal had to trust the teachers and the parents and that trust had to be reciprocated. And trust takes time. Through training, retreats, and time that trust was built. I was in awe of the process by which this trust was built. First, the training. Extensive training was offered not just for teachers but for parents, too. And it was paid for by the school and the parent organization. The message was clear. If you are willing to invest your time, we are willing to invest the money. Then the retreats. They go away for a few days. Teachers, parents, and the principal get away from the school. They plan and share and really get to know one another. They celebrate their successes and take a look at the shortfalls. They set and/or redefine goals as they look at the short-term and the long-term. These goals have led to extensive in-service for the teachers so that they might be more effective in their classrooms. The teachers were not forced or coerced to take part in this in-service but were part of the decision-making. The parents were willing to help the teachers implement the new strategies they were learning. In short, they became partners in education; they became friends.

The partnership didn't stop with parents and teachers. Once again, out of the goals that were set, businesses and the community were made partners. Lake in the Hills has embarked on a program to upgrade the technology available in the school. The community and the businesses have helped achieve this goal through donations and sponsorship. They have computers available to the students for their writing. I especially like the idea of the computers being in the classrooms rather than a lab so the students see them as a tool to be used whenever possible. The community has been involved in other improvements such as the playground and plans for a nature trail.

As these partners continue to make choices, provide input, and strive to accomplish the goals, they attempt to work out problems before final decisions are made. In so doing, everyone has the

opportunity to buy into the decisions and thus comes ownership. Ownership is what prompted the teachers to change their teaching methods to improve instruction. A teacher doesn't change teaching strategies overnight. Training, support, and time are needed. It was obvious when I visited the classrooms that not all the teachers were using math manipulatives comfortably, but they were all trying. It is okay to be at different stages when the decision for change belongs to you.

These people were empowered to make changes through shared control and leadership, trust, partnership, and ownership. They believe in the process. They believe in change to improve instruction, which leads to more learning. They believe in a cooperative as well as collaborative efforts. They believe that each person can make a contribution and a difference. They believe in themselves.

This all sounds too wonderful, doesn't it? Could there possibly be any drawbacks? The one that came across loud and clear to me that day was time. I should have asked Helen if she had a life. She did say it took a great deal of time on everyone's part. But obviously everyone involved is willing to give that time, or they couldn't have been so successful. Perhaps there are other drawbacks that are not so readily apparent that we might discuss here today. But, I believe all the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages. I applaud all of you and your efforts to make education all that it can be.

In closing, I can't help but wonder if this site-based management model might well be what the state quality review is leaning toward. Rather than looking at school districts, they look at individual schools. Will there be a state school board and quality review teams rather than district superintendents and local school boards? Or perhaps there will be such positive correlation between this site-based management tool and improved instruction and learning that this will be the wave of the future. I ke in the Hills has moved into the future and shown that it can work.

Computer Technology and School Improvement
Willow Accelerated Elementary School, Pekin

Presentation Team
Jim Bernier, Principal
Mary Jane Ingram, 2nd Grade Teacher
Linda Norman, Learning Center Teacher
Marcia Jansen, 2nd Grade Teacher

Friendly Critic
Judy Trumble, Elementary Teacher
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Overview

Each second and third grade classroom at Willow School is equipped with an IBM computer lab that is attached to a network system in the Learning Center. The teachers have completed an approved TLC training session enabling them to provide a classroom management system which integrates curriculum content and computer software. The purpose of the TLC program is to allow students to:

a) Become more computer literate.
b) Increase their utilization of computers.
c) Increase comprehension.
d) Enhance listening and speaking skills.
e) Develop self-management skills.
f) Improve writing skills.
g) Work effectively in small groups.
h) Experience a variety of teaching methods for skill development.

Background Information (Jim Bernier, Principal)

It is a privilege for our team to have the opportunity to share with you the information related to our school improvement efforts. Since our improvement efforts have focused on the utilization of computer technology in our building, I have asked two members of our staff to assist in this presentation. They are Mary Jane Ingram, a second grade teacher who has been involved since the introduction of computers at Willow, and Linda Norman, our Learning Center teacher and the "Program Manager" of our computer network. Our other two second grade teachers who were also part of the original planning and training have provided valuable assistance in the preparation of this presentation.

Willow Accelerated School is one of six primary schools in the Pekin Public Schools District #108 system. It has an enrollment of approximately 370 Pre-K through grade three students who are served by a certified and non-certified staff of approximately 36 people. The staff and school have been involved in restructuring efforts since 1988 - a process which has resulted in the development of a strategic site plan, as well as membership in the Illinois Network of Accelerated Schools. The site plan was developed in 1990 in the context of the district strategic plan following the planning process designed by Bill Cook, of Cambridge Management, Montgomery, Alabama. The affiliation with the INAS, which also began in 1990, allowed Willow to participate in a restructuring effort which was based upon the research of Dr. Henry Levin of Stanford University. It focused upon collaboration among the teaching staff, support staff, administration, school board, families, students, and the community to bring all children, especially those who may be "at-risk", into the educational mainstream and to increase their achievement.

Teachers at Willow are making positive strides in their efforts to provide more effective classroom instruction for students. They are doing it with COMPUTER TECHNOLOGY! They can specifically cite several important changes which have occurred during the past several years that are either directly or indirectly related to CT: (an overall improvement in reading, math, and language arts skills; higher student interest levels; increased individual instruction time; and greater self-discipline and self-management skills.)

In the early 1980s, the exposure to computer technology by the elementary students in Pekin schools was limited to a networked lab in the media (learning) center. Later, when the IBM Writing to Read program was adopted for kindergarten and first grade students, they enjoyed the opportunity to utilize computers on a more regular basis. Since they were receiving computer exposure as often as four or five hours weekly, it seemed inappropriate to stop there; all of the students needed additional access to and training in computer technology.

Aware that IBM was actively developing educational models for classroom use, Assistant Superintendent Perry Soldwedel contacted the company and submitted the district's name as a possible test site. That effort was rewarded when Pekin was selected as one of several school districts in which IBM would test the TLC instructional system before its release for general use in other schools. At that time, the decision was made that Willow would be chosen as the pilot school for the second grade Math TLC model.

To prepare for implementation, Mr. Soldwedel and a group of teachers attended a three-day workshop taught by representatives of IBM's Educational Systems group. There they learned what TLC was, how it could be used in the classroom, and what they could expect to accomplish with it. In addition, they were able to meet the people responsible for developing TLC. The teachers were encouraged to provide meaningful feedback to the IBM development team during the first year of implementation, which they did. This team effort helped IBM to effectively refine its classroom model by making several significant revisions within the program and also promoted a high degree of enthusiasm and ownership among the teachers.

Following the first year of implementation at Willow, the district has continued to encourage the use and growth of computer technology within the schools. Additional computer stations have been placed in all third grade classrooms at Willow and in all second and third grade classrooms throughout the district.

During the past two years, the physical plant at Willow has been wired for total network capabilities throughout the building. This includes the rooms which house the pre-kindergarten EARLY CHILDHOOD program (ages 3-6), the special education classrooms, all rooms providing special services, and all regular classroom settings (K-3). The only limitation to our capabilities for greater access to computer instruction are our computer hardware resources.

TLC Instructional Model

TLC was designed to enhance the learning process by using three of the five senses - sight, hearing (and speech), and touch - in an instructional system. The program provides students with a meaningful integration of curriculum content and computer software, and offers teachers a classroom management structure that effectively uses computers in the delivery of instruction.

A learning center approach, with separate stations for pre-computer activities, computer lessons, and post computer activities, ensures that students receive a continuous stream of instruction. TLC uses

courseware that has been developed for various grade levels and allows classroom teachers the flexibility to apply this courseware in ways that best meet the needs of their students.

Not only has TLC helped to make the effort of teachers and administrators more effective, but it has encouraged and allowed students to do the same. They have been given (and have accepted) an active role in technological training. Many have successfully completed keyboard training and often serve as peer teachers, assisting other students in their daily use of computers. It is understandable that all children may not be able to cope with a computer keyboard with equal facility. Some may forget the few function keys they must press to log on and move from one part of the lesson to another, while others may have trouble understanding the questions. As these problems arose, teachers found that students began asking the classmate at the next computer for help. Similarly, when students saw the classmate next to them stumped by a problem, they would usually reach across and show the classmate what to do. Such behavior is encouraged by teachers, who view it as a learning activity.

The technology comfort level for Willow students is at a very high level - moving toward the achievement of a goal expressed by Superintendent Jerry Parker, "I want our children to grow up feeling they are in control when they are working with a computer."

Individualized Instruction

One of the benefits of having computers in the classroom is that students are able to work at their own pace. "TLC offers teachers the means of developing very individualized programs," noted John Emery, who was principal of Willow when TLC was first introduced. As part of their daily classroom preparation, the teachers determine the specific lessons each of their students is expected to cover that day. When the children log onto the network each morning, the system automatically displays the lessons the teacher has selected for them.

As the children progress through the lessons, they receive immediate feedback from the computer. Therefore, they can repeat any segment of the lesson as often as is necessary to achieve the level of progress that is desired. The courseware provides a record of the student's progress in the program. As the teacher reviews this log, she is able to determine whether the student should continue to work on review activities or move on to the next lesson. Although the group proceeds at a planned pace, the individual students within the group may proceed at a pace they can comfortably handle.

Computers Enhance Learning

Another advantage of having computers in the classroom is that they become an integral part of learning throughout the day. Students are not inhibited or afraid of failing the computer lessons. Although no two students may be progressing through a lesson at exactly the same pace, none of them are bashful in their attempts to answer the computer's questions. They are motivated to accept the challenge and keep trying until they get the answers right.

TLC also encourages students to apply what they are learning as they learn it. Because the questions and activities encountered at the learning stations challenge them, they are stimulated to use their imaginations and to think, not only about what they are doing, but also about what they might do.

The Teachers' Perspective

Computer technology allows teachers to become facilitators. They are able to present the learning materials to a small group of students, demonstrate/explain how to use them, and then let the students

proceed on their own. While one or two such groups are working, the teacher can spend more time teaching enrichment activities to those small groups not working on the computer. More time is also available for whole class discussion.

Being a facilitator for those students who learn more easily also enables the teacher to spend more time with the children who need more instruction, to zero in on those students who need more help without feeling that valuable teaching time is being taken from others.

An additional benefit has been the growth opportunity for teachers. The widespread use of personal computers in college is a relatively new phenomenon which has occurred since many teachers received their college training. Because of this lack of exposure, they have had the opportunity to "catch up" through a learning and training process which is very similar to that experienced by their students. Many have developed their skills and also shared their expertise with their colleagues who felt they were less skilled. For example, when plans were developed three years ago to network computers in each of the third grade classrooms in our district, it was determined that effective teacher training could be provided by the three second grade teachers who had participated in the original pilot project. The agreed to do so and did an outstanding job!

Learning Center Function (Linda Norman, Learning Center Teacher)

I am the Learning Center teacher at Willow. In this capacity I service all of the students at Willow. I coordinate the computer network, instruct students, organize instructional materials for all teachers, and am the school librarian. I have a full time instructional assistant to help me. The Learning Center houses three labs; a TRS-80 (Tandy) Lab, an Apple Lab, and an IBM Lab. In the L.C., all building Audio/visual equipment and manipulatives are kept. The network's server is also there. A library for students and staff is another important part of our Willow Learning Center; however, the library is not run by technology. A description of the technology used at each grade level follows.

