THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL AS
INSTRUCTIONAL LEADER
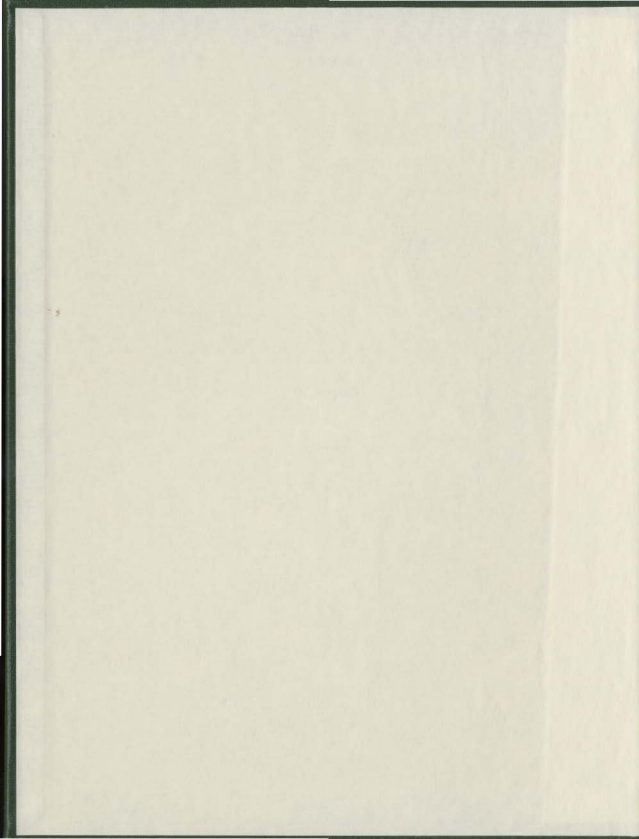
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Canada

The Role of the Principal as Instructional Leader

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 Masters of Education

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Chapter 1

Summary of the Internship

Purpose and Rationale of the Internship

The intern has chosen the internship option for the completion of the Masters of Education (Educational Leadership) for the practical experience that it offers. The Masters of Education (Educational Leadership) may be completed using several different options: The completion of a minimum of 18 credit hours plus a thesis, or 24 credit hours in addition to a project, paper folio, or an internship report. Although all of the options require students to study the current paradigms and research that exist within the realm of educational leadership, it is the author's opinion that the internship option provides graduate students with the preparation and practical experience that is required for a leadership role. An internship allows the intern to develop both personally and professionally while considering the various leadership theories studied throughout the intern's course of study.

Setting of the Internship

The intern selected School X as the site for the internship. School X is located in a rural area of Newfoundland. Although the administrative team has only been working together for the present school year, they have an extensive background and experience in the field of educational leadership. Team members have been colleagues within this school district for nine years; they have been part of an administrative team at separate schools whereby they have had many opportunities to collaborate and interact on various issues effecting their respective schools.

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School X ranges from grades Kindergarten to Grade seven, with two to three classes at each level. There is a student population of 500 with 38 teaching staff and eight student assistants who support the various programs offered within the school.

The internship site was selected for several reasons. Firstly, the school configuration is similar to the school at which the intern is currently employed. Although the intern has been trained in high school methods, most of her teaching experience has been at the primary and elementary school level; thus, the rationale for the choice of this site fulfills the desire of the intern to be involved with primary and elementary education. Secondly, School X has an excellent reputation within the district as being a model school. Thirdly, the principal, a very goal - oriented individual, has extensive administrative experience from which the intern would gain much practical experience. Finally, the vice- principal also has an extensive background in leadership and the intern felt that this combination could provide her with the opportunity to observe and participate in the many facets of the multi-dimensional approach to leadership.

Goals and Objectives of the Internship

The most important goal of this internship was to allow the intern the opportunity to observe and participate in the work of the administrative team. The intern's primary focus was to observe the principal in the role of administrator in order to construct a definition of instructional leader and his major impact on all of the stakeholders within the school culture.

In order to accomplish this experience, the intern included the following personal and professional goals:

1. to document the role of the principal as an instructional leader within the realm of facilitator and team leader of the staff and students;

2. to observe and reflect upon the various roles of the educational leader as they pertain to supervision and a positive school culture in which the teachers are empowered within a school setting;

3. to develop a positive relationship with both the administrative team and the school staff that would enable the intern to learn necessary leadership skills;

4. to participate in activities such as staffing, discipline matters and supervision that are related to educational leadership;

5. to have opportunities to apply theories studied throughout the Masters Program to practical settings such as staff meetings, assemblies and general school climate;

6. to improve personal understanding of the various roles of the administrator;and

7. to expand professional knowledge of leadership skills that will contribute to the author's abilities to promote future leadership initiatives within the classroom and school;

The internship has also included a research component. The specific research goals were as follows:

1. to evaluate the measure of support provided to the administrator;

2. to differentiate between the role of the administrator as an instructional leader and the other roles that he/she must play;and

3. to suggest possible future needs to assist the role of the instructional leader within schools as restructuring continues to take place within the school system.

Strategies for Goal Realization

This internship provided the intern with an opportunity to observe and be involved in many aspects pertaining to leadership. The following strategies were utilized in order to assist the

intern to reflect upon and understand the many facets involved in educational leadership:

1.   The intern observed interactions between the administrator and the various stakeholders within the school such as teachers, students, parents and school board personnel. These relationships were relevant to the climate and culture of the school.

2. Daily journal writing allowed the intern to reflect upon her experiences as well as provided topics for discussions with the administrator. This journal also allowed the intern to rethink and examine some of her own philosophies as they pertain to instructional and educational leadership.

3. The intern also attended staff meetings, school council meetings, special interest group meetings, meetings with teachers, students, and parents in order to view the broad range of the principal's role within the school.

4. The intern participated in school issues such as: a) administering a survey on the topic of bullying that is being studied throughout the district; b) participating in consultations between administration and primary teachers regarding the issue of how to improve CRT results.

5. The intern participated in discussion of school restructuring issues such as staffing, lengthening of the primary instructional day, and allocation of classes.

6. The intern availed of important, specific knowledge through "job shadowing" the principal and became involved with the daily routine of the administrators; it should be stated here that while most functions of the principal are routine, situations do arise spontaneously and must be responded to in the same manner.

