

ST. GREGORY'S SCHOOL PROFILE:
AN INTERNSHIP REPORT

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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ST. GREGORY'S SCHOOL PROFILE:
AN INTERNSHIP REPORT

By

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An internship report submitted to the School of Graduate
Studies in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this report is to describe the results of an internship that focused on seeking information to compile a complete profile of St. Gregory's School.

Chapter One outlines the rationale for the internship setting, describes the internship experience, method of evaluation, on-site supervision and the research component of the internship. Chapter Two contains background information on the Indicators Project and the school profile report. The school profile report is the result of the research component and is based on a template developed by the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education. Chapter Three is a case study of the school, using the format of a school report. Chapter Four is a personal reflection of my observations at St. Gregory's School during my internship. These reflections focus on the Teaching Staff and School Culture, the Role of the Principal in School Cultures, School Improvement and the Role of the Learning Resource Teacher. Each of these areas have contributed to setting the foundation of implementing Resource-based Learning into the school.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The completion of my internship and this report could not have been possible without the continual love, support, and encouragement of my husband, Ronnie and our daughter Amy. The generosity and warmth of my family in Toronto made the writing of this, my final report, a reality.

The principal of the school (the fictitious Dr. Tierney) made the completion of my internship possible by welcoming me into her school and guiding me with her knowledge and wisdom. I am also grateful for the assistance in my research by the staff of the school (the fictitious St. Gregory's), I appreciate their willingness to allow me to be present and observe their daily routines.

Special thanks to my internship supervisor, Dr. Jean Brown, for her advice, assistance and encouragement as a professor, faculty advisor and advocate for Resource-based Learning, and to Dr. Bruce Sheppard for serving as a committee member for this report.

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CHAPTER ONE

Overview of the Internship

The Internship Setting

St. Gregory's School (a fictitious name) is a two-stream inner city school. The school currently has an enrolment of 232 students and offers grades six through nine. In the past, this school has not been overly receptive to implementing new initiatives. Though the school's history reveals several attempts at school improvement, Resource-based Learning and the integration of technology (computers), these have received a less than favourable chance to survive. This may have been a result of the school culture.

In 1996, the religious order that had administrated the school for 140 years turned the school over to the local Roman Catholic School Board. In the 1996-1997 school year, the school came under the jurisdiction of the Interdenominational School Board. This change brought with it a newly appointed principal, Dr. M. Tierney. Dr. Tierney's role prior to this appointment was that of Learning Resource Coordinator with the local Roman Catholic School Board. She exhibits extensive knowledge in the areas of administration, Resource-based Learning and school improvement. Dr. Tierney is an administrator who works with her staff exhibiting a more inclusive leadership style.

The Learning Resource teacher at the school carries a half-time position. She is on a one year replacement position. The previous Learning Resource teacher is on educational leave. This year the position also included teaching duties in the areas of Social Studies and Computers. This internship was for a period of four months, under the direction of the principal, Dr. Tierney.

In assisting the Learning Resource teacher and the principal, I have helped lay down the foundations of Resource-based Learning at the school that hopefully will continue to grow in the forthcoming years.

Description of the Internship Experience

The internship experience allowed me to enter into the daily routine of the Learning Resource teacher. Part of the anticipated experience was to understand more fully school culture, especially as it relates to the work of the Learning Resource teacher. The involvement of compiling a school profile allowed me the opportunity to learn about the school culture. These roles may be classified as; the traditional librarian (cataloguing, circulation and purchasing of materials); the resource specialist (cooperative program planning and teaching) and; the computer technologist (operating and maintaining the computer lab). The following duties were under the direct supervision of the on-site supervisor, Dr. Tierney:

- a. observing staff dynamics and relationships to understand better school culture;
- b. in-servicing staff (Resource-based Learning, E-mail, Internet use, creation of homepages);
- c. implementing and supporting the use of computer technology within the school;
- d. assisting in the introduction of computer technology to the students,

- staff and parent volunteer,
- e. assisting in fund-raising activities (such as sub-runs and poster sales).

Method of Self-Evaluation

The purpose of my internship was to acquire hands on, practical skills and knowledge in the area of Learning Resources and Leadership. Part of it required the focus of compiling a complete school profile. In order to assess my development and growth, a personal journal or log was kept of my daily activities and observations. The major focus of the journal was to record my internship activities which focused on the above mentioned duties. The process of reflecting on the experiences helped me recognize patterns and organize my actions more efficiently. It was important to measure my personal growth from this experience, where I was at the beginning of my internship, where I am after this experience and where I hope to be in the future. Drs. Tierney and Brown (my faculty supervisor) have assisted me in assessing my performance and keeping me on task and focused. This assessment has been done through informal dialoguing.

On-site Supervision

Dr. Tierney supervised and evaluated my experiences throughout my internship. We conferenced regularly to discuss our observations, and to plan future strategies that I would use while working with the students, staff and volunteers at the school.

The Research Component

The research component of the internship was developed with the assistance of Drs. Tierney and Brown. The research component was to seek and synthesize information in order to write a complete profile of St. Gregory's School. This profile was to be based on the *Indicators Project: School Reports*. The Department of Education and Training has produced a template (written in WordPerfect 6.1) on which the format of this report has been based. The template and statistical information (both provincial and school based) were generously made available for this report by the Department of Education. The school assisted in providing information by making available the School Improvement Program Report (1995-1996), School Staffing Report (1997-1998), Registers (1993-1997) and archival information. Many of the staff were grateful to assist in providing verbal and written information about the school and the programs that they teach. Dr. Tierney's knowledge of the school from a board and administrative perspective made past and current details available that I or other staff may not have known.

The reason for creating an up to date school profile was to help the administration, school committees and teachers in taking a closer look at where the school stands in comparison to provincial norms. The administration will be using this report or components of it as part of the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education Indicators Project requirements. The school improvement committee will use the information to assist them in identifying areas in the school where change is needed. The newly appointed school council will use this report to familiarize themselves with an overview of St. Gregory's School. The

school is presently engaged in a school-wide research project with researchers from Memorial University of Newfoundland. A copy of this report will be made available to the researchers for future analysis in conjunction with their own survey data.

The name of the principal and school and school boards have been changed (to Dr. M. Tierney, St. Gregory's School, Roman Catholic School Board, and the Interdenominational School Board) as a means of respecting the anonymity of the principal, the school and its community. The information that has been disclosed in this report has been done so with the permission and consent of the principal.

Organization of the Report

The internship report contains three main chapters. Chapter One is an overview of the internship experience and a research component. Chapter Two contains background information on the School Profile Report. Chapter Three is the School Profile Report which is the required research component of the internship. Chapter Four is a personal reflection of my observations and experiences that occurred at the school during the internship.

As required by Graduate Studies - Faculty of Education, this report has been organized following the conventions for a formal academic paper that are documented in the *Handbook: Graduate Students*, prescribed by the Faculty of Education. There is an exception to the prescribed format in Chapter Three and the appendices. Chapter Three's text and statistical charts are based on the template that was provided by the Department of Education, for the *School Report*.

CHAPTER TWO

Background and Methodology for School Report

Introduction

In today's society of economic uncertainty, private corporations and government institutions are becoming more accountable to their stakeholders and the public, not only for their expenditures but for the quality of their products. This has become true for the education system as well. The Departments of Education, school boards, schools, principals and teachers are now being made accountable for the instruction that is being delivered to their students. The Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education has been involved in making its system more accountable. Thus, it devised the *Indicators Project* which encompasses *Profile '96*, the *School Profile System*, and individual *School Reports*.

In its provincial profiles, the Newfoundland Department of Education has been in the forefront (of other provinces) by providing information to the general public about its progress, strengths, challenges and weaknesses and by keeping the public informed of its aims, goals and objectives. The province's recent publication, the *Profile '96* report, contains indicators on the performance of its educational system based on previous provincial and national statistics. This report is updated annually and is now available to the public in print or electronically on the Internet.

Measures from the indicators available in the *Profile '96* report are compiled into a centralized database file for the province's K-12 educational system. This information has been incorporated into what is referred to as the *School Profile System*.

The information contained in the *Profile '96* report is a general overview of where the provincial education system stands in terms of major trends and developments. In order to narrow the focus, the Department of Education is in the formative process of establishing an individualized school-level document for each school in the province. This document is referred to as the *School Report*. The Department of Education has created a pre-formatted template in order to maintain consistency among the *school reports*. This template allows for each school to personalize its own information, making it unique from any other school. The same statistical information (such as raw data) that was used in the *Profile '96* report and located in the *School Profile System* is available to each school for inclusion in the *School Report*. The *School Report* will be reproduced and distributed to members of the school community. The intention of the Department of Education is that each school will produce an annual *School Report*. Presently the creation of school reports is still being piloted. It will take several years to implement this project provincially. It is estimated that approximately half of the schools in the province will voluntarily participate in this process by creating a *School Report* for the 1996-1997 academic year.