Early Childhood is a program for 3-6 year-old children who are identified through a screening process. During the 1989-90 school year, . ? Early Childhood classes received a grant from Project APPLES at Western Illinois University. Project APPLES provides assistance for pre-schoc: personnel in school settings through newsletters, seminars, grants, and workshops.

In this instance, the grant received was to be used to purchase Touch Windows for use with Apple II GS computers. The Touch Window would allow the students to simply touch the screen rather than the keyboard when using the computer.

The appropriate software which accompanies the Touch Window includes Muppetville and Touch 'n Write. Muppetville enhances the development of concept and pre-readiness skills. Touch 'n Write promotes the development of visual-motor integration and eye-hand coordination skills.

Since nearly all of the Early Childhood students have language delays or disorders, the visual element of the computer programs serves to even further enhance the acquisition of readiness and concept skills. In addition, the immediate feedback from the computer allows for the quick reinforcement to maintain the attention and the interest of the three, four, and five-year old special education student.

The Touch 'n Write program allows the student to develop the necessary motor skills while providing immediate feedback for performance by the completion of a picture, which may be printed. The Touch Window program has been a wonderful tool for pre-school students in their pre-keyboard years.

Kindergarten starts coming to the Learning Center during the first semester to practice basic skills, problem solving, and critical thinking on the computers; the students work at one of four different stations during their scheduled time. They rotate stations each time they come in. Small groups of 6-8 students are sent during Opportunity times, for enrichment or drill on skills not being mastered in the classroom. Second semester students not only use technology in the L.C., but they also go to the Writing to Read Lab three times a week for Writing to Read instruction. This lab has four stations that they rotate through in one hour. The first station is Cycle Words, where the computer teaches them sight words and sounds. The second station is Work Journal, where they practice what they learned at the computer station with a tape, pencil, and paper. The third station is Writing /Typing. Here they create their own stories on the computer using phonetic spelling. The fourth station is Make Words where manipulatives are used to reinforce the sounds and skills being taught that day in the lab.

First grades also come to the L.C. for scheduled classes and Opportunity times. We work on thematic, whole language units for their Opportunity time utilizing the computer, cooperative learning, and peer teaching. An example could be a group practicing and then reading a book to kindergartners. First grades use Writing to Read the entire school year. Second semester, in addition to this, they utilize the IBM Stories and More program with a volunteer assisting in groups of six students. Volunteers are used in every aspect of our technology instruction. We train them to assist at the computers.

Second and third graders do not come to the L.C. with their whole class. We see half of the class, while the teacher keeps half of the class. This is possible because they have six computers in all second and third grade classrooms. This accomplishes several goals. Student/teacher ratios are reduced, individualized instruction increases, and motivational strategies for visual learners are utilized. They also send groups for Opportunity times. During these sessions, students engage in activities such as creating folders on IBM Linkway, word processing on Microsoft Works, and graphing results on Measurement, Time, and Money. In the second grade classrooms during second semester, Touch Typing is introduced to begin keyboarding instruction. We see all third graders for Touch Typing twice a week for 20 minutes in the Learning Center. We have used PSInet, a network that has been formed between all Accelerated Schools in the state, through which students become penpals with other students in different parts of the state. TLC, which will be explained later, is also utilized in second and third grade classrooms.

Our resource and self-contained classrooms have computers in them. They are used for basic skills practice (as in Spelling I for spelling words) and to individualize instruction to fit the student. The resource teacher can add each student's own spelling words, so they can practice them in their rooms. All of these students come to the Learning Center for computer instruction too. All of the first and second grade resource and some self-contained use the lab.

My role as the system operator for the network has me entering all students on the network, setting up classes for teachers, instructing them in procedures they want to perform from their classroom, and trouble shooting. Our building is unique in that all teachers help each other. For instance, if a problem occurs with a printer in the far end of the hall, it is not uncommon for another second grade teacher to go in and try to help her resolve the problem instead of coming for me; however, they all know I am always willing to help. I feel my number one responsibility is to be their right arm in making technology a valuable instructional tool at Willow School.

Math Lab Summary (Mary Jane Ingram, 2nd Grade Teacher)

Children must come out of our public school system being able to understand and operate computers. As teachers of elementary students, we do not have the time to teach computers as a separate course, nor do the students need to learn programming skills. We do know that young children learn things very quickly - so now is the time to introduce computers at the earliest level - Early Childhood or Kindergarten.

The problem then is how to make our students computer literate while at the same time teaching skills and concepts needed in the academic areas. At Willow School, we were given the opportunity to do just that. We have incorporated computers into our daily instruction and have been very fortunate to have the computers in our classrooms as opposed to a lab situation.

The math programs utilized at Willow School are:

1. Math Concepts Levels P, I, II
2. Math Practice Levels I & II
3. Measurement, Time, & Money

As the name implies, Math Concepts covers all the major topics generally seen in textbooks. Children learn many computer function features as they complete various types of lessons and activities. The graphics that appear throughout the program allow students to visually interpret math concepts. Of all the math programs used, this one requires students to make use of numerous function keys. Thus, this requires teacher assistance to help students become successful.

Math Practice Levels I & II add opportunities for teacher and students to choose which skills need to be drilled. All four basic operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) are covered. One digit through four digit numbers are available within each operation.

The Measurement, Time, & Money programs require that students make use of the basic keyboard as well as a voice adapter and a mouse. Students respond very favorably to this particular group of programs because units of learning are broken into small segments. As the student responds to a question/problem, immediate verbal and visual feedback is provided so students remain activeiy involved while concept-building occurs.

All of the above mentioned programs are utilized at Willow in a Math Lab setting. Students are divided into three flexible groups. They rotate through three stations during the lab, as all modalities are involved. Students generally work in a small group or with a partner during the skills station activity. At the computer station, students can work independently or with a partner. Class size and number of computers available dictate which approach is used. The third station involves independent practice opportunities where a written assignment normally is completed.

Our teachers have found it advantageous to cover the math topic through conventional instruction and interaction between teacher and students. Once the concept has been introduced, that skill becomes the focus of a math lab setting. Most classrooms offer the students two or three opportunities a week to rotate through the lab activities. Labs require about an hour to an hour and a half to complete.

If the teacher chooses, results of each student's work at the computer can be utilized as an evaluation instrument. Most often, we don't make use of the feature, however.

Language Arts and the Computer (Marcia Jansen, 2nd Grade Teacher)

We are using the whole language concept in teaching language arts. We have the option of not using commercial textbooks.

Our language arts program utilizes technology in the following three parts: language, reading, and spelling. These three parts are connected in a whole language format; however, I would like to discuss how we use technology in the separate areas.

Reading is the focus of the day in second grade. The children are practicing their reading skills in almost everything we do during the day. We are correlating our reading series with the other areas of the curriculum. One of the tools we use is the computer. We are using the software program Primary Editor Plus as the primary word processor. The children write many stories that go along with the theme or unit in reading and type them into the computer. We then teach them to use the editing features of the program, which include a spell check. After the stories are edited and saved on the network, the program allows them to listen to the computer read their story. This also acts as a final editing phase, because often times the children say, "That's not what I wrote," and we must go back and make some last minute changes. The children are then able to pull the stories or articles into the Children's Writing and Publishing Center, which is another word processor. Children's Writing and Publishing Center can also be used to publish class or school newsletters or newspapers. The program offers a large number of pictures, headings, and fonts with which the children can finish their publishing. There is a draw feature in the Primary Editor Plus program that allows the children to become familiar with a primary paint-brush program.

Another software package we use in conjunction with reading and language is Stories and More. This is basically a first grade and beginning of second grade program, but our third grades use it for literature purposes. This program has wonderful pieces of literature that correlate with the reading program or thematic units. Some of the stories have activities, which include on-line writing activities, and some of the stories are stored in a library and are used for library type reading. As a footnote; the core part of Stories and More could be used as part of a first grade reading program during the second semester of first grade. The first grade teachers at Willow find this program can help fill in the gaps after the children finish the Writing To Read program.

Some of the other programs that we use to help fortify skills that are taught in reading and language are:

Reading For Meaning	Reading for Information	Punctuation
Combining Sentences	Vocabulary	Parts of Speech

We have developed special spelling lists that go along with the phonics skills that are taught in our reading series. We use the program called Spelling Level I and II. These programs allow the children to practice their spelling words during the week. Those children whose parents do not provide help at home and those who have a difficult time spelling come in before school to practice their words on the computer. The spelling program has a Spelling Machine that helps to drill on specific skills that correlate to reading. There is also a crossword puzzle in which the children have to unscramble a word after a definition is given and then find a place to put it on the board. This feature requires the children to do some thinking in order to construct their puzzle. This is an excellent activity for more able students.

Our language program consists of the software Writing To Write. This is a comprehensive language program and can be used without a textbook if so desired. It could also be correlated with a

commercial text if the teacher or school district wishes. In our particular building, Writing To Write has been utilized in a variety of ways. This program uses wonderful graphics to introduce the parts of speech and also provides the teacher with an architecture for writing and another word processing program if you choose to use these items. There are various activities off-line for the children to use in order to solidify the skill or concept in their minds: work journals, a literature component with specific activities that relate to the part of speech being studied, and activity cards that provide the teacher with hands-on activities that are used in cooperative learning groups. Along with the program, you teach and work on all the other language skills that are necessary in a language curriculum. The teachers' edition describes other skills that you are to work on while they are writing their papers. We tie the literature component of this program into our reading series and vice-versa.

Another software program that we use in connection with word processing is Touch Typing for Beginners. The children learn the basics of typing or keyboarding at a very early age. We begin this in second grade and then the third grades continue the program until the students have gone through the entire program. This is also an excellent piece of software for adults who need keyboarding skills.

The TLC approach, sending the children to various learning stations where the activity centers around the skill or concept being introduced or developed, has enabled us to give our children the opportunity to learn using varying learning styles. Socials skills are also developed, as well as allowing children to learn from each other. We are hopeful that providing the children with different ways to learn as well as learning to use a computer will help the children enter the work place prepared to become contributing members of society.

In closing, use of technology in the classroom required that:

A. Adequate planning occur

B. A cross-curricular approach be used

C. All modalities within a lab be dealt with

D. Peer interaction becomes a must

E. Students accept responsibility for their learning

We have found that our staff has worked together a great deal to make use of each of our strengths. Teachers now continue to use their particular teaching style while incorporating the use of technology.

Summary (Jim Bernier, Principal)

The use of computer technology at Willow has begun to help us address some of our instructional goals and needs. Three brief examples include IGAP results, creative writing, and parental involvement.

- IGAP test scores are an indicator of positive academic results that are occurring at Willow. Outstanding math results reflect a definite correlation between the use of computers and growth. (Refer to Curriculum Product News - page 4-7)
- Writing to Read has been utilized at an introductory level for creative writing for at least six years. Each year, many of our students participate in the Young Authors program. The preparation of many stories is a direct result of introduction to the computer and printer through Writing to Read.

- Parent participation has increased regularly over the past several years. Increased use of technology in the classroom and Learning Center has encouraged many parents to volunteer.

Teachers have indicated that classroom networks have allowed them to more easily integrate computer activities into class schedules, reduce students' non-productive travel time to and from centralized labs, and provide more time to utilize the network reporting and evaluating features.

