

TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF WHY THE PRIMARY AND
ELEMENTARY STUDENTS IN THEIR SMALL RURAL
SCHOOLS CONSISTENTLY SCORE AT OR ABOVE THE
PROVINCIAL AVERAGE ON THE CTBS

CENTRE FOR NEWFOUNDLAND STUDIES

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JEFFREY J. HOWARD



Teachers' Perceptions of Why the Primary and
Elementary Students in Their Small Rural Schools
Consistently Score At or Above the Provincial Average
On The CTBS

by

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ABSTRACT

The general perception in society seems to be "bigger is better". A review of CTBS scores, however, revealed that many small rural schools in Newfoundland and Labrador scored at or above the provincial average on the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills. In fact, thirteen small rural schools consistently scored at or above the provincial CTBS average. This thesis is a qualitative study investigating why ten of these small rural schools in Newfoundland and Labrador consistently scored at or above the provincial mean for Canadian Tests of Basic Skills' scores from 1988 to 1993.

The teachers and administrators of these ten small rural schools were asked to give their perceptions of what factors they felt contributed to the students' success on the CTBS. The teachers and administrators completed an open-ended response statement. This open-ended approach was used to give the respondents an unstructured, unguided format to express their views.

School and community profiles were compiled from the respondents' perceptions, as well as, from Statistics Canada data and from data retrieved from the Department of Education's databanks. This information was combined in an attempt to find factors common among all the schools in the study.

This study provided some insight into some of the possible reasons why these small rural schools consistently scored well on the CTBS. Although some of these small rural schools shared some common characteristics, the prevailing theme was that each school has a pool of characteristics exclusive to that school. It is this pool of characteristics which makes

each school successful.

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This study would not be possible without the support, patience, and encouragement of my wife, Darlene and my daughter, Bailey. It is to these two special people that I dedicate my thesis.

I wish to thank all the people who helped me with this study. I extend a special thanks to Dr. Dennis Mulcahy whose advice and guidance kept me focused and helped me contribute to a worthy area of research.

This study would not be possible without the help of Dr. Lenora Fagan and Mr. Kerry Pope of the Department of Education. They provided me with the access to and the retrieval of data from the Department's databanks.

Finally, I would like to thank Mr. Dan Reardon, who edited my thesis, and the students of my Cultural Heritage 1200 class who came up with the fictitious names for the schools and communities in the study.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

The Debate About School Size

The "conventional wisdom" (Sher, 1977) in education would have us believe that when it comes to school size "bigger is better". Big schools are preferred because they can offer a greater number of courses than small schools (Ramirez, 1992). Larger schools can offer more comprehensive courses with greater range and depth (Haller, Monk, & Tien, 1993). Larger schools can "court and sign outstanding" people early in the recruiting season and later place them in the most appropriate vacancy (Hare, 1991).

From a financial perspective larger schools can also take advantage of economies of scale. The cost of educational services is spread over more students lowering the average costs per student. Small schools cannot take advantage of economies of scale unless they consolidate. Small schools when consolidated can combine classes and facilities. Duplication of services would be eliminated. With one school only one maintenance person is required. The number of administrators and teachers is also reduced. Sports programs and other extra-curricular activities flourish (Nelson, 1985).

Galton and Patrick (1990) point out three broad perceptions that go against small schools. Because of school size and the limited number of teachers, small rural schools are unable to provide the necessary range, balance and depth of curriculum as is found in larger schools. Therefore, the standards of performance

of children in small schools are likely to be lower than those in larger schools. There is less chance for in-service for teachers in small schools. With little or no in-service teachers in small schools cannot get promoted to positions in larger schools. The teachers who do not get promoted stay in the same small schools for most of their teaching careers. With no new teachers coming into the small schools there is a lack of infusion of new ideas. These small schools stagnate.

Small schools are also seen as limited because they may find it difficult to recruit and retain teachers (Haller, Monk, & Tien, 1993). Small schools may find it uneconomical to provide and maintain buildings and facilities such as gymnasiums and laboratories for a small number of students (Galton & Patrick, 1990). And, small schools are seen as socially limiting because they provide a narrow mix of children and fewer opportunities to socialize with students of other communities (Bell & Sigsworth, 1987; Storey, 1992).

Achievement data are often offered as further proof of the inadequacy of small schools in providing quality education. Average achievement scores on standardized tests are higher for students in larger schools (Huang and Howley, 1991) and rural children score lower on standardized tests (Griffen, Richardson and Lane, 1994).

Supporters of small schools, however, are quick to point out that these assessments of small school performance fail to take into account such indicators as socio-economic factors, community

or family attitudes toward education, occupations of parents, intelligence quotients, or literacy rates in different areas (Galton & Patrick, 1990; and McCracken & Barcinas, 1991). When these are factored into the equation small schools are often seen as performing as well as or even better than their larger counterparts (Haller, Monk, & Tien, 1993).

Galton and Patrick (1990) reviewed many studies attempting to measure achievement standards attained by small schools. In their review of these studies they found no concrete evidence to support the claim that size or location (rural/urban) determines academic achievement. Barr (1959) and Morris (1959), in Galton and Patrick (1990), found that in many early studies of achievement levels between small and large schools intelligent quotients were not taken into account prior to testing. A Bristol Institute of Education study (Barr, 1959) found that the average IQ of the rural population was 2.91 standard score units below those of urban pupils. Morris (1959) found that when initial intelligence scores were adjusted for rural students the attainment differences on standardized tests disappeared.

The Plowden Report in 1967 (Galton and Patrick, 1990) compared reading scores of large and small schools. Large schools tended to have higher reading scores than small schools. The statistical significance of this difference disappeared when factors such as parental occupation, school starting age, and other factors were taken into account.

Galton and Patrick's conclusion, based on their review of the

literature, is that it is difficult to interpret small/large school achievement level differences with any degree of precision. There are too many factors such as vertical grouping, teaching style, social deprivation, and initial ability of populations which make comparison between small and large schools so difficult.

Small School Achievement in Newfoundland and Labrador

The current Liberal government is drafting legislation to revamp the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador. The reason stated by Chris Decker, Minister of Education, is that the present "Newfoundland school system is inefficient, with student performance among the worst in the country" (Sullivan, 1995). Mr. Decker bases these changes on results from the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills which shows a "pattern of continual underachievement, below the national norm". Decker continued by stating that because of denominationalism more small schools have remained in existence despite research showing lower performance levels among students in small schools, compared to larger schools.

Decker says there are always exceptions but generally, students have a better chance in a big school than a large school. These exceptions are just "glitches" that occur from time to time (Sullivan, 1995).

According to CTBS scores, Newfoundland and Labrador ranks in the 35th to 45th percentile on CTBS composite scores, which is well below the national average of the 50th percentile (Our Children Our

Future, 1993, p.38).

Achievement scores received on the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) show that students in small rural schools do not perform as well as students in large urban schools (Government of Newfoundland, 1991; 1993; and Warren, 1973). When one looks at the province of Newfoundland and Labrador there is a wide gap between urban and rural areas with respect to achievement.

The Royal Commission (Our Children Our Future, 1993,p.38) found the relationship between school size and achievement to be significant. The CTBS results "provide evidence of lower performance in small schools, at least in those skills measured by the CTBS" (p.39). The Royal Commission also points out that most large schools are found in urban areas.

In 1989, the Task Force on Mathematics and Science was commissioned to identify the reasons for Newfoundland and Labrador's poor success in mathematics and science. Through a comprehensive analysis of CTBS results, the Task Force concluded that students from larger schools and schools in urban areas tended to achieve at higher levels than those from small rural schools. The Task Force pointed out, however, that the differences were quite small compared to the differences which existed at the school district level.

Warren (1973) shows mean achievement scores by type of school, regional (urban) and central (rural). The raw achievement scores in reading comprehension and English expression are much higher for the regional schools than the central schools (significant at the

.01 level). Warren attributes this to the "inferior experiences" of the rural students. "Very likely, the richer cultural environment that is the privilege of the city student contributes to this higher educational level" (p.40).

The relationship between school size and achievement is significant. Smaller schools perform lower than larger schools on the CTBS. Most of these larger schools are in urban areas while most of the smaller schools belong to the rural areas. Smaller rural schools, therefore, are the lower achievers in this province. At the national level then, rural Newfoundland and Labrador schools rank near the bottom with respect to CTBS scores.

The case against small schools is made through test scores, especially the CTBS. These test results are constantly used as evidence of poor achievement in small rural schools. Such scores can be used to make the general case. However, an analysis of CTBS data on Newfoundland and Labrador schools reveals that there are always exceptions to this general rule. Some small schools each year match or exceed their district, provincial, and national norms. Thirteen of these small rural schools have consistently scored at or above the provincial CTBS mean over the six year period from 1988 to 1993. These 13 schools cannot be considered glitches.