Compiling, updating, writing and circulating the *School Report* into the community is a means of publicly making the school's administration and staff accountable for the quality of education that is administered to the students.

The School Report: Description

The research component of the internship required original research and collection of information to be compiled about the school and the synthesis of this information so that a *school report* could be written for St. Gregory's Junior High School. The *School Report* is to be included as part of the Indicators Project by the school.

St. Gregory's School intends to use this report to introduce and inform the parents, community and newly elected school council to its school. Recently, due to youth violence in the vicinity of the school, St. Gregory's School has held a less than favourable reputation within the local community. This document will be used to educate the parents and the community on the positive steps that the school has undertaken in order to improve its professional responsibilities and community image. This *School Report* has been written with the above mentioned constituencies taken into consideration.

To conclude, in 1996, St. Gregory's School established a new school improvement committee. The collection, analysis and synthesis of information that is contained in this report will be used to provide an objective assessment, or a baseline of where the school is presently at in terms of provincial standards, school improvement and school initiatives (Stoll and Fink, 1996).

Case Study Methodology Used in School Report

The creation of the school report required me to obtain detailed information about the school and the present programs that it offers. This could not have been possible without

the assistance of the Department of Education, teaching staff, and the administration at St. Gregory's School.

The Department of Education provided a template for the school report. This included a preformatted disk that contained headings, outlines, statistical charts and information that could be included in the school report. The template was only a guideline to help assist people in completing their own personalized report. Parts of the original template have been omitted and additional sections added. (The layout of the original document has been changed to suit the information that was included and the formatting of this report.) The Department of Education also provided the provincial and school statistical information that was used to complete the charts found in the original template. The coverpage was also provided by the Department of Education via E-mail.

The staff at St. Gregory's School shared descriptive information about the school. Many of the specialist teachers were approached about the individual programs that they offered. Some of these teachers gave verbal descriptions of their programs while others provided written descriptions.

In conjunction with Dr. Tierney the type of information for inclusion in the school report was determined. The school administration provided detailed information about the school-wide programs and the extra-curricular programs that the school offered. The principal also made available the school's records so that specific information could be included in the report. In order to calculate the percentage of students receiving Social Services assistance, the number of Social Services Vouchers submitted to the school in

September 1996 was divided by the school population. The principal felt that it would be beneficial for the school to track the attendance rate and to see if the implementation of new programs had an effect. The school has agreed to carry through with this during the forthcoming school year. It was agreed that the socio-economic status of the students should play a part in determining the need of the children. Therefore the percentage of students receiving social assistance needed to be determined. Financial records were used to calculate the amount of monetary funds that the school received from fundraising activities and to determine the expenditures. The school made the *School Improvement Program* handbook available which included the school history and detailed information that had been collected the previous year for the school improvement committee. The School Mission Statement and the Philosophy of Discipline Policy were made available to be included in the report.

Once the parameters of the report were set, researched and analysed, specific information was included to draft and finalize the school report.

CHAPTER THREE

School Report

Introduction

This chapter is the case study required in the internship program. It has been written as a school report, using the template supplied by the Department of Education. This report provides detailed information about St. Gregory's Junior High School such as school history, staff, programs (academic and extra-curricular), scores of standardized tests and surveys, achievement awards and financial information.



School Report

1996-97



St. Gregory's Junior High School

P.O. Box 000, St. Gregory's Street,
St. John's, Newfoundland, A0A 0A0
Voice: (709) 555-0000 Fax: (709) 555-0001

Interdenominational School Board

St. Gregory's Junior High School

School History

St. Gregory's School was first established in January 1856. This school was founded, built and maintained by one Catholic religious order. Many changes have occurred to St. Gregory's School over the years. It has changed locations, grade structures and types of students that it has educated. More recently, it has changed its administration to that of a layperson. Still it has retained its name and identity.

In the beginning, the school educated both boys and girls from the community. It was in the late 1800's that another Catholic religious order established an educational facility for boys in the same community. It was then that St. Gregory's became an all girls school. Local girls would attend St. Gregory's School from the beginning of their schooling until they reached grade XI. In 1958 St. Gregory's changed to a grade school (up to grade 8), students attended the local all girls high school for grades 9 - 11. When grade 12 was introduced in 1984 the school changed once again, retaining its grade 9 students. Another shift occurred in the schooling at St. Gregory's in 1988 when it was changed to a co-educational junior high school for grades 6-9.

The present school building was constructed in 1954 with the gymnasium being added in the early 1970's. The entire structure is approximately 33,533 square feet and housed on one acre of land. St. Gregory's is equipped with the following facilities: 11 classrooms, 2

laboratories (1 science lab and 1 computer lab), Learning Resource Centre, Gymnasium (including a stage), Art room, Band and Music rooms, and a Pastoral Ministry room.

In 1996, after 140 years of educating the youth of St. John's, the religious order released their school to the Roman Catholic School Board. The 1996-1997 school year was the first time St. Gregory's School was solely administered by a layperson. In January 1997, the school boards of the province were restructured. St. Gregory's School became part of the Interdenominational School Board. In June 1997 St. Gregory's School was designated to become an interdenominational school, thus it will no longer maintain its Catholic identity but become a Christian-based school.

School Mission Statement

The mission of St. Gregory's School is to provide a safe, supportive Christian school community which promotes self esteem, respect for others, responsible behaviour, and which fosters a love of learning. This will be accomplished by a partnership of home, school and community, the insistence of a strong work ethic and the commitment by the staff to enable students to achieve their full potential.

Philosophy of Discipline Policy

At St. Gregory's, we believe that all students have a right to a safe, caring, well-ordered, positive environment that is conducive to learning. To this end students must be encouraged to develop a strong sense of responsibility for their own behaviour and respect for themselves and others.

We believe that an effective discipline policy is one that treats students with respect and dignity, and promotes the cooperation of teachers, students and parents. Such a policy recognizes that students are ultimately responsible for their own behaviour, have the ability to change their behaviour, and need to recognize and accept the fact that there are consequences for their actions.

| |
|---|
| Statement of School-wide Expectations for St. Gregory's School |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Be Respectful• Be Courteous• Be On Time• Be Prepared• Try Your Best |

Our School

Our school, St. Gregory's, is part of the Interdenominational School Board which has 85 schools with a total school population of approximately 35,000 students. The school currently has an enrolment of 232 students and offers grades 6-9.

Our Staff and Classes

Our school has a total of 12 full time and 6 part time educational staff which includes 9 classroom teachers and 2.5 special services personnel. St. Gregory's School has 1 full time principal and an assistant principal with full time teaching duties. As of 1997-1998 the assistant principal will have half time administrative duties and half time teaching duties. This school also has 1 part time guidance counselor (3/4 time), 4 specialist teachers in the areas of music, band, physical education and learning resources (each 1/2 time). The school receives the support of 2.5 student assistants. In addition to staff based at the school, it has access to District office staff including: educational psychologists and enrichment teachers. The school also has the services of 1 secretarial and 1 maintenance personnel.

Support Services

Resource-based Learning - This program meets a variety of learning needs and styles of the students. Emphasis is placed on teaching skills to encourage students to "learn how to learn". The integration of computer technology and instructional

strategies in the prescribed curriculum supports the philosophy of students taking responsibility for their own learning. This program develops and enhances life long learning.

Physical Education - Physical Education is offered to all students from grades 6 - 9. The program follows the "Active Living" concept and emphasizes participation rather than the competitive nature that usually encompasses most sports. A variety of sports are offered, including indoor soccer, volleyball, basketball, European team handball, and badminton. Each class receives two periods of instruction within a six day cycle. The students also participate in 'recreational days' where they are asked to choose a particular activity in which to participate. This idea works well because it gives the students the opportunity to participate in what they feel comfortable playing.

Band (enrichment) - The band program is a performance-oriented program involving students in grades 6 - 9. Students receive instruction three times in a six day cycle, during which time they acquire the physical and aural skills involved in playing a musical instrument and develop their general musicianship and knowledge of basic concepts in music. Musical literacy is a key component of the curriculum, including the study of melodic and rhythmic notation, key signatures, time signatures, musical terminology, and sight reading. Music history is incorporated in the study of music from different cultures and eras. The school has two performing bands, junior and senior, and several small

ensembles which perform at school concerts, festivals, and other local venues.

Music - The classroom music program at St. Gregory's is made up of many different aspects of music including music theory, music history and music appreciation. These different parts of the music program are learned through singing, playing and listening to many different styles of music that range from classical to jazz to rock and roll to contemporary popular music.

Choir (enrichment) - The Choir program is an extra curricular activity in which the members volunteer their time. In Choir, students work on such techniques as vocal production, posture and ear training. These skills are then used in songs that range in styles that include classical, jazz, holiday, spirituals and popular songs.