The members of the school board, which set the educational objectives and goals for the district, have recognized the success of computer technology. They have been very supportive, providing funds for the program in order to meet the objectives which have been established.

Chief among these objectives is the maximum use of computers throughout the school system so the children of Pekin are prepared to live and work in a world in which computer technology plays an increasingly dominant role.

Reference:

Flying high at willow elementary: Technology helps boost achievement scores. In IBM Special Issue: Teaching & Learning with Computers. (March, 1992). Curriculum Product News. Stamford, CT: Educational Media, Inc.

Technology and School Reform

Friendly Critic -- Judith A. Trumble

I had the privilege of visiting Willow School on two occasions during the past year. First, I was part of a team from the Kankakee School District that was interested in the use of technology in this school. This fall I visited again to gain a better understanding of the impact of technology on student learning, teacher effectiveness, and parental support and involvement.

The technology plan of Willow School is a very impressive one. It began with one lab in the media center. They then installed an IBM Writing to Read Lab for K-1 students. The plan didn't stop there. Developing a partnership with IBM, Willow School added a completely networked computer system in each of its second and third grade classrooms. All teachers received extensive inservice in the evenings for which they received in-district credit on the salary schedule. I was most impressed by the fact that some Willow teachers were used as trainers for other teachers in the building. This is a clear sign of real commitment and solidarity on the part of Willow School teachers.

Since I am a classroom teacher, my number one objective was to observe how students participated in and benefited from the use of technology in the classroom. I visited every classroom in the building and talked to many students. The children were very knowledgeable and very excited about the computers in the classroom. They were eager to talk to me about the writing they did on the computer and the math skills they practiced. Several students told me that they thought using the computer made them "smarter" and "better thinkers." The students were at ease with the computers because their teachers were at ease with the computers. Some computer skills carried over in other areas of instruction. For example, students demonstrated an excellent understanding of graphs after learning to construct graphs on the computer. The availability of appropriate software and the influence of technology was obvious in all the classrooms.

Although I observed some small group work in many classes, I did not observe cooperative learning with positive interdependence, classroom charts, or assigned roles. The computer network in the school is a powerful metaphor to describe the potential of real cooperative learning.

My second area of interest was the commitment of the teachers. I saw a real team at work during my visit. The teachers were supportive of the administration and of one another. They shared a common goal--how to make technology a tool for learning. They were willing to invest the time and energy to make this school improvement plan work. There were at least two key factors. First, the school improvement plan resulted from shared decision making and a shared vision. But, perhaps more importantly, they were all willing to take risks. The teachers have since expanded their inservice activities beyond computer technology into other instructional areas such as whole language and learning styles. I saw the positive results of all of this as I watched the students. They were using technology as tools for learning. They were willing to take risks to be successful.

I believe this staff is ready to share its recently developed knowledge with other teachers. I encourage them to continue to grow by sharing with others in forums similar to this Illinois State University program.

Parental interest, support, and involvement were my third areas of interest at Willow School. The parent room just off the learning center was a warm, inviting place for parents to spend some time helping teachers or just waiting for their children. Some classrooms had parent volunteers working

with the children. I talked to a few parent volunteers and they were very enthusiastic about the computer technology at Willow School. They were very supportive of the changes made possible by computer technology and saw their own children become more excited about learning.

With the high level of parent support, I would expect mounting interest/pressure to extend the technology capabilities of Willow School and the instructional growth of the school staff to the middle school and the junior high.

In summary, I would like to make the following general observations about Willow School. Willow School students appear to be happy, enthusiastic, motivated, and successful. Computer technology has been a useful vehicle for helping students achieve. The IGAP scores at Willow are part of the proof. The students' time on task and the integration of skills across the curriculum is even more powerful proof. Everyone at Willow--students, teachers, administrators, and parents--has obviously bought into the school improvement plan and is willing to do whatever is necessary for this plan to grow and change to continue to meet the needs of all students at Willow School.

Technology to Meet the Needs of Adolescent Learners

Lisle Junior High School, Lisle

Presentation Team
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Pete Meyer, Technology Instructor
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Friendly Critic
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Introduction

Lisle School District 202 had eliminated what would be termed a traditional industrial arts program from the junior high curriculum due to financial limitations in the early 1980s. While this was a painful decision, we always maintained a strong desire to reinstate this discipline based upon our perception that there existed a great student need in this area. Our consenus of opinion was that our traditional program would not, however, meet the needs of the students of the 1990s and beyond. As our financial picture began to improve, we began to investigate alternatives in technology education to replace our traditional program. The new technology program is the end product of our investigative efforts.

Evolution of Change

Over a five-year period, numerous discussions were held that involved members of our industrial arts staff, building principal, central office staff, and Board of Education members regarding the introduction of some form of technology education at the junior high level. In the fall of 1990, we learned of an exemplary technology program in Kansas. The Board of Education approved sending a contingent of staff to visit the Kansas program in November of 1990. This trip included the superintendent, building principal, and one industrial arts instructor. We were totally impressed with the program we observed and felt it could be adapted to meet our needs.

Lisle Community School District 202 has made a total commitment to our technology program. Our goal is to provide our students the opportunity to explore classes that will help them make decisions about future educational plans and career choices. We want our students to have the best possible education so they will be able to reach their fullest potential. We take seriously our responsibility to assist students to become competent, responsible, and productive adults. We feel every segment of our community needs to contribute to this educational process.

The first step in our commitment to the program was the hiring of an outstanding instructor. When planning for the new technology program, we agreed that it would be paramount to employ an instructor who was highly trained in the area of technology education. Our employment search ended with the hiring of Mr. Peter Meyer, a 1991 graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Stout with a degree in technology education. Mr. Meyer student taught in Madison, Wisconsin, in a program similarly committed to hands-on technology education. Mr. Meyer is a dynamic, energetic teacher who channels his energy into making our technology program informative and exciting for our students. His excellent rapport with the early adolescent student and total commitment to the program ensure continued program improvement.

Our Board of Education and central administration have pledged their full support to the program. In addition to their words of encouragement and support, they have committed to financing the purchase of new modules, equipment, and supplies to maintain an exemplary program.

Special recognition is given to the efforts of the Lisle Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber pledged its full support to our school project. I was invited to speak about our tentative technology plans at the April, 1991, Chamber meeting. I feel this presentation served as a launching pad which generated a great deal of interest in our program by the business community. Articles about the progress of our technology program were featured in several Chamber newsletters.

In September, 1991 we held an "Open House" for area businesses and school officials. We welcomed everyone to get a first-hand look at our new program. Chamber members assisted school district personnel with the evening's program. All members of the Chamber received an invitation to attend. The night was a huge success with over 250 people attending.

The Chamber continues to serve as a strong supporter of the technology program. Its support has generated a tremendous amount of favorable public relations for Lisle School District 202.

The Technology Program

Our vision was to implement a state-of-the-art technology program that would stimulate the intrinsic motivation of all students. The program emphasizes the essential elements of a broad-based, student-oriented approach to meet the educational needs of the early adolescent. Our focus is the total engagement of all students.

The new technology program encompasses all necessary materials to provide students a complete unit of study of the various technology topics. We feel that the middle years should be a time of exploration. Our technology program stimulates inquiry and investigation by students. We are especially pleased with the cooperative learning aspect of our program. Students assist one another to access information and complete required work. Students learn by hands-on experience. Completion of modules is dependent upon the students' ability to communicate with one another. Each module involves computer-assisted activities.

Lisle School District 202 is totally committed to the team approach in making curriculum decisions for the district. The new technology program is the product of everyone working together to provide the best possible educational programs for our students. This project has total support and commitment at all levels, including parents, teachers, principal, central office, and Board of Education.

Initial funding for the project was provided by the sale of property owned by the school district. The Board of Education earmarked this money for special projects for the district. The initial commitment to the project by the Board was $225,000. Actual costs turned out to be approximately $209,000.

In our January proposal to the board, we emphasized that we were confident we would be able to gain financial support for this program from the business community. This prediction has proven to be true as evidenced by the approximate $90,000 in donations we have received so far. The business community has eagerly supported our technology education efforts.

Learning Opportunities For Students

It is without question that our new technology program has significantly enhanced learning opportunities for our students. The wide variety of learning modules has afforded students new horizons to explore and investigate. The new technology program has also generated several

interdisciplinary activities involving math, science, social studies, and computer classes.

Especially noteworthy is the interaction and communication that takes place between students as they complete their work. Successful completion of each module relies on the concept of teamwork in problem-solving. All students enrolled in our school (girls, boys, academically talented, special education, ESL, physically handicapped) participate in the program. We have seen a significant positive impact on the social skills of our students as they work together on various hands-on activities. We feel this is a very important aspect in the development of the early adolescent. Every student can find success to some degree with each module. Student interest and enthusiasm has been intense. Students develop a feeling of pride and self-worth through successful attainment of established goals for each module.

Students are totally engaged, highly self-motivated, and aggressive in completing their work. Students typically arrive well before the tardy bell and begin to work immediately.

Conclusion

Our technology program has certainly had a positive impact on the overall climate of our school. It has been most satisfying to see the enthusiasm and support for the program that has come from our parents, the business community, and colleagues across the state of Illinois.

We have hosted over 1,500 visitors since implementing this program. Visitors include teachers, department chairmen, principals, superintendents, parents, board of education members, state board of education members, government officials, business and industry representatives, college faculty and many others from across the state of Illinois and beyond. We have had the privilege of hosting Congressman Harris Fawell's Elementary and Secondary Education Advisory Committee, the State of Illinois Council on Vocation Education Committee (Mr. Peter Johnson, Executive Director), the Illinois Curriculum Council Committee (Dr. Flo Grebner, Chairman), the Illinois Chamber of Commerce Education Committee (Mr. Lawrence B. Sullivan, Chairman), the Illinois Association of School Boards, DuPage Division, and numerous other state and local groups. We have been invited to and made presentations at the 1992 winter seminar program for LEND (Ms. Mary Ann Burgeson, Coordinator), participated in the 1992 School District Excellence Fair at the IASB/IASA/IASBO Joint Annual Conference at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Chicago, presented at the 1992 Illinois ASCD Conference, hosted tours during the 1991 Role of Technology in Education Conference held at Pheasant Run Convention Center, and hosted a tour during The 1992 DuPage County Technology Conference.

In addition to numerous local newspaper articles, our technology program has been featured on WBBM radio; received front-page coverage in the Chicago Tribune by education writer Casey Banas; was featured on WGN television in the "For Kids' Sake" segment; and was featured in *Education Blueprints*, a 1990's Guide for Rebuilding Education and Workforce Quality. This publication is prepared by the Center for Workforce Preparation and Quality Education, an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. This program is made possible by a grant from Kraft General Foods.

The moral, technical, and financial support District 202 has received from the business community is especially noteworthy. Area businesses have generously provided financial assistance. Several school business relationships have been generated since the implementation of our program. Business officials have repeatedly stressed that, "This program is exactly what we want our schools to be teaching the work force of tomorrow."

I am proud of the fact that we have been able to assist many school districts as they plan for technology programs in their school districts. We have been instrumental in assisting numerous Chicago-area school districts, the Rockford Public Schools, and several other districts across the state with the development of a technology program for their students. We have also assisted Central Middle School in Stirling, New Jersey, (Ron Huffman, Principal) with the implementation of a new technology program at their school.