Thesis Question

This thesis will focus on those small rural primary and elementary schools in Newfoundland and Labrador that consistently scored at or above the provincial average on CTBS scores from 1988 to 1993.

The thesis question is: Why do these particular small rural schools contradict the norm in terms of provincial achievement? Other questions may also be answered in the process. What do these thirteen small rural schools have in common? Is there a consistent, identifiable set of factors at work here?

Purpose of Thesis

In an effort to understand the factors that may have contributed to the success of their schools on the CTBS, the staff of each of the schools were contacted. They were asked what factors they thought contributed to the success of their schools. The purpose of this thesis will be to present their perceptions of why they think their schools are successful.

Other data will be used in this thesis to provide additional background when comparing each school in the study. This would include data on the communities and the schools. Community data will include social, economic and educational attainment factors. The accumulated data of the communities and teachers' perceptions

will be analyzed to determine if a common set of factors or characteristics exist among all or some of the schools.

Significance

Little research has been done on effective small rural schools. Horn (1991) points out that,

seldom, if ever, has there been a conscious effort to develop a comprehensive amelioration of perceptions among ... administrators and teachers about the expectations of quality and effectiveness of schools and the degree to which small/rural schools fulfil these expectations.

The findings in this thesis would contribute to a needed area of research in rural education worldwide.

This research will have a particular significance for Newfoundland and Labrador. Because of its geography, the province will always have a significant number of small rural schools. The results of this thesis may provide some guidance as to how they may be strengthened and improved. Since the results are based on teachers' perceptions, some useful guidelines may be identified.

Limitations of Study

This study will be based on teachers' perceptions as to why these schools work. The perceptions of teachers from different communities may vary considerably and make it difficult, if not impossible to make generalizations about all the schools in this study.

The schools were selected based on their performance on the norm-referenced Canadian Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) and on the fact that they are small and rural. Although there are problems relying solely on standardized tests (Wildemuth, 1985), the CTBS was used because it is a recognized measuring device used by the Newfoundland Department of Education.

The author also recognizes that many schools in Newfoundland and Labrador are successful, even though their CTBS scores may be low. There is no intention to infer that low CTBS scores reflect non-effective or unsuccessful schools.

No other criteria were used in the selection.

Definition of Key Terms

Small School. School where the mean elementary grade enrolment is twelve or less, (Education Statistics, 1993).

"Small" is a relative term. When referring to a small school in New York State, small may refer to schools with total populations

of less than 1000. Since this study involves small primary and elementary schools in Newfoundland and Labrador, the definition used is the one used by the Department of Education in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Rural. Communities outside urban census metropolitan districts with populations below 5000 people. This is derived from the Newfoundland Department of Education's definition of urban (Education Statistics, 1993). It does not take into account the distance from urban centers or the degree of geographic isolation of a community. Sher (1977) points out that rural implies both small communities and low population density ratios. It is, however, a relative term and may be interpreted differently depending on a person's location or perspective. Because of this vagueness in definition, the author has chosen what is not urban, in the Newfoundland and Labrador context, to be the definition of rural.

Achievement. For the purpose of this thesis achievement is defined as scores on the CTBS.

Canadian Test of Basic Skills (CTBS). An extensive norm-referenced, standardized test that measures student performance in five basic skill areas. The skills tested are: vocabulary, reading, language, work study and mathematics. It is administered to students in Grades 4, 6, and 8 in all schools in Newfoundland

and Labrador and in many other provinces in Canada. It is rotated yearly so that only one grade writes the CTBS in any given year. Periodically, a grade 12 form of the CTBS is administered to a sample of students in the province (Profile '93).

Composite. The average score calculated based on a number of subtest scores on the CTBS.

Chapter 2 - Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the theory used, and the procedure followed in collecting and reporting the data.

Qualitative Research

"Qualitative research" is an umbrella term, covering a variety of research approaches. These include: phenomenology, hermeneutics, ethnography, symbolic interactionism, ethnomethodology, sociolinguistics, feminism, critical theory, and postmodernism. Qualitative research, therefore, is a general category to facilitate the discussion of implementation that transcends a particular paradigm (Green and Chandler, 1990).

Quantitative researchers acknowledge the presence of individual fluctuations in human behaviour, but they also believe there are general laws that hold across individuals. Quantitative researchers are likely to study a population or sample of people, rather than a few individuals (Borg and Gall, 1989).

Qualitative researchers are more likely to study the individual case. Each individual, each school, each culture is likely to have an idiosyncratic set of values, feelings, and beliefs that can only be discovered through intensive, interactive

study of that individual, school and culture (Borg and Gall, 1989)

Hopkins (1976) makes a distinction between qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative research is based on describing an observation on a nonnumerical scale. Quantitative research is based on describing an observation on a numerical scale. Wiersma (1991) states that quantitative research relies heavily on statistical results represented with numbers while qualitative research relies heavily on narrative description. Qualitative research is done for the purpose of understanding social phenomena. Quantitative research is done to determine relationships, effects and causes.

Firestone (1993) says that qualitative methods are useful for understanding the perspectives of students, teachers, parents and others, for clarifying processes that take place in classrooms and schools, during program implementation, and in other areas.

Taylor and Bogdan (1984) point out that in qualitative methodology the researcher:

1. looks at settings and people holistically; people and groups are not reduced to variables.
2. tries to understand people from their own frame of reference, to experience reality as others experience it.
3. and suspends, or sets aside, his or her own beliefs, perspectives, and predispositions.

Within this qualitative framework an emphasis will be placed on the phenomenological approach. According to Wiersma (1995) the phenomenological approach emphasizes that the meaning of reality

is, in essence, in the "eyes and minds of the beholders," the way the individuals being studied perceive their experiences. In phenomenological research:

1. priori assumptions about phenomenon are avoided.
2. data collection procedures and instruments, although having some structure, should have minimum influence on the phenomena under study.
3. and there is an openness to alternative explanations of the phenomenon, which may lead to alternative and changing concepts of reality.

As Green and Chandler (1990) stated in their definition of qualitative research, qualitative research is a general term that encompasses a wide range of paradigms. These paradigms may be seen in isolation or combined with other paradigms. In the case of this study the phenomenological perspective will be combined with an ethnographic approach. Ethnography involves the collection of data on many variables over an extended period of time, in a naturalistic setting. The term "naturalistic setting" refers to the fact that the variables being investigated are studied where they actually occur, not in a laboratory or under a controlled environment (Gay, 1987).

The unit of observation in an ethnographic study in education is typically a classroom or even a school. The ethnographer works inductively by observing many aspects of the learning environment and attempting to identify factors associated with effective and ineffective environments (Gay, 1987).

Research design in qualitative research, when applied in a specific study, is less structured and generally considered to be more flexible than research design in quantitative research. This has nothing to do with whether designs are good or bad, or whether some are better than others. Research designs differ because of the context, purpose, and nature of the research (Wiersma, 1995). To qualitative researchers, what is to be learned does not invariably necessitate a particular study design involving theory, hypothesis, or generalization. It necessitates a judgement that leads them to decide what research designs they should frame to produce one or more imagined and, as yet, unimagined outcomes (Peshkin, 1993).

When being introduced to research methods there is a strong tendency to focus on techniques and procedures for getting the research done. This is fine, but it is important to realize that qualitative research is more than techniques, it is an approach to research which has somewhat different underpinnings than quantitative research (Wiersma, 1995).

According to Rist (1977), with qualitative research the researcher is encouraged to get close to the data, to develop an emphatic understanding of the observed, to be able to interpret and describe the constructions of reality as seen by the subjects, and to be able to articulate an inter-subjectivity with regard to phenomenon being studied. Rist goes on to say that it is from an interpretation of the world through the perspective of the subjects that reality, meaning, and behaviour are analyzed.

There are a variety of data gathering techniques that can be used: interviews; questionnaires; surveys; participant and nonparticipant observation; and case studies. The qualitative nature of the information sought makes it necessary to use open-form questions. Most researchers employ interviews rather than questionnaires to gather qualitative data (Borg and Gall, 1989). Because of the long travelling distance to the eleven schools, in this study, and the limited budget of the author, a "questionnaire" approach was used. Since a question was not asked, the "questionnaire" has taken the form of an open-ended response statement.

The open-ended response statement does not influence the teachers' perceptions by including prior assumptions. The participants can freely express their views and beliefs. This open-endedness may also lead to alternative explanations as to why these small rural schools achieve well on the CTBS.

Eisner (1991) develops an analogy comparing teachers with wine connoisseurs. The wine connoisseur has developed a discerning taste for wine and can distinguish among the various ingredients and can comment, with a certain sense of expertise, on the quality of the wine. The purpose of this thesis is to find out what ingredients make these eleven schools so successful on the CTBS. It seems appropriate then, to seek the views of the "connoisseurs" of education in these eleven schools. Wiersma (1995) points out that it is the perceptions of those being studied that are important, and to the extent possible these perceptions are to be

captured in order to obtain an accurate measure of reality.