Special Education - Two full-time teachers are assigned to the Special Education program at St. Gregory's School. There are 30 students in this program at this time. The students participate in a pull out program where they go to their Special Education teacher for Language Arts and Math. The regular classroom programs are modified and altered to each student's ability. This modification brings the program to the student's level. Thus each student is challenged to achieve personal success.

Remedial Instruction - Remedial instruction is provided to students who do not qualify for special education but who need extra help. At St. Gregory's there are 25 students who receive additional

assistance with their school work and preparation for tests and examinations. Each of these students is also encouraged to participate in the school's peer tutoring program which occurs on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 3:00 - 4:00.

Challenging Needs - The Challenging Needs program is geared towards the student's needs. At present the following areas are covered: Math (life skills); Reading (comprehension and life skills reading); Student Used Bookstore (pre-vocational skills) (this reinforces material taught in other areas of the program); School duties (absentee list, helping the leadership group with the recycling program, etc.), Computers (covers math, reading, forms and posters for the Used Bookstore).

A limited Family Life and Cooking program will be added in the 1997-1998 school year.

Pupil-Teacher Ratio and Class Size

For 1996-97 the pupil-teacher ratio in St. Gregory's School was 16.6:1. This compares to a pupil-teacher ratio of 14.62:1 for the Province. In our school 4.8% of teachers were teaching in a multi-graded classroom in 1995-96 compared to 12.3% for the Province. These multi-graded classes were in the areas of special education and enrichment band. In 1996-1997 none of the regular classroom programs were combine at St. Gregory's School.

The following table shows the percentage of the instructional groups in our school in each size category. (An instructional group is a class of students instructed by an educator, not necessarily a homeroom.)

| Size Category | % School | % Province |
|---------------|----------|------------|
| 1-5 | 6.5 | 1.6 |
| 6-10 | 4.3 | 5.8 |
| 11-15 | 5.4 | 14.9 |
| 16-20 | 17.2 | 23.8 |
| 21-25 | 22.6 | 26.7 |
| 26-30 | 36.6 | 18.4 |
| 31-35 | 7.5 | 7.3 |
| 36-40 | 0.0 | 1.1 |
| 40+ | 0.0 | 0.4 |

For example, 22.6% of instructional groups in St. Gregory's School have 21-25 students.

How has our Enrolment Changed?

General Enrolment

The number of students at St. Gregory's School has decreased over the past 10 years, as shown below:

| Total Enrolment, 1986-96 | |
|--------------------------|-----------|
| Year | Enrolment |
| 1986-87 | 373 |
| 1988-89 | 324 |
| 1990-91 | 278 |
| 1992-93 | 292 |
| 1994-95 | 242 |
| 1996-97 | 232 |

The reason for this change would be due to the following:

- In 1988 there was a school transition from an all girls K-XI school to a co-educational 6 - 9 school.
- Since the transition, the school has had two religious administrators, with different styles of operating a school. In 1996-1997 the school administration shifted to a lay-person.
- The school culture was closed as it was not receptive to outside initiatives.
- Up until 1996-1997 the staff basically had not changed. There had been very little turnover among the teachers. Many of the teachers have spent their entire teaching careers at St. Gregory's.

What Programs are offered in our School?

In 1996-1997 the school was introduced to a wide variety of programs. These school-wide programs are as follows:

(* new programs as of 1996 - 1997)

- Leadership/Pastoral Group*
- Resource-based Learning *
- Reading Intervention Committee *
- Non-Violence Program *
- Computer-GrassRoots Projects, STELLAR School *
- Peer Tutoring
- Enrichment Program - computers, art *
- Concert Band/ Festivals
- Academic Ceremonies *
- School Improvement Committee
- School Bookstore / Traveling Bookstore *
- Image Committee*

This year St. Gregory's School has also increased the amount of extracurricular activities that students have become involved with at the school. They are as follows:

(* new programs as of 1996 - 1997)

- Basketball
- Volleyball
- Intramurals
- Pep Rallies *
- Sports Days
- Sports Events
- Teacher/Students Athletics *
- Cheerleaders
- Chess Group
- Student Newspaper Group
- Quilting Group *
- Wall Painting Group *
- Field Trips
- Concerts (local artists)*
- Recycling Group/Environmental Group *
- Peer Tutoring
- Resource Centre Helpers *

How Well do our Students Achieve Nationally?

Canadian Tests of Basic Skills

The Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) are standardized tests given to students throughout the Provinces each year to either Grade 4, 7, 10 or 12. Results of our students are compared to the results of students at the same grade level across the country. The main purpose is to compare how well our students do compared to those elsewhere in Canada and to identify strengths and weaknesses in our instructional programs. At Grade 7, the tests include five major skill areas: Vocabulary, Reading Comprehension, Work Study, (graphs, diagrams and use of reference books), Language (spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and usage) and Mathematics (concepts, problem solving, and computations). **Student performance is reported as a percentile rank, which shows where our students are relative to others at the same grade level.** For example students scoring at the 45 th percentile are performing better than 45% of students in the cross-Canada sample and lower than 55% of the same group. The table(s) below show the average percentile ranks of the students in this school on each skill area. These can be compared with the average percentile ranks for the Province on the same tests.

| | Grade 7 CTBS Results, 1994 | | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------------|
| | Vocabulary | Reading | Work Study | Language | Mathematics | Total |
| School | 33 | 44 | 48 | 41 | 47 | 42.6 |
| Prov. | 41 | 47 | 51 | 43 | 53 | 49 |

For example, in 1994 students at St. Gregory's School on average, performed better in reading than 44 % and lower than 56% of the cross-Canada sample of Grade 7 students.

The Canadian Tests of Basic Skills: What do our results tell us?

The students from St. Gregory's School scored below the Provincial Average in all areas. They scored significantly lower in the vocabulary portion. These results show that greater emphasis must be placed on the Language Arts. As a result, the staff will be implementing a school-wide cross-curricular approach to improving the Language Arts program. This emphasis will involve further development of Resource-based Learning and the integration of computers into the curriculum. The school has established a Reading Committee to address interventions that can be built into the Language Arts program to improve the academic performance of the students.

How Well do our Students Achieve the Objectives of the Curriculum?

Criterion-Referenced Tests

How well students achieve the objectives of various provincial programs is measured using criterion referenced tests (CRTs). These differ from the CTBS in that student performance is compared with what students are expected to learn rather than comparing them with other students across the country. To date students have been tested on Mathematics in grades 3 and 6, on Science in grade 6, core French in Grade 6, and Writing in Grade 9. Each test is made up of subtests that focus on different parts of the programs.

Unlike the Canadian Test of Basic Skills, the results in the tables below describe the **average percentage of items correct on the test.**

Grade 6 Mathematics

| Grade Six Mathematics Test, 1995 | | | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------------------|-------------------|
| | Numbers & Numeration | Geometry | Measurement | Statistics | Problem Solving | Total Test |
| School | 69.2 | 55.4 | 45.8 | 69.2 | 53.1 | 62.7 |
| Province | 70.1 | 52.9 | 64.2 | 73.4 | 63.5 | 66.9 |

For example, in 1995 the average score for grade six students at St. Gregory's School in geometry was 54.4%.

Grade 6 Science

| Grade Six Science Test, 1993 and 1990 | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|-----------|----------------------|-----------|--------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|--------------|-----------|
| | Scientific Processes | | Life Sciences | | Physical Sciences | | Earth Sciences | | Total | |
| | 93 | 90 | 93 | 90 | 93 | 90 | 93 | 90 | 93 | 90 |
| School | 52.0 | 54.4 | 53.8 | 47.4 | 43.2 | 34.8 | 36.2 | 41.8 | 48.8 | 48.1 |
| Province | 61.7 | 60.2 | 59.8 | 58.2 | 50.4 | 50.4 | 52.8 | 55.6 | 58.3 | 57.5 |

For example, in 1993 the average score for grade six students at St. Gregory's School in Scientific Processes was 52.0%. In 1990 the average score in earth sciences was 41.8%.

Grade 6 French

This French test brings together the language skills of listening, reading, comprehension, speaking and writing. All grade 6 students, with the exception of some students with special needs, took the listening, reading and writing components of the test. A sample of students was selected to complete the oral section of the test. The scores presented in the following table are the average percentage scored by students in the school and the Province in each part of the test and for the total of all parts of the test.

| | Grade Six Core French, 1996 | | | |
|----------|-----------------------------|---------------------|----------------|-------|
| | Listening | Reading and Writing | Oral Interview | Total |
| School | 81.0 | 64.0 | 65.8 | 75.1 |
| Province | 83.8 | 71.3 | 69.1 | 79.8 |

For example, the average score for grade six students at St. Gregory's School in the reading and writing component of the French test was 64.0%.