The compliments and support we have received from our colleagues in education has been most reassuring. Likewise, the support from the business community has been most gratifying. We are very proud of our technology program because we are preparing self-directed students who can successfully and confidently explore and experience the technology that surrounds them today.

We are careful to share with each of our visitors that we do not claim to have "THE" technology program of all time. We are very proud of our endeavor and feel confident that other schools will also benefit should they implement a similar type of program.

Our technology program is closely related to technology education initiatives currently posed by the Illinois State Board of Education. It is also consistent with the majority of principles outlined in the America 2000 program. Business and political leaders likewise have whole-heartedly supported our program. We feel the support we have received from all levels of education serves as a valid testimonial to the appropriateness of our educational endeavor in technology education.

The Technology Program at Lisle Junior High School

Friendly Critic - Ken Jerich

Introduction

It was 10:30 a.m., after a three-hour car drive from Central Illinois, when I drove into the parking lot of Lisle Junior High School. The school is attractively nestled in the suburban community of Lisle, Illinois, a few miles west of Chicago, Illinois. Since this was my first time visiting the school, I couldn't help think that, based on the types of sprawling homes in the community, the school may be one that is strongly supported financially by its community. As I entered the principal's office, I was warmly greeted by a member of the principal's staff and then shortly thereafter by the principal, Mr. Roger Wanic.

We introduced ourselves and conducted a pleasant conversation about a wide range of topics ranging from the demographics about the school, its mission and curriculum, to how the teachers welcomed preservice teachers from various teacher education institutions throughout Illinois, before we talked about the school's technology program. Then, it was time for a quick lunch before Mr. Wanic and I met Mr. Peter Meyer, a 1991 graduate of the University of Wisconsin-Stout, whose field of study was technology education.

As Mr. Wanic and I were walking down the various hallways to the technology center, it seemed like only yesterday when I was a teacher in this setting. The bell rings. Change of class periods. The students were quite orderly in the hallways having various conversations with classmates while at the same time proceeding to their next classes. As we approached the technology center, Mr. Wanic asked me to watch what the students would be doing as they entered the center, usually two to three minutes before the end of the five minute bell between class periods. He pointed out that the students routinely engaged themselves in cognitive activity the second they entered the center, which was a physical area with more than sufficient space to house the various types of instructional technology equipment used in the large room.

As I watched the various movements of the students entering the class during the three class periods I observed that day, Mr. Wanic's observation was very accurate. The students immediately engaged themselves in the instructional procedures of setting up their computer stations within the center. Mr. Meyer cheerfully provided instructions for each subgroup of student teams within the class as they began to review their sign-in sheets and check their progress on homework assignments leading to today's instructional activities. Those activities were clearly based on the curriculum and instructional plans/tasks that had been carefully designed and executed by Mr. Meyer.

The students didn't even seem to notice that I had entered the room as they walked around, with ease, from instructional station to instructional station. Mr. Meyer shared the day's learning objectives with the class and reinforced to the students to check them as they were posted electronically for them on an electronic bulletin board that was the center-piece for the center. He continued to reinforce verbally the learning objectives, while at the same time fielding questions from various students. After that initial teaching episode was completed, the students began to work independently on the various audio and video-taped instructional packages that permitted the students to cognitively engage with various forms of instructional technology in different subject matter areas. Some students teamed up in groups of twos, while others worked in larger groups. A few of the students worked independently on the instructional tasks they were to complete during the class period.

Throughout the time the students were cognitively engaged, that is, cooperative time on task with an instructional package, Mr. Meyer transformed himself into a teacher-facilitator, promoting an active learning environment for the class. If students needed assistance, they simply had to activate a "help" button at any of the instructional stations in the center. Mr. Meyer, in turn, would interact with the student to investigate and hopefully clarify the learning task to be completed.

As I observed a second and third class period later in the day, I was wondering about the extent to which the different types of students arriving in the center would act any differently than the students I observed during the first period. Given the various grade levels of students Mr. Meyer taught that day, there was a very high level of congruence between the three different class periods in the ways the students engaged themselves in the learning objectives and instructional tasks designed for the day.

Afterwards, Mr. Meyer and I had an opportunity to have a conversation about the mission of the instructional technology center and its impact on student achievement. Mr. Meyer stated, "I don't sell them anything, I want them to get actively involved with learning the very second they enter the technology center." He continued by stating, "It is my goal to make it their [the students] idea, not mine. They are the ones who will be using this information in their lives. I believe very strongly in the position of teacher as facilitator. The facilitator role is important."

Perspectives

Through my observation at Lisle Junior High School, I would like to share the following conceptual perspectives for consideration.

The instructional technology program incorporates a curriculum perspective, that is, a point of view that reflects current thinking about the integration of instructional technology in the curriculum. The program's curriculum is supportive with a strong rationale providing evidence in support of its point of view. The mission statement for the program leads into the development of an overall program objective, one which represents educational reform as expressed by Linda Darling-Hammond (1993) who stated, "...reform should begin with the assumption that students are not standardized and teaching is not routine," (p. 758).

Furthermore, the mission and the overall program objective of the technology program reflects a position stated by Berry and Ginsberg (1990) who stated, "The challenge for the future is to transform the typical classroom, with a single teacher lecturing to large numbers of students who are required to do seatwork and use 'dumbed-down' textbooks, to new classrooms, with teams of teachers helping students make complex construction of knowledge. In these new classrooms, students would be expected to organize and monitor their own learning and engage in collaborative and situational specific learning activities," (p. 169). As stated by Principal Roger Wanic (1993), "The program emphasizes the essential elements of a broad-based, student-oriented approach to meeting the educational needs of the early adolescent. Our focus is the total engagement of all students."

More importantly, the learning experiences constructed by Mr. Meyer reflect positions commonly referred to as (a) teaching for understanding and (b) total immersion of thinking (Prawat, 1991). Research on effective schools (Murphy, Weil, Hallinger, & Mitman, 1985) found that effective teachers demonstrated mastery over how they integrated teaching practices to promote student learning. Also studied has been how students' ability levels relate to teacher expectations. Good (1987) reported that studies have shown that "teachers' expectations are often an accurate assessment of student ability" (p. 33). Mr. Meyer's ability to challenge his students in incremental stages reflects

Good's position. Weinstein (1985) suggested there is a close relationship between differential teacher treatment and the ways in which students perceive the effectiveness of the teacher. The students with whom I spoke shared with me that Mr. Meyer is a very good teacher and is serious about wanting the students to achieve.

Moreover, Ducharme and Kluender (1986) found that lecturing was the most preferred teaching method in the schools they observed. Brophy and Alleman (1991) raised the issue of the types of activities and assignments students are engaged in during instruction. They called for, "scholarly attention to the design, selection, and assessment of activities and to teacher structuring and scaffolding of student involvement in those activities.....as a means of enabling students to accomplish curricular goals," (p. 9). Mr. Meyer's instructional presence certainly does not reflect the former position expressed by Ducharme and Kluender; rather it is representative of the latter position of Brophy and Alleman.

Most of the class time I observed that day was spent in demonstrations and discussions, gaming situations, and inductive lessons focusing on concepts and generalizations. The main goal of Mr. Meyer was to promote critical thinking among the students that they could apply both inside and outside the classroom. Toward this end, he asked them to reflect upon their current beliefs on the various topics and challenged them with new information. The outcome of this teaching strategy invites students to either change their beliefs, to reinforce them with facts, or to change them as they gather new information having direct implications for long term significance (Broudy, 1971).

The intent of my impressions is *not* to reduce the complexities of the teaching act to a simple set of notions, for our minds rethink things all the time. To make the claim that the types of successes experienced in this setting will hold up in other places would be false. To do so, one would be making a grand presumption of generalization. However, an obligation to share these results is warranted to make claims about this setting with the condition that they are speculative in nature (Stake, 1980; Krathwohl, 1985).

I leave you with questions for consideration and reflection.

- To what extent does the Lisle Junior High School Technology Program help students acquire commitments, dispositions, and knowledge in the areas of science, mathematics, social studies, and the field of communications?
- In what ways does the Lisle Junior High School Technology Center curriculum blend with the interests and needs of the students?
- In what ways does the Lisle Junior High School Technology curriculum focus on learners and learning transcending the boundaries of traditional courses in the junior high school curriculum?
- In what ways does the Lisle Junior High School Technology Program seek to create instructional practices that are student-oriented and knowledge-based?
- In what ways does the Lisle Junior High School Technology Program meet students on their own terms, at their own starting points, assessing their prior interests and knowledge, and provide a wide range of strategies to support their academic success?
- To what extent does the Lisle Junior High School Technology Program impact other science, mathematics, and social studies classrooms outside of the center?

- In what ways does the Lisle Junior High School Technology Program develop a community of learners in which the importance of interpersonal skills takes on greater significance?
- To what extent does the Lisle Junior High School Technology Program use authentic assessment strategies for learning?

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Parent Involvement: A Bargain at Any Price!

Erie Elementary School, Erie

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Background and Origin

For many years, the Erie School District has operated with the concept that parents involved in their child's education will strengthen a solid educational program. This concept was formally addressed in the last two five-year plans, Project 90 (developed in 1985) and Project 95 (developed in 1990). Administrators and teachers were encouraged and directed to build a parent component into their respective programs. There were several reasons for this.

Within the past decade, the district has experienced a significant change in student population that has made it harder to provide the type and quality of service that had always been the standard. The student mobility rate has increased due to decreased job opportunities in this rural community. Factory jobs in the Quad City areas have also declined, causing many moves, both in and out, and increased family problems. Middle class families began moving out, and lower income or non-income families replaced them.

It became apparent that changes were needed to maintain a quality school program. In order to continue providing a strong learning process within a positive learning environment, the district made student potentiality a shared goal and joint responsibility of the school, the parent, and the child. Within this partnership, all work together in a developmental learning program. Program adaptations have been made at all level Pre K - grade 12. The elementary portion of this program includes the formation of a strong early childhood program which begins at birth and continues through first grade.

A major goal of the district has always been to foster strong home-school relations. Whenever new programs were developed, parent involvement was always discussed. Many opportunities have been established to encourage and involve parents in their child's education, working hand in hand starting at age 0. It began in 1982 with a readiness workshop held yearly for parents and preschoolers. This has evolved into a strong parent/child program beginning at pregnancy and formally continuing through first grades.

The readiness workshop has a natural evolution. After completing the state mandated preschool screening in 1981, it became apparent that unless home and school worked together we would achieve only the minimum results. There was a need for more to be done to build this relationship. The theme "Getting Ready Together" was adopted, with emphasis on building a program. It also established earlier intervention as the best method of developing school readiness.

Although there was an increase in service, the scope of this program did not fully serve our community. The district made an application in June of 1988 to the ISBE for a preschool at-risk grant. Upon receiving this money, a preschool at-risk program was established based upon

consultation with a state approved resource person. The grant allowed us to become more involved in early childhood education and to provide services to children two years earlier. State review visits indicated that we were on target, and we were encouraged to further expand the program to increase parental involvement.

As the next school year began, the staff planned to implement more parent involvement opportunities. The decision was to offer different activities to encourage parents to join the home school partnership. The formats offered included parent/child workshops, parent educational seminars on topics such as sibling rivalry and parent skills, and child play groups. Response was good and demand helped establish linkages with the many Whiteside County programs being offered through the Regional Superintendent's office.

