THE ROLE OF COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP IN BUILDING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES: AN INTERN'S PERSPECTIVE
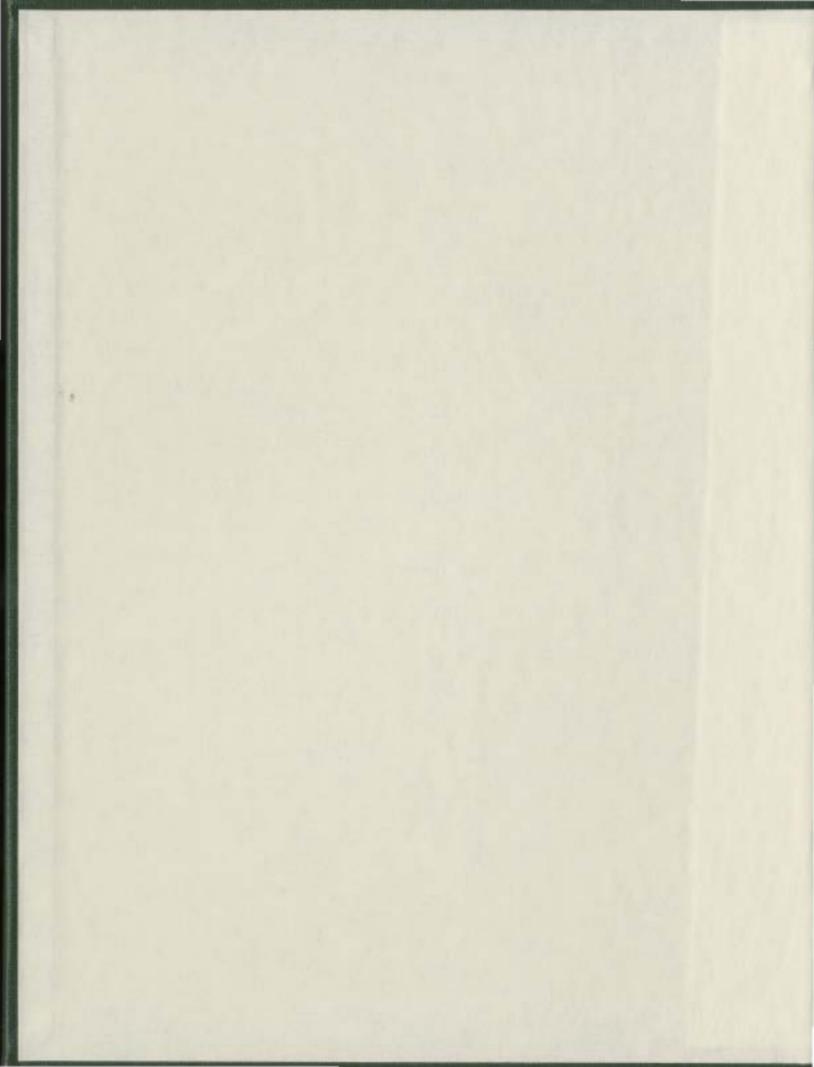
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**The Role of Collaborative Leadership in Building Professional Learning
Communities: An Intern's Perspective**

by

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

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Abstract

This paper posits that a learning organization which creates high academic school performance is created when there is a collaborative approach not only between administration and teachers but, with an interaction between school and community. Dibbon (1999) writes, "in schools characterized as learning organizations the organization's culture is truly collaborative; individuals take responsibility for and contribute to one another's learning as they go about their day-to-day activities" (p. 35). For the purpose of this paper, collaborative leadership will be discussed to encompass the specific variables necessary for school leaders to achieve effective school performance, particularly in student achievement. These will include definitions of school leaders as managers, change agents, culture builders and lead learners. The role of teachers, students, school administrators and the relationship necessary of the school, parents and the community will be discussed. Vanier Elementary provide an excellent example of a professional learning community and will act as an example to a desired process.

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CHAPTER 1 – THE INTERNSHIP

Rationale for Internship Option

The Masters Degree in Educational Leadership at Memorial University offers graduate students the option of completing a thesis, course route or doing an internship and courses for completion of degree requirements. I chose the internship to complete these requirements. The internship provided an opportunity to meet and work with administrators, which afforded a level of practical experience. Applying the concepts researched at the academic level to observations in the "real world" is a practical and useful activity. "Many first-year principals undergo a 'trial-and-error' introductory experience that only serves to increase their anxiety about fulfilling their new responsibilities" (Elsberry & Bishop, 1996, p. 32). The opportunity to apply academic classroom learning within an internship is a valuable and rewarding experience. The internship affords the opportunity to avoid the "sink or swim" approach many new principals experience when taking on a new job. "A new principal gets a title, an office, a set of keys, many responsibilities and obligations, and is expected to be fully accountable from day one" (Elsberry & Bishop, p. 32). The National Society for Experiential Education defines an internship as "a carefully monitored work or volunteer experience in which an individual has intentional learning goals and reflects actively on what he or she is learning throughout the experience". According to Graduate Studies, Faculty of Education, Memorial University (1999):

> The purpose of the internship is to provide a graduate student with a breadth and depth of experience in a practical setting on a full-time basis for a minimum period of ten weeks, and to provide opportunities for:
> 1. the development of personal and professional competencies based on the intern's perceived needs, previous experiences and career ambitions;

2. practical experiences that serve to accentuate the theoretical and pedagogical aspects that have been studied throughout the program; and

3. the development of a creative and reflective perspective in light of stated goals of the experience, the nature of the setting, the specific placement, and field supervisor's exchanges on knowledge of subject matter, as well as counseling/instructional/leadership competencies. (p. 1)

Internship Setting

I chose an elementary school setting for my internship because this is an area in which I had little teaching and administrative experience. Gaining a strong knowledge and working background in the development of the primary and elementary setting, particularly the role of improving student performance, was very motivating.

Vanier Elementary is a K-6 dual track (English / French Immersion) school located in St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada. The school is operated by the Avalon East School Board and has approximately 390 students, 23 professional staff (20 full-time and 3 part-time), a full-time principal and a teaching vice-principal, one secretary, two student assistants, two full-time and one part-time support staff.

Vanier Elementary School was officially opened on November 14, 1968 under the St. John's United Church School Board. It later became part of the integrated system under the jurisdiction of the Avalon Consolidated School Board. On January 1, 1997, Vanier came under the jurisdiction of the Avalon East School District.

In 1981, Early French Immersion was introduced, making Vanier the first bilingual elementary school in the former Avalon Consolidated School District. At present, Vanier is a dual-track English / French Immersion school accommodating students from Kindergarten through Grade 6.

Mission Statement

The mission statement of Vanier Elementary School is as follows:

At Vanier Elementary School, we are committed to fostering independent, life-long learning in an atmosphere of caring and mutual respect, which encourages personal achievement and development, and promotes a sense of responsibility to society and the world. (Vanier's Mission Statement, 2004)

Statement of Beliefs

The school's statement of beliefs:

At Vanier, we believe that: All children can learn. Children are individuals with physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs. Children learn at different rates. Learning occurs best in an atmosphere of mutual respect. Learning is a life-long process. Teaching is a shared responsibility of the school, the home and society. Children's needs differ and require different teaching strategies.

From the beginning, Vanier has commanded respect as an educational institution, demonstrating leadership in elementary education. Over the years, Vanier has investigated new avenues and approaches, and has given leadership in such areas as Resource-Based Learning, Co-operative Program Planning and Teaching, French Immersion, School Improvement and Co-operative Discipline, Intensive Core French and Collaborative Leadership.

The setting allowed me to work with the school administration to obtain knowledge and information related to my research, which focuses on the role of collaborative leadership in building a professional learning community. This setting afforded me the opportunity to participate in and observe the workings of the action teams and staff meetings, and perceive the connection between teacher, administration, and the community at large.

Supervision of the Intern

Supervision was conducted throughout the internship by the principal (Ms. Pike) of Vanier and Memorial University professor, Dr. David Dibbon. I was encouraged by the continuing and consistently positive feedback from the supervisors. During my internship, I engaged in many reflective discussions with administrators, teachers, support staff, students and parents of the school, as well as exchanging e-mails, school visits, and having telephone conversations with Dr. Dibbon.

Internship Goals and Objectives

The internship was a practical experience affording me the opportunity to realize my various goals and objectives. It provided me with opportunity to witness and observe the workings of administrative life at an Elementary school, and relate relevant literature to real observable situations. The first week was spent developing a working relationship with the teachers, administration and support staff of the school, and making myself known to the students. The administration introduced me to staff members and explained the purpose of my visit. This venue allowed me to answer any questions by staff members. The introduction also enabled me to speak with teachers individually in order to explain my placement at the school and what I wished to accomplish.

I accompanied the principal throughout the day and became aware of the many roles and responsibilities of administration. I observed the interactions between administrator and students, teachers, support staff, parents and community, effectively dealing with daily situations were valuable experiences of the internship program.

I worked with the administration on supervision scheduling, student discipline, *Vanier Voice* parent newsletter, staff allocation for the upcoming year, staff meetings, the

ISSP process (Appendix E), monthly returns, hiring of a grade one teacher, the interview process and the Literacy Profile Checklist. I served as an interviewer for a grade one replacement position, participating with the principal in teacher evaluations, accompanying the administrator at administrative council meetings and Leadership at Work meetings. These were important events of the Internship.

I participated in weekly meetings including, staff meetings, School Development, Action Team and Special Service meetings. During these meetings I witnessed the role the administrator plays in establishing an environment of collaboration. Participating in the school council meetings, which required preparation, was valuable because I learned about the administrator's role in establishing community relations and providing a means for open communication.

Many daily conversations with administration, staff, students and parents focused on staff development, student concerns, professional literature and creating a safe and caring environment. The role administrators play in creating a collaborative environment fostering trust among staff, risk taking and other leadership qualities among teachers were among the topics discussed.

My observations also focused on the importance of open lines of communication with all groups within the school and the district. Communicating with the district and seeking advice on such issues as the Literacy Profile Checklist, discipline, irate parent concerns, and a health concern that developed at school, were important aspects of open communication for all stakeholders.

I was also involved in a number of unexpected incidents during the internship process. A teacher becoming ill in the middle of a class, dealing with the death of a staff

family member or discussing an unexpected visit from a parent over a perceived concern are a few examples. These unforeseen activities illustrated the unpredictable nature of educational administration and demonstrated the need for time management and leadership skills.