Grade 9 Writing

Three pieces of writing were evaluated for each student: a best piece from the writing done during the year; a process piece prepared over a three-week period; and a demand piece, a short piece written during an eighty minute class. The tests were scored by a panel of classroom teachers in six different areas of writing ability: content, organization, sentence fluency (variation in sentence structure), wordchoice, voice (how well the reader gets to know the writer behind the writing), and conventions (spelling, punctuation, etc.). Five performance levels were established for each area. **The results show the percentage of students that achieved at or above the minimum standard of performance (i.e., level 2) and standard of excellence (i.e., level 4).**

| | | Grade Nine Writing, June 1996 | | | | | | |
|----------|------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|------------------|-------|-------------|-------------|--------|
| | | Content | Organization | Sentence Fluency | Voice | Word Choice | Conventions | Demand |
| School | Minimum Standard | 91.8 | 91.7 | 91.8 | 100.0 | 97.9 | 91.8 | 84.3 |
| | Standard of Excellence | 2.0 | 4.2 | 2.0 | 36.7 | 4.1 | 4.1 | 0.0 |
| Province | Minimum Standard | 98.4 | 97.8 | 97.5 | 98.5 | 98.4 | 97.6 | 96.6 |
| | Standard of Excellence | 39.3 | 35.3 | 30.5 | 52.3 | 26.3 | 45.0 | 23.3 |

For example, 91.8% of grade nine students at St. Gregory's School achieved the minimum standard in the conventions subtest.

The Criterion Referenced Tests:

What do our results tell us?

It is evident that St. Gregory's School has scored below average in most areas of testing. The school is addressing the issue of poor CRT scores in four major ways.

First, the school focus of instruction has changed with the implementation of Resource-based Learning. This allows the students to become active participants in their learning. Small groups of students work together in a hands-on approach to instruction.

The school improvement committee has agreed that as of the 1997-1998 school year the entire school will place a strong emphasis on Language Arts. This will include a cross-curricular approach and will heavily involve Resource-based Learning. In conjunction with the resource teacher, each grade level will engage in resource-based thematic units that include specific skill development, the use of progressive strategies, which will contain general and specific learner outcomes based on the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation.

Secondly, next year there will be one teacher responsible for the instruction of science at the school. This teacher specializes in science and instruction will occur primarily out of the newly equipped science laboratory. This will allow for more expertise in the area and once again a hands on approach to learning.

Thirdly, one teacher will be responsible for the majority of Core French instruction at the school. This will allow for consistency and fluency in the implementation of French. The French teacher is proficient and extremely knowledgeable of the curriculum.

Finally, a Reading Committee has been established at St. Gregory's to address low scores in Language. In 1997-1998 the entire school will be participating in a reading program. This uninterrupted supervised silent reading (U.S.S.R.) program will require all students, teachers, administrators and guests to drop whatever they are doing and engage in 15 minutes of silent reading each day. This program will be monitored on an individual, class, grade and school level. The Reading Committee is also looking at alternate ways to increase reading in the curriculum.

How is our Attendance?

Attendance can be a factor that influences a student's academic performance. Overall attendance would influence the amount of instructional time a student received.

| St. Gregory's School Average Attendance Rate by Percentage | | | | | | |
|---|--------------|--------------|--|-------|--------------|--------------|
| Month | 1995 1996 | 1996 1997 | | Month | 1995 1996 | 1996 1997 |
| Sept | 93.9 | 94.2 | | Feb | 71.6 | 89.3 |
| Oct | 93.1 | 92.6 | | Mar | 90.1 | 90.1 |
| Nov | 96.4 | 92.5 | | Apr | 88.4 | 90.7 |
| Dec | 84.5 | 90.7 | | May | 89.6 | 90.5 |
| Jan | 87.4 | 85.0 | | June | 86.7 | 81.0 |

The attendance of the students appeared to be fairly similar for the 1995-1996 school year in comparison to the 1996-1997 school year. The average attendance did increase slightly from 88.17% to 89.66%. This 1.49% increase may be a result of the early stages of new programs that have been introduced to St. Gregory's School this year. With the implementation of the School Discipline Policy and School Improvement Interventions that will occur in 1997-1998 it will be interesting to see the effect that these new policies and procedures have on the attendance rate of the students.

One reason for the attendance rate being low is that there are students on the registers that have been relocated for various reasons but remain part of the student population.

How well do we graduate students?

| St. Gregory's School 1996-1997 Graduation Rate, Percent of Students with Honours and Retention | |
|---|-------|
| Graduation Rate | 100% |
| Percent of students graduating with 1st class honours | 10.9% |
| Percent of students graduating with 2nd class honours | 9.0% |
| Retention of Students | 79.3% |

Graduation rate - the number of graduates from June, 1997 as a percentage of those who were eligible to graduate in 1997.

Retention Rate - the number of Grade 6 students in school in 1993-94 who were still in school as Grade 9 students in 1996-97.

1st Class Honours - overall average of 90% or above.

2nd Class Honours - overall average of 80% to 89%.

These statistics reveal that 19.9% of our grade 9 students graduate with either first or second class honours. As well, 79.3% of the students who were enrolled at St. Gregory's School in grade 6 went on to graduate from the school.

How do our Students feel about the Quality of their School Life?

Students in various grades are regularly asked how they feel about the quality of their school life. The surveys used ask students whether they agree or disagree with a series of statements that all begin with: *School is a place* where.... The table below shows the percentage of students at each grade level who agreed with each of the statements, for St. Gregory's School as compared with the Province.

| Quality of School Life Survey, 1995 | | |
|--|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Statement - School is a place where... (% that agreed with the statement) | 1995 Grade 8 | |
| | School | Province |
| I like to be | 30.0 | 61.2 |
| I feel bored | 62.0 | 51.9 |
| I feel good about my work | 64.7 | 77.8 |
| I feel proud to be a student | 52.9 | 70.3 |
| I can get along with most of the students even though they may not be my friends | 74.5 | 85.6 |
| I find my work interesting | 38.8 | 59.0 |
| I feel important | 37.3 | 61.8 |
| teachers treat me fairly in class | 78.0 | 80.4 |
| teachers help me to do my best | 80.4 | 83.2 |

For example, 30% of the students in St. Gregory's School agree with the statement "School is a place where I like to be".

In what types of activities are students involved?

Research suggests that factors that make a significant contribution to student success include their habits, activities and attitudes toward different aspects of their schooling. The Student Activity Survey was administered by the Department of Education to all students in Grade 7 in 1994 and again to the same students in 1996 (grade 9).

The survey gathered information from students on TV watching, homework, reading habits and preferences, and both in-school and out-of-school activities. The following table shows the results for St. Gregory's School compared to the provincial average.

| Grade 7 Student Activity Survey, 1994 | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Item | School (%) | | | Province (%) | | |
| | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male | Total |
| Daily time spent watching TV | | | | | | |
| 0 - 1 hour | 14.3 | 4.5 | 9.3 | 18.7 | 18.0 | 18.4 |
| Between 1-3 hours | 61.9 | 45.5 | 53.5 | 59.6 | 53.2 | 56.3 |
| > 3 hours | 14.3 | 45.5 | 30.2 | 21.7 | 28.9 | 25.3 |
| Where do you use a computer? | | | | | | |
| I don't use a computer | 38.1 | 31.8 | 34.9 | 8.2 | 9.5 | 8.9 |
| I use a computer only at school | 19.0 | 31.8 | 25.6 | 49.9 | 47.9 | 48.9 |
| I use a computer only at home | 28.6 | 31.8 | 30.2 | 11.2 | 11.6 | 11.4 |
| I use a computer both at school & home | 14.3 | 4.5 | 9.3 | 30.7 | 30.9 | 30 |
| Which best describes your homework? | | | | | | |
| I rarely do any homework | 0.0 | 4.5 | 2.3 | 1.3 | 3.9 | 2.6 |
| I do my homework on my own | 23.8 | 27.3 | 25.6 | 30.3 | 29.9 | 30.1 |
| On my own & parent sometimes checks | 38.1 | 18.2 | 27.9 | 51.3 | 46.5 | 48.9 |
| On my own & parent always checks | 38.1 | 50.0 | 44.2 | 17.1 | 19.7 | 18.4 |
| Number of hours per week spent outside of school reading for pleasure | | | | | | |
| None/<1 hour | 19.0 | 36.4 | 27.9 | 20.1 | 41.1 | 30.7 |
| 1-4 hours | 52.4 | 54.5 | 53.5 | 54.6 | 45.1 | 49.8 |
| 5 hours or more | 28.5 | 9.0 | 18.6 | 25.3 | 13.7 | 19.5 |

| Grade 7 Student Activity Survey, 1994 | | | | | | |
|--|------------|------|-------|--------------|------|-------|
| Item | School (%) | | | Province (%) | | |
| | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male | Total |
| Number of hours per week spent outside school involved in organized activities | | | | | | |
| None | 19.0 | 27.3 | 23.3 | 12.1 | 13.9 | 13.1 |
| 1-4 hours | 47.6 | 31.8 | 39.6 | 58.4 | 49.5 | 53.9 |
| 5 hours or more | 33.3 | 40.9 | 37.2 | 29.5 | 36.5 | 33.0 |