Based on Canadian Tests of Basic Skills test scores, eleven (only ten were used) schools were selected for this study. Quantitative data shows that these eleven schools consistently scored at or above the provincial mean for CTBS test scores. The data, however, does not reveal why these schools are successful. These eleven schools are located throughout the island of Newfoundland coming from eight different school boards and from three of the main religious denominational systems in Newfoundland - the Roman Catholic, the Consolidated, and the Pentecostal school boards. Quantitative analysis enables us to pose the question: why are they successful? But the answer cannot be derived from quantitative analysis. A qualitative approach may answer the question since each individual, school and community is likely to have an idiosyncratic set of values, feelings and beliefs. It is through qualitative enquiry, the intelligent apprehension of the qualitative world, that we make sense (Eisner, 1991).

Identification of Schools for Inclusion in the Study

In May, 1994 Dr. Lenora Fagan, Director of Evaluation, Research and Planning of the Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education was approached. At that time the author of this thesis asked Dr. Fagan for information concerning small rural schools and achievement (Appendix A). A review of the literature,

read by the author indicated that based on raw standardized test scores large urban schools achieved higher results than did small rural schools. This question was then posed to Dr. Fagan: Are there some small rural schools which do not follow the norm and actually achieve "higher than average" scores on standardized tests.

Dr. Fagan felt this was a useful question and arrangements were made for the author to gain access to the Department's database to investigate this question.

Dr. Fagan introduced the author to Mr. Kerry Pope, Measurement Analyst with the Newfoundland and Labrador Educational Indicators Project. Mr. Pope outlined the various functions of the database retrieval system with the Department of Education. He also discussed the keywords that could be used to assist in a data search.

Since the focus of this study is on small rural schools in Newfoundland and Labrador "higher than average" was defined as - small rural Newfoundland schools that scored at or above the provincial mean on the Canadian Test of Basic Skills in 1993. Mr. Pope entered several variables into the Department's computer - small, rural, CTBS scores at or above the provincial average. Mr. Pope was able to retrieve the data based on composite scores for the CTBS.

The database produced a list of small rural schools that ranked at or above the provincial average on CTBS scores. The data for 1993 showed that 46 small rural schools ranked at or above the

provincial average for CTBS scores. This list was much larger than anticipated.

Mr. Pope then generated a list of small rural schools that scored at or above the provincial average for CTBS scores for each year from 1988 to 1992. The data showed that there were anywhere from 31 to 46 schools scoring at or above the provincial average for CTBS scores for each year from 1988 to 1993 (the 1993 list was retrieved previously).

The data on the CTBS scores of the selected small rural schools was analyzed. First, the top ten schools on each list, for each year from 1988 to 1993, were cross-referenced to see if any schools scored in the top ten regularly. Only two schools appeared more than twice over the six year period. The top twenty schools from each list were then cross-referenced. Only four schools appeared in the top twenty more than three times from 1988 to 1993. All schools on each list were cross-referenced in totality. By cross-referencing each school on each list over the six year period, thirteen schools consistently (appeared on lists three or more times) scored at or above the provincial average on CTBS scores from 1988 to 1993.

"Consistently" was defined as scoring at or above the provincial CTBS average three or more times over the period 1988 to 1993 for several reasons. Only one school scored at or above the provincial CTBS average six times out of six. The research base was broadened to include at least ten schools. The decision to use three as the cut off mark was not made arbitrarily. Several

schools in the study are strictly elementary schools. In 1989 and 1992 grade eight students wrote the CTBS tests. Since elementary schools only teach students up to Grade VI, elementary schools would not appear in the Department of Education's databanks in 1989 or in 1992. As you will see in Chapter IV, these elementary schools in this study scored at or above the provincial average, three out of four times over the six year period from 1988 to 1993. As well, some small schools may not have had any students in the particular grade writing the CTBS tests in a particular year. Also, it is reasonable to assume that a school may score poorly from time to time on the CTBS tests for any number of reasons.

Mr. Pope retrieved statistical school profiles on twelve of the thirteen schools from the Department's databanks. The computer was unable to output one of the school profiles. Mr. Pope suggested that the school may either be closed or amalgamated thus causing a change in the retrieval code for that particular school.

After reviewing the twelve schools one school was dropped from the study. The school dropped was a Grade IV to XII school from 1988 to 1989. In 1990 it was changed to an all grade school until 1993 when it was again changed, this time to a Graded VII to IX. These changes in grade structure may have produced unforeseen complications in this study so it was dropped. The remaining eleven schools were contacted to participate in the study. Ten of the eleven schools responded to the response-statement. This thesis, then, is based on the data collected from ten schools.

The respective school boards of the eleven schools were

contacted to gain permission to administer a survey to the principals and teachers of the eleven schools in question (Appendix B). Permission was granted by each of the respective school boards.

Data Collection

The purpose of this study was to determine teachers' and administrators' perceptions as to why their small rural schools consistently perform well on the CTBS. As pointed out earlier the best means for retrieving this information is through qualitative inquiry.

One of the tenets of qualitative research is that it sets aside the researcher's own biases and assumptions (Aaron and others, 1993). The qualitative researcher partakes in a study not knowing what the outcome will be. A structured questionnaire then, would serve no purpose in this qualitative study. The best means to this end then is an open-ended "questionnaire".

Wiersma (1995) points out that qualitative methodology is less structured and more flexible than quantitative methodology. With such leeway in qualitative research, the author is extending this flexible liberty in the design of the "questionnaire". It will be in the form of a response statement.

Consistently scoring well on the CTBS is considered a sign of success by the Provincial Department of Education. The author has taken the Department's view at face value and has incorporated this

assumption in the response statement to be completed by the teachers of the respective small rural schools. The response statement was presented in an open-ended form in the first person.

I believe the following school and/or community factors have contributed to the success of our school:

By giving no guidelines I hoped to get honest, personal responses from the teachers, maybe even responses that would not have occurred to me and would have been excluded in a guided response questionnaire.

Collection of Data

The data collecting method of choice for participants' perceptions was an open-ended questionnaire. The distances between each school and the distances of each school from St. John's made it impossible to conduct personal interviews. As well the questionnaire gave the participants time to think about their responses.

To make the response statement a little more inviting it was limited to one incomplete statement, to be completed by the teacher. As well, Mr. Pope supplied a list of the teachers' names in the eleven schools in the study. Each of the 90 letters and questionnaires was personalized and sent to the each teacher and each administrator in the eleven schools in the survey (See

Appendix B).

Of the 90 surveys sent out to the teachers of the eleven schools 40 individual surveys were returned from nine schools. One school felt the study was very important and held a staff meeting to discuss why they felt their school was successful. The principal of this school sent back one survey representing the views of the five teachers on staff. By combining the group response with the forty individual responses there was a return rate of 50% from ten of the eleven schools. Further efforts to obtain answered questionnaires from the eleventh school were unsuccessful.

Other Documentary Sources

Qualitative research may also be supplemented with other documents and archival materials (Aaron and others, 1993; Wolcott, 1992; and Eisner, 1991). This thesis uses two other main sources to add background to the teachers' perceptions. These two sources are the 1991 Canadian Census and School Profiles from the Newfoundland and Labrador Indicator's Project.

The Canadian census presents data on the socio-economic status of communities, literacy rates and other demographic information. The Indicator's Project provides data on school demographics, achievement scores and questionnaire responses on each school in Newfoundland and Labrador (See Appendix C).

Data Analysis

Upon receipt of the questionnaires from the schools, the data was cross-referenced to find common themes as well as unique characteristics of the schools.

This information was then incorporated with the documentary evidence to develop school/community profiles for each school/community. These individual profiles were then cross-referenced to find common themes and develop a single profile of a successful small rural school.

Chapter 3 - Review of the Literature

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to investigate studies and writings which have focused on issues relating to small rural schools and achievement. Although the amount of literature on small schools has been increasing over recent years there is none focusing on teachers' perceptions of why they think their small rural schools consistently achieve above average scores on standardized tests. The literature, however, does refer to views on small rural schools and success, and small rural schools and achievement.

As well, achievement and success have been linked. Reference will be made to characteristics essential to successful small rural schools. Some of these characteristics may be similar to the contributing factors perceived by the teachers in this study.

Throughout this review of the literature reference will also be made to multi-grade schools, rural schools, and small schools. Since most small schools and multi-grade schools are located in rural areas their success, or lack thereof, is relevant to this study.

Achievement

The perception of society, in general, is that larger urban schools are better than smaller rural schools. This claim has some statistical backing but, in many cases the perception is based upon things that smaller schools cannot provide (Galton & Patrick, 1990).

Galton and Patrick (1990) point out three main groups of criticisms of small schools. The first group of criticisms asserts that small schools are unable to provide enough teaching staff to provide the necessary range, depth and balance of curriculum as larger schools. As a result the performance of children in small schools will be lower than the performance of children in larger schools. These problems may be compounded by the teaching difficulties associated with various age levels and ability levels within a particular class. As well small schools find it difficult to offer teacher in-service. This reduces the opportunity for teacher promotions to larger schools. These teachers then remain in the same small school receiving no new training or new ideas, resulting in the stagnation of the school.