CHAPTER 2: LEADERSHIP

Today's leaders as suggested by this literature review, must be cognizant of many factors, which affect the learning organization. While assessing the roles of culture and climate, the modern leader will consider the values, beliefs and expectations of all educational stakeholders. Indeed, today's leader must overcome bureaucratic quagmire and obstacles while effecting change for the betterment of the child.

Today's leaders are no longer the "lone heroes" but leaders who are collaborative "partners". Leaders develop sophisticated communication, collaborative skills and relationships, in addition to the visionary skills that are so essential.

"Schools are communities of human beings, bound together in an organic, continuously developing web of relationships" (Rooney, 2003, p. 78). Barth (2001) and Sergiovanni (2001) argue that schools are communities of learners. Boyer (1995) concludes that without community nothing else matters. Authorities and experts outside the school, mandating expectations from above cannot create communities. School community must be developed collaboratively as any relationship. All stakeholders who live within the community create this process. There is no cure or special formula for administrators to follow. Dibbon (1999) writes,

> Historically, reform efforts in education have resulted in band-wagons that have promised to be cure-alls for the problems associated with the teaching profession. While many of these initiatives (e.g., scientific management, human relations movement, effective schools movement, and the total quality movement) delivered short-term solutions, they provided no panacea. (p. 2)

The leaders of a collaborative school must establish initiatives by those who live within its walls—in conversations about students, about teaching, and about learning. "Deep and sustained reform depends on many of us, not just on the very few who are

destined to be extraordinary" (Fullan, 2001, p. 2). This dialogue includes all who participate in and enhance the community. When this work takes place in an environment of intense care, students learn and thrive, and the seemingly impossible work of the principal becomes not only possible, but also deeply meaningful.

Defining Leadership

After so many years of leadership study, why is there such uncertainty about the concept of leadership? Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach write that, "the definition of leadership is arbitrary and very subjective. Some definitions are more useful than others, but there is no 'correct' definition" (1999, p. 5). Leaders have been taught how to plan, organize and lead using management concepts and skills, which reflect the traditional transactional style of leadership. Today, many leaders continue to use traditional leadership styles, while environments and expectations change. Owens (1998) states that, "U.S. schools require leadership, not 'mere management'" (p. 216). This suggests that leadership and management, are "mutually exclusive", Owens writes:

> Some blame much of our present dearth of educational leadership on the existence of a managerial mystique, long promoted by school of business as well as schools of education, that taught managers to pay attention to structures, roles, and indirect forms of communications and to ignore the ideas of people, their emotions, and to avoid direct involvement of others in leadership. (p. 217)

Leaders in the twenty first century must be prepared to deal with management issues as well as the "process of building human capital in the organization" (Owens, 1998, p. 224). Rost (1991) makes a clear distinction between leadership and management. Leadership, he suggests, is a relationship based on influence whereas, management is a relationship based on authority. However, the role of the administrator to lead in today's society may require both leadership and management skills. Fullan (2001) states that he

has "never been fond of distinguishing between leadership and management: they overlap and you need both qualities. But here is one difference that it makes sense to highlight: leadership is needed for problems that do not have easy answers" (p. 2).

Early studies of leadership tended to analyze leaders in terms of several variables which facilitated empirical study but largely ignored the cultural and political contexts in which they were embedded (Sergiovanni, 1998). Sergiovanni further contended (1996), as does Fullan (1994) and Owens (1995), that it isn't a matter of making others follow your vision but rather of developing a shared vision. Owens is referring to the context of shared power and open communication, a context which may provide the solution to complex problems encountered within the school setting.

While definitions of leadership vary, most experts assume that the twenty-first century leader must have the ability to create an environment where all stakeholders work together toward a shared vision. Creating a mutually shared vision cannot be done without sharing some of the power that was once closely held by those at or near the top of the hierarchy. Creating an environment that facilitates the development of trust, open communication and sharing of power are essential hallmarks of leadership.

In addition to providing trust and open communication to all, it is important to incorporate resisters into the process. Administrators must recognize the role resisters play in the overall culture of the school. According to Hoy and Miskel (1991), "division of labor among positions improves efficiency" (p. 104) and, they suggest, enhances specialization. However, efficiency and specialization create and promote the potential for fragmented thinking since separate departments tend to communicate infrequently and often have no true understanding of one another.

Lack of communication or impersonality is intended to improve rational decision-making as suggested by Hoy and Miskel (1991). However, when people are treated in an impersonal manner, morale is lowered. Personal experience suggests that when teachers have a personal connection to their administrator they are more productive.

"For better or for worse, change arouses emotions, and when emotions intensify, [good] leadership is key" (Fullan, 2001, p. 1). This never-ending process of change, development and growth within our environment, reflect varied leadership styles. James MacGreggor Burns is generally credited with proposing a theory of leadership that has shaped the way leadership practice is now understood (Dibbon, 1999, p. 40). Sheppard & Brown (1999) write, Burns' "new paradigm," referred to as transformational leadership, consists of delegation, collaboration, teamwork and organizational participation and provides the foundation for a style of leadership called collaborative leadership. However, Sheppard & Brown suggest that the traditional style of leadership is still very prominent throughout our educational system and business sectors. Leadership styles such as autocratic, transformational, distributed and collaborative represent only a few of the paradigms from which leaders have to choose.

Is there a style of leadership that educators should embrace as the ideal? Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999) state:

> So there is no final word on what is good leadership. We are simply trying to hit a moving target, maybe even get a little ahead of it. Granted, the qualities that are relatively enduring may become clearer in the process, but these qualities will never be more than the "basic skills" of leadership. They will never tell us anything important about how to exercise outstanding leadership, because outstanding leadership is exquisitely sensitive to the context in which it is exercised. (p. 4)

Successful leaders must have an understanding and an appreciation of the leadership styles available to exercise within the context of the environment. A major focus of this

internship was to examine how different leadership styles worked at Vanier Elementary School.

Leadership Styles

Leadership style has been defined as an "action disposition, or set or pattern of behaviors, displayed by a leader in a leadership situation" (Immegart, 1988, p. 262). The manner or approach that a leader displays when providing direction (lead), decision-making and getting the job done will determine the type of leadership style used. It is important to recognize several styles of leadership, which reflect different historical and social conditions. Kanter (2000) suggests that the traditional roles of authoritarian, participative and delegative styles of leadership for school administrators/leaders are changing as a result of societal demands, restructuring and globalization.

In the twenty-first century, leadership styles are moving beyond the role of instructional leader and incorporate such roles as "culture builder" (Barth, 2002), "lead learner" (DuFour, 2002) and "change agent" (Fullan, 2001; Kotter, 1998). Leithwood et al. (1999) have developed a multidimensional definition of transformational leadership for schools that includes: building school vision, establishing school goals, providing intellectual stimulation, offering individual support, modeling best practices and important organizational values, demonstrating high performance expectations, creating a productive school culture, and developing structures to foster participation in school decisions.

Leadership styles do vary. However, it must be understood within the context of the community, and recognized that there are times when a style may be more suited for a particular situation. Fullan (2001) includes a story from Goleman (2000) about Tom, a vice president of marketing at a floundering national restaurant chain that specialized in pizza.

[Tom] made an impassioned plea for his colleagues to think from the customer's perspective.... The company was not in the restaurant business, it was in the business of distributing high-quality, convenient-to-get pizza. That notion—and noting else—should drive what the company did....With his vibrant enthusiasm and clear vision—the hallmarks of the authoritative style—Tom filled a leadership vacuum at the company." (p. 83)

Autocratic Leadership

"Authoritarian leaders are those who allow little or no employee participation in organizational decision making and may even severely restrict employee decision making about the most effective ways of accomplishing the tasks within their jobs" (Kowalski & Reitzug, 1993, p. 225). Jones (2003) of USA TODAY writes, "the days of bosses standing over the backs of factory workers is over and that workers must be given autonomy. They are not to be bossed but conducted like orchestras." However, it is important to recognize that autocratic leadership may have a role in the work place. William Winter, president of the American Press Institute who has seen different leadership personalities first hand in newsrooms across the country, states that "it's a style (autocratic) common to newsroom bosses and not foreign to the *Times.* "

Autocratic leadership is employed by many school administrators dealing with issues such as financial, structural decisions, safety considerations and instruction to support staff. "The term authority refers to the capability of exercising power by virtue of the fact that an individual occupies a legally established position within a social institution" (Abbott and Caracheo, 1988, p. 242). This definition suggests that authority is created as a relationship between subordinates and superordinates; or, as Bendix (1960) put it, authority "involves a reciprocal relationship between rulers and ruled" (p. 295).

Research demonstrates that the authoritative style can have a positive impact on climate and performance as Goleman's (2000) data has indicated. However, Fullan (2001) suggests the importance of recognizing the weaknesses as well as the strengths in all leadership styles. It is important, as Goleman concludes, to use all four of the successful leadership styles: "Leaders who have mastered four or more—especially the authoritative, democrative, affiliative, and coaching styles—have the best climate and business performance" (p. 87). Authoritative leadership with its strength in mandating change is not an effective style for large-scale reform. Fullan (2003) writes' "the larger infrastructure really is crucial for system change. Let us also remember that mandated change has a very poor track record" (p. 33).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership focuses on building a shared mission, improving communication and making decisions collaboratively. Modern day expectations and responsibilities from our administrators requires us to adopt new ways of working together to effect change. Sheppard and Brown (1999) claim that, "approaches to leadership that appear to support the development of learning organizations emphasize the need to move away from the technical, hierarchical, and rational models of such leadership toward more culturally sensitive, collaborative approaches in which, for example, teachers are viewed as partners" (p. 296). Eaker (2002) concurs and writes that,

> transformational leadership implies that effective leaders change the lives of those around them. They motivate and inspire. They get those with whom they work to accomplish things that seem impossible. If the central purpose of schools is learning, who is in the best position to transform students' lives, motivate and inspire students, and get students to do things they never thought they could do? The answer is clear—teachers! (p. 23)

Leaders in today's schools are required to establish an environment that facilitates partnerships with teachers in creating schools and classrooms that as Bolman & Deal (1994) suggest, produces purpose, commitment, and creativity in all. The intricacy involved in establishing such an environment has created a need for collaborative leadership at the school level.