The next step was to bond further with interested parents. The P.A.T. (Parents As Teachers) program was ideal as it promoted the concept that the parent is a child's first teacher. It was being piloted within the ESC area and the district agreed to send three staff members to St. Louis for training. This certification allowed our parent educators to work with parents with children ages 0-3. The format was monthly home visits involving both the parent and the child. We are in the fourth year of this program and plan to continue. It has been strengthened through collaboration with other services in the county. These include community colleges, Project Vital, and the County Health Department. The high level of parent interest made the decision to implement the BABY TALK Program a logical next step. This will give our parents and children an even stronger start on developmental learning.

As these parents and children entered kindergarten, we realized that this group wanted and expected to be involved. The Kindergarten Parent Based Instruction (renamed School Talk!) program developed by the Regional Superintendent's Office seemed to be the vehicle we needed to continue this mutual education. These monthly evening sessions for parents and children let all know what is happening and what to expect. Topics have been wide-ranging, and parent surveys indicate a continued interest. The program has been expanded to first grade for the 1993-94 school year.

Procedural Steps

The following steps (listed in their chronological development stages) were instrumental in the development of a long-term parent/school relationship. These have been developed over the past 11 years and are all ongoing and relevant to the success the district has continued to experience in Pre K education.

1. Use the required annual preschool screening as a time for parents and school to begin building a relationship. This was done in half-day workshop segments with many short informational sessions on topics such as reading and math readiness, the importance of play, how to discipline your child, and toys. Parents attended these sessions while children were screened in the areas of speech and language, motor skills, vision, and hearing.
2. Formal responses were mailed to all who attended regarding the screening results. Students with special needs were referred to Bi County special education co-op. Speech needs were met by our speech therapist.
3. Monthly newsletters were sent to all parents and children with ideas and suggestions of activities to further develop readiness. These continued until the child attended kindergarten roundup which was a one- or two-day small-group session that allowed children to experience a kindergarten class in a kindergarten setting.

4. In 1988, the district established a preschool at-risk program with the help of state funding. This allowed us to provide a program for children who were "at-risk" for future academic failure. This filled a void that was created after we received information at the annual screening. Thirty children were enrolled in preschool.
5. The district felt a need for more in-depth help with all Pre-K parents and sent three preschool staff members to St. Louis for training in the P.A.T. (Parents As Teachers) program. This was done in collaboration with the Whiteside County Regional Superintendent's Office. P.A.T. educators make monthly home visits to homes with children from 0-3. This has been in operation for four years and has proven highly successful.
6. Through the Pre-K grant and with the district commitment to early childhood education, the district employs an early childhood coordinator to oversee and plan all the many opportunities we offer to the community.
7. There have been many offerings for all parents and children within the district. It is not required that they be enrolled in preschool or P.A.T. These play groups, story sessions, and hands-on activities are designed to allow anyone to become involved. Invitations are issued through the elementary newsletter to inform all families.
8. Parent Based Instruction Classes (School Talk!) have allowed us to continue the support that we have been offering these parents before their children entered school. These are a series of short evening sessions (five) spread throughout the school year and conducted by the kindergarten teachers. Topics include: what happens in class, parent conferences, report cards, making a valentine for your child, meeting the school nurses and guidance counselor, a special presentation by the county nurse on Children and AIDS, and the last session in May involved the next grade teachers to allow parents an opportunity to meet them.

Areas of Assistance and Support

There are two areas that were instrumental in the success of this program. The first has been a long-term commitment from the school board and administration as to the need for early childhood education and parental involvement. Staff have been encouraged to attend programs which promote developmental education concepts and to spread this throughout the lower elementary curriculum.

The other form of assistance has been the Pre-K grant money from ISBE. This money has allowed us to continue to progress and to offer programs that would not have happened so quickly. The financial commitment and ongoing support have been instrumental to the success of our program.

Long-Term Plans

The effect of the early and continued home school involvement are very apparent as children and their parents become part of the elementary program. The need to maintain the current level of program is important and will be a priority. Future plans include offering parent based instruction classes at the other grade levels so the parents are able to continue to have this same type of involvement. At the Pre-Kindergarten level, plans are to implement the Baby Talk program in conjunction with the P.A.T. program. This will increase the opportunities for both child and parent. Upper elementary teachers have attended a series of parent involvement workshops which are sponsored by the Regional Superintendent's office. Plans are underway to sponsor several all school events which will involve parents and children grades K-4.

Program Commitment

Sustained commitment to parent involvement is indicated in: long-range planning, curriculum and instruction, staff development, and the philosophical underpinnings of the Early Childhood program. The district's five year plans, Project 90 and Project 95, each list parental involvement as a goal. The incorporation of a developmental philosophy with parental involvement has impacted the elementary curriculum. Classroom programs continue, using the same strategies such as whole language and integrated subjects. Intervention is the focus as opposed to remediation. Reading Recovery is being implemented this school year. This is another example of a proactive response to increasing experiences and successes of the children. Staff development plans are established yearly and are revised as needed to support these program elements. Early Childhood philosophy and developmental learning principles are stated in the parent handbook and the philosophy is observed by anyone participating in any aspect of the program. The staff is knowledgeable and works closely to relay the concept to parents.

Relationship With the Community

Broad ownership and a sense of community are indicated in the following ways:

- Educational activities at the Pre-K level are by personal invitation. Letters, phone contact, the local newspaper, posters, and newsletters are used to inform all of the many available activities. These include parent information seminars, children's play groups, book and toy lending libraries, local and state meetings, home visits, and parent support groups.
- Community and school based groups meet on a monthly basis to discuss issues that are relevant to both. This includes a Parents' Club and the Ministerial/Administrative Association. Several projects have been initiated under the joint sponsorship of these groups.
- A Parent Advisory Committee works with the Pre-Kindergarten program and meets twice each semester. This group is used as a format for presenting ideas and seeking input to be used in planning and implementation.
- An "Open Door" policy is formally addressed in the district's latest long-range planning document, Project 95. This policy is reinforced at all opportunities to encourage and allow community and parent ownership in a strong educational program. The traditional open house, computer helpers, grandparents' lunch, and parent teacher conferences are supported by other more personalized concepts. Many creative ideas have been used to expand the parental involvement. Activities begin at the Pre-K level with the P.A.T. program. In addition, the district has worked to send parents to educational conferences. The elementary has an Adopted Grandparents program which invites local senior citizens to the classrooms as special guests and volunteers. At the middle school and high school, an organized parent group, ESP (Erie Spirit and Pride), provides an opportunity to work toward the common goal of pride and ownership within the schools.

Program Evaluation

Success can be measured using the following objective criteria:

A. School report card statistics
   1. Student test scores have exceeded state averages in all years
   2. Student mobility rates have exceeded state averages
   3. Parent contacts 100%
   4. Open House attendance 100%

B. Pre-K parent attendance results as reported to ISBE for 93-94
   1. Parent-Teacher conferences 100%
   2. Parent Workshop/Seminar attendance (at least one) 100%
   3. Classroom Volunteer 96%
   4. Parent attending field trips 80%

C.P.A.T. families (30 families are currently receiving P.A.T. home visits)
Subjective measurements include:

A. Staff Morale and Building Climate
   These cannot be measured objectively, yet certain factors can indicate a sense of satisfaction. Turnover among staff is minimal and staff inservice attendance (90%) is high.

B. Parent Surveys
   Written comments and suggestions are requested at the end of each school year. Response has been overwhelmingly positive.

C. ISBE Self Study
   This was completed by staff and members of the Parent Advisory Council.

Applicability for Other K-12 Settings

Several components are necessary for continued success in any program. These include strong leadership and a staff composed of educators who have respect for each other and the desire to continue professional growth. If staff members have this commitment, any program can be successful. Our local early childhood program is based upon a combined commitment from the school and the community. The original impetus came from within the school, but the community has come to expect these programs and is interested in sustaining their relationship with these programs. Financial support is secondary to philosophical stability.

The commitment to building and maintaining strong home/school relations is one that the district intends to continue to emphasize. Ongoing participation in educational experiences is the necessary component for all involved (school and home). The opportunity to share the Erie program serves as a form of networking and is also an excellent method to see other successful programs throughout the state. By sharing in the development of the program, teachers, parents and administrators each have a vested interest in the success of the program.

Erie Elementary: A Lesson in Partnerships

Friendly Critic -- Phil Hunsberger

The Context of Change

Consider the dynamic changes that are reflected in the characteristics of a community. In 1955, 60% of households were of the "Ozzie and Harriet" blend: a mother, a father and two children. In 1990, this same family type represents 4% of our population. This singular statistic has been used to describe our basic cultural unit, the family, as dysfunctional. Certainly it is not the intent of this paper to prove the description valid or invalid. However, given this reality, schools must attend to very different agendas in their path toward excellence. In short, small children no longer come to school with "little kid" problems. Instead small children carry to school "big people" problems.

"Today's children are faced with a bombardment of influences in a society that is struggling to figure out what it wants" (McKinnis, 1993 p. 27).

Learning to read, write, and problem solve is no less an agenda for today's school than is learning to cope, accept, and persevere. In order for all of this learning to exist, public education can no longer be a "solo" act. We must form strong partnerships with our community. In particular, we must act in harmony with the needs of parents as well as the needs of students. Erie Elementary is an excellent lesson for us all in building that kind of harmony.

I would like to share my impressions of the Erie experience by drawing some comparison with what Tobin (1991) refers to as first hour needs in his book *What Do You Do With A Child Like This?*. Though Tobin's context is the needs of the troubled child, a similarity can be drawn to highlight the efforts of the partnership formed by Erie Elementary with its parents. Tobin describes first hour needs in this manner:

> All students come to school with unmet needs. Most have the ability to delay these needs. Troubled children focus on nothing else until these needs are met. Meet the needs early or consume your time fighting them. The choice is yours not theirs. (p. 106)

Parents, in a similar way, bring needs to school. Some parents have the ability to delay these needs or at least seek appropriate resources for these needs. Many parents, perhaps more in the future, because of the complex demands placed upon their lifestyles are unable to seek resources or delay their own needs. The choice is ours. Either schools choose to accept the responsibility of meeting the first hour needs of parents by actively creating advocacy, or be guaranteed adversity. The Erie Elementary Parent Program is an excellent example of **"meeting first hour needs of parents."**

With this as a framework, let's examine some of these first hour needs of parents. Acknowledgment, awareness, empowerment, and trust are characteristics that weave together into the fabric of a relationship. Much like the fine structure of a spider web, each strand will have residual effect upon another. For the sake of this critique, I will address each of these issues separately in spite of their interdependence.

Need for Acknowledgment

The first day of kindergarten marks a major step in a child's life. For the parent, it is equally a day of importance, a day in which certainly a separation has begun. This particular separation is, however,

complicated by another message often felt by the parent. "We will now take care of your child. We, the educators, will now tend to the needs of your child." It is certainly clear that the pain of separation is as traumatic for the parent as the child. The further pain of allowing someone else, hardly known to the parent on that first day of school, to become completely responsible for "my child" creates anxiety and for some, frustration. Consequently, a major need for the parent is one of acknowledgment.

Because of the separation created by "schooling", parents need to be acknowledged for the impact and influence they have upon their childs' lives. Though we know this to be true, our behaviors as an institution at times do not reflect this acknowledgment. In our rushed and hurried effort to attend to the business of learning, we often forget the impact of relationships. We schedule parent/teacher conferences periodically throughout the year which generally amounts to 15 to 20 minutes of talk about learning. We send home report cards with letter grades and at best small descriptions of subjects taught. We keep a child in school for approximately six hours a day from August through May. During that 1000 or more hours, we devote minimal time to building upon the impact and influence of parents. Consequently, our unintentional denial of acknowledging the role of parent as co-designers of a learning experience causes us to miss out on building an essential relationship.