The second group of criticisms focus on the economic viability of small schools. It is uneconomic to provide facilities for music, physical education, drama and other specialty areas for small numbers of students to use only part of the time. For the same cost the facility could be built in a larger school to accommodate hundreds of students continuously. Many critics of

small schools argue that it is cheaper to bus the students from the outlying areas to the larger school.

The third group of criticisms sees the small school as socially limiting, in that, there is a narrow mix of children and fewer opportunities for students to engage in extra-curricular activities.

There are those in rural areas who would still opt for small schools even if larger schools were readily available. In other rural areas, however, the teachers, the students, and the community have bought the consolidation message: small is backward, small is poor, small is decrepit (Dunne, 1977).

Dunne (1977) says this leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy. Once everyone in the rural community perceives that small schools are inadequate, it does not take them long to become so. Parents come to believe that their children are "missing too much", and they communicate that feeling to their children. Bright young teachers, emerging from training programs where they have been taught that larger schools are superior, will seek employment in big schools, leaving those who could not "do better" to staff the smaller schools.

Many educators, state board of education members, legislators, and the general public believe that students from smaller and rural schools receive an inferior education from that of students in suburban or urban schools (Edington and Koehler, 1987).

There has been some empirical evidence to support this perception. Downey (1980) reported that in a Kansas study, ACT

(The high school profile report for small, middle, and large schools) scores for rural students were two points lower than urban students in each category of the ACT. The categories on the ACT include: math, English, natural science and social studies. An examination of student performance in Hawaii public schools found substandard achievement to be a pattern in rural areas (McCleery, 1979). Research on achievement in social studies for 13 year olds pointed out that rural students did well on objective tests focusing on skills, but not as well on objective tests focusing on factual learning (Easton and Ellerbruch, 1985).

"No matter what testing system or assessment programs are employed, researchers have found that rural school children consistently rank lower than their metropolitan counterparts" (Sher, 1977a, p.4). According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress (1974), rural children scored significantly lower than the U.S. average in almost every subject area (Sher, 1977a).

According to Edington and Martellaro (1984) the general consensus on the part of education professionals was that consolidation was the panacea for almost all the rural and small schools' problems. The public was told that the very small schools were not cost effective and could not provide quality education for their children; however, consolidation of the smaller schools and districts could overcome both the cost and quality aspects and provide a better education for all children. Because of this perception of small schools, many states in the United States

elected to consolidate the smaller schools and districts whenever possible.

In the 1970's the view of "bigger is better" began to lose steam but many educators still doubted that small schools could academically prepare students as well as larger schools. Even after no relationship between school size and quality was found, the Washington State Temporary Special Levy Study Commission concluded that "... it is generally agreed that very small schools cannot compete favourably with larger schools" (Hess and others, 1978; in Edington and Martellaro, 1984).

Edington and Martellaro (1984) conducted a study to determine whether a relationship could be found between school size and academic achievement. Academic achievement was measured by using a school average total scale score on the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills. (This CTBS is not to be confused with the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills). The sample for this study was limited to grades five, eight, and eleven in New Mexico public schools from 1978 to 1981. Two major questions were examined: is there a relationship between school enrollment size and student achievement? and is there a relationship between school enrollment size and student achievement when corrections have been made for certain other predictors of achievement?

Edington and Martellaro concluded from their study that there was no reason to believe that school enrollment size is related to academic achievement. They recommend that since academic achievement does not seem to be related to school size, then

factors other than achievement should be considered when consolidation is being contemplated.

Edington and Martellaro did find, however, that academic achievement appears to be highly related to socio-economic factors and secondarily related to cultural or ethnic factors.

Herriott (1980), in Edington (1980), says that rural individuals in comparison to their urban counterparts, are more likely to be classified as functional illiterates, score lower on national assessment tests, attend public schools that expend less for instruction, first enroll in school at an older age, progress through school more slowly, and complete fewer years of school.

Children in urban areas seem to be exposed to formal schooling sooner than children in rural areas. Edington (1980) points out that there are more varied curriculum opportunities in urban areas than in rural areas. There are fewer preschool facilities in non-metropolitan regions of the U.S. than there are in metropolitan regions. The following table lists the percentage of children aged three to five years of age in the U.S. who attend school or preschool (Sher, J. and Rosenfeld, S., 1977).

Table 3.1 Children Attending School in the U.S.

Ages	% Metropolitan Schools	% Non-Metropolitan Schools
3	15.2%	8.9%
4	33.1%	18.5%
5	73.1%	61.2%
3 - 5	41.5%	30.2%

Edington (1980) goes on to say that other educational programs are geared more to urban areas. A prime example of this is the Sesame Street program produced for television.

The small staffs at rural schools lack the versatility and flexibility that larger school staffs have. Only seven percent of rural schools have a psychologist on staff, while seventy-six percent of urban schools have a psychologist on staff. Although most schools have libraries, only 58% of the rural schools have a librarian whereas 98% of all urban schools have librarians (Edington, 1980).

Although a dismal picture of small rural schools has been painted over the years, more recent research and more sophisticated research designs show that small rural schools are just as "good" as larger urban schools, if not better. In fact, over time when factors such as socio-economic data are factored into the achievement equation small rural schools are found to be as good as or better when it comes to achievement (Riggs, 1987; Sher, 1977; McCracken and Barcinas, 1991; Reck, 1987).

The few studies available suggest that only trivial differences exist between the attainment level of pupils in large and small, and urban and rural schools; those which have been found invariably favour small rural schools (Nash, 1980).

In an Alberta study of grade twelve examination results the percentage of students passing departmental examinations increases with the size of the school (Harrison and Downey, 1965) in Riggs (1987). It is not conclusive though. These results could be

attributed to factors other than size. Beckner and O'Neal (1980) in Riggs (1987) list father's occupation, family attitudes, or socio-economic status as possible factors.

Huang and Howley (1991) studied the effect of small scale schooling on low socio-economic status students in Alaska. The study showed that disadvantaged students tend to do better in small schools than in larger schools. The small school provides a setting for instructionally effective contact. Small schools reduce the negative influences of low socio-economic status on student achievement. Huang and Howley also point out that achievement levels are higher in large schools but disadvantaged students tend to do better in small schools.

In many studies, small rural schools appear to be inferior to larger urban schools based on their "limited" definition of achievement. Usually, their definition is based on standardized test scores. Other studies use a broader definition.

Horn (1991) studied small schools in rural areas of Kansas. He determined school effectiveness by students' scores on standardized tests, attainment of college scholarships, percentage of students attending post-secondary educational institutions, and participation in extra-curricular activities. In his definition of achievement he also included development of higher-order thinking skills, socialization, development of good work ethics, and preparation of students for good citizenship. He found that in small schools in Kansas: students participated widely in extra-curriculars; over seventy percent of students intended to pursue

post-secondary education; over seventy percent of students reported receiving grades of A or B, with only 1.4% getting D or F; over eighty percent of adult respondents believed extra-curricular activities to be important; all groups questioned perceived that quality indicators were present in their schools; and that those schools had a very low drop-out rate. Questionnaires were circulated to high school and junior high school students, teachers, building administrators, district superintendents, school board members, and adult community members. He concluded by stating that "students in small/rural schools performed above the state average on all areas of the Kansas competency test, and students pursue post-secondary education at a rate higher than the average for the state" (p.25). He also stated that there is no evidence to indicate that those schools are doing an inferior job, and evidence points out that they are doing a much better job than average.

Advantages of Small Rural Schools

The perception of small rural schools being inferior to larger urban schools still exists in many peoples' minds today. Many studies conducted over past few years, however, refute any claims of academic superiority of larger urban schools. In fact, many writers have openly expressed the virtues of small rural schools. Some of these advantages will be summarized here because they

reflect some of the responses and views of the teachers in this study.

Some of America's greatest intellectuals - Jefferson, Thoreau, and Emerson - wrote about the national importance of a healthy rural society. For them, the urban world was nothing but a place of purposeless noise, commotion and filth (Shi, 1985 in Theobald, 1992). Only in the countryside could the best qualities of humankind flourish.

Among the very diverse rural systems are many rural schools that compare favourably in terms of educational quality with their larger and wealthier urban and suburban counterparts. The broad statistics mask these successes and tend to divert researchers away from studying the characteristics of outstanding small schools. Much of what is unique about rural schools and rural school districts defies quantitative analysis or statistical description (Sher, 1977a).

Rural school districts provide a sense of community that is usually missing in urban districts. The teaching staff usually has more opportunity to exercise leadership, and administrators are more visible. Evidence indicates that students in small rural schools score better on standardized tests. Student participation in extra-curricular activities, student satisfaction, and attendance was higher in smaller schools (Griffen, Richardson, and Lane; 1994).