In 1994 9% of the grade seven boys in St. Gregory's School indicated that they spend 5 hours or more per week reading for pleasure.

| Grade 9 Student Activity Survey, June 1996 | | | | | | |
|---|------------|------|-------|--------------|------|-------|
| Item | School (%) | | | Province (%) | | |
| | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male | Total |
| About how much time do you usually spend on weekdays watching TV or videotapes? | | | | | | |
| 0-1 hours | 25.0 | 0.0 | 9.3 | 10.2 | 8.9 | 9.6 |
| Between 1-3 hours | 35.0 | 41.1 | 38.9 | 57.8 | 48.3 | 53.0 |
| > 3 hours | 40.0 | 58.8 | 51.9 | 32.0 | 42.8 | 37.4 |
| Where do you use a computer? | | | | | | |
| I don't use a computer | 0.0 | 8.8 | 5.6 | 5.4 | 7.6 | 6.5 |
| I use a computer only at school | 60.0 | 50.0 | 53.7 | 46.3 | 44.0 | 45.2 |
| I use a computer only at home | 5.0 | 5.9 | 5.6 | 9.4 | 10.8 | 10.1 |
| I use a computer both at school & home | 35.0 | 35.3 | 35.2 | 38.9 | 37.6 | 38.2 |

| Grade 9 Student Activity Survey, June 1996 | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------------|-------------|--------------|
| Item | School (%) | | | Province (%) | | |
| | Female | Male | Total | Female | Male | Total |
| How many hours a week do you spend in school involved in organized activities (e.g., band, clubs)? | | | | | | |
| None or less than 1 hour a week | 60.0 | 44.1 | 50.0 | 44.7 | 43.2 | 44.0 |
| 1-4 hours a week | 35.0 | 50.0 | 44.4 | 44.9 | 45.4 | 45.1 |
| more than 4 hours a week | 5.0 | 5.9 | 5.6 | 10.4 | 11.4 | 10.9 |
| How many hours a week do you spend outside of school involved in organized activities (e.g. sports, music, clubs, etc.) | | | | | | |
| None or less than 1 hour a week | 70.0 | 30.3 | 45.3 | 28.2 | 23.4 | 25.8 |
| 1-4 hours a week | 20.0 | 18.3 | 18.8 | 50.1 | 39.4 | 44.8 |
| more than 4 hours a week | 10.0 | 51.5 | 35.8 | 21.7 | 37.1 | 29.4 |
| How many hours a week do you spend outside of school reading for pleasure (including magazines)? | | | | | | |
| None or less than 1 hour a week | 55.0 | 58.8 | 57.4 | 20.8 | 50.2 | 35.6 |
| 1-4 hours a week | 40.0 | 38.2 | 38.9 | 61.7 | 42.0 | 51.9 |
| more than 4 hours | 5.0 | 2.9 | 3.7 | 17.4 | 7.8 | 12.5 |
| How much time do you spend per week in volunteer activities? | | | | | | |
| none or less than 1 hour a week | 75.0 | 70.6 | 72.2 | 66.8 | 76.2 | 71.5 |
| 1-3 hours a week | 25.0 | 29.4 | 26.9 | 28.1 | 19.0 | 23.5 |
| more than 3 hours a week | 0.0 | 0.0 | 0.0 | 5.2 | 4.9 | 5.0 |

For example, in 1996 2.9% of the grade nine boys in St. Gregory's School indicated that they spend 4 hours or more per week reading for pleasure.

What do the results from these surveys tell us?

The summary of these results reinforces what the teachers of St. Gregory's School had already suspected. The students were below the provincial average in many areas. The results that the school has addressed are the following:

1. As the students get older the amount of reading that they engage in outside of school decreases. In Grade 7, 28.5% (girls) and 9.0% (boys) read more than 4 hours a week for pleasure. This dropped to 5.0% (girls) and 2.9% (boys) when they reached Grade 9. Similarly, in Grade 7, 19.0% (girls) and 36.4% (boys) read none or less than 1 hour a week. This increased to 55.0% (girls) and 58.8% (boys) by the time they reached Grade 9.
- To compensate for reading outside of the school, St. Gregory's has put together a Reading Intervention Committee that has addressed this issue. As of September 1997, the entire school body will participate in an uninterrupted supervised silent reading program.
2. During this two year period the students who were surveyed decreased the amount of time they participated in volunteering, organized activities and school activities.
- The survey results show that the students at St. Gregory's School need to be exposed to structured activities outside of the school day. Many new groups have been formed with the help of the teachers, administration and with the assistance of volunteers. It is a goal of the school to provide a wide variety of extra-curricular activities that would appeal to the interest of all students. This would allow each student the opportunity to become actively involved in an alternate aspect of school life.
3. The amount of time that the students engaged in watching television had increased. The school cannot prevent students from watching television, but if extra-curricular activities are available for the student to engage in, than less time may be spent in front of the television.
- The teachers at St. Gregory's School are hoping that the new reading program and the Resource-based Learning program will encourage students to take a more active role in their education outside of school.
4. The test results did show that our students use of computers had increased during the two year period. This would have to do with the installation of the new computer lab. However, in 1997-1998 the school will be a STELLAR School and hook-up to the Internet. With the training of staff members, the students will receive more exposure to the use of computers, and the Internet. It is a goal of the school that each student will have one piece of his/her work displayed on the Internet.

What extra-curricular activities are offered at our school?

What Programs are offered in our School?

This year St. Gregory's School has also increased the amount of extracurricular activities that students have become involved with at the school. They are as follows: (* indicates new activities as of 1996 - 1997)

- Basketball
- Volleyball
- Intramurals
- Pep Rallies *
- Sports Days
- Sports Events (athletic tournaments, bowling, skating, hockey, swimming)
- Teacher/Students Athletics
- Cheerleaders
- Chess Group
- Student Newspaper Group
- Quilting Group *
- Wall Painting Group *
- Field Trips (St. John's harbour, Brother Brennan Environmental Centre, Fluvarium, St. John's Maple Leafs, RCMP Headquarters, Bird Island Charters, Bowling, Skating)
- Concerts (local artists)
- Recycling Group/Environmental Group*
- Peer Tutoring
- Leadership/Pastoral Group *
- School Concert Band/Choir
- Traveling Bookstore/Used Bookstore
- Resource Centre Helpers *

What special distinctions have been awarded to our students and teachers?

Student Distinctions and Awards

- The boys' basketball team won the District and Regional Championships and earned a silver medal at the Provincial Championship.
- One student represented Newfoundland at a National soccer tournament in British Columbia.
- The band received silver, at the Rotary Festival.

Teacher Distinctions and Awards

- A staff member received an International Award for the publication of her writing in a professional journal.
- The school was approved to become a STELLAR School. Two of the school's on-line projects received Federal/Provincial Funding from GrassRoots. As well, one project was entered in the STELLAR Heritage Web Fair. It received a wonderful review from the coordinators.
- The Grade 6 teacher was commissioned by the Canadian Olympic Committee to be an official artist at the upcoming Olympics.
- The Music teacher was involved in the production of a CD that was recently released with her instrumental accompaniment.

What is the financial position of the School?

St. Gregory's is not a wealthy school. It is an inner city school that serves a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds. In 1996-1997, 34% of the students received social assistance. This does not include the students that come from homes that are considered to be the working class poor. Due to this particular situation the school requires money to assist some individuals with the basic necessities of life.

The school receives between \$50-55 per student each year from the District Budget. This is to cover operational costs, running the school, instruction, supplies, resources and upgrading. A specified portion of this money is designated for instructional materials such as resource materials.

St. Gregory's School cannot provide a well rounded education to its students based solely on the district budget. As a result it has to go to the school population and community to raise extra funds.

St. Gregory's has been involved in a wide variety of fund-raising activities over the past year. However, the staff find it very discouraging at times because many of the families do not have the extra money to be supporting the school. Therefore, the school has tried to approach the public with its fund-raising activities.

St. Gregory's School received \$8,644.21 from fund-raising activities in addition to products (such as books, video coupons, pizzas etc.).