Collaborative leaders cultivate an educational milieu that fosters broad participation and inspires creative solutions. They achieve results by shifting to a facilitative leadership approach, distributing shared expertise rather than relying upon traditional management styles.

Distributed Leadership

In distributed leadership, "the emphasis is on leadership practice, which is best understood as "practice distributed over leaders, followers, and their situation," rather than "solely a function of an individual's ability, skill, charisma, and cognition" (Finnan and Meza, 2003, p. 87). Elmore (2002) suggests that a distributed leadership model require people to operate in networks of shared expertise rather than hierarchies that have a defined division of labor. When leadership is distributed, the professional knowledge and practices span many roles rather than being confined to one or another. Elmore suggests that in order for schools to be successful at connecting pedagogy to learning, they need to provide structures that develop the knowledge and skills of individuals and stretch this expertise among people sharing the same role (teachers) and different roles (administrators). Learning will emerge from the concrete tasks that require shared expertise, as all people develop their own skills and knowledge and contribute to the development of others. In this way an organization becomes more aware of the cognitive

and affective skills needed to improve its performance. Elmore writes that, "the new conceptualization of leadership as distributed within the culture of the school or district provides a compelling framework for understanding the interaction between leadership and culture" (p. 87).

Smyle, Wenzel and Fendt (2003) state that, "schools that made the greatest progress [leadership and culture] were those that had cultivated strong, distributed leadership" (p. 152). Today's administrator must use the potential expertise that is available at every school and recognize the value of teacher leadership. Successful administrators create and facilitate opportunities for teachers to lead from within.

Collaborative Leadership

Collaborative leadership has been described as: shared, participatory, collective, cooperative, democratic, fluid, inclusive, roving, distributed, relational, and post-heroic (Dibbon 1999, Sergiovanni 1995, Mahon 1994, Leithwood 1998, Fullan 2001, Brown & Sheppard 1996, Barth 2001). Collaboration involves working together with people where traditional approaches usually suggest leading the way, commanding, and controlling others. In contrast with the traditional view, Dibbon (1999) states that "leaders in learning organizations are responsible for building organizations where people are empowered and enabled to create their own future – this means, leaders are responsible for learning" (p. 39). The building of learning organizations is suggested by Dibbon (1999) and supported by Finnan and Meza (2003). Both recognize "that a single leader cannot reform a school or district and has led to an awareness of the potential of teacher leadership" (p. 87).

For years researchers and scholars such as Rost and Senge have been trying to define or describe what leadership is. Scholars of today suggest that the purpose of

leadership is to create a supportive environment where people can work together, participate and live in peace with one another; and create a caring nurturing environment (Dibbon, Posgai & Uline, Fullan, Sheppard & Brown). Today's leadership recognizes that every child and member of the community matters and where respect is afforded to all community members. In this way a supportive environment will be sustainable for future generations. Leithwood and Menzies (1998) suggest that schools that are successfully restructuring seem to employ high levels of administrator-teacher collaboration in leadership.

Collaborative leaders must acknowledge and respect the thoughts and ideas of all teachers regarding particular topics, even if they are in disagreement with the leader's viewpoint. This can be very challenging, particularly if the leader is in a hurry to create change. Fullan quotes Peter Marris (1975):

> When those who have power to manipulate changes act as if they have only to explain, and when their explanations are not at once accepted, shrug off opposition as ignorance or prejudice, they express a profound contempt for the meaning of lives other than their own. For the reformers have already assimilated these changes to their purposes, and worked out a reformulation which makes sense to them, perhaps through months or years of analysis and debate. If they deny others the chance to do the same, they treat them as puppets dangling by the threads of their own conceptions. (Fullan, 2001, p. 31)

Allowing debate and analysis of future change within a professional learning community for all participants is crucial to the role of a collaborative leader.

Collaborative Leaders: Teachers as Leaders

The increased teacher participation in school leadership generates a sense of ownership, advances professionalism, and "allows for greater control over the decision process" (Weiss, Cambone, & Wyeth, 1992, p. 351). The first impression one receives when working at Vanier is the importance administration affords all teachers in the decision making process. Teachers are leaders at Vanier and they provide administrators with valuable insight and support.

The teacher in a leadership role is not a new concept. Ovando (1996) suggests that teachers have performed both formal and informal leadership roles in schools and classrooms. Roles such as department, grade level and committee chairs represent positions of leadership on formal teams. However, according to Smylie and Brownlee-Conyers,

> recent initiatives to develop teacher leadership represent often dramatic departures from these more traditional roles. They expand and create substantially different work roles and responsibilities for teachers. They place teachers with administrators at the center of school and district level decision-making. (1992, p. 151)

Senge in conversation with O'Neil states in reference to staff development programs that "the traditional approach to helping educators learn has been to develop the skills of individuals to do their work better. I'm talking about enhancing the collective capacity of people to create and pursue overall visions" (O'Neil, 1995, p. 20).

It is important that "teachers and administrators understand the importance of shifting the way they think about teaching, coming to see the teacher as a leader and inventor rather than a performer, presenter, or clinician" (Schlechty, 2001, p.155). Such a shift is contrary to how teachers were taught as students. Teaching the curriculum is what

teachers are trained to do. The shift from teacher-presenter to leader-inventor will be difficult and somewhat traumatic. The leadership required to facilitate this change is evident at Vanier Elementary School. Teachers are encouraged and actively seek leadership positions within each committee, providing and inventing new ways of achieving better student achievement.

"Learning how to deal with uncertainty and learning to 'thrive on chaos' is a major challenge faced by most school leaders" (Schlechty, 2001, p.157).   When substantial change is created by Board initiatives or school and community projects outside the traditional framework of the school, "most leaders move from the area of procedural and technical changes to the arena of structural and cultural change: an area with which educators, and leaders generally, have had less experience and about which there is less guidance from the research community" (Schlechty, 2001, p.163). Schlechty suggests that structural and cultural change require that leaders communicate clearly and effectively a picture of what the new system will look like and the reasons why the organization needs to create such a system. Fullan (2003) wonders what individual teachers and schools can do to create change, and suggests that they "can understand the agenda; start working together, especially if led by supportive principals and teacher leaders; they can seek external linkages that have capacity-building resources" (p. 43).

"The school's culture dictates, in no uncertain terms, 'the way we do things around here.' Ultimately, a school's culture has far more influence on life and learning in the schoolhouse than the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principal can ever have" (Barth, 2001, p. 7). The fact is that traditionally, teachers prefer routine ways of doing things to new ways. The way they do things is

embodied in their habits and becomes part of their structure and culture of their environment. When change affects these habits, patterns and assumptions, there is much more at stake than simply creating change for the purpose of organizational efficiency and effectiveness. "Careers are at stake, and feelings of personal worth are at stake, as is individuals' sense of social integration and belonging" (Schlechty, 2001, p.163).

"Structural and cultural change should not be undertaken lightly or often. Such change will have profound effects on life in the organization and relationships between the organization and its larger environment. Unless the organization is change adept, such change can be catastrophic as well" (Schlechty, 2001, p.163-164). Openness to change is clear at Vanier with the process initiated by both teacher and administrator within the context of collaborative teams. Staff recognized the importance of creating change when it directly relates to improved methods of increasing student achievement. Habits change as a result of staff understanding that the change will create an efficient and effective tool for making the process of increasing academic and student outcomes. Staff at Vanier embraced such initiatives as "First Steps", recognizing that it provided a framework to organize and evaluate English Language outcomes.

Leadership at Vanier

Heck et al. (1990) suggests that the "principal's role in establishing strong school climate and instructional organization is precisely the area that strongly predicts school achievement" (p. 117). The principal at Vanier has established a positive school climate emphasizes performance, provides praise and recognition, inspires teachers, clarifies responsibilities and shares information and goal setting. The principal helps to define and

communicate the school's educational purpose: setting high expectations, communicating those expectations and educational goals effectively to staff and parents and establishing an environment conducive to learning.

The principal and teachers at Vanier ensure that instructional goals are communicated to everyone; communicating high expectations for student performance is a continuous process. Other leadership tasks include: encouraging formal and informal discussions of instructional issues; recognizing the academic accomplishments of students; celebrating good deeds recommended by students; announcing accomplishments such as Vanier Chess club, Kiwanis music festival participants, and ballet results; celebrating school volunteers; providing information to the community regarding academic achievement; working to keep teachers' morale high; and establishing a safe and orderly environment. Eaker et al. (2002) insists that changing the structures of schools-- how they are organized is the key to change behavior. But they add that, "changing the structure of schools is not enough. Changing the structure without altering the belief system will not produce fundamental change" (p. 9). Seymore Sarason (1996) observes that,

> if you want to change and improve the climate and outcomes of schooling--both for students and teachers, there are features of the school culture that have to be changed, and if they are not changed, your well-intentioned efforts will be defeated. (p. 340)

CHAPTER 3: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

Definition of Professional Learning Community

A Professional Learning Community or PLC, consists of individuals who share a common purpose or goal. Teachers, administrators, staff, students, parents and community partners of a PLC's common purpose is to enhance their productivity as educators so that all share the common goal and or purpose. This "professional community of learners" coined by Astuto and colleagues (1993) recognize the increased complexity of the world. Today it is not expected that administrator or any one person will have sufficient know how to deal with all decision making. Decision making in a PLC is a collective responsibility by all whom share the vision of the school. Researchers have agreed that a PLC will create higher academic results from students. Dibbon 1999; DuFour 2003, DuFour and Eaker 1998; Lee and Smith 1996; Little 1982; Louis, Marks and Kruse 1996; Newmann and Wehlage 1995 and others suggest that strong professional communities in schools that promote collective responsibility for student learning and norms of collegiality among teachers have been associated with higher levels of student achievement

What could one expect to see in a school that functions as a PLC? DuFour (2003) provides educators with a framework that will support an organization moving toward a PLC. DuFour writes,

> First, the people in the organization have a clear sense of the mission they are to accomplish and a shared vision of the conditions they must create to achieve their mission. They work together in collaborative teams that engage in collective inquiry into both best practices for accomplishing their aims and the current reality of the conditions in their organization. Any discrepancy between best practice and the reality of their school spurs them to take action to reduce the discrepancy.

> The entire organization is designed to engage teams in a cycle of continuous improvement— gathering and analyzing data and information, identifying weaknesses and areas of concern, working together to develop strategies to address

specific weaknesses and concerns, supporting each other as they implement those strategies, gathering new data and information to assess the impact of the strategies and then starting the process all over again.