Durkin (1977) stated that a small school is much easier to administer than a larger school. It is also much easier for the

entire community to get involved with the operation of the school. Renihan and Renihan (1991) also pointed out the ease with which the community can get involved with smaller schools. Beckner and O'Neal (1980) contended that small schools have: closer relations between faculty and administration; less red tape; more participation in decision making by teachers and students; easier change processes; closer parent-teacher relations; and more parental involvement in the school. Levin and Marshall (1980) contended that small schools have more sense of community, closer relationships between students and teachers, greater student participation in extra-curriculars, less discipline problems, and more human contact. Sher and Tompkins (1977) stated that small schools provide such advantages as, "local control; close relations among professionals, parents, students, and community; and the opportunity for many more students to participate in school activities at a more meaningful level" (p.57). Brimm and Hanson (1980) agreed with that list of advantages of the small school. It seems reasonable that those conditions would exist in small schools, with smaller numbers of teachers and students. Closer relationships and ease of communications should facilitate a closer, more family-oriented atmosphere. Such an atmosphere should be good for the overall development of students (Vincent, 1994).

Miller (1991) says there are many advantages to multi-grade schools. There is individualized instruction, tutorials by older students, and a greater opportunity for teachers to be innovative.

Kearney's (1994) review of the literature shows many

advantages of a small rural school. Small rural schools:

1. have greater student participation in extra-curricular activities
2. have more interaction and cooperation among students, teachers, administrators, parents and communities
3. have less red tape and are more in tune with community
4. typically achieve at higher levels than counterparts in large schools
5. boost achievement of at-risk students
6. have practiced new education reform measures: low student/teacher ratios; cooperative learning methods; student centered instructional methods; cross age grouping; non-graded classes
7. show teacher and student morale as being higher, teacher stress as being lower
8. place a greater emphasis on the "basics"
9. act as community and service centers

Positive school environment is a major contributor to student success (Conrath, 1986) in (Griffin, Richardson, and Lane; 1994). Griffin, Richardson, and Lane (1994) found, in their study of at-risk youths' perceptions of their educational environments, that students desire a non-threatening school environment. This can be effectively promoted by most rural high schools (Griffin, Richardson, and Lane; 1994).

Mock and Haller (1986) describe many attributes of small rural

schools. Small rural schools are the focal points of community activity and pride. Small rural schools are usually devoid of discipline problems. Students in small rural schools learn the basics just as well as students in larger urban schools and many times even better than average. There are far greater opportunities to develop leadership potential and non-academic skills in small rural schools than in larger urban schools.

Barker (1987) points out many contributions of the small school, most of which are located in rural areas. The small school is credited with the origination of many present day educational techniques, strategies, and learning approaches. The list includes: the non-graded classroom, individualized instruction, low student-teacher ratio, cross-age grouping, peer tutoring, using the community as a resource, mainstreaming, and emphasizing the basics.

Reck (1987) adds to the list of advantages of small schools. He claims there is much more community support than in larger schools in larger centers. The school setting is more relaxed and personalized. Students of different ages can associate with each other without seeming out of place.

Despite the advantages of small rural schools, consolidation of many small schools continues in many regions of North America today. Many European countries, however, have ended or reversed this trend. In Ireland, the government is now committed to maintain small country schools and in Norway and Finland several schools closed in the 1960's have been reopened (Nelson, 1985).

New Zealand has also reversed its policy of consolidating

rural primary schools. In these countries it has been realized that the educational benefits of larger schools are illusory and that the policy has caused real hardship to individuals and actual damage to the viability and structure of rural communities (Nash, 1980).

Kearney (1994) points out that the dollar saving on consolidation is not always there. Transportation costs can be significantly higher than anticipated when consolidation is complete. Bussing reduces extra-curricular participation by bus students and reduces parental involvement in school. These opportunity costs coupled with increased transportation costs greatly reduces any savings from consolidation (Hallanan, 1992 in Kearney, 1994).

The advantages and disadvantages of small rural schools depends on one's point of view. Many of the advantages of rural schools are qualitative characteristics that are difficult to analyze such as "sense of community". The quantitative aspects of small rural schools seems to be lacking. They do not have: large class sizes, wide selection of courses, many specialized teachers or as much red tape as large urban schools.

Chapter 4 - Profiles

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to compile profiles of each school in the study. The profiles are created from data collected from three sources. The community data has been extracted from Canadian Census statistics compiled in 1991. The school information has been retrieved from the databanks of the Department of Education. The information on teachers' perceptions was received from response-statements completed by the teachers from the ten schools in question.

The names of the communities and schools have been disguised to protect the anonymity of the students, staff, and schools.

Census data for three of the communities was either incomplete or non-existent. Income levels for Tickle Cove and Wilson's Brook are not accessible to the public. Since their populations are below 250, access to this information may disclose the identities of families in the respective communities.

Deep Shallow Bay poses a different problem. The community is considered to be an unincorporated census district. This means the census boundaries are undefined and the demographic data is consolidated with that of a another district. This seems only fitting considering the topic of this thesis.

Bayside All Grade, Summerville

Summerville

Summerville is made up of 465 English speaking Protestants living in 140 households. Ten people in Summerville have French origins while the rest of the community come from British backgrounds.

The adult population (over age 15) of Summerville is 375. These adults have achieved various levels of education. One hundred sixty of these adults have less than a grade nine level of education. This is roughly 41% of the adult population. One hundred forty people had reached high school but did not graduate. Fifty adults in Summerville have a high school diploma as their highest level of educational attainment. Twenty-five adults pursued post-secondary studies. Ten residents received certificates from institutions other than a trades college or a university. The remaining fifteen adults attended university and have graduated with either a certificate or a degree.

Summerville's labour force is made up of 160 males and 60 females. 57.6% of the male labour force is unemployed while 33.3% of the female labour force is unemployed. This brings the overall unemployment rate of Summerville to 52.2%.

The employed and unemployed labour force is spread over several industries. One hundred ten people are involved in primary industries, 55 are involved in manufacturing, 15 are in construction, 25 are in trades and 10 are in education.

Of the male labour force, 140 men work part-time earning an average income of \$13,686. The average income of the 20 full-time male workers is \$21,940 annually. Women of Summerville are only employed in the workforce on a part-time basis earning an average salary of \$5260.

Viewing the household incomes of the residents of Summerville, the average annual household income is \$34,937. More than half of the households earn more than \$35,629.

Bayside All Grade

Bayside All Grade is with the same integrated school board as Birchy Cove Academy in Wilson's Brook. Bayside All Grade is K - 12 school with 79 students, 40 males and 39 females. The thirteen grades are divided up among nine teachers.

The student population of Bayside All Grade has been steadily declining since 1986 when 126 students were in attendance. This decline is expected to continue into the next century.

Looking at Table 4.1 one can see that Bayside All Grade has scored above the provincial and national means for CTBS composite scores four out of the last six years (1988 - 1993). Bayside All Grade scored higher than its district's mean CTBS composite scores five out of six years.

Table 4.1 CTBS Scores for Bayside All Grade

Year	Grade	School	District	Province	Canada
1988	6	80	50	45	50
1989	8	23	43	40	50
1990	4	70	35	43	50
1991	6	58	33	37	50
1992	8	35	31	40	50
1993	4	59	39	43	50

On the Grade Six Elementary Science Assessment Tests, Bayside All Grade fared well over the three test years 1987, 1990, 1993. In 1987, Bayside All Grade scored above the provincial average on the Earth Sciences subtest of the Grade Six Elementary Science Assessment Test. In 1990, Bayside All Grade scored above the provincial average on all subtests. In 1993, Bayside All Grade scored lower than the provincial average on the Life Sciences subtest but beat the provincial average on the other three subtests.

In June 1993, the grade three students of Bayside All Grade scored 88.4% on the Grade Three Math Criterion Reference Test. This score surpassed both the district's and the province's averages of 78.7% and 74.3% respectively.

Teachers' Perspectives

Five of the seven teachers at Bayside All Grade responded to the response statement. The principal's views on why Bayside All Grade is successful will be presented first. He feels the teachers are very dedicated and committed. As a principal he does not take an authoritative leadership role; he includes the staff in the decision-making process. The staff works together on school policy and in setting up the curriculum. The principal also points out that the teachers "take" responsibility for the students' performance. The teachers also attempt innovative approaches in the classroom to improve student performance.

No school can be successful without support and positive communication among the various groups that are part of the school community. At Bayside All Grade, the teachers have a good working relationship with the students, the parents and the community. The parents support school initiatives both morally and financially. The school is also used extensively by members and groups in the community as well as by the church.

Finally, the principal says the students are a very close-knit group who are supportive of each other.

Many of the teachers attribute the students' success to the benefits of a small school. With low enrolments there is more one on one interaction between the teacher and each student. Teachers then get an opportunity to become familiar with each student and his/her problems. The small class size provides a "family

closeness" where students interact more and want to help each other. Above average students take on a helping role as peer tutors.