Organization of the Report

This internship report is written in three chapters. The first chapter contains a rationale for the

report as well as internship goals and objectives. Chapter two contains the literature review which examines the role of the principal as an instructional leader. Chapter three presents an overview of the pertinent experiences of the intern and its content is of a personal and reflective nature.

Chapter 2

The Role of the Principal as Instructional Leader

Introduction

Over the past decade, there has been a constant demand for educational reform within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador. Many provincial initiatives have been implemented, such as the reorganizational structure of our schools. Due to greater concern for school effectiveness and school productivity, there are higher expectations placed on schools and there has been a call for greater accountability from all stakeholders involved within the school systems.

In March, 2000, the Department of Education of Newfoundland and Labrador released the document Supporting Learning, which gave recommendations for the improvement of the education system in our province. This document complements the work done by the Royal Commission in 1992 on educational recommendations included in the document, Our Children, Our Future. There were several driving forces for reform within our province:

> 1. demographic trends, specifically a long-term decline in enrolment;
> 2. the elimination of duplication of educational services;
> 3. financial restraints, as government attempted to reverse a lengthy period of deficit financing and;
> 4. educational performance, more specifically the perception that the education system was not producing graduates with the knowledge and skills required to succeed in a rapidly changing society (Supporting Learning, 2000, p.1).

With reform has also come a dramatic change in the role of the principal. The role of the principal has shifted from a school official or bureaucrat to a team leader (Wise, cited in

Bolender, 1996). Principals play a complex, multi-dimensional role within the school. The research suggests that principals are in a key position of influence. Berman and McLaughlin (1977) found that with the active support of the principal, projects would most likely be successful. Kulmatychi and Montgomerie (cited in Sharpe and Harte, 1996) posit, "the principal is viewed as being the key person to effect change and improvement in the school" (p.376). If the government wishes schools to be more effective in their curriculum delivery, it stands to reason that school administrators must first and foremost fulfill the role of instructional leader. Due to the complexity of the principalship, administrators "are frustrated that they are unable to devote enough time to their primary role as leaders in curriculum delivery" (Supporting Learning, 2000, p.34).

Developing an effective approach to leadership presents difficult, though not insurmountable obstacles. In order to experience constructive change, various perspectives on effective leadership must be clearly understood and its principles clearly implemented within the organization. This paper will address the concept of education reform in terms of the process of change and how the ever evolving nature of organizations is related to leadership, specifically to the instructional leader in the broad sense of the definition.

The Process of Change

Change is often a difficult process. Educational change involves the vision of many different stakeholders. Mitchell (1996) believes that current reform, unlike in the past, involves many stakeholders such as business, community, government, and parents. Reform deals with many problematic issues; therefore, positive relationships must be developed between the many different stakeholders. Giroux (cited in Mitchell, 1996) posits that "schools and society can be

transformed by developing the capacity of communities and schools so that individuals will integrate the past traditions with future hopes while they confront major contradictions and challenges in our current world" (p.13). It is important to stress that schools must ensure that students become more literate as education is seen "as a basis for social and economic development and for competitiveness in a global economy" (Supporting Learning, 2000, p. 79).

The literature suggests that school districts which are willing to disperse power so that there is more involvement and decision-making closer to the point of delivery are more successful in implementing change (Fullan, 1983). Initiatives that rely more on participation between levels and collaborative planning, with central monitoring and support, are more successful. Therefore, the capacity of an implementation plan to influence basic beliefs about curriculum and instruction are essential to any attempt at planned change.

Change is a problematic process; there are many reasons that would cause it to be impossible for a change to be implemented. Fullan (1991) states that all stakeholders have a vision of how change must occur. Conflicting visions can cause problems. Educational reform cannot be realized until all of the stakeholders can "internalize and habitually act on the basic knowledge of how change occurs successfully" (Fullan, 1991, p.1).

Leadership - An Exact Definition?

Leithwood. et. al., (1999), argue that "as times change, what works for leaders changes also" (p.3). There is no exact definition for "good leadership" as it is dependent on many factors. They acknowledge that there exists "enduring leadership qualities" but knowledge of them will yield little more than basic qualities that a leader should possess (p. 4). Leadership and what it represents is an evolution; it must be so in order to be applies and be effective in the numerous

organizations in which one finds oneself. Leadership is varied depending upon the context. Leithwood et. al. (1999) posit "some leadership practices are helpful in almost all organizational contexts ... the meaningfulness of each approach to leadership is also significantly context dependant..." (p.23).

Leithwood et. al., (1999), refer to Clark and Clark (1990) and Rost (1991) to point out that in their opinion, a failing of leadership and work has been the lack of attempts to define leadership itself, and indeed calls it an oversight. This oversight is viewed as mostly intentional however, as they further explain that trying to develop "a precise definition of a complex concept like leadership is counterproductive" (p. 6).

As administrative theory has matured from early positivism to the more humanistic modern theories, the role of the leader has evolved with it. Dubrin (1998) describes the major elements of leadership as "inspiring and influencing others, and bringing about change" (p.152). Leithwood et. al., (1999), echo this change theme in discussing the work of Senge (1996) and the "relatively recent conceptions of leadership as something widely distributed throughout organizations, and ... the empowerment of others" (p. 4). Owens (1998), in arguing the ineffectiveness of dated bureaucracies to reform schools, similarly points that "leaders", on the other hand, "assume that the ability to lead is widely distributed throughout the organization" and that it is "important for leaders to empower others to participate fully" (p. 214). English et. al., (1992), posit that an effective school leader has a collective vision that can actively communicate the school's goals and mission to all of the school's stakeholders.

It can be said then, that leadership is not a "thing", an absolute, rather there are as many organizations and contexts as there are ideas and concepts about leadership. Dubrin (1998) refers

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to a statement made by Stogdill that "the most effective leaders appear to exhibit a degree of versatility and flexibility that enables them to adapt their behavior to the changing and contradictory demands made on them" (p. 124). There is no absolute goal or destination towards which all people work; it is ever changing. Goals change, the nature of the organization changes, the leader changes - leadership is a work in progress.