DuFour warns that this process is not an annual event, but rather the ongoing process that drives the work of individuals within the organization. Finally, DuFour suggests that the effectiveness of the organization is assessed on the basis of results, rather than intentions or activities.

Best results are linked to staff and administration that work as a PLC. PLC will strive to: create a collaborative teaching culture; create a stimulating environment that contributes to a high level of performance and achievement; provide a challenging and appropriate curriculum; implement strategies for improving student achievement; infuse technology throughout the curriculum; develop a process of continuous school improvement; value and recognize every member of the school community and finally, monitor every student's progress.

Professional Learning Community at Vanier

One of the most powerful and pervasive themes emerging from contemporary educational research can be summarized as follows: "The most promising strategy for sustained, substantive school improvement is developing the capacity of school personnel to function as a professional learning community"(DuFour, 1998). The principal at Vanier took much pressure off teachers by continually reminding them that there is no quick fix in educational problem solving, but rather an ongoing process of continuous improvement. Each month teams would come together to discuss and share guiding ideas. The advantage of such meetings was that each team had an opportunity to develop and build a shared vision where individuals learned from each other. Dibbon (1999) writes,

In schools that are serious about organizational learning there will be a clear focus on continuous individual learning as it will be something that is planned for, encouraged, supported and accelerated by the development of formal systems and processes that promote learning and sharing. (p. 15)

The principal acted as a facilitator encouraging each team to communicate concerns and ideas. The purpose was to share in the decision making process and develop a consensus toward positive change. Each team recorded its own detailed minutes, which were shared with the staff. The administration at Vanier vigorously strived to develop and build trust among teachers and staff. Mahon (1994) suggests that, "trust is the glue in any organization. Effective communication over a period of time builds trust" (p. 6).

DuFour and Eaker (1998) provide educators with a set of tools to enable school improvement initiatives referred to as a professional learning community or PLC. Creating an environment that promotes emotional and personal growth as well as achieving cooperation within the learning community are crucial components of school improvement. However, the ultimate reward of achieving sustainable student improvement comes from a collaborative process of change. Since sustaining change relies heavily on communication, failure to recognize this process will create little change.

A professional learning community "rests on a foundation of four building blocks or pillars that support the school and give direction to people within it"(DuFour and Eaker, 1998, p. 57). They are: mission, vision, values and goals. These building blocks create sustained change and embed change into school culture. DuFour and Eaker also explore the importance of "passion and persistence"; "curricular focus"; the role of principals, teachers and parents; and the importance of staff development in a professional learning community. More will be discussed in Chapter 4 on the role that teachers, students, administration, and community have at Vanier Elementary School.

DuFour and Eaker suggest that a well-trained staff working in a supportive environment is a key to the creation of a professional learning community. Effective, dedicated teachers will naturally create a caring environment, deal with curriculum issues, and establish communication between each other, parents and students. When all stake-holders feel a sense of connection and importance, true achievement takes place.

The principal at Vanier emphasizes the importance of supporting teachers, maintaining and establishing high expectations from both teachers and students, as well as providing opportunities for continuous professional growth. This growth is recognized by all stake-holders who acknowledge that it is an ongoing process. This goal is sometimes difficult to achieve, considering the frustration administrators have in obtaining funding and time from school boards across our province for professional development. Administrators at Vanier continuously look for creative ways of providing PD to teachers. Creative scheduling for meetings, calling on teachers with expertise to share or inviting school board personnel to a staff meeting are some examples of creative ongoing professional development.

The administration stressed and promoted collaboration within the community environment and empowering teachers to create change and take risks. DuFour and Eaker (1998) state that all stakeholders have a role in creating positive sustainable change. Teachers, parents, staff and community can all be leaders in a professional learning community. The administration at Vanier appreciates the importance and role they must play in collecting data, interpreting the results and communicating them to all stake holders, as it creates an environment for the school to experiment while achieving student growth. For example, technology concerns were addressed through the use of internal data

which was collected by teachers. A technology questionnaire (Appendix A) was used to direct future initiatives in technology innovation and for improvement in student achievement. The initiative was conducted and directed by staff with administration providing a supportive role. The process created personal ownership to a perceived concern regarding a school problem.

DuFour's and Eaker's ideas of passion, patience and persistence applied over several years to achieve sustained change were comforting and refreshing (p. 58). Vanier's creation of a working document titled Literacy Profile Checklist (Appendix B) through the Literacy Action Team gave teachers a tool to organize data, and a checklist of required evaluations. This is an excellent example of the passion, patience and persistence that this team and the administration demonstrated. The process took well over a year with many revisions and direction from administration, teachers and school board. DuFour and Eaker explain that sustained change is a process that happens over several years and that requires a professional life style of continued reflection and evaluation.

Collaboration

Eaker et al. (2002) states "we must shift from a culture of teacher isolation to a culture of deep and meaningful collaboration" (p. 10). The fundamental shift:

> professional learning communities strive to create a culture of collaboration. Collaboration by invitation will not work. It is never enough. This is a key point. In a professional learning community, collaboration is embedded into every aspect of the school culture. Every major decision related to the learning mission is made through collaborative processes" (Eaker et al., p. 11).

Fullan (2003) further states that working in a professional learning community not only builds confidence and competence, but also makes teachers and principals realize that they can't go the distance alone. Decision making at Vanier incorporates the teachers into the

process with staff collaborating in small groups such as grade level meetings, divisional meetings and action teams. All teams have one common goal, providing a better environment for achieving high academic performance. Eaker et al. states "the culture of a professional learning community is characterized, in part, by collaborative teams whose members work interdependently to achieve common goals. Special attention must be paid to the "interdependence" and "common goals" if we are going to have high-quality collaboration and truly effective teams" (p. 11).

The Individual Service Support Plan referred to as the ISSP process at Vanier encourages the culture of collaboration. The "special services team" is made up of the administration, special service teachers, Guidance Councilor and the concerned classroom teacher. During these meetings a teacher can sign up and present their student to the team. Teachers complete pre-referral forms indicating a potential concern that he/she may have for an individual student. This concern is brought to the "special services team" who reviews the strategies that have been tried and recommend further accommodations. Collectively, they discuss the child with the clear vision of improving the child's academic success. The process is not intended to be a quick fix but a collaborative process that incorporates all the experts within the school. The student concern is no longer a classroom teacher concern but a school concern.

The strategies discussed at the special services team meeting are used by the classroom teachers and are monitored carefully. If noted improvement is not experienced after exhausting good teaching strategies, Pathway 2 documentation is then considered by the team. The process strives to deal with individual student concerns regarding their ability to learn. Teachers and administrators truly believe that all students can learn but

appreciate that there are many different learning styles within their classroom. The job of the professional educator at Vanier is to understand the best teaching strategies to accommodate the strengths and needs of each student.

Creating a Collaborative Culture

Frances Hesselbein is chairperson of the board of governors of the Peter F. Drucker Foundation for Nonprofit Management and is a former chief executive of the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A. She explores seven steps required in changing the culture of an organization. The seven steps, which focus on customers and results are:

(1) scanning the environment for the few trends that will have the greatest impact on the organization in the future;

(2) determining the implications of those trends;

(3) re-examining the mission and refining it;

(4) dropping the old hierarchy and creating flexible, fluid management structures and systems that unleash people's energies;

(5) challenging assumptions, policies, and procedures and keeping only those that reflect the desired future;

(6) communicating a few compelling messages that mobilize people around mission, goals, and values; and

(7) dispersing the responsibilities of leadership across the organization at every level. (Hesselbein, 2002, p.1)

Successful change is evident at Vanier with the principal creating a collaborative culture that accepts and encourages experimentation, risk-taking, and open dialogue leading to norms, practices, and power relationships uniquely suited to this school. Responsibility is

shared throughout the staff with one goal in mind, change which reflects the vision and goals of the school.

Creating a Collaborative Culture: The Principal's Role

The focus of an internship is the opportunity to participate in school activities and study the role of the principal. McLaughlin & Hyle (2001) suggest that the principal is the "key change agent in a school and that the principal must identify strategies both at the individual and group level in order to promote successful change" (p. 39). Lucas and Valentine (2002) agree when they state that recent studies of shared leadership structures stress the importance of the shaping of school culture in school change. The impact of leadership upon student achievement, for instance, seems to be mediated by characteristics of school culture (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). That culture includes the assumptions, values, and beliefs of the school's members as evidenced in their everyday actions (Kytle & Bogatch, 2000). Successful principals create a culture that accepts and encourages experimentation, risk-taking, and open dialogue that leads to norms, practices, and power relationships that are uniquely suited to their schools (Oakes, Quartz, Gong, Guiton, & Lipton, 1993). Transformational leadership emphasizes engaging leaders with followers in order to inspire the latter to go beyond self-interest, work toward values-driven, higher-level goals, participate in shared decision-making, and develop school-based solutions to challenges. Transfomational leadership, then, seems to be a leadership model well suited to the changing contexts within schools (Tucker-Ladd, Merchant, & Thurston, 1992). Principals who are transformational leaders are characterized by more flexible, versatile, and responsive leadership behavior (Duignan & Macpherson, 1993) and help their schools become more participative and democratic (Anderson, 1998).

Mission

"The fundamental mission of a school that functions as a professional learning community is learning" (Eaker et al., 2002, p. 12). Vanier's mission statement addresses three corollary questions posed by Eaker et al. If we believe the primary mission of schools is learning, then:

1. What do we expect students to learn?

2. How will we know what students have learned?

3. How will we respond to students who aren't learning?

Addressing these three questions will move a school's culture from one of "teaching" to a culture with an emphasis on "learning" (Eaker, 2002, p. 13).

Vision

"Once we have addressed the issues related to the mission, we can devote our attention to developing a shared vision that is meaningful, credible and, most important, used" (Eaker et al., 2002, p. 13). A professional learning community will reflect on the learning mission and will ask questions such as, "What are the essentials? If we did an excellent job with the essentials, what would the results look like?" Eaker et al. (2002) suggests that professional learning communities seek to describe what excellent programs look like.

> Visions, in the language of leadership, involve pictures one carries around in one's head. Ideas and concepts can have properties similar to visions. A vision is a mental image intended to organize or categorize experience. Once developed and shared, visions transform otherwise mundane activities into inspiring experiences" (Schlechty, 2001, p.169).