Teachers in this multi-grade school are multi-subject teachers. By teaching many subjects to the students the teachers get a better overall view of student performance in several subject areas.

Since the community is also small, teachers meet the parents on a regular basis at the store or at the community centre. This provides an opportunity for a teacher and a parent to discuss a student's status on an informal basis. This gives the teacher further insight into a student's background and the teacher can build supports for individual student weaknesses and for missing home supports.

All the teachers agree that there is an excellent rapport between teachers and students. In fact, one teacher said, "Teachers and students are what I would consider buddies". The teachers are always available to give extra help to the students after school.

Although there are many informal meetings with the parents, the school sends home monthly reports on each student. The reports comment on student grades, student behaviour, and student attitude. The school makes a great effort to keep the parents well informed on school matters and puts the responsibility back on parents for their children's status in school.

The teachers also meet regularly at staff meetings to discuss

student progress, student problems, and school policies. The staff work cooperatively to bring about change.

The teachers report that there are few discipline problems in their school and that every effort is made to "have low achievers strive to do better". This combination of factors make Bayside All Grade a successful school.

St. Jerome's Academy, Herne Bay

Herne Bay

Herne Bay is an isolated community of 756 people. This 215 household community is made up mostly of English speaking Protestants. Even though Herne Bay is a strictly English speaking community, ten residents are of French origin and ten people are of aboriginal descent. The rest of the population of Herne Bay is of British origin.

Five hundred fifty-five people in Herne Bay are over the age of fifteen. Three hundred ninety-five of these adults have less than a high school education with two hundred twenty people not even reaching high school. Fifty adults ended their formal education with a high school diploma. One hundred forty-five adults pursued some form of post-secondary studies. Ten people completed studies leading to a certificate or diploma in the trades. Fifty-five people completed courses in other non-

university post-secondary studies, forty-five of whom received a certificate. Thirty adults attended university with twenty completing the degree program.

Herne Bay's labour force consists of 230 men and 120 women. Herne Bay hovers around the provincial average unemployment rate with an unemployment rate of 20%.

The 350 person labour force is spread over several industries. The primary industries involve 80 people. One hundred forty of the Herne Bay residents vie for jobs in the manufacturing sector. Ten people are involved in the construction industry with an additional 35 people in the trade industries. The communication and trades industries in the area account for 25 members of the labour force. The remaining 60 members of the work force rely on government departments - 10 people are involved in health care, 30 people in the education sector, and 20 others are involved in other government services.

Two hundred twenty five men were employed either on a full time or part time basis from Herne Bay. The 80 full time full year male workers earned an average salary of \$28,201. The part time or part year male workers earned an average salary of \$14,870. Their female counterparts did not earn as high salaries as the men. The 35 full year, full time females earned an annual salary of \$16,325. The 95 part year or part time female workers earned \$7,821.

The average household income of the people of Herne Bay is \$35,320. The median household income is \$29,884. Looking at the

extremes, 20 households earned less than \$15,000 per year while 30 households earned more than \$50,000 per year.

St. Jerome's Academy

St. Jerome's Academy is a K - 12 school with one hundred seventy students. The eighty-four boys and eighty-six girls are taught by fifteen teachers.

Prior to 1988 St. Jerome's Academy was 7 - 12 school. At the end of 1988 St. Jerome's Academy merged with a K - 6 school to form an all grade school. Since 1989 enrolment has been declining, from a high of 206 in 1989 to its 1993 level of 170 students.

St. Jerome's Academy's CTBS scores however, are faring much better than its enrolment. The CTBS composite scores for Waterloo Academy, its school district, the province and the Canadian average for the period 1988 - 1993 are listed in Table 4.2. St. Jerome's students' CTBS composite averages exceeded its district's CTBS composite average five out of six times during that period. St. Jerome's average CTBS composite scores surpassed the national and provincial mean CTBS score 4 out of 6 times. In 1992, St. Jerome's scored at the provincial mean for CTBS composite scores.

Table 4.2 CTBS Scores for St. Jerome's Academy

Year	Grade	School	District	Province	Canada
1987	6	65	50	45	50
1989	8	31	43	40	50
1990	4	66	35	43	50
1991	6	51	33	37	50
1992	8	40	31	40	50
1993	4	59	39	43	50

On the Grade Six Elementary Science Assessment Results St. Jerome's Academy surpassed its district's average score for the three years it was written in 1987, 1990, and 1993. On the provincial level St. Jerome's Academy scored higher than the provincial average in 1990 and 1993 by large margins. St. Jerome's scored 66.8% in 1990 and 75.3% in 1993. The provincial averages were 57.5% and 58.3% respectively.

The high level of achievement of students of St. Jerome's Academy is also evident at the Grade Three level. St. Jerome's Academy scored 82.4% on the 1993 Grade Three Math Criterion Reference Test. This score surpassed St. Jerome's district average of 78.9% and the provincial average of 74.3%.

Teachers' Perspectives

The principal of St. Jerome's Academy attributed the students success to several factors. The school has set high standards and

the teachers expect a lot from the students. The students rise to meet this challenge. The principal also contends that a school cannot do it on its own. In Herne Bay the parents recognize the value of education and attempt to help the teachers in whatever way they can. The parents, in general, ensure that their children have a quiet, well equipped study area very conducive to learning.

Besides being there as moral support, the parents are there with their "pocket books" as well. Herne Bay is a relatively prosperous town with a high socio-economic standard uncommon to many small rural communities in Newfoundland.

Finally, the principal of St. Jerome's Academy, attributes much of the students' success to the well qualified and devoted teaching staff. "Their expertise and devotion to teaching accounts in a big way to the success which we have experienced over the years".

The teachers of St. Jerome's Academy state many of the same factors as those of the principal. Community involvement seems to contribute to the students' success. The parents keep in close contact with the faculty and staff of St. Jerome's Academy. The parents have high aspirations for their children and constant interaction with the teachers keeps their children "on track".

Often times all one has to do is look at the top to find out the driving force behind a successful venture. The teachers of St. Jerome's Academy feel secure with the quality leadership exemplified by their principal. As well, there is tremendous support from the school board. Without this support it would be

difficult for such an isolated school like St. Jerome's Academy to keep abreast of new and current teaching practices and new ideas.

The teachers of St. Jerome's Academy also "toot their own horn". These teachers consider themselves to be highly educated and highly qualified professionals. These dedicated teachers use a "firm but kind" approach to facilitate the learning process.

The curriculum plays an important role in the learning process. The elementary teachers place high emphasis on the basics such as math, vocabulary, and language skills. By focusing on the basics many problems associated with poor reading and arithmetic skills are "nipped in the bud" at an early age. The school also has an accelerated reader program to push their accomplished young readers.

The teachers point out that the students are the most important component in the school's success on the CTBS scores. The students accept the high standards set out by the school, teachers, and community and aspire to reaching and surpassing these high standards. Also, by being well behaved the students have more time for learning.

Beothuk Elementary, Tickle Cove**Tickle Cove**

Tickle Cove has a population of two hundred twenty-five people living in seventy households. All of these English speaking inhabitants are Protestants. Two hundred fifteen of these people are of British origin while the remaining ten people are of multiple origins.

There are 185 adults (fifteen years or older) in Tickle Cove with varying levels of educational attainment. Forty of this adult population have not attained a grade nine level of education. Eighty-five adults attended high school but did not receive a high school diploma. There are thirty-five adults whose highest level of educational attainment was a high school diploma. Thirty-five adults however, pursued post-secondary studies. Ten of these residents received a trades certificate and twenty-five others attended university. Of the university students ten received a certificate. The remaining students did not complete either a degree or a certificate program.

The overall unemployment rate in Tickle Cove is high with 52.4% of the working force unemployed. The gender breakdown shows that 46.2% of the male labour force and 66.7% of the female labour force were unemployed. The 110 person labour force of Tickle Cove is widely distributed over several industries. Twenty-five people are involved in the primary resources, 30 are in manufacturing, and

ten are in construction. Ten people are employed in the education field and ten others work for other government departments. The remaining members of the labour force are employed in other nonspecified areas.

Information was not available on the income levels of residents.

Beothuk Elementary

Two teachers comprise the full teaching team of Beothuk Elementary. This small K to 6 school accommodated 26 students in 1993. The girls outnumbered the boys 17 to 9. The enrolment has steadily been declining since 1986 when 36 students were in attendance.

Since Beothuk Elementary is a K to 6 school, there are no CTBS scores for 1989 and 1992 which recorded Grade eight scores. In 1990 Beothuk Elementary matched the provincial mean score for CTBS with a score of 43. For each of the years 1988, 1991 and 1993, Beothuk Elementary scored above the provincial mean for CTBS composite scores with scores 77, 44, and 51 respectively. In fact, Beothuk Elementary scores for 1988 and 1993 are above the national average for CTBS composite scores. Also, Beothuk Elementary exceeded its district's mean CTBS composite scores each year in question.