It cannot be denied that with the demands placed upon educators and administrators today, it is extremely difficult for a principal and a vice - principal to "lead" a school. An effort toward staff collaboration is needed to have an effective school. Just what characteristics should an effective administrator possess? According to a recent provincial government document, a good administrator:

> - Monitors classrooms frequently and is seen throughout the school on a regular basis
> - Provides encouraging notes and comments to students and teachers
> - Promotes both working hard and playing hard
> - Monitors the positive growth of student behaviours by helping teachers see, nurture, and positively recognize student growth
> - Involved with students in positive ways
> - Assists teachers in collectively forming a vision for the school
> - Responsible, fair, and exercises good judgement
> - Facilitates and enables teachers to act collaboratively on school issues
> - Willing to act (Classroom Perspectives A Resource Guide for Teachers, 2001, P. 79 - 80).

Defining Instructional leadership

Leithwood et. al., (1999) point out that early definitions of instructional leadership "featured practices intended to directly influence curriculum and instruction" (p.24). Born out of the reform agenda of the school improvement movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s, this form of "strong leadership" was ultimately "aimed at control" (p. 24). The modern restructuring

agenda of the 90s calls for "higher order thinking" (p.24): therefore. "commitment rather than control strategies are called for" (p.24). Several other definitions of instructional leadership have implied collaboration and teamwork amongst colleagues which imply not only administrative commitment but total staff commitment. Greenfield (1987) posits that instructional leadership is "actions undertaken with the intention of developing a productive and satisfying working environment for teachers and desirable learning conditions and outcomes for children" (p.60). DeBevoise (1994) contends that instructional leadership is "those actions that a principal takes or delegates to others to promote growth in student learning."

Smith and Piele (cited in Sybouts and Wendel. 1994) state five critical focus areas for school instructional leaders: "(1) defining the school's mission. (2) managing curriculum and instruction. (3) promoting a positive learning climate. (4) providing supervision of instruction. and (5) assessing instructional programs" (p. 18). This implies that an administrator has many responsibilities within the school: Drake and Roe (cited in Reitzug. 1997) insist that the most crucial role that the principal must play is that of instructional leader. Krug (1992) asserts that in addition to the five areas of instructional leadership that another area should also be concentrated upon . "monitoring student progress" (p. 433). These categories of the instructional leader will be further examined so as to provide a broader understanding of the principal as an instructional leader.

Defining School Mission

Sergiovanni (1990) contends that school mission should be the basis which guides all school stakeholders: parents. teachers. administrators and students. in the "appropriate direction" (p. 60). Krug states that the definition of a school mission is "a stated purpose that their principals clearly

communicated to teachers, students and parents" (p.432). This definition is the antithesis of Segiovanni's as it suggests that it is the principal alone who decided the goals of the school.

Research in current trends suggest that the principal is no longer isolated from the rest of the "school community". Rogus (cited in Lashway, 1995) suggests that "major stakeholders (teachers, parents, community, students) should be invited to participate in formulating the mission". It is through this involvement that all parties can take ownership for what is happening at the school. A vision for the organization must be held by all stakeholders in order for a school to be effective as "vision refers to the capacity to create and communicate a view of a desired state of affairs that induces commitment among those working in the organization" (Sergiovanni, 1987, p. 57). Senge (cited in Isaacson and Bamburg, 1992) suggests that vision is never forced upon the stakeholders: "it emerges from people who truly care about one another and their work, who possess a strong sense of personal vision, and who see the collective vision as one that can encompass the personal visions of all". Thus, collaboration and collegiality are key issues for effectiveness and maintenance within a school. Blumberg and Greenfield (1986) maintain that having a vision is crucial since "principals must bear the greatest responsibility for determining what sort of school a school is to become" (p. 228). McCall (1994) posits that the possession of a vision of what an organization can and should be is the main focus of a learning environment.

Managing Curriculum and Instruction

Accountability is a key word within our society today. In order to compete within the global village, student achievement must be higher. Principals must be knowledgeable in curriculum, outcomes and standards as well of the current assessments because the public demands that progress be made within the realm of student achievement. "As we prepare our students to live

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in the global village, we need to give them a curriculum which will open their heads, hearts and hands to all the reality in the cosmos" (McCall, 1994, p. 218). Sergiovanni (1987) maintains that "as leaders, principals need to be concerned both with what should be and is being accomplished in their schools" (p. 133).

Mailing (1995) suggests that school leaders must be aware of the needs of students who come to the school and provide resources for those needs. Administrators cannot "hide" within the four walls of an office immersed in phone calls and paperwork; in order to achieve knowledge of who the students are, administrators must be visible by visiting classrooms and walking in the corridors just to spend time with the students. Undeniably, classroom teachers directly impact upon the academic achievement of students but the principal does play a very important role indirectly "through making such school decisions as formulating school goals, setting and communicating high achievement expectations, organizing classrooms for instruction, allocating necessary resources, supervising teachers' performance, monitoring student progress, and promoting a positive, orderly environment for learning" (Heck et al., 1990). Effective principals must realize and make student achievement the top priority within the school (Kimbrough and Burkett, 1990). Principals could engage in such activities as limiting classroom disruptions, participate in meetings to discuss curriculum or student achievement, and highlight student and staff achievement in newsletters or assemblies in order to demonstrate to the school community an interest in student and school achievement. The Department of Education and the Atlantic Provinces Curriculum have mandated that teachers teach their students to achieve outcomes; the principal must assist teachers in the provision of resources as well as the creation of curriculum in order to achieve these outcomes.

It is crucial that the principal recognize that in order to encourage a community of lifelong learners, daily matters should be organized in order to accommodate instruction. Drake and Roe (1999) posit that if instructional leadership is to be effective, it should be the main focal area of the principal's work and day.

The pressures and frustrations that principals feel in our society today are overwhelming. They are constantly under scrutiny to raise curriculum standards and achievement scores. This task creates an issue with many principals because they are responsible for the daily routine of the school as well. Blumberg and Greenfield (1986) contend that "principals are expected to do everything equally well - provide instructional leadership, to manage instructional programs and resources, to administer day-to-day school operation, to monitor student behavior and support teacher discipline, to manage all the support staff and to handle inquiries and concerns of parents, to attend numerous meetings during and after the regular school day - the list is almost endless" (p.235). A study conducted by Sharpe and Harte (1996) indicates that the most time consuming issues in school are the daily administrative tasks and not instructional leadership. Unfortunately, this is the reality of the demands placed upon administrators today; what should be deemed as a priority often cannot be, due to the daily demands that must be dealt with immediately.