The following is a list of fund-raising activities that the school participated in during the 1996-1997 academic year:

Fund-raising activities for 1996-1997

- Christmas gift/chocolate Sale
- Sub Runs
- Scholastic Book Club
- Scholastic Book Fair
- Dominion/Sobeys Grocery Tapes
- T-shirt Sales
- Picture/print Sales
- Poster Sales
- Traveling Bookstore
- Hockey Ticket Draw
- Lap-A-Thon
- Recycling
- Bake Sales
- Can Food Drive
- Pizza Slice Sales

The money and products that were obtained from the fund-raising activities were used for the following:

- Basketball uniforms
- Gym equipment - basketballs, volleyballs, badminton racquets and birdies
- Athletic registration fees, referee fees
- Networking the computer lab and office
- Resource Centre materials
- Instructional supplies
- Upgrading computer equipment
- STELLAR School application and hook-up
- Pastoral room operation and dedication
- Parent volunteer ceremony, volunteer thank-you
- Guest speakers and concerts
- Field trip - registration costs, participation fees
- Discipline Committee - supplies
- Postage
- School insurance - (for students who could not afford coverage)
- Food (for students who were on assistance, had not had breakfast or forgot their lunch)
- Replacement of missing or damaged equipment

CHAPTER FOUR

Critical Reflections

Introduction

Choosing to complete an internship as the final component in the Master of Education degree provided me with the opportunity (a) to develop the hands on skills necessary in the field of learning resources, (b) to apply the theoretical component of my education in a practical manner, and (c) to gain a better understanding of school culture. The internship program allowed me to gain practical training in the area of Resource-based Learning as well as participate in the daily routines and variety of roles undertaken by the Learning Resource teacher. This experience was extremely beneficial in my development as a competent professional in this area.

This section of the report is a personal reflection of my observations/experiences and what I have learned during my internship. They are categorised into the following areas: Teaching Staff; the Role of the Principal; School Improvement, and The Role of the Learning Resource Teacher.

The Teaching Staff and School Culture

As reported in the school report, there are 17 teachers on staff at St. Gregory's School (9 full time classroom teachers, 2 special education teachers and 6 half time specialist teachers). Although there is a full time principal, the assistant principal has full time teaching duties. In the 1997-1998 school year the assistant principal will have half time administrative duties and half time teaching duties. In addition, this school has one part time guidance

counselor (3/4 time), one challenging needs teacher (42%) and, 4 specialist teachers in the areas of: music, band, physical education and learning resources (each 1/2 time). The school receives the support of two full time student assistants and one half time student assistant.

In 1988 St. Gregory's School changed from an all girls K-9 school to a co-educational junior high school (grades 6-9) when it merged with the local all boys school. This not only resulted in a loss of the primary grades and teachers but the inheritance of boys and new junior high teachers. The two staffs remained separate in many ways, eventually establishing their own cliques. Over time other cliques developed based on the layout of the school and teachers that worked in proximity to each other or in isolation.

The staff turnover was limited at the school. Many of the teachers have spent their entire teaching careers at St. Gregory's School, which has resulted in a school culture that was closed and not receptive to new staff or outside initiatives. School culture as used in this report refers to "the way we do things around here" (Deal & Kennedy, 1982, p.4 as cited in Brown, 1992, p.12). Schein (1985) gives a more formal definition of school culture:

A pattern of basic assumptions - invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration - that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to these problems. (p.9 as cited in Brown, 1992, p.12)

In 1996-1997 the school experienced many changes in staff personnel. Due to retirements and educational leaves, St. Gregory's School received eight full time and part

time staff (seven of which were on replacement positions). This change in staff placed great pressure on the school culture. These new staff members brought with them the knowledge and desire to implement current and innovative teaching methods and techniques. The former staff tried to maintain the culture existing there. The new teachers could have assimilated into the current culture, but instead they established their own unique culture. Throughout the year these new teachers challenged the previous staff to change. This brought about instability and conflict both in and outside the staffroom. Stoll and Fink (1996) state that "because culture is created by its participants, it inevitably changes as participants change, although it can also be a stabilizing force, particularly for longer-standing members" (p. 83).

The result is that the staff presented many characteristics that are referred to in Stoll and Fink (1996) as dysfunctional staff relations. Many conditions occurred creating stress among the staff. There was a difference in perception of how the school was functioning. One clique clung on to a false identity of how the school had performed in the past, though some others felt this was not a true representation of the reality. When confronted to change some of the current practices, new routines were often met with resistance. Reynolds (1995), refers to this as 'clingons', "where people carry on doing things because they have always been done that way, and of how problems presented for advice are often masks for real problems of morale, competence and feelings of failure" (as cited in Stoll and Fink, 1996, p. 34). By hanging on to the image of the past and previous practices the staff has refused to change or are attempting to avoid change wherever possible. Some of the staff have avoided taking risks for fear of failure. It was felt that this could explain the failure of previous

attempts of introducing school improvement and Resource-based Learning into the school.

This year (1996-1997) the staff made many steps towards becoming a healthier and happier staff. Boundaries began to break down and doors began to open. The staff began to build stronger relations by sharing teaching practices and socializing with each other. These progressions could be contributed to the change in staff, (including the administration), and the efforts towards school improvement.

It will be interesting to see if these changes were only temporary or if they will become permanent. The majority of the new staff were on replacement positions and left the school as of June 1996. This means that there will be new faces entering the staffroom in September. This will result in a new culture again being built within the school. It is unfortunate but three of the new staff members are coming to the school not out of their own choice, but because they have become redundant in other schools and have been reassigned to St. Gregory's.

The Role of the Principal in Changing School Culture

Dr. M. Tierney was appointed the position of principal of St. Gregory's School after a major shuffle in personnel in the school board office. This was a direct result of the referendum regarding education in the Newfoundland and Labrador education system in 1996. To the benefit of St. Gregory's School, Dr. Tierney brought with her a solid background in the areas of administration, Resource-based Learning, and school improvement.

For 140 years prior to Dr. Tierney's appointment, the school had been built and administered by one Catholic religious order. The previous administration of the school reflected this tradition and tended to be hierarchical, with decisions being made at the board or administration level, and shared decision making with the teaching staff rarely occurring. This top-down process of decision making did not take into consideration the needs and feelings of the teaching staff and as a result there was tension between the teaching staff and administration.

DuBrin (1995) in his book *Leadership: Research Findings, Practices, and Skills*, states that the transformational leader aspires to renovate the culture or subculture of the organization. Transformation takes place when the leader: "(a) raises people's awareness, (b) helps people look beyond self-interest (c) helps people search for self-fulfillment, (d) helps people understand the need for change (e) invests managers with sense of urgency (f) is committed to greatness" (p. 69). The arrival of Dr. Tierney and her transformational leadership style brought about positive, major changes to the school.

Her focus on cooperation, collaboration and building trust is outwardly displayed when she treats her staff and students with dignity and respect. Over the past year a partnership has been built between the administration and the staff. This is represented by a balance of power with all parties. With this new leadership approach, power is not enforced by the principal, but "opportunities are built for others to assume leadership roles through involvement and empowerment" (Stoll & Fink, 1996, p. 52). Thus, power and leadership are shared by many within the school.

Through dialogue and discussion with the staff, Dr. Tierney has tried to create a positive school climate and improve school spirit. Some of these initiatives were: repainting parts of the school with more pleasant colours and designs, encouraging the public display and recognition of students accomplishments, and by establishing new traditions at St. Gregory's School. All of these efforts were directed at changing negative attitudes and building a positive spirit within the school. These were all done in consultation with various members of the school community.

Dr. Tierney recognized a need for team building (in order to break-down the cliques that had been established). The staff needed to build a positive school climate where there was an environment of teamwork and trust (Heck, Larsen and Marcoilides, 1990). If this issue was not addressed positive changes would not have occurred. Staff meetings were directed to this matter. Dr. Tierney brought in a psychiatrist from an outside agency to work with her staff in creating new staff dynamics which included trust, sharing, risk taking and working together. The principal's efforts towards (team) building required both empowerment and vision (DuBrin, 1995).

The major task that Dr. Tierney tackled with the student population was violence. In a survey that was taken in 1995-1996, students and parents showed a concern towards the personal physical safety of the students and their property. Counteracting this problem was achieved through the implementation of a school wide anti-violence program and zero tolerance for displays of violence. Dr. Tierney and the school improvement committee is in the process of establishing a partnership between the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary and

St. Gregory's School in order to promote the safety of the students and school community.

Dr. Tierney's position as principal of St. Gregory's School is far more extensive than that of a traditional school administrator. There are many roles that she must undertake to bring about change. Dr. Tierney is aware that these changes will not occur over night, and she is personally and professionally prepared for this challenge.

School Improvement

Schools are being made more accountable to the Department of Education, school boards and communities for the instruction that is being delivered to students. As a result, they have encouraged and, in some instances mandated that their schools engage in school improvement. School improvement is seen as a means of improving the quality of education of their students. Teachers are seen as the implementors of this positive change by engaging in planning, taking action, and participating in ongoing evaluation.