The lesson we learn from the Erie experience clearly demonstrates the value of acknowledgment in building relationships. As early as the child's pre-school screening, the Erie school reflects a strong acknowledgment of parents as partners. One need only hear the program title to know that Parents As Teachers values the role of parents in learning. Communication begins with parents the same day they register their pre-schoolers through the monthly newsletter called BEEP (Beginnings Erie Elementary Preschool). Half-day workshops with many short informational sessions on topics such as reading and math readiness, the importance of play, discipline, and toys greeted parents at the annual preschool screening. All of these activities simply serve to demonstrate the effort extended to acknowledge parents' influence upon the learning experience. Even more, the sensitivity of the Erie program toward the building of relationships supports Jim Fay's, Co-Founder of the Cline Fay Institute of Colorado, definition of education: Education is not about information. It's about relationships.

Need for Awareness

Parents' needs for awareness have two dimensions. One dimension stems from the need to be aware of what is happening in school, the second is that of what could happen out of school. A school day can often be quite a mystery for parents. Most children when asked what happened in school respond with a simple, "Nothing." Parents certainly recognize that this response is rarely true, but nonetheless they still are left with, "Nothing." Striving for an awareness of what my child has done all day can be quite a struggle, and can often lead to a power play between parent and child, hardly a positive experience.

Here again we gain a simple lesson from the Erie experience. Educational activities at the Pre-K level include information seminars that examine developmental learning. A strong contribution to the awareness level of parents with respect to child development is found in the Parents As Teachers program. Through information seminars, play groups, tapes, and books parents gain insight into the business of learning. As these children enter school, their parents will be a small step closer to an understanding of school activity.

Helping parents become aware of what to do at home to support a child's learning must be an integral part of the effort of the school. As previously stated, Erie's efforts to frequently communicate with

parents is predominantly in the context of learning. A myriad of suggestions for home activities strengthens parents' opportunities to work in harmony with learning activities begun at school.

Need for Empowerment

In the 90s, empowerment is quickly becoming a "buzz" word, dangerously bordering on negating its importance for our growth as an organization. Perhaps some of the trepidation felt by public schools with respect to parent empowerment stems from the fear of "take over". Our most recent history of local control of schools has not validated a "better idea" as some might have hoped. Thus, public schools build armor and barriers for parents to overcome in order to gain a sense of empowerment with school. If the root word of empowerment could be changed to strength rather than power perhaps our orientation with this need could be improved. If empowerment emerged from positive participation rather than negative scrutiny, then our growth as a public entity would indeed be enhanced. Parents in the 90s need a sense of having some control, having some voice in decisions, having some belief that opinion, though it may not be shared by all, still has a listenership. These are the meaningful issues of empowerment, and once again the Erie School experience provides us a lesson in acquiring these characteristics.

The roots of healthy empowerment must be nurtured with conceptual understanding. Learning is not accidental. Lessons are planned with activities in harmony with an outcome. Hiding our craft from parents serves only to lessen the potential for students' success. Allowing school issues to remain masked with mystery will only increase the complexity of those issues. In Erie, a Parent Advisory Committee meets twice each semester to format ideas and seek input to be used in planning and implementing activities. Community and school based groups meet on a monthly basis to discuss issues that are relevant to both. Project 95, the district's long range planning document, encourages community and parent ownership as a means to a strong educational program. Parents' need to feel empowered are easily served in the Erie School system.

Need for Trust

Trust is always earned, never simply given. Trust seldom is built solely upon activity. Trust can only become long-term through the accumulation of short-term experiences that are sincere and genuine. Trust in an organization that serves our most treasured possession, our children, must be a central theme for all organizational thinking and activity. Caring efforts of school people to model trust is the strongest contribution for its growth.

LaVerne Olson and Kathy Heim have certainly demonstrated that caring effort. Their leadership in the Erie program is without a doubt a significant benefactor to the blending of trust and school. They have provided for parents, who like children entering the first day of school, need an open door and a receptive hand. Their influence upon Getting Ready Together cannot be understated, in particular with the meeting of the need for trust.

Getting Ready Together allows parents to grow up **with** school while their child grows up **in** school. A result of this process leads me to examine but two more aspects of the Erie program. As a friendly critic, I offer then as cautions for the future, in the spirit of Marshall McLuhan's warning about avoiding driving into the future while looking into the rearview mirror.

The Reciprocal Promise

The laws of motion that state, for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction, is not limited to objects alone. Organizational activity that serves to create relationships begets organizational responsibility; empowerment begets individual accountability; interest begets responsiveness. All of these -- organizational responsibility, individual accountability, and responsiveness -- can either be positive or negative depending upon the origins and conceptual design of the beginning activities. For Erie, the reciprocal promise impacts its organization through the following:

action Parents will continue to play the role of consumer with desires to acquire the best of learning.

reaction Teachers in their effort to provide the best of learning will devote greater effort to their own professional growth.

action Parents will become critics of the school based upon the foundation of positive participation rather than negative scrutiny.

reaction School officials will be able to capture a larger more informed audience to plan and act upon organizational improvements.

These are but two of the results of the reciprocal promise. Of course the greatest reaction will be the development of a community of learners described here by Roland Barth (1990), senior lecturer for the Harvard Principals' Center:

> . . . the concept of the school as a community of learners, a place where all participants - teachers, principals, parents, and students - engage in learning and teaching. School is not a place for important people who do not need to learn and unimportant people who do. Instead, school is a place where students discover, and adults rediscover, the joys, the difficulties, and the satisfactions of learning. (p. 43)

Cautions for Continuation

The unfortunate reality of organizational success is that its vitality and subsequent longevity rest with its leaders. Erie Elementary's Getting Ready Together program might easily suffer from this reality. As mentioned earlier, Kathy Hein and LaVerne Olson have provided key leadership. Therefore, it is essential to expand leadership with individuals who have a strong conceptual understanding of the program.

The beginning of the Erie program was founded in a $60,000 at-risk grant. Since that time, dollars for continuation have become less and adaptations to the program have become necessary. Consequently, continuation of programs must include a strong reliance upon creative thinking, so that the strength of the partnership is not dependent upon the dollars.

Finally, a conceptual awareness of the impact of this partnership must be shared by all levels of the organization. Michael Fullan (1992), University of Toronto, warns us that school reform efforts sometimes fail because people are unable to recognize that pockets of success do add up to new structures, procedures, and school cultures. In short, the high school teacher in Erie needs to recognize that his student's success was achieved in part, and perhaps in large part, by a play-group the student attended as a two-year-old.

In summary, the greatest compliment people in our business give to each other is the friendly thievery of ideas. I have indeed done just that, and I thank you!

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Hinsdale Elementary Science Program

Hinsdale Elementary School District #181, Hinsdale

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Demographics

Hinsdale Elementary School District 181 is located in the western suburbs of Chicago and serves Hinsdale and Claredon Hills as well as parts of Oak Brook and Burr Ridge. Approximately 2630 students are educated in seven elementary schools and one middle school. The community of 25,000 middle and upper middle class citizens is very much the symbolic American melting pot with people representing all nationalities. The people Hinsdale are committed to high standards and valuable educational experiences.

Historical Background

Subsequent to the launching of Sputnik I, this district, like many others, participated in a nation-wide thrust to improve the quality of science education at all levels. An increased awareness of the importance of science education and national funding of numerous curriculum projects designed to improve the teaching of science affected the curriculum development process in Hinsdale District 181. One principal was appointed to work as science coordinator. The decision was to adopt an activity-oriented textbook and make the science coordinator/principal available to work with teachers on a limited basis.

In the 1970s, materials-based programs such as ESS, EIS, and IS were purchased by the district for every elementary school. Initially, teachers were provided inservice on these programs. However, there was no provision for ongoing inservice nor for supply replacement because no one person had been assigned that task. Consequently, these programs were, at best, temporarily successful in some classes in some schools.

By 1979, because most elementary teachers had become frustrated with their attempts to use the materials-based programs, the possibility of a textbook adoption was enticing. Subsequent to the textbook adoption, the ESS, EIS, and IS materials were still used by a few teachers. Science education, in most cases, was not a high priority. The "basics"; reading, writing, and mathematics were the focus of the curriculum. Many teachers considered teaching science an extra. Many were reluctant to the risk letting children investigate when they themselves did not know the answers.

By 1983, it became obvious that the existing textbook-oriented program with practically no emphasis on the development of process skills was inadequate. A teacher and the principal who had formerly worked as science coordinator received the support of the administration in their endeavors to improve the quality of science education in Hinsdale District 181. Presentation to the Board of Education resulted in this teacher's assignment as one-half time science consultant for the year 1984-85.

In September, 1984, a district science committee, chaired by the science consultant, was formed. This committee was charged with the responsibility of developing a philosophy of science education,

determining goals, and recommending revisions of the existing program in order to improve the quality of science education in the district.

The committee took direction from the most recent nationally recognized research findings in science education. Based on these findings, a philosophy of science education and general goals were developed. Our district accepted the philosophy as a commitment to a program which emphasized the development of process skills.

Our district science committee was convinced that the students in our district would benefit from a hands-on, inquiry science program, but they still had to decide whether to supplement the textbook with appropriate hands-on activities or to pattern its program after exemplary programs recognized by the National Science Teachers Association.

Hinsdale is located 45 minutes from Schaumburg District 54, one of the exemplary programs recognized by N.S.T.A. The science consultant was able to refocus the science curriculum and pattern our new program after Schaumburg's exemplary programs.

In January, 1986, a Citizens' Science Advisory Committee was formed. This committee was charged with the responsibility of examining the nationally recognized research findings, appraising the new direction of our K-6 science program, and preparing a position paper for the Board of Education. In May, 1986, this committee recommended to the Board of Education that a program emphasizing the hands-on, inquiry approach to science education, patterned after the nationally designated exemplary programs, be created. The Board of Education made the position of K-6 Science Consultant full-time so that the new program could be developed and implemented as quickly as possible.

Beliefs

Our district believes that the primary responsibility of science education is to develop scientifically literate citizens - people who are able to use science in their everyday lives. While the study of science offers a knowledge of natural phenomena that uniquely rests on the fact that humans can test and understand the orderly nature of the universe, it is the logical thought processes of science that must be included and developed empirically in a well articulated science program. The thought processes which are part of basic learning are developed when science is taught in an environment which invites and supports critical thinking, curiosity, decision-making, investigation, and inquiry. Science is basic, and science teaches basic skills.

Science is activity. Science is doing. Science is problem solving. A good science program must provide opportunities for the student to develop the following skills: observing, classifying, measuring, recording data, predicting, inferring, hypothesizing, investigating, experimenting, identifying and controlling variables, decision-making, valuing, modeling, and generalizing. These skills should be developed in programs which emphasize earth/space, life, and physical sciences.

These process skills are the thinking skills which are basic to life-long learning. Piaget's work has shown that if children are to develop their thinking skills, they must be allowed to "think with their hands." Children must manipulate objects before they can grasp abstractions. Piaget stated that children not only learn by doing, but they learn by thinking about what they are doing. The development of higher level skills must be an integral part of any successful science program.