Promoting a Positive Learning Climate

An instructional leader must create and promote a positive learning climate within the school. This type of school environment motivates both students and staff to want to learn. Seyfarth (1999) refers to a positive learning climate as "a positive relationship exists between the sense of caring and trusting community and students' academic and achievement motivation, their

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feelings of self esteem and their prosocial motivation" (p.126). According to Sergiovanni (1987), climate within the school has two definitions. From an organizational perspective, climate is defined as "those enduring school characteristics that distinguish a school from other schools and that influences the behavior of principals, teachers, and students" (p. 359). On a psychological level, climate "is the perpetual "feel" that teachers and students have for a particular school" (p. 359). Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) maintain that "the principal should invest leadership in the development of a climate conducive to high educational achievement" (p. 274).

School effectiveness is also contingent upon its culture. Shafritz and Ott (1996) posit that culture is "a pattern of basic assumptions invented, discovered, or developed by a given group, as it learns to cope with integration - that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (pp. 433 - 434). It cannot be denied that leaders must have a good comprehension of their school culture in order to be better able "to shape the values, beliefs, and attitudes necessary to promote a stable and nurturing learning environment" (Stolp, 1994). School climate and school are intertwined in that they both address the issue of relationships toward the school. Stolp (1994) maintains that a "healthy " school culture brings about higher student achievement and "teacher productivity" thus, the school is a more effective learning environment. Hopkins (1994) posits that "the culture of a school is the key to successful school improvement" (p.20).

Providing Supervision of Instruction

Supervision of instruction is a crucial aspect of a successful school. Rossow (cited in Reitzug

and Burrello, 1997) define supervision as "the key to the principal's role in the effective classroom" (p. 350). Supervision, as described by Glickman et al. (1998), is "the process by which some person or group of people is responsible for providing a link between an individual teacher's needs and organizational needs so that individuals within the school can work in harmony toward the vision of what the school *should* be" (p. 6). Lashway (1995) suggests that the evaluation of teachers is important for the instructional leader as "considerable interaction is needed to create shared goals and understandings about evaluation and its relation to school improvement".

The principal, as supervisor, is the leader of improvement of teaching and a motivator. The principal must be able to work collaboratively with the staff in order to build an effective school. Kimbrough and Bennett (1990) suggest that "supervision is the means by which leadership is provided for improving the teaching and learning environment of the school" (p.169). If an administrator is effective, he/she is able to create a common vision for the school whereby teachers are seen as a collaborative unit whose values and opinions are respected. This collaborative unit then works toward the ultimate goal of providing the best education possible for the students within the school.

The principal "holding the fate of the teacher in his/her hands" is a thing of the past. Principals today, are very much "team players" in supervision; they collaborate with teachers. Principals no longer mandate how the classroom should be run or how a teacher should teach; Shreeve (1993) contends that teachers are professionals and should be treated as such. Teachers should be involved in setting their own teaching goals and the principal should be actively supportive in assisting the teachers to achieve their goals (Shreeve, 1993). Conferencing is

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important within this type of supervision as it "should help teachers see and understand their own emotions, ambivalence, biases, and needs" (Garubo and Rothstein, 1998, p. 109). This also helps teachers feel understood and supported in their goal achievement and gives them a sense of ownership and empowerment within the school. Reitzug and Burrello (1997) contend that "outstanding principals go beyond merely involving teachers in decision making - they encourage teachers to continuously engage in identifying best practices" (p. 48).

Under the realm of supervision, staff development also plays a major role in schools. Through supervision, staff needs are identified and professional development programs can be implemented to serve these needs. Traditionally, teachers have linked professional development with inservice programs that are usually not very useful as there is no follow - up. Joyce and Showers (1995) posit that "the field of professional development is evolving gradually from a patchwork of courses and workshops into a system ensuring that educational professionals regularly enhance their academic knowledge, professional performance, and image as professionals" (pp. 8-9). Mailing (1995) insists that "those in leadership positions need to ensure that staff are qualified and have every opportunity to learn and continue learning throughout their careers".

Reitzug and Burrello (1997) suggest that principals should foster an environment whereby teachers are encouraged to "become more reflective practitioners" (p.48). They offer four strategies that would provide teachers with this supportive environment. These are:

1. teachers will be permitted to use their own style of teaching provided that it is justified
2. provide opportunities for professional development
3. "encourage risk - taking"- If something does not work out, look upon it as a learning experience

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4. increase possibilities for teamwork - "Teaming provides teachers with a
support group that recognizes individual limits" (pp. 48-49).

Isaacson and Bamburg (1992) maintain that the main purpose of professional development is not
that of "personal mastery" is needed for a school to achieve its goals. They contend that
"personal mastery - continuously learning and improving - is viewed as a result that is every bit
as important as the overall success of the organization" (p. 43). Staff development is a means to
achieve an end where everyone is looked upon as achieving some measure of success. Sybouts
and Wendel (1994) contend that professional development initiatives are relevant and conducive
to learning for all staff members. Teachers must be actively involved in any program for staff
development. It must also be related to the teachers' work and area of training; any program that
is irrelevant is not effective.

A principal's attitudes, behaviors and knowledge of a situation affect how they supervise. A
very one sided and clinical supervisory style can intimidate staff members. A more collaborative
supervisory style can facilitate communication and professional development. "Principals can
increase their value as supervisors through many actions, such as being consistent and honest
with staff, being available to provide assistance, stating expectations clearly, showing
appreciation for positive results, seeking opinions from staff, and basing performance on first-
hand information" (p.155). The traditional supervisory model is a top - down approach whereby
the principal is seen as the main authority figure (Blase and Blase, 1996). This model is not seen
as collaborative and perhaps puts the principal in the hierarchal role of "master teacher" who is
an expert an all areas of school life. Glickman et. al., (1998), posit that "supervision is assistance
for the improvement of instruction. This definition allows supervision to be viewed as a function

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rather than a role or position" (p.8). This definition is essential for the understanding that self improvement is the main goal within the organization.