On the Grade Six Elementary Science Assessment Tests, Beothuk Elementary scored well below the district and provincial means for

1987 and 1993 with composite scores of 51.3% and 52% respectively. In 1990 though, Beothuk Elementary scored well above the district and provincial composite scores with a score of 64.7%.

In the June 1993 Grade Three Math Criterion Reference Test Results, Beothuk Elementary scored above the district and provincial averages with a score of 75%. The district and provincial averages were 70.2% and 74.3% respectively.

Teacher Perspectives

The two male teachers at this two teacher school were the first teachers to respond to the response statement in this study. Both teachers claim that there is no major adjustment starting school. Everyone in the community knows everyone else so there are no new faces to get used to or to feel intimidated by. As well the two teachers have been teaching in the school for more than twenty years each and are pillars of the community.

Beothuk Elementary is a multi-grade school and the teachers feel that many of the characteristics present in the multi-grade school and the multi-grade classroom explain why Beothuk Elementary is so successful on the CTBS. The multi-grade classroom promotes student independence and group interaction. Students must work independently on assignments and class work while the teachers are teaching other groups. Students also get together in groups to help each other while the teacher is attending to another group. The multi-grades at Beothuk are open-ended. Concepts that are not mastered one year can be taken up again the following year by the

same teacher.

In the multi-grade classroom there is an overlap and reinforcement of ideas and concepts among the grades. While the teacher is discussing a topic with one grade, the grade below is hearing new concepts being discussed and the grade above is hearing old concepts repeated. When the lower grade is being taught concepts the following year the concepts are not foreign to them, the students having heard them before. The higher grades, on the other hand, are constantly hearing old ideas being repeated and this helps in longer memory retention.

The parents take an active role in their childrens' education. They also place a lot of trust in the teachers' judgements. Since the community is small the parents are constantly bumping into the teachers within the community. This leads to many informal meetings and discussions about the students' progress in school.

With small numbers of students in the school, the teachers become well acquainted with all the students and all the parents. This personal contact develops such a rapport that students come to respect and like their teachers.

From a curriculum perspective, the teachers feel language arts skills are very important and put heavy emphasis on language arts skills at all grades.

In a small community the students don't have a whole lot to do so they spend a lot of time on task.

Blue Mountain R.C. School, Flat Cove**Flat Cove**

Seventy-five households house the population of 330 of Flat Cove. The 240 people of British origin and the 90 people of multiple origins are all English speaking. Except for ten people with no religious affiliation, everyone is of the Roman Catholic faith.

There are 250 people over the age of fifteen living in Flat Cove. Sixty-five people of Flat Cove have not attained a grade IX level of education. One hundred people have some high school education but have not graduated. Forty people have earned a high school diploma. Ten adults have a trades certificate. Thirty people attended university with ten graduating with degrees and another ten obtaining a certificate. An additional ten people completed some university courses but did not receive a degree or certificate.

The Flat Cove labour force is comprised of 105 men and 80 women over the age of fifteen. 63.2% of the labour force is unemployed - 71.4% of the males and 50% of the females.

The labour force of 185 is spread over several industries. Sixty people are involved in the primary industries; 45 are involved in manufacturing; and 35 are involved with trade. Ten people are associated with education and ten others are with other government agencies. Fifteen other people have been with other

nonspecified industries.

Eighty-five men worked part-time earning an average income of \$6859. Thirty-five part-time women workers earned an average income of \$5625. Forty-five female full-time workers averaged \$15,866 in 1991 and fifteen full-time male workers averaged \$27,620.

The average household income for Flat Cove in 1991 was \$43,097. The median household income was \$32,255.

Blue Mountain R. C. School

Blue Mountain R. C. School is a K - 8 school providing learning opportunities for sixty students on the west coast of Newfoundland. Thirty-four boys and twenty-six girls interact with six teachers within the walls of Blue Mountain R.C. School. Enrolment has been declining over the past six years and is expected to continue this decline into the next century.

Over the six year period - 1988 to 1993 - Blue Mountain School has scored above the provincial and district mean composite CTBS scores three out of six times. Two of these three times Blue Mountain School has scored above the national average (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 CTBS Scores for Blue Mountain R. C. School

Year	Grade	School	District	Province	Canada
1988	6	42	49	45	50
1989	8	69	46	40	50
1990	4	66	51	43	50
1991	6	47	40	37	50
1992	8	28	46	40	50
1993	4	18	43	43	50

The Grade 6 students of Blue Mountain R.C. School fared well on the Grade 6 Elementary Science Assessment Tests. In 1987, Blue Mountain School matched the provincial average with a composite mark of 56.5%. In 1990 and 1993 Blue Mountain School surpassed the provincial averages 67.6% to 57.5%, and 61.3% to 58.3% respectively. Blue Mountain School's area of strength was in the Earth Sciences subtest scoring well-above its district's average and the province's average (See Table 4.4).

Table 4.4 Earth Science subtest mean scores

Year	School	District	Province
1987	69.4%	55.9%	55.7%
1990	76.7%	54.7%	55.6%
1993	75.0%	58.4%	52.8%

In 1993, the grade 3's of Blue Mountain R.C. School wrote the Grade Three Math Criterion Reference Test. The class average was 77.5%. This mark beat the provincial average of 74.3% but was just short of the district's average of 78.6%.

Teachers' Perspectives

Five of the six teachers from Blue Mountain R.C. School responded to the response statement. The principal's statements will be presented first. The principal attributes much of the students' and school's success on the CTBS to a combination of qualities. First, the principal states that Blue Mountain R.C. School promotes a Catholic philosophy of education with a strong moral base. There is a close relationship among the school, home, and church. This forms the basis for a solid educational foundation.

The school prides itself on its "awards/rewards" system. Students receive awards for many activities such as public speaking, math problem solving, spelling and science. Overall and individual student academic excellence highlight the awards program. Student behaviour is rewarded. This is monitored using a point system.

The provincially set curriculum is enhanced by the school's self-initiated and self-supplied enrichment program. Blue Mountain R.C. School keeps abreast of current trends in education through its computer technology. It is on line with the latest computer software and the teachers can 'surf the net'.

Finally, the principal attributes the parental value of education coupled with the dedication of the teachers as being an integral part of Blue Mountain's success. The teachers and parents spend many hours after school setting up and participating in

extra-curricular activities.

The responses of the remaining four teachers were just as positive as those of the principal. Living and going to school in a small community has been a way of life for the people of Flat Cove. In fact, the teachers and students know each other well inside and outside the community. Several teachers claim that "school is an extension of the family".

Blue Mountain R. C. School is a multi-grade school with a low enrolment. This low enrolment allows the teacher time to give individual attention to each student's needs as well as gives the teacher time to get to know the student on a very personal basis. With smaller classes the slower students receive extra help on a continuous basis which may span their entire school (grade school) lives.

The teachers of Blue Mountain R. C. School are very close knit. They meet on many occasions to discuss the students' progress and problem areas. These dedicated teachers also stay behind after school nearly every evening. Since there is no busing, all the students can avail of extra help, extra-curricular activities, and extra access to the school's resources. The school has purchased many resources for use by the teachers and students at any time. Their resources include books, videos, computers with a variety of software titles, CD-Rom, and Stemnet.

Besides relying on the latest computer technology the teachers have initiated several learning programs in the school. The students participate in a "read to succeed" program. Each night

the students have to read to their parents. Reading levels have improved dramatically. In language arts, a thematic approach is used to understand the content and context of what students are reading. There is a focus, however, on basic sight words. In mathematics problem solving is given much attention. At the end of each month students who have solved the most problems receive awards.

A point system is in place in the school. If students lose points they also lose certain privileges. The students, though, rarely lose points for discipline. The students are well behaved and prefer to spend more time on task than off task. The kids are very enthusiastic and genuinely enjoy learning.

The parents and teachers are very fundamental to the children's success in school. The parents are very supportive of the school and teachers of 'their' school. Even though many of the parents have little formal schooling, they value education. Many of the teachers at Blue Mountain have an important advantage teaching students in a multi-grade environment. They themselves, have gone through a multi-grade system. These teachers understand the needs and problems in a multi-grade environment and can readily adapt the current provincial curriculum to this situation.

Finally, the teachers attribute much of the school's success to the Roman Catholic ambiance in the school. "The staff are good Catholic role models. Through their weekly celebrations and daily actions each child is made to feel special. Everyone also helps to create a warm, safe, and caring atmosphere which is conducive to

learning".

Darby's All Grade School, Berry Hill

Berry Hill

The people of Berry Hill originally came to Newfoundland from the British Isles. There is a strong Catholic presence among the population of four hundred with only ten Protestants. Seventy percent of the population is over the age of fifteen.