Goals

With this in mind, our district established the following general goals:

1. To provide opportunities for students to develop process skills: The thinking skills basic to life-long learning
2. To communicate the knowledge of science
3. To provide opportunities for students to understand the impact and application of science and technology on both the individual and society
4. To promote the development of positive attitudes toward science.

Our district wanted a science program which would move it closer to truly meeting the future needs of students who live in a highly technological society. Its goal was to offer a science program in which the student is an active participant - a program which encourages curiosity, inquiry, investigation, critical thinking, and decision-making.

Current Program

The locally developed hands-on, inquiry, nontext Hinsdale Elementary Science Program consists of four extensive units per grade, K-6. The units are sequential in terms of skills rather than content. The goals and objectives are consistent with the Illinois State Goals for Learning.

Teachers are provided with packaged units which contain everything necessary to provide experiential science. The kits contain materials, equipment, audiovisual materials, posters, and student activity sheets for 30 students. The units, which are the required science curriculum, are delineated by grade in the following chart:

	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
K	Seeds & Bulbs	Hot & Cold	Senses	Light & Shadows
1	Measurement- 1	Measurement-2	Air, Water. & Weather	Butterflies
2	Rocks to Soil	Magnetism	Kitchen Science	Plants
3	People & Animals	Sound	States of Matter	Space
4	Mystery Powders	Life Cycles	Machines & Motion	Earth Science
5	Buoyant Forces & Forces of Flying	Weather	Microscopic World	Electricity
6	Crayfish	Light & Optics	Physics Around Us	Environment

A teacher's manual for every unit contains the following elements:

a. An overview of the unit
b. Background information for the teacher

c. Specific sequential activities for which each of the following is clearly defined:
   1. Objective(s)
   2. Process skills
   3. List of materials for the specific activity
   4. Procedure
   5. Suggested questions for discussion
   6. Student activity sheets
   7. Suggestions for extending the activity

A schedule for kit distribution ensures that a teacher receives each kit designed for his/her grade for a specific quarter, or grading period, during the school year. The kit is then returned to the central supply center where it is refurbished by the science center assistants before it is sent out to another teacher. Each kit is used in two different classrooms each year.

This system is cost-effective, as consumable items are purchased in bulk quantities, and nonconsumable items are shared. The use of a central supply system assures that the kits will not sit on shelves unused because teachers have depleted the supply of an item in the kit. Kits are delivered and returned on the district-wide mail truck.

The elementary schools in our district are not departmentalized. This program has been developed for teachers who are generalists who teach in regular classrooms rather than in laboratory settings. We acknowledged the depth of the change teachers were being asked to make and phased the program in over a period of four years. One new unit was added at each grade, K-6, each of the four years.

Inservice training is mandatory for every teacher for every unit at his/her grade level. Each inservice session focuses on a specific unit. The time frame of these inservice sessions ranged from three to six hours per unit, depending on the grade level and the nature of the particular unit. The sessions are conducted during school time when teachers are given released time.

The inservice sessions, conducted by the science consultant, focus on an overall understanding of the experiential inquiry-oriented approach as well as on specific experiences with each activity in the unit. The teachers are introduced to a variety of teaching methods which are appropriate for teaching the unit. In this science program, the teacher assumes the role of facilitator in the process of learning rather than that of a disseminator of knowledge. The science consultant strives to ensure that the classroom teachers have the competence, the confidence, and the positive attitudes toward science to make this program successful.

Benefits

Teachers benefit from intensive staff development, materials provision, continual program revision, and the collegial spirit of learning together. Students benefit from being active participants in a program which encourages curiosity, inquiry, investigation, critical thinking, and decision making. These are life skills which help children strengthen their reasoning abilities so that they may become self-motivated, independent learners who are active and concerned participants in society. Our students are developing the attitudes, skills, and knowledge they need to solve problems of their own and to deal with the future and its unknown challenges.

Hinsdale Elementary Hands-On Science Presentation: Comments and Observations

Friendly Critic - Jeff Nelson

The Hinsdale Science Curriculum - Change and Pedagogy

A review of the research on school change initiatives by Sashkin and Egermeier (1992) identified four strategies that typified school change initiatives for quality programs. Innovators typically addressed the components of complex systems independently, attempting to arrive at a quality school by fixing the parts, fixing the people, and fixing the school. Hinsdale Elementary has looked at quality science instruction from a fourth and fundamentally different perspective - fix the system. The system and systemic change has been a prominent fixture in the literature on school improvement and the quality school. Peter Senge (1990) characterized systemic structure as the "interrelationships of key variables over time" (p. 44). Systemic change addresses the underlying causes at a level at which patterns of behavior can be changed. Hinsdale looked systemically at the key instructional variables in the science curriculum and made changes in the way teachers taught science and how students constructed meaning out of this instruction.

The Hinsdale science approach is a model that all school science programs could adopt. It is not an affluent collar county program built on abundant district resources. The Hinsdale science curriculum is grounded in what we know about good teaching - in David Perkins' (1992) words, "It involves clear information, thoughtful practice, informative feedback, and strong intrinsic or extrinsic motivation" (p. 45). Much of the learning that takes place is the result of persistence and effort. There are no textbooks, no exotic materials lists, and technology is used only as a resource. The science kits are supplied with a variety of household articles that could be purchased at the grocery store. The instructional approach is similar to Perkins' ideas on teaching for transfer, in that retention, understanding, and use of knowledge is stressed. Linkages to real world problems using exhibitions modeled after Theodore Sizer's Essential School exhibitions further the understanding and use of knowledge.

Capacity Building in Students and Teachers in a Quality School

The constructivist approach to teaching science, in the opinion of Chaille and Britain (1991), stresses the importance of a child's increasing intellectual autonomy as an important function of science education. Instead of passively memorizing information, constructivism emphasizes an active learning role where the student struggles with problems, seeks understanding through hypotheses building, and tests those hypotheses with the teacher acting as coach.

Hinsdale saw teacher ownership of its science curriculum and the role of the science consultant as an extension of the constructivist approach to student autonomy. Peter Senge (1990), however, found the use of consultants potentially worrisome. Senge examined the role of consultants in learning organizations and their effects on teacher autonomy. According to Senge, profound underlying educational problems have given rise to symptoms that demand attention but are often costly and complicated. In response to the immediacy of the symptoms, people "shift the burden" from the underlying educational problems to symptomatic solutions ameliorating the symptoms but leaving the problems unaltered. People feel better because the symptoms have gone away, but the underlying educational problems that gave rise to the symptoms remain untouched and usually grow worse; also the system's ability to combat the problems deteriorate from lack of use.

Hinsdale's systems approach to building a quality science program defeats the short term "shift the burden" solution by understanding the interaction between the curricular variables and the treatment

of problems and symptoms as parts of a fundamental systemic solution. Its approach was not to impose a new science curriculum on its teachers, but to eliminate the obstacles to teacher autonomy. The consultant was not the sole source of information. Rather the science teachers, in their role as learners, were allowed to feel their way into consensus patterns through inservice and staff development. Teacher input was solicited and the curriculum responded to the needs of the classroom teacher and an evolving systemic need for relevant teaching topics and methodologies. The consultant successfully shifted the locus of control from the change agent to the practitioner. In this manner, teacher ownership and instructional autonomy were maximized, the systemic problems envisioned by Senge were not exacerbated, and the reactions to the symptoms of a failing science curriculum were not shifted to the consultant.

The Role of Technology in the Hinsdale Elementary Science Program

The constructivist approach to science defines the goals of technology education as providing students with ways of dealing with the complexities of life. Technology compliments the goals of science education, which are designed to propose explanations for observations about the natural world. Loucks and Horsley (1990) elaborated on the benefits of combining science and technology stating that "deep content - understanding systems, for example - is uncovered, information-gathering processes are practiced, and the higher order processes such as problem-solving and decision-making emerge in what can become lively sessions that begin to prepare children for a world that is becoming increasingly complex" (p. 31). More than using microcomputers, this is teaching about technology. Hinsdale has successfully linked technology and science education in a thinking curriculum designed to apply problem-solving strategies to human problems of adaptation and propose solutions.

Concluding Comments

David Perkins (1992) discussed the concept of how "Smart Schools" distribute intelligence within the classroom. I picture "smart classroom" science instruction in Hinsdale. The cognitive burden is mentored from teacher to student. Children interacting with children under the guidance of a teacher coach is an enabling learning environment. Constructivist science, as practiced by Hinsdale Elementary, is more than hands-on science. Its integrated curriculum has a special appeal to children. It plays to their strengths: curiosity, problem solving, creative thinking, and experimentation. Children learn by doing in Hinsdale. Students construct scientific knowledge in the classroom much like real scientists construct science in laboratories. It is a program that emphasizes both content and process in an arena that concentrates on observation and responsibility.

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Reactions to the Symposium

The Illinois Search for Excellence: An Outsider's View

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Alliance for Curriculum Reform

The Context

The continuing public demand for improving student performance and more accountability from schools has energized state boards of education and state education agencies into a new pattern of policy and legislation designed to make this happen. Such new policies affecting standards and monitoring systems are often viewed by the state agencies as providing visionary leadership while school people see them as intrusive bureaucratic requirements. Whatever your view is, the simple fact is that schools are public institutions, and indeed many schools and districts are incredible bureaucracies themselves that have resisted the changes needed to improve productivity and accountability.

The Illinois Recognition System contains many of the features found in other states across the country and needs continual refinement to produce the desired results in the many and diverse Illinois schools. The system's chief strength is that it compels schools to more clearly articulate their goals or outcomes, and to act upon the results derived both from their own and the state's assessment plans. The chief flaw in the Illinois plan is that it does not do enough to restructure schools so that its teachers and leaders are enabled to act on weaknesses in student performance. In this paper, I will report what this restructuring means and discuss why changes in the way schools operate are imperative if real improvement is to be accomplished.

There is a striking similarity in the school reform plans that are being enacted by state boards and agencies across the land because of the close communication between governors, SDE chiefs, state boards, and legislators. They frequently share their policy thrusts and sometimes seem to be in a race to enact new mandates which do become impossible for the schools to implement because there are too many changes, or bad policy, or both. Indeed some politicians have made education initiatives their mainstay in the quest for higher office.

The common components of school reform policies in many states include: (1) establishing clear outcomes or goals in the form of curriculum frameworks describing the common learning expected of all students, (2) an assessment system for all students that is publicly reported, and (3) financial rewards or penalties for schools and districts depending on results (and sometimes including "takeovers" by the state if results are especially poor). A few states have added other components for promoting such components of systemic change as provisions for staff development, technology, social services, or early childhood education. Very rarely do policy changes support comprehensive school restructuring itself, which is badly needed to facilitate the kind of school operation that is needed.

The Illinois plan is anchored in its curriculum expectations, the assessment plan which does recognize the value of local assessment work in addition to the state's tests, a review or inspection process, and the requirement of plans for improvement. It does compel schools to develop a system of outcomes and assessment if they don't have one, and this is seen as a burden by schools that don't.

A critical assumption underlying the accountability aspect of this plan is that public revelation of test scores serves to galvanize teachers or school leaders into action. My every impression is that this is a

dubious assumption. Schools, districts, states, and nations have long since been ranked on various indicators with little evidence this has sparked improvement. In testing my impression with school people, while some genuine interventions are sometimes undertaken as a result of public posting of test information, I also sense another response called subverting the system.