Assessing Instructional Programs

Currently, there is an emphasis on the teacher and learner regarding curriculum reform. Lienhardt and Prawat (cited in Leithwood et al., 1994) state that with major curriculum reform, there is an emphasis on "personal meaning-making" for the learner, which "stresses the learner's ability to connect new curriculum with previously stored, relevant understandings and the importance of how knowledge is stored and organized in long-term memory" (p.39).

Goldsmith and Kantrove (2000) propose the development of a rigorous curriculum. This type of curriculum places an emphasis on students making connections between the real world and classroom content. It also "helps students develop ways of thinking" that would enable them to create links with prior knowledge (Goldsmith and Kantrove, 2000, p. 34). This would enable students of all different learning styles to be accommodated (Goldsmith and Kantrove, 2000; Our Children, Our Future, 1992). Fullan (1998) suggests that it is due to reform and the effort to meet the needs of learners that "curriculum documents are becoming more clear, reflect best ideas in the different areas of learning, link goals and outcomes better, refer to key instructional methods, and provide sufficient flexibility for teachers, schools, and districts to adapt or develop local versions" (p. 4).

Curriculum and assessment are strongly linked. Hargreaves (cited in Hargreaves et al., 1996) state that "curriculum and assessment reform should be undertaken together with planned coherence. Otherwise assessment reform will simply shape the curriculum by default" (p. 112). Assessment indicates accountability. Earl (1999) posits that assessment is a useful tool that

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would identify areas of improvement to educators and it would enable them to decide how to improve on areas of weakness. There are two views of assessment with regard to educational change. Assessment provides evidence for educational reform to an external group who has the authority to mandate change. Another view argues that assessment is an internal process which provides educators and students with a vehicle that allows "them to reflect, question, plan, teach, study, and learn" (Earl and LeMahieu, 1997, p. 158).

With measures of assessment and accountability comes an argument about standardized testing. Barlow and Robertson (1994) argue that "standardized testing can measure only what students know (or, perhaps, correctly guess); such test results measure only the frequency with which students give the same answer as other students to questions posed by someone else, questions for which the answer has already been predetermined" (p. 119). This statement contradicts the development of curriculum and the idea of teaching students how to think.

The idea of assessment, however, does create a basis for competitiveness and an indicator "to ensure students can function at the levels required for individual well-being and for the growth of society" (Supporting Learning, 2000, p. 79). Hargreaves (1995) argues that there is a "paradox of expectations" (p. 2). He states that these types of testing and comparisons "emphasize restricted definitions of intelligence, narrowness in learning styles, rigid practices of sorting and tracking, and reaffirmation of subject specialties that most tests seem to value" (p. 3). Assessment must be well explained and viewed as a means to improve a certain area. Krug (1992) maintains that "principals need to use assessment results in ways that help teachers and students improve and that help parents understand where and why improvement is needed" (p.433).

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Conclusion

Leadership styles have changed greatly over the past decade. Due to the fact that the principal "must be able to work with several different groups and a wide range of individuals", a more humanistic approach to leadership is more effective than a traditional top-down approach (Mailing, 1995). This leads to a collaborative and team approach to the improvement of schools and the education of students. Owens (1998) maintains that "organizations are made more effective as the people in them grow and develop personally and professionally over time so that they become increasingly effective not only in their individual work but as participants in a work group" (p.78).

Kimbrough and Burkett (1990) contend that "the principal is accountable for the entire operation of a school" (p. 4). Research places a tremendous emphasis on the role of the principal as an instructional leader within the school. Leithwood and Montgomery, Duke, and Smith and Andrews (cited in Leithwood, 1992) maintain that "instructional leadership focuses administrators' attention on "first-order changes - improving the technical, instructional activities of the school through close monitoring of teachers' and students' classroom work." (p. 9). He also states that instructional leaders make crucial "second-order changes"; these include "building a shared vision, improving communication, and developing collaborative decision-making processes" (p. 9). McCall (1994) believes that, "Principals give their schools purpose and direction by developing a shared strategic vision, shaping school culture and values, and formulating school improvement efforts. Principals do not perform these tasks in isolation but rather serve as facilitators, eliciting the involvement of the stakeholders and ensuring that such efforts are carried out" (p. 34). It cannot be argued that the role of instructional leader

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should be the principal's main function within a school but the demands within the school community are so great for other issues that arise, it is difficult for administrators to concentrate solely upon that role.

Chapter 3

Personal Observations and Reflections

Introduction

The main goal of this internship experience was to gain actual job experience as an administrator while "being taught" by an administrator through job shadowing and interaction with staff, students, parents, and other stakeholders involved in the school community. This particular experience has allowed the intern to observe and be involved in the various aspects of leadership and it has allowed her to develop and reflect upon the varied skills that is necessary to be an effective leader. The research component directed the intern's observations in such a way that she could concentrate upon the role of the principal as an instructional leader in the wake of many curriculum changes and other reforms to the educational system.

In order to better comprehend the daily roles of the principal, the intern availed of a journal. This journal was a valuable tool where she recorded the daily activities of the principal, her reflection of them and the varied experiences in which she was involved. It allowed her to better understand the role of the principal and the daily demands that are placed upon him. This qualitative method was the best choice to complete the study as it allowed for reflection and personal interpretation.

This chapter also includes specific events that occurred within the school during the period of the internship. These events involve the relationship between the principal and the various

stakeholders within the school and the intern's personal reaction to those events. School X has been deemed a "model school" by the chairperson within the district; this suggests that the staff and administrators have a collective vision and the school has effective leadership.

Reflections and Internship Experiences

Defining the School's Mission

A recent government document entitled <u>Classroom Perspectives A Resource Guide for Teachers, Teachers Make a Difference</u> (2001) contends that an effective school is one in which "environments conducive to order, discipline and learning" are maintained (p. 3). As previously stated, this goal can only be realized with the input and cooperation of parents, school personnel, and students. In order to achieve cooperation, the person who sits in the office must have good interpersonal skills as "the tone of schools as organizations, for good reason and for better or worse, seems to be influenced by the attitude and behavior of whoever sits in the principal's office" (Blumberg and Greenfield, 1986, p. 223).

The principal was extremely active in the lives of the students. He made a regular practice of supervising children playing sports in the gym both before school and during lunch. This was not just a supervisory duty; he genuinely took an interest in the students and their well being. During these times, the principal took the opportunity to get to know the students on another level rather than solely classroom life. The students also appreciated this opportunity because they were given an opportunity to play team sports that perhaps some may not have been able to be involved in due to financial reasons.