For example, in a vision-driven school like Vanier, consistency in assessing and evaluating students in all grades contribute to the vision of creating a school in which students

succeed to their potential each and every day. Effective leaders understand that not many

teachers will fight hard to use assessment simply to improve test scores. However, Vanier

staff members use assessments to direct instruction, which is how they increase student

academic success. Consistency in assessing students helps teachers in their quest to teach

all children. In such a school, test scores are certain to improve.

> In schools where many students are not learning much and most students are learning less than they could learn, the belief that every child can learn more than he or she is now learning, combined with the belief that it is the obligation of the school and the community to ensure that this occurs, produces a vision (a concept of school) that is obviously at odds with present reality. Such a discrepancy can inspire corrective action, or it can lead to conflict and denial. (Schlechty, 2001, p.170)

If leaders and followers embrace Schlechty's ideas and sincerely believe that all

children can learn more than they are now learning. And if they sincerely believe that it is

the obligation of the school and the community to ensure that students do learn more,

radical change in schooling is likely to be the result. If, however, the belief is not strong

and the commitment low, then the result will be a rejection and a belief that many students

are learning about all they can learn, even though what they learn is not very substantial or

very worthwhile.

Finally, as this discussion has implied, a vision must be shared by all involved in

the change process. Vanier teachers discuss at great length what they visualize as an ideal

learning environment. If a teacher tries something that works in their classroom, they are

the first to express the success with their colleagues. Equally, failure is also expressed with

intent of finding solutions. Without a shared vision, distrust among participants is likely,

and factions and factionalism are certain to appear. "In change initiatives where persons

rather than ideas are the driving force, the fickleness of personal loyalties and the

uncertainties of individual choices make long term commitment problematic and the quest for short-term advantage almost mandatory" (Schlechty, 2001, p.170).

Common visions, like a common culture, create shared meaning and inspire shared commitments over time. The legacy of previous leaders can continue to inspire action in the present because they were a part of the vision-building process.

Values

The third cultural shift necessary for a professional learning community as described by Eaker et al. (2002), is the development of value statements. Values developed in the traditional setting rarely incorporate a collaborative dialogue. Traditionally, value statements were belief statements beginning with words such as "we believe." Eaker compares the traditional approach with that of a professional learning community. In a traditional setting, values are many-fold and random, leaving little opportunity for collaboration and discussion. In contrast, a professional learning community, linking the values of the school with the vision statement, provides a limited number of specific statements. As well, value statements directed by the vision offer the school "a blueprint for improvement" which focus on ourselves rather than articulating behaviors and commitments of outside interests (p. 15).

Traditional schools use the statement "we believe" which a Professional Learning Community (PLC), recognizes as important. However, PLC's ask the question, "how do we need to behave if we are going to become the kind of school we said we seek to become?" (Eaker et al., 2002 p. 16). This question invites collaboration into the process and underlies the importance of collective involvement by all stakeholders. This process, as described by Eaker et al. is a collaborative process that "developed in order to articulate

the commitments that we will need to make together if we are going to become the kind of school we described in our vision statement" (p. 15). The shift is from belief to behavior. Vanier has "we believe" statements but unlike traditional ones they reflect the mission, teachers and administration's behavior as described in Chapter 4.

Goals

Meetings at Vanier begin with a reflection of what was accomplished, researched and tried and where the staff desires to go. An opportunity to reflect on the outcomes and desired vision are measured and continually monitored. Within a PLC, Eaker et al. (2002) suggests goals are linked to vision are few in number, focus on desired outcomes, are measurable, are continuously monitored, and are designed to produce both short and long term benefits. A PLC will ask questions such as "Why is this a goal? What are we trying to accomplish?" These questions focus on the "ends" rather than the "means" emphasized in more traditional schools.

Focusing on Learning

"One of the most important cultural shifts that must take place if schools are to perform as PLC's involves a shift from a primary focus on teaching to placing the primary focus on learning" (Eaker, 2002, p. 18). A PLC will encourage collaboration as it addresses key questions about learning, such as:

- What exactly do we expect students to learn?

- How will we know what students are learning?

- How can we assist and support students in their learning?

- Based on a collaborative analysis of the results of our efforts, what can we do to improve student learning?

- How can we recognize and celebrate improvements in student learning?

These are some questions that Eaker suggests collaborative teams address in schools that function as a PLC.

Collaborating over curriculum issues is an important component of a PLC, particularly when the primary focus shifts from teaching to learning. Eaker (2002) suggests that in traditional schools teachers independently decide what to teach so that curriculum overload is common. In contrast, a PLC collective agreement on curriculum focuses on what students are expected to learn when the content is reduced, which provides opportunities for meaningful content taught at greater depth. "In a PLC, time is viewed as a precious resource, so attempts are made to focus our efforts on less, but more meaningful content" (Eaker, p. 19). Unfortunately, Newfoundland and Labrador's Department of Education doesn't provide this flexibility.

Collaboratively, PLC's develop assessments to measure learning and have a plan to respond to all students who are not learning. This plan comes from collective inquiry where the community seeks out "best practices." Eaker (2002) asks the question "where do collaborative teams of teachers look for best practices?" He then answers:

> anywhere and everywhere! They read and discuss books and professional journals. They search the Internet. They attend conferences and workshops. They belong to professional associations. And they visit other schools that are having outstanding success. (p. 20)

Within the context of learning, Eaker (2002) suggests that in traditional schools decision-making is "based primarily on how well teachers 'like' particular approaches" (p. 21). Teacher consideration and feelings are important in a PLC; however, Eaker writes PLC's "makes the primary basis for embedding particular practices into the school culture the effect that these practices have on student learning. This emphasis on how practices

affect learning helps to create a results-oriented culture" (p. 21). Decision-making at Vanier is done on behalf of improving student achievement, recognizing the role leadership from teachers and administration play in the process.

Leadership

"PLC involves how teachers are viewed" (Eaker, 2002, p. 22). The PLC views administrators as 'leaders of leaders' and teachers as transformational leaders that hold key leadership positions in a school. On the other hand, in traditional schools, administrators are in leadership positions and teachers are regarded as "implementors" or followers. Teachers at Vanier chair committees with administrators participating as one of the members. However, the administrator is called on to express her experience and expertise to support, encourage and direct teacher leaders as they collectively move towards their vision.

Focused School Development Plans

Eaker (2002) states that "the primary mission of a PLC is learning and if we are committed to improving learning in our school, then we need plans for getting from point A to point B" (p. 24). This process will create continual improvement regarding the progress a school has made towards achieving its major goals over a defined period and relative to its past performance. O'Neil (1995) states:

> learning is always an on-the-job phenomenon. Learning always occurs in a context where you are taking action. So we need to find ways to get teachers really working together; we need to create an environment where they can continually reflect on what they are doing and learn more and more what it takes to work as teams.
> (p. 20)

It is essential that administrators link school improvement to individuals in the school and district and connect the school's goals to the broader, deeper mission of

providing high-quality learning for all students. Leaders also must be impartial when developing and implementing change initiatives and ask themselves, for example, whether a proposed strategy will improve achievement among all students.

A key question Eaker (2002) considers regarding school improvement initiatives is: "If all of the goals in the plan are accomplished, what will be the impact on student achievement?" (p. 25). In a PLC, the school improvement plan focuses on creating an environment that improves learning for all students. Senge (1990) suggests for school improvement efforts to be successful, all stakeholders-- teachers, parents, community and business partners, administrators, and students must share leadership functions. "There is always a huge difference between individual capacity and individual learning and collective learning. But this is rarely reflected in how schools are organized, because education is so highly individualistic" (O'Neil, 1995, p. 20).

Celebration

"In PLC's, there is a conscious effort to use the power of celebration to promote the values the school professes to hold dear" (Eaker et al., 2002, p. 25). Traditional schools almost always recognize groups of teachers rather than individuals. "There is a reluctance to publicly recognize and praise individuals" Eaker (p. 25). This contrasts with the PLC. Eaker recommends that both individual and group accomplishments be celebrated, particularly those that directly relate to the school's vision of student learning. Traditional schools have done an inadequate job of appreciating the outstanding work of teachers and it goes largely unnoticed by most administrators. Vanier has created a process of encouraging the celebration of students and teachers especially if it involves the school's mission. Vanier has created an environment, which celebrates the personal and group

accomplishments of students and staff. Through the use of the PA system, "Vanier Voice" (parent newsletter), school council meetings and staff meetings, the administration takes time to communicate the accomplishments of the learning community. Celebrating individual teacher initiatives such as the NLTA anti-bullying musical, the Kiwanis music festival, Grade 4 Iditarod project, the Chess Club, working with parent volunteers, and a class web site to promote better communication between school and home, are just a few examples. Vanier awards such as, "good deed" ribbons (Appendix F) are given to students and are awarded through the nomination by another student or staff, and announced weekly. Teachers also celebrate each other's achievements. Each month, at a staff meeting, the administration acknowledges recent accomplishments. Teachers also award stickers and certificates of merit to deserving children, and present such awards frequently at assemblies to both students and teachers.

Formal and informal conversations among teachers, students and staff contribute to acknowledging achievement. "I applaud what you are doing and congratulate you on the work that is being done" is a typical comment from administration as teaching and non-teaching staff work together as a team, helping children reach their academic potential. The administration is committed to realizing the goals of the school's mission statement and celebrates activities that support these mission statements. Celebration at Vanier is not as Eaker states simply "decorating the tree" (p. 29), but rather celebration that promotes student learning.

Nonlinear Process

In his comments on non-linearity, Fullan (2003) advises not to "expect reforms to unfold as intended" (p. 22). Given that there is no step-by-step process to follow, it may

take years for an administrator to create change through collaborative leadership. The speed of change, as Eaker (2002) suggests, "depends on the quality of leadership and collaboration that is present" (p.29).

The role of collaboration in creating a Professional Learning Community is not merely about inviting staff into the process but creating a "culture of collaboration" (Eaker, 2002, p. 11). Eaker adds that, "collaboration is embedded into every aspect of the school culture. Every major decision related to the learning mission is made through collaborative process" (p. 11). Indeed, Vanier teachers have the comfort level to express their concern openly at staff meetings and, the office is always open to parents, teachers and students, with no appointment necessary.