Patterns of behaviour must be modified. This is a lengthy process that takes time. School improvement requires the cooperative efforts of all members to pull together and strive towards a common goal. The efforts of the group are exhibited in the results of student learning. This is an ongoing cyclical process. The process of school improvement requires the staff to grow and develop together as a team. As a team their efforts are recognized and supported. This builds trust and support. School improvement "has the potential to generate the energy and knowledge needed to support healthy learning communities" (Calhoun, 1993, p. 68).

In the past, the school culture at St. Gregory's School has worked against the efforts of school improvement. The school culture was closed and not conducive to innovation. During the 1995-1996 school year the school board stepped in and required St. Gregory's School to participate in the school improvement process. With the direction of school board personnel, St. Gregory's School went through the initial steps of school improvement. The principal appointed staff members to become part of the school improvement committee. The standardized questionnaires were distributed, collected and analyzed. A final report was compiled and shared with the staff during an inservice day. After discussing the report, a draft version of a mission statement was developed by the staff. It took the school improvement committee a year to finally bring the drafted version of the mission statement to acceptance.

The staff, however, never genuinely bought into the concept of school improvement. They were unable to work together as one cohesive unit in establishing and obtaining their goals. It is imperative that the staff buy into the concept of school improvement and take ownership and responsibility for their efforts (Stoll & Fink, 1996). It is important that the group stay focused and committed to the process. If they lose sight of their focus, their efforts may produce less than favourable results.

The arrival of Dr. Tierney and her background knowledge in school improvement initiatives proved to be positive in the process of school improvement. Dr. Tierney opened up the committee to all staff members and welcomed their efforts. The school improvement committee created a subcommittee that focused on school discipline. In October 1996, the

school discipline committee (comprised of four teachers, one parent and two students) worked towards creating a report that dealt with topics such as the philosophy for dealing with discipline issues, school-wide expectations, and the process and procedures to be followed in dealing with behavioural problems. Up until this point in time, there was no written school policy. It was expected that everyone knew the rules because it had always been that way. This allowed for inconsistency among the staff, especially between the cliques that had formed. A copy of the report was circulated to all staff and parents for their input. Once revised, the report was approved by the school improvement committee.

The school improvement committee met in June (for a one day inservice) to establish the direction that it would follow during the 1997-1998 school year. Its first decision was for all staff members to implement consistently the school discipline policy as of September. The school improvement committee was given a brief synopsis of the draft of the school profile report (chapter three). The report showed that the students have consistently done poorly on standardized tests and criterion referenced tests. It was stressed that there was a definite need to concentrate school efforts in the areas of Language Arts.

The school improvement committee agreed that during the 1997-1998 school year the entire school would place a strong emphasis on Language Arts. This will include a cross-curricular approach that will heavily involve Resource-based Learning. In conjunction with the resource teacher, each grade level will engage in resource-based thematic units that include specific skill development, the use of progressive strategies, and contain general and specific learner outcomes based on the Atlantic Provinces Education Foundation.

A Reading Committee was established to look at the various ways that the school could increase reading in the curriculum. I was invited to work with this group in establishing guidelines for reading and literacy. All recommendations were based on the Department of Education's Student Learning Outcomes. These recommendations were presented to the school improvement committee. It was agreed that the school would participate in a U.S.S.R. program (uninterrupted supervised silent reading), further incorporate Resource-based Learning, and increase its use of technology within the curriculum.

The committee met with a member of the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary to develop strategies to be used to decrease the violence at school and increase the safety of the staff and students. It was agreed that the anti-violence program would continue to be administered in the upcoming school year. All of these decisions were brought back to the staff for their input throughout the implementation process.

If school improvement is to become successful, it will require all staff members to become team players. By working cooperatively together the process builds a positive culture among the staff which results in the staff, as a whole, becoming stronger. This does not mean that there will not be any disagreements. The results of positive stress may be exhibited in the form of congealing and unifying the staff. Fullan (1993) states that "growth occurs when individuals or groups cope with tough, intractable problems and overcome them" (p. 141). However, this growth and development is possible only when teachers are willing to risk being honest, open and trusting with their colleagues as well as with themselves. In light of the school report and recent school history, team-building among the staff needs to be

implemented concurrently with school improvement efforts for greatest effectiveness.

The Roles of the Learning Resource Teacher

The role of the Learning Resource teacher at St. Gregory's School has changed dramatically this past year. Previously, St. Gregory's School had a Learning Resource teacher whose background had been in Library Sciences. This was more the traditional role of the librarian. Today, the Learning Resource teacher brings with her a background in School Resource Services. As a result, the roles undertaken by the Learning Resource teacher have changed. This position carries with it three distinctive roles: (1) traditional librarian, (2) cooperative program planning and teaching, (3) technology specialist. Each of these roles is distinctive but they tend to overlap.

Traditional Librarian

The traditional role of the librarian included clerical and administrative duties, as well as the general running and upkeep of the Resource Centre. Such duties would include reviewing, purchasing and processing materials, and circulation. The resource centre at St. Gregory's became fully automated in 1996. Unfortunately, due to technical difficulties, the Columbia Library System was out of operation during my internship. Circulation had to be done manually. The school had disposed of its card catalogue so it made the process of book searches more difficult. This incident forced me to tune further and develop my knowledge of the Dewey Decimal System and the layout of the resource centre.

The Learning Resource teacher at St. Gregory's had the assistance of a volunteer who would occasionally come to the school to process and repair materials. Since the Columbia Library System was not available for cataloguing, new materials would be manually recorded, and stamped. A barcode label was affixed. The volunteer and myself worked together to accomplish this task.

The Learning Resource teacher at any school is responsible for purchasing new materials, supplies and equipment for the centre. At St. Gregory's the budget needed to be reassessed to include the purchasing of hardware and new software releases. In the past there was very little consultation with the teachers about new materials that would work well cross-curricularly. The resource teacher worked with the staff to locate appropriate material for specific thematic units. This also required previewing, censoring and evaluating materials prior to purchasing them.

Cooperative Program Planning and Teaching

Resource-based Learning requires teachers to work cooperatively together. Many teachers at St. Gregory's were still working in isolation, behind closed doors. This pattern is slowly changing with the efforts of the resource teacher and Dr. Tierney's efforts on team building. Resource-based Learning is based on the premise that teachers work together to develop and implement cross-curricular units. Peter Senge, in an interview about leadership in schools, states that collective capabilities are far greater than individual capabilities (O'Neil, 1995). The resource teacher and the principal worked together in trying to unite

teacher's individual efforts and helped them join forces and focus their efforts as a team. Once trust and support were established teachers were more willing to take risks and try to incorporate Resource-based Learning into the curriculum. It took most of the year to bring the staff around to try Resource-based Learning. The new staff members had been eager and willing to work with the resource teacher. These teachers openly talked about Resource-based Learning and their students progress in the staffroom. By displaying student's work in the corridors and keeping an open door policy other teachers became interested. Interest was generated at student, teacher and administrative levels.

When my internship commenced most teachers were ready to plan resource-based units with assistance from the Learning Resource teacher. This allowed me the opportunity to assist and develop my skills in cooperative planning and teaching. I worked with the teachers from the start of my internship to the end. By the end of my internship each class had completed at least one resource-based project. However, it had been chaotic trying to schedule the classes into the resource centre. This did require flexibility, patience and cooperation on the part of the staff and students. The high demand on the resource centre will require the Learning Resource teacher to look more closely at scheduling next year. It was a priority this year to get teachers interested and involved in Resource-based Learning.

Technology Specialist

Many of the resource-based projects required the students to use technology as a tool. This was strategically done on the part of the resource teacher in order to hook both the

teachers and students on this innovative approach to teaching and learning. Peter Senge comments on the fact that “schools need to focus on thinking and learning skills...(in order to)...prepare kids for a world of increasing interdependency and increase change” (O’Neil, 1995). Resource-based Learning focuses on the needs of the students, teachers, teams and community by teaching life-long skills along with content. By incorporating Resource-based Learning into the school, teachers were now working cooperatively with planning and teaching. Students also learned how to work together with their peers and school mates. Teachers take on the role of facilitator.

The shift towards technology in the school has changed the physical structure of the school, classrooms and the resource centre. It has also changed the role of the Learning Resource teacher. This integration brings about added responsibilities. The Learning Resource teacher “will be required to be a specialist in collection development, data base, maintenance, information input and searches” (Blake, 1994). In accordance with the *Competencies for Teacher-librarians* it is the responsibility of the Learning Resource teacher to “keep abreast of current developments in educational changes, for example....new technologies and innovative developments” (ATLC & CSLA, 1996).

The Learning Resource teacher at St. Gregory’s School has taken on the role of computer specialist. A large portion of the Learning Resource teacher’s day is occupied by helping students and teachers access information accurately. This may still incorporate the traditional method of locating resources that are on the shelves but it also involves finding electronic information, via CD ROMS or over the Internet. To assist teachers in using the

Internet (E-mail and World Wide Web), I developed two step-by-step handouts that describe how to access E-mail and the World Wide Web. (Appendix A and Appendix B respectively.)