The principal also made his presence known in the corridors of the school during other unstructured times such as recess time and the first part of the lunch break. Although he did not

have any scheduled duty, as soon as the recess and lunch bell rang, the principal could be found in the halls of the school speaking to students and casually watching to quell any discipline problems before they arose.

The leadership and the relationship of the principal with parents, school personnel, and students were never more evident than when the school community was faced with the death of a grade one student. The principal immediately took a strong lead and guided the staff as to how to deal with this crisis. Many staff members were openly grieving for the child and her family and the principal called in the School Board Crisis Team. When the little girl's parents came to the school following her death, the principal made every effort to speak to them without being disturbed. The child's father requested that he be allowed to have her little chair from the classroom. The principal informed me at that moment that, "I would've given him the whole school if it would have made a difference to him." The principal also made himself available and also made provisions for any teacher who needed to be relieved from class. The school was closed on the morning of the child's funeral. The whole school staff attended this sad occasion and it was quite evident that they were a remarkable support system for one another. Later, the intern questioned the principal as to how he managed to get approval from the school board to close the school out of respect when a similar incidence at another school district did not yield the same results. He said simply that he did not ask the school board but **told** them that he was going to close the school. Ordinarily, this type of statement would bring about declarations of insubordination but, as the principal put it, he appealed to the director in the sense of being a parent himself and how it was important to support the grieving family. Several days later, the principal spotted a little girl crying while looking at a picture of the deceased student that was

hung in the corridor. The principal knelt down and put his arms around the little girl and said, "It's alright to cry. I know you're sad that your friend isn't here anymore". To the intern, that gesture implied that the principal was not afraid to express his emotions. Through his support for the children; he had achieved the ultimate goal of trust and respect.

Parents are another interested group who play an active role in the school. Parents assist teachers by photocopying and laminating materials for the classroom; parents volunteer in the library by checking out books and other resource materials; parents and service groups also volunteer to serve breakfast to the students at the Breakfast Program; the list is endless. The parents, in conjunction with the principal and other representatives, also plays an integral part in the running of School Council. The parents and community representatives on the School Council were very much a part of school life. The principal encouraged them to implement their plans to "boost" morale by organizing such events as ice cream sundae day. The appreciation that the parents have for the school and its role was also evident during Teacher Appreciation Week: food from parents was constantly flowing into the staff room. Some parents sent in cards to say thanks for a job well done. This created an atmosphere of appreciation for all staff members.

The principal also ensured an open door policy to school personnel. When he received a complaint about Ms. Doe, a teacher on staff, he simply left his door open. He knew the nature of his staff so well, that he knew that Ms. Doe would come to speak to him. He allowed Ms. Doe to present the nature of her concerns and he empathized with her by referring to her large class size and the amount of planning periods. Eventually, Ms. Doe came to a solution to her concern on her own. The principal just used questions and empathy to encourage the teacher to reflect and

solve her own problem. This was an excellent example of problem solving whereby the principal was the facilitator and not the person who mandated a resolution.

Because of his excellent rapport with personnel at the school, the school's mission was not simply the principal's vision of which direction the school should move. This vision was one of the entire staff. This created a trusting atmosphere where each staff member felt comfortable in approaching the principal about any issue.

Managing Curriculum and Instruction

Krug (1992) states that "effective leaders provide information that teachers need to plan their classes effectively and they actively support curriculum development" (p. 432). The principal has a strong background in Science and Physical Education and if any teacher felt that they needed assistance on a particular topic in Science, they asked for it and the principal was always eager to even demonstrate or teach a topic if the teacher wished.

Often the principal cannot teach a class because of the demands on his time but he has to ensure that the resources are available for teachers to teach to the curriculum outcomes. Since the Science program in the primary and elementary grades entails a lot of activity- based learning, the principal ensured that the materials were made available to each teacher or to like grade levels. Another instance of this is that the new Language Arts program that has been adopted by the province at the primary level only provides one text per five students. The principal realized that this was not very conducive to teaching reading to students in the primary grades, as not every student had a textbook, so he purchased class sets of the resource for each grade level to use.

Curriculum and instruction are extremely difficult to manage without the proper resources and

it cannot be done without adequate staffing of teachers. The principal was very diligent about completing a staffing proposal for the coming school year. He felt that the programs could only be delivered if the class size were smaller and his proposal reflected that issue as he stated that "a smaller class size would impact positively on the effective delivery of programs and student - teacher contact. He also took measures to ensure that the students who required special services would receive same in stating that "extra special services personnel would be required to meet the ever present demands in the area of special education.

The principal was also actively involved in promoting the district's anti-bullying campaign. He organized a half day workshop to coincide with the school board's mandate on this issue where the school personnel were trained by experts such as psychologists and the RCMP in how to deal with the issue of bullying. He also invited a basketball group to do a presentation to the students. This group was called the "Half Pints"; they were a group of midgets who used personal narratives and basketball to convey an anti-bullying message.

A new literacy initiative was adopted by the school board this year. All primary teachers were trained in the use of guided reading and of reading continuums. They were also instructed in the usage of the Benchmark series which is intended to find the reading level of students. When the primary teachers expressed concern as to how they could accomplish this task during the course of the school day because of the large number of students in their classes, the principal readily offered support. He invited the literacy and language arts specialists to the school to speak to the teachers in order to "trouble shoot" and brainstorm solutions to their problem. The teachers eventually discovered the answer themselves and decided to cooperate in doing the Benchmark series with their students. The principal also offered his time to free

teachers to do this testing. Although the intern feels that the teachers will not avail of the principal's offer of time, she knows that they appreciated his suggestion. He also spearheaded the formation of a committee of primary teachers to address any concerns regarding literacy issues within the classroom. As the principal said, "We can't wait until the end of the year and complain about the things that we haven't accomplished. We have to address any issues that we have immediately, so that everyone can experience satisfaction." Blumberg and Greenfield (1986) maintain that "in order to get something you have to give something" (p. 29). This statement rings true in the style of the principal: he assisted the primary teachers and he received their cooperation in return.