Collaborative Teams

A common feature at Vanier is the establishment of collaborative teams such as the school council, the literacy action team, and the technology and school culture team. These teams consist of teachers, parents and administrators, a common feature of the current landscape of school reform. Dibbon (1999) defines a team as, " a collection of individuals who have come together because they need each other to explore complex issues and accomplish some common goals. They will be judged to have functioned effectively as a collective learning unit when they meet the needs of their clients" (p. 17). Eaker's (2002) work on collaborative cultures highlights several important characteristics of highly effective teams. Collaboration is embedded in routine practices and built into the school day and school calendar. Products of collaboration are made explicit. Guided by norms, teams pursue specific and measurable performance goals and make their products explicit.

Ultimately teams focus on key questions associated with learning, and use relevant information to answer them.

Enduring change can only be achieved through the development of a team approach. The principal at Vanier created the environment where "teachers can continually reflect on what they are doing and learn more what it takes to work as a team" (Senge, Roberts, Ross, Smith & Kleiner, 1994, p. 20). Bolman and Deal (2001) write that, "leading is giving" (p. 106 & p. 143). The gift of authorship provides the environment with empowerment, needed space, and control to be creative. "Trusting people to solve problems generates higher levels of motivation and better solutions. The leader's responsibility is to create conditions that promote authorship" (Bolman & Deal, p. 112). The staff at Vanier feel that they can make a difference and create positive change. Staff members are a part of a group of professionals and an administrative team that defines roles and relationships. They engage in a process which research has identified as leading to success (Larson & Lafasto, 1989; Wohlstetter, Van Kirk, Robertson, Mohrman, 1997). A genial environment is created within the action team so that teachers can openly express their ideas without ridicule and tension.

The principal at Vanier provides the teams with enough information and material for teachers to discuss important philosophies that they would use as the basis of their action plan. What the principal achieved was to bring the staff together in an environment of effective dialogue, where they could interact and work together with a minimum of conflict. However, most important, was to create an environment where the primary focus is on the students academics and the staff's ability to provide the best education possible.

"Take off the principal's hat, loosen your tie and remember that you are one of us"

(Mahon, 1994, p. 2). This statement describes the atmosphere that the principal strived to

foster. Teams met each week to socialize and to get to know each other socially and

professionally. Teams also demonstrated leadership by providing input into the school

decision-making process. Bolman & Deal (2001) stress that principals "develop the

courage to let others lead" (p. 142). Senge et al. (1994) state:

> Team members will develop new skills and capabilities which alter what they can
> do and understand. As new capabilities develop, so too do new awareness and
> sensibilities. Over time, as people start to see and experience the world differently,
> new beliefs and assumptions begin to form, which enables further development of
> skills and capabilities. (p. 18)

Fullan (1994) provides eight principles to produce change that are useful in the

context of establishing teams: 1) you can't mandate or force change 2) change is a journey,

not a blueprint 3) problems are our friends 4) vision and strategic planning come later 5)

individualism and collectivism have equal power 6) neither centralization nor

decentralization work by themselves 7) connections with the wider environment is critical

for success, and 8) every person is a change agent. Vanier's Literacy Profile Checklist

(Appendix B) is an excellent example of Fullan's essential elements of creating change.

Wilkinson (1997) claims that the following are vital for school leaders in change

management: meshing, empowering, communicating, interacting, responding, developing,

envisioning, focusing, ensuring and having the patience and courage to let it happen. The

principal and teachers at Vanier together invest the time in developing and communicating

new ideas. Each team works toward creating guiding ideas that eventually represent what

values the school stands for and what the teachers want to create. The principal invests

resources, time and money to develop powerful guiding ideas. Before new ideas are implemented, it is important to study their impact on the school environment, climate, and student achievement.

CHAPTER 4: PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

Introduction

From the outside Vanier Elementary appears to be no different from many other schools. Its common factory-like exterior, however, stands in stark contrast to the dynamic of what is happening within its walls. Vanier has witnessed the emergence and evolution of a truly professional learning community, equipped with the many hallmarks espoused by today's leading researchers and practitioners. The teachers recognize the importance of a clear mission statement and a shared vision for their school. This is evident through the many private and open discussions and conversations in the staff room and staff meetings. They engage in reflective dialogue and there is a collective focus on student learning. Collaboration is part of their culture and the departure from traditional practice is quite evident. It is a school where a challenging, and meaningful curriculum coupled with excellent teaching works toward providing every primary and elementary student with the knowledge and skills and values essential to success.

Friedman (1997) speaks of the importance of taking time to define and understand a problem, and to resist the temptation of finding a quick fix. This is illustrated at Vanier. School Development and decision making is not a sprint but more like a marathon well thought out, researched and calculated.

According to Dufour and Eaker (1998), it is very important for teachers to be "students of teaching and consumers of research" (p. 220). The teachers of Vanier have engaged in provocative professional discussion, both formal and informal, and they have encouraged in-service throughout the school, as many teachers took advantage of the resource teacher's expertise. They have invested time after school to learn new technologies to support classroom learning, and many teachers have taken advantage of summer educational programs for the purpose of professional development. The teachers of Vanier know that their efforts are respected and valued by peers, supervisors, and the public, a crucial piece of the puzzle according to Kruse and Louis (1999).

The Role of Teachers

Teachers at Vanier took time to understand the uniqueness of their particular student population, to know the elements of the learning environment they wished to modify, and to pinpoint the weaknesses in their existing instructional strategies. As effective teachers, they were driven by a desire to provide the best learning experience for all students with the idea of focusing student's attention on student achievement.

Today's leading educational researchers agree that it is not possible to create effective schools without effective teachers. It is also impossible to create professional communities without teachers who function as professionals. Recent research suggests " a spirit of professional respect and trust motivates teachers to work together on school improvement initiatives" (Morrissey, 2000, p. 3). Dufour and Eaker (1998) refer to teachers as the "heartbeat of a school" (p. 233), and as the chief agents of change in the school improvement process.

The teachers at Vanier are indeed professionals. These teachers have invested significant time and effort into cultivating a PLC. Dufour and Eaker (1998) make reference to the work of the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium and the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and present a list of standards for what teachers should know and be able to do. By applying these standards to the teachers of Vanier we can see how a professional community has emerged. Vanier teachers emphasize learning rather than teaching. Vanier teachers are innovators in redesigning curriculum and instruction which engage students in significant, meaningful content. A focus on student performance and production in developing curriculum and assessment strategies is evident in the projects displayed on the walls and in classroom activities. Members of the community are also involved in the assessment and learning process. The teachers of Vanier constantly collaborate with colleagues on teaching and learning as well as on school-wide issues. This is apparent in their creative use of time through Special Services meetings held during school time. They keep abreast of research and are willing to experiment with new ways of doing things. For example, the Special Service Team invited knowledgeable experts in the field of software to assist students to read and write. They recognize that all students are individual learners and foster an environment where every student can be successful. Teachers accept responsibility, playing key roles for student learning. Private conversations initiated by teachers discussed concern CRT's looking for professional guidance from the administration, and focuses on challenging areas of curriculum. These teachers are "transformational leaders" (Dufour and Eaker, 1998, p. 234) who are making a difference in the lives of their students and in the culture of their school.

This group of teachers exhibits a great sense of pride in their school. They share a mutual respect and care for one another. Longevity is prevalent with the majority of staff working between six and ten years which, enables teachers to link past and present practice. The school exudes a family atmosphere where teachers are friends and often socialize with one another. This strong sense of affiliation with one another and with their school is invaluable in enhancing the professional community (Kruse, Louis and Byrk, 1994) at Vanier. The students of Vanier are the beneficiaries of this shared commitment.

The Role of Students

The students of Vanier respect the efforts of their teachers. They have a positive attitude and know they are cared about. Dufour and Eaker (1998) believe that the conduct, character, and achievement of its students measure the quality of a school. An evaluation of the students at Vanier indicates that this school is a high quality one.

At Vanier, students accept responsibility for their learning. They are actively involved in the popular music program and large numbers participate in the school's annual musicals, intramurals, science fairs and heritage fairs. An excellent attendance rate indicates that students and families are committed to school and work hard to accomplish their goals. They participate in both curricular and extra-curricular activities. They have formed partnerships with their teachers and community as they work to realize their learning potential.

Students have embraced the innovations and appreciate the efforts of their teachers who implement these initiatives. They speak of having to be more creative, of having to work with others, and of the need to be more responsible for themselves and others. They enjoy the freedom of choice within their classrooms and they readily accept the rigors of

their programs because they can see a connection between hard work and their success. They are active learners and also evaluators of themselves, their peers, their teachers, and their school.

Students at Vanier receive a holistic development – the children are taught social as well as academic skills. Staff emphasizes putting children's needs first by coordinating all available resources. Vanier involves the total school community – administration, teachers, support staff, parents, students and board personnel. The students of this school undoubtedly give teachers, administrators, and parents a sense of pride and worth. Their successes validate the hard and dedicated work of the staff. These values are characteristic of the transformation of Vanier into a professional community.

The Role of School Administrators

Cotton and Blum (2001, p. 33) maintain that leaders in high achieving schools are highly visible, create safe environments, encourage responsibility for learning, and engage in staff collaboration and other educational matters. According to Brown (2000), "successful schools have strong leaders" (p. 1). Administrators must create a vision for the future, achieve results, and analyze them with a view toward enhancing learning. Leadership is not separate from the learning process but rather is a necessary precursor to learning results. Copland (2003) writes:

> A vision ultimately translates into enhanced student learning. A recultured school with broadly shared leadership, fully engaged in an ongoing process of evidence-based reform using the cycle of inquiry, should produce youngsters that learn more. (p. 178)

"Principals of professional learning communities lead through shared vision and values rather than through rules and procedures"(DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 185). Teachers and administrators make student work meaningful by the use of collaboration for

all grades. Administration engages the staff in the co-creation of shared vision and values through the process of reflective dialogue. "Individuals give voice to shared experiences and, in so doing, begin to understand and value them. The reflective dialogue not only directs decisions but fosters shared norms and values" (Posgai & Uline, 1999, p. 15). When all become collectively committed to shared vision and values, common hopes and commitments become the driving force in school improvement. "Rather than relying on regulations and procedures to screen every decision or to control others, they rely on shared vision and values to give people the direction they need in order to act autonomously"(DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 185).