This subversion comes in such forms as teaching for the test, seeking test norms that will make student performance "look better", leaving certain students out of testing, and even cheating. At the moment, these signs of subverting the system seem minor, but their full impact is not known and can be expected to become more serious when the stakes become higher. That this subversion can be anticipated is a well documented phenomenon derived from the total quality management movement which is only now finding its way into the schools. Clearly the state agencies must avoid creating a system which encourages attempts to "beat the system" rather than substantively improve it.

The Major Weaknesses in the Illinois Reform Plan

The most fundamental flaw in the Illinois Recognition System is that the schools are not structured to work at the task of improving student performance and accountability. Most schools are organized like they have been for several decades, which is under a fairly rigid schedule that does not enable teachers to work collaboratively in analyzing what their results are for the purpose of planning improvement. In addition, they are unable to teach in an interdisciplinary fashion to help students recognize connections between various subjects. Such teachers and their leaders are not withholding service...they simply do not have the opportunity throughout the year to work at changing the system, obtain training to diversify their teaching strategies or use technology, improve assessment, or fully participate in developing the school improvement plans required by the Illinois system.

The net result is that a principal or perhaps central office person will need to assume a heavy responsibility for the school improvement plan with whatever time he or she can get with a committee of teachers. School improvement plans require time to analyze, discuss, examine the knowledge base about interventions that afford hope of improving student performance, and to communicate with many interested parties including parents, other faculty members, school boards, and administrators. It is simply unrealistic to expect teachers both to teach a full day and come up with thoughtful and powerful plans that attend the several elements that constitute the instructional system. And there is no reason whatsoever to believe that simply getting clear on outcomes and carrying out assessment plans will do anything other than produce about the same results the schools are now getting.

What Does School Restructuring Mean?

At its simplest, restructuring means redesigning the major elements of a system to enable better performance. In the case of schools, a more comprehensive definition was employed in a recent study of high school restructuring (Cawelti, 1993):

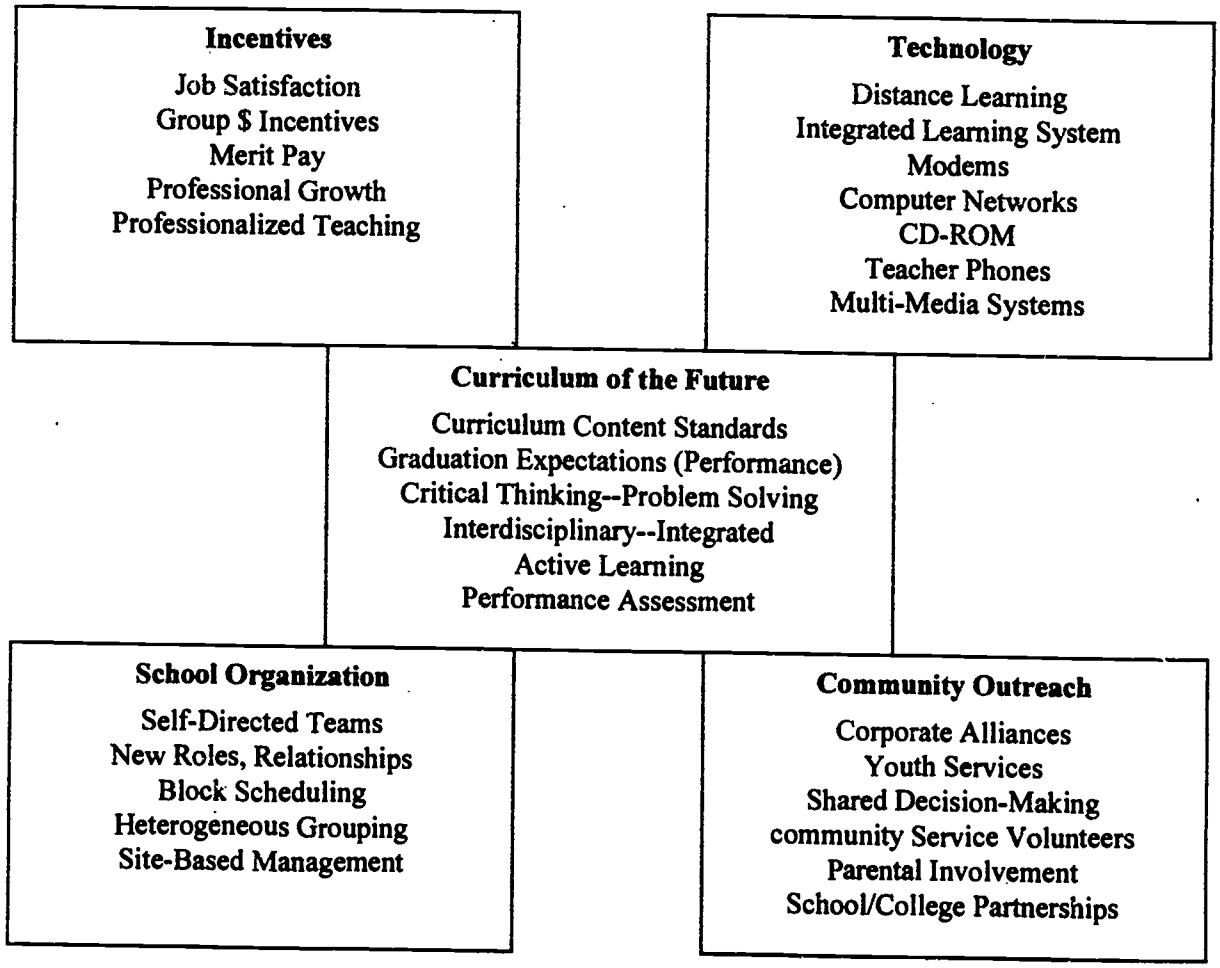
> The centerpiece of high school restructuring involves designing fundamental changes in the expectation, content, and learning experiences for a curriculum appropriate to the future, and utilizes different organizational structures and incentives, more and better use of technology in the classroom, and broader collaboration with community agencies and parents to help focus on significantly improving student performance on important outcomes.

While this definition describes the key components for high schools, the concept is applicable to elementary or middle level schools also. Figure 1 shows how these five key components must mesh together for the full impact of restructuring to occur.

When viewed from this perspective, the Illinois Recognition System deals essentially with the curriculum component, but affords little attention to the supporting components of incentives, technology, community, and school organization. Thus, the traditional school operation is having a new system imposed on it without giving attention to how other aspects of schooling can be drawn upon to increase the probability of improved productivity and accountability and without having a work place to facilitate cooperative planning.

As typical school operations now are conducted, it will be extremely difficult to work from the information on student performance in designing school improvement plans.

Figure 1: High School Restructuring Model



If a principal or curriculum director takes the lead in disaggregating data and designing a plan, teachers will need to be involved or one immediately faces the problem of "buy-in" on any plan that emerges. Any school that has enjoyed a degree of success in changing the order of things will affirm the importance of this, and when failure in accomplishing change and improvement has been experienced the lack of teacher acceptance and commitment is usually reported. The importance of this factor cannot be underestimated, and to simply impose the additional burden of planning on a traditional structure can be anticipated to produce resistance, mediocre plans, system subversion, or burnout if such new tasks are taken seriously.

Putting the Critical Restructuring Elements Together

Results from the national restructuring study reveal significant numbers of schools that are setting standards of performance, using new assessment techniques, working in teams, or developing new schedules; typically, about a fourth of the nation's schools are involved in such changes with more planning for such restructuring during the current year.

However, when selected critical elements are identified, only a very few schools have been able to sustain the difficulties involved in comprehensive restructuring. Figure 2 on the following page identifies seven such critical elements which include the following:

a = Site-Based Management

b = Setting Performance Standards

c = Developing Authentic Assessment Techniques

d = Interdisciplinary Teaching (Teaming)

e = Block Scheduling

f = Business/Industry Alliance

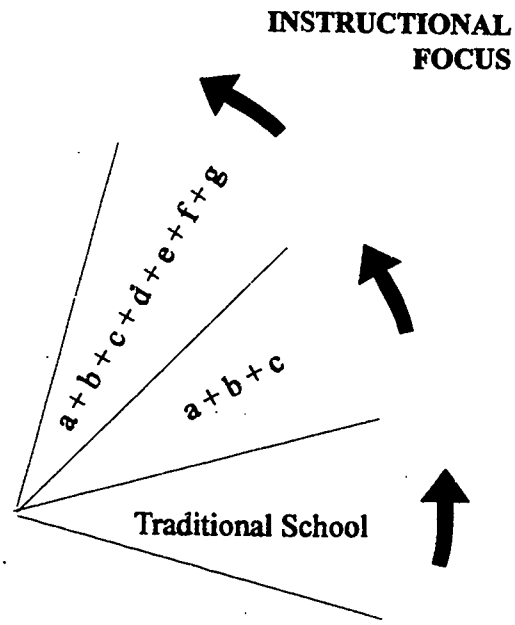
g = Technology

This schemata suggests that when a school restructures to accommodate all of these elements, it is much more likely to shift from the "seat time" to the performance paradigm with classrooms that help students become active learners and critical thinkers that are able to see connections between the various subjects they are studying.

Figure 2: High School Systemic Restructuring Schemata

Performance

Constructing Meaning
Evaluating Information
Critical Thinking
Active Learners
Developing Talent
High Achievement



Elements

a = Site-Based Management
b = Performance Standards
c = Authentic Assess nent
d = Interdisciplinary Teaching (Teaming)
e = Block Schedule
f = Business/Industry Alliances
g = Technology (Modems)

Seat Time

Delivering Information
Sorting, Testing, Recalling
Passive Learners
Modest Achievement

As an example of this, if a school is seeking to improve student performance on problem solving skills in mathematics, the faculty must be empowered to take on the responsibility for this task (site based management), establish clear standards of performance that define quality, and have assessment tools that compel students to demonstrate this skill on novel problems. They need to plan on how other teachers can contribute to this goal (interdisciplinary teaching) and work together in teams to help students see how to apply this skill in a variety of settings. A block schedule (for example, four 80-minute periods in a day) enables teachers to work together on the problem-solving issue. The contribution of a local engineering firm might be called upon, and the best possible software that provides practice must be used. Here the continuing search for the best of technology becomes very specific in the need it is addressing.

If Illinois schools can be assisted in restricting themselves so that teachers and their leaders have time to work together in such a re-organized work place, then the prospect for powerful school improvement plans greatly improves. How the state education agency undertakes this responsibility is an important question.

In many respects, "you can't mandate what matters," and this is true where the goal is restructuring schools. Rather than legislating on such an issue, leadership is more likely the answer: leadership in showing the way via pioneering schools, recognizing and rewarding risk takers, linking schools up in networks of those trying new ideas, and enlisting the university community for help in the effort.

The Illinois State Board of Education's plan is a direct response to public concern over poor student achievement and accountability. The plan many not be the best approach, but it clearly does encourage schools to develop a more systematic and effective approach to educating the diversity of students in Illinois. It must be perfected, and schools need to cooperate in perfecting a system of outcomes, assessment, public reporting, and planning for improvement. This outsider's view is that the plan represents a partial approach to improving productivity and accountability. The payoff will begin to be seen when schools are helped to transform the way they operate by restructuring the seven critical elements described here into an institution that better reflects what can be done collaboratively to better prepare students for the future.

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