Promoting a Positive Learning Climate

"Effective school leaders help create that excitement, provide the reinforcement, and channel the energy of students and teachers in productive directions" (Krug, 1992, p. 433). The goal of every principal is to create an atmosphere in which everyone wants to learn and an opportunity is provided for all students and teachers to avail of any learning activity - direct learning or indirect learning.

This winter, the Olympics was the focus on all television stations. As a former Olympian, the principal encouraged teachers to avail of this opportunity to take part in several Olympic based activities. The two physical education teachers were supported in their initiative to have grade level Olympics. The students and the teachers greatly enjoyed the activities that were provided. These mini-olympics also provided the children the opportunity to practice teamwork and endurance as well as time to practice previously learned skills. Sybouts and Wendel (1994) contend that "empowering teachers to plan, manage and implement the curriculum unleashes

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instructional leadership among teachers" (p. 18). By providing teachers with opportunities to create and implement new teaching ideas, the principal had empowered the teachers.

The principal also informed teachers of any professional development courses that were being offered. A first aid course was being offered in the community and the principal felt that the Challenging Needs teacher and the Criteria C teacher would both benefit from this program. He immediately informed them and gave them the funding to participate. Both the principal and the teachers felt that this course would be beneficial to themselves and the students that they serve.

For learning to take place in a school, discipline must be present. The principal was very positive in his strategy dealing with discipline and the intern felt that his strategies were excellent learning experiences for her. The principal had a vivid memory of student names and incidents. If a student arrived at the office for a disciplinary issue for the first time, the principal allowed the student to explain the incident. He would then speak to the student in a calm, non-threatening manner to let him know that this kind of behavior was not acceptable and the student would be sent back to class. If, however, the student was a "repeat offender", the principal was not so lenient. He would allow the student to explain what had happened and the principal would again speak in the same calm and non-threatening manner. He would then call home and have the student explain his behavior to parents. The principal felt that by having the student explain the incident while he was standing in the principal's office left no room for diverting from the truth. The principal tolerated no "nonsense" and the students and parents were well informed of the school's discipline policy. Any repeat offender who was seen disrupting class on numerous occasions was suspended immediately because, as the principal stated, "I cannot have some students making it difficult for others to learn. The teachers must be able to teach and it is

the students' right to be able to learn."

The principal made allowances for the individuality of each student. He often knew the background from which each student came and he was able to draw them aside and speak to them if they were experiencing any difficulty. He offered encouragement and an open door if they wished assistance. The students knew that he was concerned for them. He related several instances to the intern of when a child needed a lunch or even a pair of winter boots, he always ensured that school funds were available to purchase what was needed. This humanistic approach was evident in the way he spoke to the students and asked them questions about their interests.

Providing Supervision of Instruction

Supervision of teachers and instruction is imperative in the school community. Although the intern did not have the opportunity to observe a formal in-class teacher evaluation, she did have the opportunity to assist in a meeting with a student intern, the cooperating teacher, and the principal. The principal was very encouraging to the intern, concentrating on the strengths of the lesson and "cheerleading" her involvement with the students in extra-curricular activities. The writer was given the opportunity to evaluate this student intern several times and was encouraged by her enthusiasm in her approach to the students and her ability to motivate the students during the lesson. By involving the writer in this supervisory process, the principal gave her the opportunity of a "hands on" approach to learning.

Each teacher was expected to pass in an Individual Action Plan where they listed their goals for self-improvement for this school year. The teachers who were being formally evaluated this year met with the principal to go over their IAPs and they discussed how the goals could be

reached. One teacher that was to be evaluated this year is in her final year of teaching. The principal said that he did not see the reasoning of putting any additional stress on this teacher as her career was close to an end. He regularly found time to speak to teachers and often found opportunities to visit classrooms on an informal basis. He "kept his finger on the pulse of the school". Student and school achievements were regularly highlighted on the school "Brag Board". This was kept in a central location so that all students, school personnel, and visitors to the school could acknowledge their successes.

The principal was well aware of the strengths of his staff and he capitalized on them when organizing the school. He felt that it was necessary that each grade level have a strong leader who was knowledgeable about curriculum. He tried to ensure that, where possible, common grade levels were free at the same time for planning periods to better facilitate instruction within the classroom. He also asked teachers to submit long range plans from their grade levels. This allowed him to be involved and knowledgeable of the various activities going on in the school at each grade level.

Assessing Instructional Programs

Krug (1992) contends that "good instructional leaders need to be aware of the variety of ways in which student progress can and should be assessed" (p. 433). During this age of change and reform, the main measure of assessment at grades 3, 6, 9, and 12 are the Criterion Referenced Tests.

At the beginning of the term, all grade five and six teachers were asked to attend a two day inservice on CRTs. All grade six students within the district wrote a "mock" CRT in Language Arts. The principal attended this inservice as well and he participated in marking these exams

along with the rest of the teachers. He acknowledged the difficulty of being consistent with some elements of the language arts program. He called for explanation of certain content items on the test such as viewing and he requested that the school board coordinators do up a package of writing exemplars whereby the teachers could compare what constitutes certain grades.

The results of the grade three CRTs in Math and Language Arts also arrived at the school at the beginning of the term. The principal interpreted these results and discussed with the intern the areas in which the scores were lower than the province with. He decided that an Action Plan must be established in order to improve these scores and he made this a priority throughout the term. This plan was not to be developed by the principal or the grade three teachers solely. He presented the results to all primary teachers and he applauded their success and their hard work throughout the years. He went on to point out areas that needed improvement in each subject and he asked teachers to give him suggestions as to how to improve in areas of weakness. This was obviously a way to involve all the primary teachers in the process of CRTs and it also allowed them to have a direct say as to how improvement could be accomplished.

When, unfortunately, he did not receive much teacher input for this process, so he invited the school board coordinators to the school. He insisted that the CRT should not be viewed as a grade three test; it is a test that incorporates what is learned from the entire primary grades. Greenfield (1987) acknowledges the difficulty of situations such as these as it is a "challenge for the principal to develop a working consensus among teachers as to what the situation is and what needs to be done" (p. 63). He requested that the coordinators schedule a meeting with all primary teachers to discuss the school's Action Plan. The intern was instrumental in this process as the principal had confidence in her knowledge of curriculum and the CRT process. The intern

proceeded to develop an Action Plan to be distributed to all primary teachers (Appendix 1). This plan would be regularly reviewed and supports would be offered when required.