Administration at Vanier recognizes that it is not just someone from above or below who says how this school should be. It is not a cookbook recipe! Administration and teachers have initiated a deliberate dialogue about schoolwork and student learning. They wrestle with ideas about how they might improve daily school experiences for everyone. Through these conversations, they identify shared values and establish norms necessary to realizing these values. DuFour and Eaker (1998) agree that "a professional learning community strives to provide its students with a curriculum that has been developed by the faculty through a collaborative process and enables the school to foster a results orientation in its most critical area - student learning" (p 152). Staff collaborate and open their classrooms and offices for that purpose. Perhaps most importantly, they commit themselves to ongoing conversation.

DuFour and Eaker (1998) suggest involving faculty members in the school's decision-making processes and empowering individuals to act. Staff does not want any ultimatum from their leaders, but rather, "want co-design, co-creation, to arrive at solutions

jointly, to own what is developed" (p. 106).   Involving staff in the decision-making processes and empowering them to act on their ideas are two of the most significant and effective strategies used by capable leaders (DuFour & Eaker, p. 185).   "Professional communities encourage open participation and discussion, ideas and actions are public and accessible to all"   (Posgai & Uline, 1999, p. 19).   The administration empowers teachers to create initiatives and supports risk taking.   The administration never hinders teacher initiatives while maintaining high standards and expectations.

Kanter (1995) writes, "Change is always a threat when it is done to people, but it is an opportunity when it is done by people. The ultimate key in creating pleasure in the hard work of change is ... to give people the tools and autonomy to make their own contributions to change" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 83). The administration of learning communities disperses power throughout the school to teaching teams and committees. DuFour and Eaker recommend "avoiding the mistake of concentrating power within a school council composed of a small group of teachers, because this would suggest to the rest of the faculty that the responsibility for school improvement resides with a committee rather than with each other" (p. 186). Vanier administrators and teachers initiated a deliberate dialogue about schoolwork and student learning. They wrestled with ideas about how they might improve daily school experiences. This approach allowed all stakeholders to participate within the decision making process and is reviewed annually. DuFour and Eaker (1998) recommend providing staff members with the information, training, and the parameters they need to make good decisions. Administration must provide the opportunity and relevant training to help teachers arrive at informed opinions and decisions.

The Relationship of the School, Parents and the Community

The administration recognizes the importance of partnering with parents, particularly at the beginning stages of positive change within a school. Administrators communicated clearly what the school needed during school council meetings with the opportunity for parents and volunteers to play an active and important role in the decision making process.

As suggested, faculty, staff and parents were already experiencing this form of consensus decision making. DuFour and Eaker (1998) support partnering with parents and suggest that "when schools view parents as partners and engage them in decision - making processes, they realize higher levels of student achievement and greater public support" (p. 248). Fullan (2003) agrees that, "parental involvement and public support is essential for school success" (p. 43). DuFour and Eaker hold that a collaborative decision - making process has a positive benefit "on issues ranging from course selection and discipline policies to school wide improvement initiatives" (p. 248). Administrators at Vanier recognize the critical role parents play in the school community. "Role of Volunteers" at Vanier: (Appendix C) A modest number of parents serve on the local school council; some parents participate in lunch time supervision, lunch time reading, participation with lunch pizza program and library duties (supporting the learning resource teacher). The United States Department of Education (1995) concludes that, "thirty years of research make it clear: parents and families are pivotal to children's learning" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 19).

Vanier has won many prestigious awards throughout the years. Parents, teachers and administrators take pride in these awards and remain committed to expanding

innovations. School community commitment involving all the stakeholders is a valuable asset for continued growth. DuFour and Eaker (1998) suggest that "parent volunteers are more likely to express confidence in the school and to serve as its advocates" (p. 246).

Working with Community Partners

Administration recognizes the importance of community involvement and promotes it in such initiatives as their poetry day, guest speaker invitations, and fundraising initiatives with local business. "There is a sense that teachers and administration place great stock in ensuring that parents and community members remain comfortable with, and confident in, the school program, even as it changes" (Posgai & Uline, 1999, p. 69).

Importance of Parental Involvement

"Educators who truly welcome parents find that the benefits are virtually limitless" (Comer, Ben-Avie, Haynes, Joyner, 1999, p.52). Staff and administration at Vanier Elementary encourage collaboration with the home; for example, communicating discipline issues with the *I'M O.K.!* discipline form (Appendix D). This form provides an opportunity for parent and child to collaborate about a negative incident that occurred at school and documenting ways of curbing such behavior. Fullan (2003) writes, "parents have as much responsibility as do schools to combat disruptive student behavior and truancy. We often lay all the responsibility on teachers to compensate for poor family upbringing" (p.43). Making assessments and using a classroom-based web page created and maintained by the teachers and students. The web page is updated daily by students and parents are able to read what homework is required, learn about daily activities, see student work displayed and become informed of future plans. The initiative came from a

grade six classroom teacher and has developed into a project of interest to teachers. Teachers are now in the planning stages of incorporating this initiative into their own classroom. Such a web-site represents a tool for communicating with parents and guardians so that they see what their child is accomplishing each day and be updated regarding curriculum outcomes and homework responsibilities. Fullan (2003) adds that,

> one of the interesting by-products of engaged learning communities is that they become more proactive with parents and the public. The dynamic, I think, is that when teachers are working alone, not learning together, they are not as confident about what they are doing. Lacking confidence in explaining themselves, and being on their own, they take fewer risks, play it safe, and close the classroom door. With the thirst for transparency on the part of the public this, of course, compounds the problem—making parents more suspicious, more insistent, and teachers more defensive. (p. 44)

Comer et al. claims that "no matter how well I attempt to plan life at school, parents are still the most important influence on children" (1999, p. 54). Vanier strives to include parents in all aspects of school such as, monitoring their child's homework and school progress, academic involvement, the reading program, library support, classroom support during lunch, preparing teachers' materials, school council and fundraising initiatives. "When you get parents involved in the life of the school, you increase children's chances to succeed" (Cormer et.al., 1999, p. 55).

Vanier is a French Immersion school with many non-French speaking parents who are limited in their ability to support the academic needs of their children. Cormer et al. writes that with the right attitude, all adults can support and ultimately help their children to learn, even if they struggle with their child's academics. Cormer et al. tells a story that was shared with the parents of Vanier Elementary School through the biweekly newsletter titled *Vanier Voice.*

> When I was a high school student, my mother was at work, so my grandmother had to proof my homework. I remember one assignment in particular. When my grandmother proofed that assignment, she gave it back to me within minutes, and she said, "You look it over again because I think there are a couple of mistakes in it."
>
> I went back, and sure enough, there were several mistakes. When I gave it back to her, she looked at it for a few minutes, and then she gave it back to me saying, "Look it over again. There are some more mistakes in this paper."
>
> I redid that paper three times that night, and when I finished, it was correct. Three years later, I found out that my grandmother couldn't read!
>
> (Cormer et al., 1999, p. 54).

Spending time with your children and showing interest in their work is often all they require. When provided with the tools and ongoing support from home, children will succeed.

Vanier houses approximately 390 students. You might expect that, with so many students living in a small environment, there would be many discipline issues. This is not the case. As I walked through the hallways talking to students in their classroom during lunch, parents and teachers can be found interacting with the students tying a shoe, zipping a coat, helping with a student's lunch or reading to students. Each day parent volunteers support the school during lunch and throughout the day. Parental involvement during this potentially problematic time of the day is an important factor in the school's success.

Staff at Vanier know every child as an individual and work toward establishing a relationship with every parent. The benefits of parental input for students and staff are tremendous, as suggested by Cormer et al.:

> Each principal is just one individual. But each school community has many, many parents, and those parents have many, many ideas. When you're working with a group of youngsters, every parent has ideas about what the children should achieve. So just look at all the ideas about we can take and use when we talk to parents and work with parents! (1999, p.55)

Implementing Lessons Learned

As I reflect on the importance of professional improvement for my staff, I struggle with finding sufficient time and resources for my teachers. Time for collaboration among teachers is at a minimum when every period is accounted for, and the gradual removal of preparation time from our school further challenges us. Generally, high school teachers traditionally work in individual subject areas with arrangements for specialized preparation rooms dedicated to subject areas. Finding the physical space for teachers to meet as a group and set collective priorities on an ongoing base will be a challenge.

The respective role of initiatives necessary for enhancing student achievement by all community members is vital to the process. Creating positive change is a process which I now feel more prepared to initiate. I have also come to realize the important role teachers, parents and community have in creating and maintaining reform initiatives within a school culture.

My expectations at Vanier have provided me with a working knowledge of an excellent school that works for the betterment of teachers, students and community. Implementing ideas from Vanier will be a challenge when I return to my administrative duties. Each school is unique and Vanier's context may not be conducive to my situation. However, the collaborative and decision-making process experienced at Vanier is an environment both possible and desired. Eaker et al. (2002) writes, "while things may work well in one school it does not necessarily mean they will work equally well in another school" (p. 21). Creating a cultural shift toward collaboration will require internal experimentation rather than external practices.

As Atkin (1994) and Mortimore (1996) point out, principal's who ignore the school as a learning community do so at their own peril. Effective change management and leadership skills are essential. I concur with Dawson (1997) who suggests that the leader or principal should be the head learner.

The days of the autocratic leader working in isolation commanding and enforcing change should be a thing of the past. Instead collaborative leadership, hand in hand with continuing professional development and knowledge acquisition in many areas, is the norm. Sharing an articulated vision is part of this educational leadership. The principal at Vanier adopted a more facilitative, transformative, consultative and "bottom-up" style of decision making since she believes that, in most instances, those affected most by decisions should have significant input into making them. Inherent in this approach is the belief that those making the decisions have to be trusted to do the right things and that these will be done without excessive direction from the office.

I see the community, parents, students and staff associated with Vanier as "supercharged". They are approaching the administration with ideas of what they want to do. There is energy and enthusiasm. The principal recognizes that you can learn just as much from an unsuccessful event as a successful one. However, reflection is the key. The trust which the principal placed on teachers to make decisions without interference was predicated on the belief that the teachers were not making decisions based on self-interest, but rather on what was best for the students.

> Quality of followership is a barometer that indicates the extent to which moral authority has replaced bureaucratic and psychological authority. When moral authority drives leadership practice, the principal is at the same time a leader of leaders, follower of ideas, minister of values, and servant to the followership. (Sergiovanni, 1995, p. 320)

As educators, we are constantly striving for ways to improve student achievement, which is after all, our ultimate goal. "Students must be the constant and singular focus" (Posgai & Uline, 1999, p. 17). We examine our own particular situations, identify our weaknesses, and generate ideas and eventually goals pertaining to our profession. In doing so, we realize what it is we hope to accomplish, but we are often puzzled as to how to do it. The teachers and administrators of Vanier experience similar feelings. Vanier provides an example of the roles to be played by all stakeholders and the nature of the work involved in creating a learning community.