Resource-based Learning encourages the publication of student's activities. The Learning Resource teacher is responsible "to assist students with creating information in print, electronic and multimedia formats" (ATLC & CSLA, 1996). This includes on-line publishing over the Internet. Two units that I developed required the students to post their project on the Internet. I assembled a handout for the teachers and students that introduced the basic Hypertext Markup Language codes that are used in creating homepages. (Appendix C.)

The role of the Learning Resource teacher has changed with the introduction of technology. I feel that change has allowed the resource specialist to diversify and become more creative in working with the staff, students and community. Personally, I am looking forward to this challenge.

Conclusion

The internship experience, particularly the work of compiling a school profile, allowed me the opportunity to look closely at one school and to draw on the theoretical component of my studies in education, Teacher-Librarianship and School Improvement. I closely observed staff dynamics, the way that the staff interacted and reacted to each other, and used this information to formulate a representation of the school culture. The importance of the principal and the impact that this one person can have on a school was evident. Dr. Tierney's support and guidance in implementation of the School Improvement process and

Resource-based Learning was crucial. The internship experience has allowed me to see myself function as a Learning Resource teacher by experiencing first hand the roles, daily routines and tasks that the Learning Resource teacher engages in both inside and outside of the Resource Centre. My involvement in creating a school profile forced me to realize how important a full understanding of the school is for a Learning Resource teacher. As a result of this experience, I feel that my proficiency as a Learning Resource teacher has been greatly enhanced. This learning experience is a beginning on what I now see as continuous journey as a 'life long learner'.

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APPENDIX A

How to use E-mail from St. Gregory's School

How to use E-mail from St. Gregory's School

Computer A in the Resource Centre (Closest to the window - tower CPU)

1. Turn on the computer and the monitor.
2. At the c:\ prompt type **win** and press enter. Double click on the icon that reads Delrina Communications Suite.
3. Double click on the icon that reads Delrina WinComm PRO 1.1.
4. Double click on the STEM-NET icon.
5. You will get a screen that reads as follows:

STEM-NET OPTION MENU

1. Login to Calvin
2. Login to Sussie
3. Quit

Stem-net: _____

type **1** and press enter

6. You will then be asked to login. Type your user name (eg. **dasmith**) and press enter when you are done.
7. You will then be asked to enter your password. When you type your password the letters will not appear on the screen. Type your password (eg. _____) and press enter.
8. You will get a prompt that reads calvin>. Type the word **pine** and press enter.
9. You are now in Pine 3.91 Main Menu. You cannot use the mouse in pine, you will have to use the arrow keys to move up or down.

To change your password

1. When you are at the Main Menu type **S** for setup.
2. You will be asked to choose a setup task from the menu below:
Type **N** to choose a new password.
3. Type your old password (eg.). Remember it will not show up on the screen.
4. You will then be able to choose a new password that is generated for you (**g**) or pick your own password (**p**).

Type **p** and press enter.
5. Enter your new password. (Note: It must be between 6-16 characters). It will not show up on the screen. Type in your new password and press enter.
6. You will then be asked to re-enter your new password. Type it in again and press enter.

Set up an Address Book

1. From the main menu type **A** (for address book).
2. Type **A** to add an address.
3. You will be asked to type the new full name (last,first). Press enter. (eg. Smith, Debbie)
4. Enter list nickname this is one word that is easy to remember the person by. Type and press enter. (eg. Debbie)
5. Enter new e-mail address. If the person has a calvin address (stem-net) you only have to type in their username (eg. jones@basilian.ca or dasmith). Since, dasmith is a calvin address you do not have to type the entire address.
6. When you have finished typing in all your names you can press **M** to go to the Main Menu.

Fingering an Account

This will allow you to find out someone's username on STEM-NET.

1. Logon as usual. When you get to the calvin> prompt type **f smith@jmore** and press enter. This will give you a list of people who are registered with STEM-NET under that last name.

To Quit

1. Go to the Main Menu screen.
2. Type **Q** and press enter.
3. The computer will ask you if you really want to quit pine. Type **y** for yes and press enter.
4. You will then get the calvin > prompt. At this point type **logout** and press enter.
5. Make sure you close out all of the windows and exit the computer properly. Please turn off the monitor and the CPU.

APPENDIX B

How to log on to the World Wide Web

from St. Gregory's School

How to log onto the World Wide Web

Computer A in the Resource Centre (Closest to the window - tower CPU)

1. Turn on the computer and the monitor.
2. At the c:\ prompt type **win** and press enter. Double click on the icon that reads **Stem-net Slip 1.00**.
3. Double click on the icon that reads **Trumpet Winsock**.
4. Pull down the menu that reads **Dialler**. Go to **Manual Login**.
5. Type **atdt 7373030** and press enter. This will connect you to Stem-net.
6. Login to Stem-net as usual (using your username and password).
7. Go back to **Stem-net Slip 1.00** and double click on the **Netscape** icon. This will connect you to your host site (<http://www.stemnet.nf.ca>).

APPENDIX C

Hypertext Markup Language (HTML) Codes for Creating Homepages

HYPertext MARKUP LANGUAGE (HTML)

url- uniform resource locator. This is a fancy word for an address.

http - hypertext transfer protocol. This is a filename of where the homepage is located.

tags - are keywords/commands that are written between < brackets >. Tags indicate to the program that this text is to be displayed. There are opening and closing versions of each tag. A closing version is indicated by a / (forward slash). Eg. opening tag, closing tag. The commands inside the tags are to be written in capital letters unless otherwise directed. Tags are nested this means they follow this sequence: <A> then then then . The B tags are enclosed inside the A tags.

Codes for Creating a HTML Document

A. Starting an HTML Document

1. Type <HTML>
2. Create your document
3. Type </HTML>

B. The Head and Body

HEAD- The head contains information about URL and other pages in the document.

1. Directly after <HTML> tag type <HEAD>
2. Create the head section
3. Type </HEAD>

BODY

1. After </HEAD> tag type <BODY>
2. Create the contents of your web page.
3. Type </BODY> before </HTML> tag

C. Creating a Title

1. Place the cursor between the opening and closing HEAD tags
2. Type <TITLE>
3. Enter the title of your web page
4. Type </TITLE>

Organizing the Page

Special Symbols -

 - line break - This is used when you are starting a new line. This allows you view your document more clearly while you are writing it.

Header - Headers are used to help organize your page. They act as chapters in a book.

- <H n >** n = a number from 1-6 depending on the size you want to create
H1 = largest
H6 = smallest

New Paragraph- This is used to begin a new paragraph.

1. Type **<P>**
2. Type the contents of a new paragraph
3. Type **</P>** at the end of the paragraph

Bold

1. Type ****
2. Type the information that you want to be bolder
3. Type ****

Italics

1. Type **<I>**
2. Type the information that you want to be in italics
3. Type **</I>**

Centre for Regular Text

1. Type **<CENTER>**
2. Type the information that you want to be centred
3. Type **</CENTER>**

Centre for a Header

1. Type **<H n ALIGN=CENTER>**
2. Type your header
3. Type **</H n >**

Subscript

1. Type **<SUB>**
2. Type the information that you want to be in subscript
3. Type **</SUB>**

Superscript

1. Type **<SUP>**
2. Type the information that you want to be in superscript
3. Type **</SUP>**

Block Quote

1. Type `<BLOCKQUOTE>`
2. Type `<P>` to begin a new paragraph
3. Type your paragraph
4. Type `</P>` to end your paragraph
5. Type `</BLOCKQUOTE>`

To set the background colour -

1. In the BODY tag, after the word BODY but before the final `>`, type `BGCOLOR="#rrggbb"`, where *rr* is the hexadecimal equivalent of the Red component, *gg* is the hexadecimal equivalent of the Green component and *bb* is the hexadecimal equivalent of the Blue component.
eg. `<BODY BGCOLOR="#FF00FF">`
This would create a bright pink background for your page.
The default is a grey screen.

To change the colour of your text -

1. Inside the BODY marker, type `TEXT="#rrggbb"`, where *rr* is the hexadecimal equivalent of the Red component, *gg* is the hexadecimal equivalent of the Green component and *bb* is the hexadecimal equivalent of the Blue component.
eg. `<BODY TEXT="#FFFFFF">`
This would create white text on your page.
The default is black text.

To create navigational buttons

1. Type `` where url.address identifies the page that the user will jump to when they click the button.
2. Type `` where image.location gives the location of the image file on the server.
3. Add other image attributes as desired and then type the final `>`
4. Type the clickable text, that will be underlined or highlighted, when clicked upon will bring the user to the URL referenced in 1.
5. Type `` to complete the link definition

Adapted from: [HTML for the World Wide Web](#) by Elizabeth Castro.