Conclusion

This internship provided the intern with the valuable experience of working with and observing the daily routine of a school principal. It provided the intern with insights into the challenging and rewarding aspects of the job. It is only through participating in the daily life of the principal through interaction with students, staff, and community that one can understand the diverse role that an administrator fulfills.

According to Morris et. al., (1994), "the principal should devote by far the largest portion of the day to direct supervision of instruction and to staff development. As much as three-quarters of the principal's time should be given to the improvement of instruction." As this should be the mandate of the principal, it is clear that all activities within the school should reflect the reaching of the goal of instructional development. This cannot always be the case as a principal must also respond to any situations that may arise within the course of the school day. Senge (cited in Mailing, 1995) posits that "leaders of learning organisations must do more than just formulate strategies to exploit emerging trends. They must be able to help people to understand the systemic forces that shape change ... have the ability to conceptualize their strategic insights so that they become public knowledge, open to challenge and further improvement."

Through the internship program, the intern also learned to link practical experience with theory and practice that she has studied throughout the course of the Masters Program. The intern was able to observe and learn about the "humanistic" side of administration; that it not only entails a lot of "administrivia" as we are so apt to think. It also provided her with the opportunity to

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explore her career options and decide if she wanted to pursue a career in educational administration. This internship was also viewed as practical experience within the ranks of the school district and will facilitate her entry into administrative positions.

The intern has learned that an effective principal has a sense of commitment to achieve the mission and vision of the school; he is able to work collaboratively with others without mandating his vision on others. An effective administrator uses a "hands on" approach whereby he is aware of all school related issues; he is compassionate and caring toward students, staff, and parents. As previously stated, the key to a school's effectiveness lies in the beliefs of the principal. Hughes (1994) contends that "in organizations fraught with challenges from both inside and outside resulting from impelling societal expectations, demographic shifts, new knowledge, and societal and technological revolutions, a different kind of leadership is required. Such a leadership requires vision, political acumen, and an environment in which leader and followers work together for the good of the whole ..."(p. 17). The administrator with whom the intern worked possessed all of the above characteristics. The administrator at School X is a person who will continue to be a mentor for the intern for the above reasons.

APPENDIX 1

ACTION PLAN
Re: CRT Results (Fall 2001)
Subject: Language Arts

INTRODUCTION:

The following Action Plan has been devised with input from primary teachers, school administration and program specialists. The intent is to use this plan for the remainder of the current school year (2001-2002) and into the next year (2002-2003). It should be acknowledged that this plan will be revisited on a regular basis as outlined below and revisions will be made as deemed necessary.

DATES FOR REVIEWING ACTION PLAN:

Early June (2002)
Early December (2002)
Early March (2003)
Early June (2003)

AIM:

To implement a more organized and consistent approach to reaching instructional outcomes and thus improving Criterion Reference Test results.

LANGUAGE ARTS - GENERAL STRATEGIES:

1. Any information received by the Administration or Grade Three Teachers pertaining to Language Arts and/or CRT's will be photocopied and distributed to all primary teachers.

2. There will be monthly primary level curriculum meetings with all primary teachers and school administration. These meetings will take place the first Monday of each month and be no longer than 1hour 15 minutes. They will start at 2:15 p.m. and take place in the library. The agendas will be determined in consultation with teachers and school administrators.

3. We are required by the Department of Education to complete a reading continuum on each child. These records will be updated at the end of each school year and be placed in the cumulative files. As well, we are required to keep running records on every child. The Benchmarks Kits is a tool to help us ensure that these records are kept accurately and consistently. Each child must be evaluated using this tool, twice each school year (mid-year - January/February and late May/early June). Results will be placed in cumulative files.

4. Guided reading is to be used on a regular basis in all primary classrooms. It should

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consist of 15 minutes a day with groups of 3 - 4 students.

5. Grade Levels must use the "New Nelson Reading Program" as the primary resource for reaching outcomes as it's philosophy and strategies are in line with CRT expectations and approaches. Teachers should use supplementary materials and resources as deemed necessary when extra focus is required on various outcomes.

ACTION PLAN:
Specific focus ➡ CRT Strands.

CONVENTIONS:
– Our School level results were lower than both the District and Province in this strand.

ie:	(≥ 3)	School	69.1
		District	77.6
		Province	79.8

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT:
1. At grade level, children will be expected to spell words that they know and are learning correctly (ie: spelling words).

2. At grade level, an emphasis will be placed on proper usage of displayed words in the classroom in children's writings.

3. At grade level, children will be expected to spell words correctly when answering comprehension questions. Parental/teacher help is appropriate.

4. At grade level, children will be encouraged to use dictionaries to check the correct spelling of words.

NARRATIVE:
– Our School level results were lower than both the District and Province in this strand.

ie:	(≥ 3)	School	58.0
		District	69.4
		Province	63.0

1. Questioning techniques will go beyond the literal level and children will be expected to give evidence to support their answers.

2. Correct language/terminology will be used in class when addressing children (proof, evidence, text, etc.). Consistent usage of language is essential from early grades into elementary so to avoid the problem of children misunderstanding what they are being asked for on CRT's.

3.   Provide children model answers on a regular basis so as to indicate what is expected at grade level.

INFORMATIONAL:
–   This strand was low for our School, the District and the Province.

ie:	(≥ 3)	School	22.0
		District	25.8
		Province	29.6

1.   On a regular basis select informational texts from various children's magazines, books and former language arts programs.

2.   Attempts will be made to add more informational texts in the Accelerated Reader Program.

3.   On a regular basis children will be required to write down their answers to questions on informational texts. Class discussion is appropriate but should be limited.

4.   Provide children with higher level questions that will challenge them. Students should be provided with models of how to construct answers. Emphasis should be placed on justifying their answers, extracting appropriate information and devising charts to represent the information requested.

MATHEMATICS - GENERAL STRATEGIES:
1.   At grade level children will be requested to master basic addition, subtraction and multiplication facts.

2.   To achieve outcomes, supplementary materials will be provided to students in the areas of measurement and geometry.

3.   An emphasis will be placed on teaching problem solving strategies at each grade level. This will be accomplished through daily mathematical activities and by scheduling 2 (30 minute) slots specifically for problem solving activities in each 8 day cycle.

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