Schools should be places where students are provided with a framework in which they can succeed, a framework that engages students in meaningful work, backed by a dedicated group of teachers. Schools also need administrators who support, yet challenge the staff and students to reach their full potential. Finally, they require commitment from parents and the community. Within this framework stakeholders will emerge as leaders-- leaders willing to take on the challenges of building a professional community.

Vanier Elementary School is about transformation, the transformation of a school into a better place for all, especially the students. The teachers at this school have been guided by the responsibility of motivating, inspiring, and challenging all students to reach their full potential. To some, the story of this school might sound like a "pie in the sky," but at Vanier, it's reality, the way they do things; it is the culture of the school.

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Appendix A

Technology Questionnaire

Technology Questionnaire

Section 1: Computer Use

1. Have you developed strategies in your classroom to facilitate the integration of software/internet with the curriculum? (eg. Learning centres)

   Yes _____   No _____   NA _____

If you answered yes, describe briefly the strategies being used.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Have you developed a schedule for computer use that is working in your classroom?

   Yes _____   No _____   NA _____

Please describe.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. Have you established rules for student use of the computer in your classroom?

Yes _____   No _____   NA _____

What rules have been established?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. Do you feel that you have ideas for the use of computers (successes large or small) that are worth sharing with colleagues?

Yes _____   No _____   NA _____

5. Would you be willing to share your ideas with colleagues at a staff meeting?

Yes _____   No _____

6. What are your main concerns (problems) involving the use of your classroom computer? (Curriculum & general)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

7. What suggestions do you have that would make the use of computers more
    effective?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. What do you think should be priorities for technology spending? (e.g.
    computers, software, etc.)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. How many students are in your class? _____

10. How many students have a computer at home? _____

Section 2: Training Requirements

Please place a check mark beside each item in which you would like to have more training.

1. e-mail (setup and use of t-mail) _____

2. Library Pro (searching for items) _____

3. Check in / check out of library materials _____
4. Internet use _____

5. Microsoft Office
- Word _____
- Excel _____
- Power Point _____
- Photo Editor _____

6. Student Writing Center _____

7. WinZip (for compressing large files to fit a disk) _____

8. Subject Specific Software (Please list specific titles)

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. Electronic Projection Unit _____

10. Digital Camera _____

11. Scanner _____

12. Web Page Design _____

13. Other (Please specify) _____

Appendix B

Literacy Profile Checklist

Vanier Elementary Literacy Profile Checklist

Student's Name: _____

Kindergarten (√) Attached		English		French		Teacher's Initial		Date	
	Concepts of Print								
	Alphabet Check								
	Running Record Level								
	Reading Comprehension Check								
	Listening Comprehension Check								
	Viewing Assessment								
	Writing Sample (Demand)								
	Phonemic Awareness Check								
	Sight Vocabulary								
	1st Steps Profiles								
	Kinderstart Profile								

Comments:

Grade 1 (√) Attached		English		French		Teacher's Initial		Date	
	SORT -Sight Vocabulary (grade level)								
	Alphabet Check								
	Phonemic Awareness Check								
	Running Record Level								
	Reading Comprehension Check								
	Listening Comprehension Check								
	Viewing Assessment								
	Writing Sample (Demand)								
	1st Steps Profiles								
	Dictation (November & March)								

Comments:

Grade 2 (√) Attached	English		French		Teacher's Initial		Date	
SORT -Sight Vocabulary (grade level)								
Running Record Level								
Reading Comprehension Check								
Listening Comprehension Check								
Viewing Assessment								
Writing Sample (Demand)								
1st Steps Profiles								

Comments:

Grade 3 (√) Attached	English		French		Teacher's Initial		Date	
SORT -Sight Vocabulary (grade level)								
Running Record Level								
Reading Comprehension Check								
Listening Comprehension Check								
Viewing Assessment								
Writing Sample (Demand)								
Writing Sample (Process)								
1st Steps Profiles								

Comments:

Grade 4 (√) Attached	English		French		Teacher's Initial		Date	
SORT -Sight Vocabulary (grade level)								
Reading Level								
Reading Comprehension Check								
Listening Comprehension Check								

	English	French	Teacher's Initial	Date
Viewing Assessment								
Writing Sample (Demand)								
Writing Sample (Process)								
1st Steps Profiles								

Comments:

Grade 5 (√) Attached	English	French	Teacher's Initial	Date
SORT -Sight Vocabulary (grade level)								
Reading Level								
Reading Comprehension Check								
Listening Comprehension Check								
Viewing Assessment								
Writing Sample (Demand)								
Writing Sample (Process)								
1st Steps Profiles								

Comments:

Grade 6 (√) Attached	English	French	Teacher's Initial	Date
SORT -Sight Vocabulary (grade level)								
Reading Level								
Reading Comprehension Check								
Listening Comprehension Check								
Viewing Assessment								
Writing Sample (Demand)								
Writing Sample (Process)								
1st Steps Profiles								

Comments:

Guidelines :

➢   Assessments to be completed twice a year (Fall & Spring)
➢   At year end, _staple_ together all work samples for your particular year and identify the grade and teacher's name.
➢   Include a writing sample (narrative) from the final term and the _scoring rubric_ as well as a writing sample from one other genre such as poetry, essay or letter.
➢   Use Department of Education Rubrics for the listening & viewing assessments.
➢   Grade 3 teachers remove materials from K – Gr. 2 except students with an ISSP.
➢   Keep the Literacy Profiles in the literacy containers.
➢   Include a Running Record completed at the first and last term: Narrative and Informationa
➢   Indicate on the Literacy Profile the final Running Record level reached for each school year.
➢   Provide scores on lines under the appropriate program (English or French Immersion).
➢   Include all stages of the writing process for the process piece writing sample.
➢   When a student transfers to another school the Literacy File accompanies the cumulative fil
➢   Return the Literacy containers with profiles to the office at the year end.

Appendix C

Roles of Volunteers at Vanier

Role of Volunteers at Vanier

We would certainly like to offer our **thanks** to you for volunteering your services here at Vanier. We appreciate all you do. Below is a list of guidelines to help you while you are here. If there are any questions please speak to your child's teacher, the teacher on duty or the administration.

GUIDELINES FOR THE LUNCHTIME VOLUNTEER

1. Help with the opening of food containers and packages.

2. Monitor student behaviour and refer discipline issues to the teachers on duty.

3. Help the teachers on duty ensure all classrooms have been adequately tidied following the lunch break and ensure all garbage has been placed in garbage containers and juice boxes are emptied and placed in recycling bins.

4. On outside days, remind children to change their footwear, help with zippers, coats and   boots etc. Ensure all children are adequately dressed for the weather conditions before they   leave the school.

5. On outside days, assist the teachers with playground supervision using the supervision   category indicated for you.

If you have any questions, please check with the teachers on duty.

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT BEHAVIOR DURING LUNCH

1. Lunch begins at 12:00 noon

2. Children **remain seated** until **12:25** p.m. At this time, students tidy their eating area and   ensure their lunch boxes/bags are returned to their lockers . They get cleaned up and ready to go outside. On outside days, students will dress to go outdoors and when the bell goes at   12:30, they may then *walk* outside. On inside days, they can choose free choice activities.
   If a volunteer is present Grade One students can begin to tidy up at 12:15 p.m. After tidying their eating area they can choose a free choice activity until 12:30 p.m.

3. Children who leave the classroom to go to the washroom must take a hall pass. Only one   child per class can go to the washroom at any given time. This is to cut down on the   congestion in the washrooms.

4. Children are not permitted to raise their voices beyond normal speaking tones.

Other Important Information

FIRE EXITS
In case of an emergency, fire exit routes are posted in all classrooms and in central areas within the school. Please familiarize yourself with these routes. ALL children are aware of their designated areas outside of the school should an evacuation be necessary.

STUDENT ALLERGIES
It is important that you be aware of Vanier students who have severe allergies that require immediate medical attention should a reaction occur. Please notify the teacher on duty if you notice any of these children having any difficulties.

STUDENT NAME

Student X is in **Grade 1 English**. He has a severe allergy to **kiwi**.

STUDENT NAME

Student X is in **Grade 5 French Immersion**. She has a severe allergy to **peanuts and a mild allergy to nuts**.

STUDENT NAME

Student X is in **Grade 3 French Immersion**. She has a severe allergy to **cashews and all nut products**

PLEASE NOTE: **Teachers on duty are ultimately responsible for the safety and well being of the children.**

Volunteer Badges

Extra volunteer badges are available at the office if you don't have yours already. These badges can be easily identified by the children and by the teachers on duty. Please remember to wear your badge at all times while supervising.

Appendix D

I'M O.K. Discipline Form

Name_____   Date _____

What did I do wrong?

_____
_____
_____
_____

Why was it wrong?

_____
_____
_____
_____

What should I have been doing?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Look on the Bright Side because from

now on I will remember

_____
_____
_____
_____

_____   _____

signatures
parent   child

P.S.I think you should know…

I'M O.K.!

Appendix E

ISSP Process

```
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │      COMPLETE       │
                    │    PRE-REFERRAL     │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                               ⇩
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │     SUBMIT TO       │
                    │     PRINCIPAL       │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                               ⇩
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │    REVIEWED BY      │
                    │  SPECIAL SERVICES   │
                    └─────────────────────┘
                               ⇩
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │  SPECIAL SERVICES   │
                    │       MAKE          │
                    │  RECOMMENDATIONS    │
                    └─────────────────────┘
```

| CONTINUE TO USE STRATEGIES AND MONITOR | REFERRAL TO SLP | INITIATE ISSP PROCESS | INTERVENTION HAS WORKED | OBSERVATION BY GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR | REFERRAL TO GUIDANCE COUNSELLOR |

```
                               ⇩
                    ┌─────────────────────┐
                    │ COMPLETE PATHWAY 2  │
                    │  DOCUMENTATION IF   │
                    │       NEEDED        │
                    └─────────────────────┘
```

Appendix F

Good Deed Ribbon

Vanier Elementary

Good Deed Ribbon

2003 - 2004