One hundred ninety-five adults (age: > 15) have not received a high school diploma. In fact, 90 people have less than a grade nine education. Of the adults who graduated high school, twenty decided not to pursue post-secondary studies 50 others attended university. None of the university students completed degree programs but fifteen of the students received university certificates.

The unemployment rate in Berry Hill is above the provincial average but is relatively low compared to other regions of the province. It stands at 34.7%. The labour force is composed of 75 men and 40 women. Twenty-five of the male and 15 of the female labour force are unemployed, putting the male unemployment rate at 33.3% and the female unemployment rate at 37.5%.

The labour force is vying for and working in a variety of positions across several industries. Most of the labour force is

involved in the transportation industry and with government, with 25 people and 20 people involved respectively, in each. These government positions are not involved in either health care or education. Manufacturing and construction account for ten members each of the labour force. An additional 15 people are involved in unspecified occupations.

The average household income for the 115 households stands at \$26,689. The median household income in Berry Hill is \$21,684. The individual incomes for the citizens of Berry Hill are broken down into three categories - full time males, part-time or temporary males, and part-time or temporary females. There were no full-time female workers. The 20 full-time male workers earned an average income of \$44,400. The 55 part-time males earned an average income of \$14,287. This set the average male income at \$19,398. The 30 part-time female workers earned an average income of \$3703.

Darby's All Grade Country School

Darby's All Grade School is an all grade Roman Catholic school. The staff of eight at Darby's All Grade School teaches 54 boys and 42 girls. For the past four years the student population has been hovering around the mid-nineties but there is a projected population decline in the latter part of this century through to 2000.

The students of Darby's All Grade School consistently score at or above the district and provincial means for the CTBS composite scores. From 1988 to 1993 Darby's All Grade School has scored higher than its district's average CTBS composite scores (see Table 5). Darby's All Grade School fares well on a provincial comparison as well. In 1990, 1991, and 1993 Darby's students scored above the provincial mean CTBS composite score. In the years 1989 and 1992 they matched the provincial mean CTBS composite score. On a national scale the students at Darby's All Grade School scored higher than the Canadian average composite CTBS score twice during the 1988 to 1993 time frame (see Table 4.5).

Table 4.5 CTBS Scores for Darby's All Grade School

Year	Grade	School	District	Province	Canada
1988	6	44	38	45	50
1989	8	40	31	40	50
1990	4	47	39	43	50
1991	6	51	33	37	50
1992	8	40	37	40	50
1993	4	51	47	43	50

The students of Darby's All Grade did not fare as well on the Grade Six Elementary Science Assessment Tests. In the years 1987, 1990, and 1993, Darby's All Grade School scored below the district average and the provincial average.

The Grade Three students of Darby's All Grade School though,

fared very well on the Grade Three Math Criterion Reference Test. Darby's average score was 78.3%, surpassing both the district's and province's averages of 75.4% and 74.3%, respectively.

Teachers' Perspectives

The response rate from the teachers of Darby's All Grade School was 75% with six out of the eight teachers responding. These enthusiastic teachers had some very positive comments to make relating to the students' consistently high CTBS scores.

The principal attributes much of the students' success on the CTBS tests to the availability of books in the school. Darby's All Grade has purchased many quality books and reading materials through grants, fundraising, and from the Memorial University Education Society. In the primary area, display shelves covered with books promote the importance of books and the role of books in each person's life.

The principal points out that the parents are very supportive of the school, the qualified teaching staff, and of education in general. They are always on hand to assist in fundraising, to encourage students to perform well in school and to help with homework.

The principal ends off by saying Darby's All Grade School is a multi-grade school. This type of school setting is very conducive to developing student independence. While the teacher is teaching one group another group of students is working

independently. The multi-grade classroom also encourages student interaction and in this school it also fosters friendly competition. This pushes each student to his or her potential.

The teachers of Darby's All Grade School reiterate some of the principal's sentiments and contribute some different factors.

The teachers describe the community as being very isolated. With few outside interactions the school has become the focus of the community. Also, with a small student population of varying ages there are not many extra-curricular activities. This puts the focus on academics.

In this small multi-grade school the curriculum focus is on the basics. There are few specialty courses. The classes are small so the teachers get an opportunity to find out more about the students. The multi-grade classroom creates a "real" learning environment. The higher grades overhear lessons being taught to the lower grades; this provides review and reinforces old ideas. The lower grades overhear lessons taught to the higher grades; this gives the younger students some insight into future more complex ideas.

Berry Hill has few job opportunities. Education seems to be the key to expanding students' options and providing more opportunities for the future.

Because of the smallness of Berry Hill everyone knows everyone. Teachers meet parents and students in and around the community every time they step out of doors. This provides ample opportunity for many informal meetings between parents and

teachers.

The teachers point out that local community groups such as the Lion's Club and the church give the school as much support as they can. These community groups have sponsored the Darby's All Grade School "speak out" and the annual science fairs by providing the forum, awards and plaques.

The teachers do their utmost to support and assist the students. School does not end at 3:00. Teachers provide tutoring and extra help after school. The teachers willingly accept phone calls at home from students seeking help on assignments.

Role models are very important to the students of Darby's All Grade School. Teachers in the community are highly qualified and highly educated. Parents and students look up to teachers. Teachers are not the only role models at Darby's All Grade School. The children of the teachers tend to be very high academic performers and appear to be a significant influence on their peers.

John Cabot Academy, Sandy Harbour

Sandy Harbour

Sandy Harbour is a small rural community in Western Newfoundland. The population of 405 is strictly English speaking. Every resident of Sandy Harbour is a Protestant with 390 people being of British ancestry. The other fifteen inhabitants' roots

are of multiple origin.

The educational levels of the adult population varies considerably. There are 120 adults whose highest level of educational attainment is below grade nine. One hundred seventy-five adults have attended high school. Seventy of these adults left high school without receiving a high school diploma. One hundred five students graduated from high school. Of this number forty-five did not pursue post-secondary studies. Ten adults enrolled in university receiving a certificate. No one had completed a degree program. Fifteen adults attended a trades college receiving either a diploma or a certificate.

The unemployment rate in Sandy Harbour is extremely high. The unemployment rate for females is 76.5% while for males it is 61.9%. The overall unemployment rate for the area is 66.7%. A further break down of the unemployment rate shows that the youth (aged 15 - 24) of Sandy Harbour involved in the labour force are all unemployed.

The labour force of Sandy Harbour is quite diversified. Thirty residents are involved in the primary sector, with forty-five residents involved in manufacturing and construction. Seventy-five members of the labour force rely on work within the government. Twenty people are involved in education, ten in health and social services and forty-five in other non-specified governmental departments. Ten other people from Sandy Harbour are involved in industry related to finance, insurance and real estate.

Of the 105 men involved in the workforce, 15 worked full time.

The other 90 men worked either part of the year or part time. The average income of the full time male workers was \$29,093 while the part year part time workers earned \$8018. The female work force was composed of 10 full time workers earning an average income of \$16,339 and 80 part time or part year workers earning \$5287 per annum.

There are 100 private households in Sandy Harbour. The average income of these households is \$30,782 with a median income of \$26,705.

John Cabot Academy

John Cabot Academy is a Protestant school along Newfoundland's west coast. This small rural school creates a learning environment for forty-five boys and forty-eight girls. Nine teachers work, teach and interact with these kindergarten to grade nine students every day in the school year. According to provincial demographics the student population is now at its peak. It is expected to decline over each of the next five years.

The teachers and students of John Cabot Academy have been pleased with their rankings over the past six years on the CTBS. In three of the last six years (1988-1993) the students of John Cabot Academy have scored above the national average for CTBS composite scores (see Table 4.6). In four of those six years the students of John Cabot Academy have surpassed the provincial average CTBS composite scores. And, the students of John Cabot

Academy have ranked well above their district's CTBS composite ranking five out of the past six years.

Table 4.6 CTBS Scores for John Cabot Academy

Year	Grade	School	District	Province	Canada
1988	6	60	40	45	50
1989	8	49	31	40	50
1990	4	55	28	43	50
1991	6	22	28	37	50
1992	8	78	35	40	50
1993	4	39	31	43	50

The students of John Cabot Academy have written the Grade Six Elementary Science Assessment Tests three times from 1987 to 1993. In the 1987 writing of the test the average score for John Cabot Academy students was 60.4%. This exceeded the district and provincial averages by 2.8% and 3.8% respectively. In the years 1990 and 1993 John Cabot Academy's mean score was below both the district and provincial mean scores. On the Physical Sciences subtests, though, John Cabot students surpassed the district and the provincial mean scores for this subtest every year.

The John Cabot Academy grade three students did not fare as well, on average, as their district and provincial counterparts on the Grade Three Math Criterion Reference Test. John Cabot Academy's average score was 67.5% while the district and provincial averages were 74.2% and 74.3% respectively.

Teachers' Perspectives

The teacher response rate to the response statement was considerably low. Only three of the nine teachers responded. Although the principal was responsible for collecting completed response statements and returning them to the author of this thesis, he did not participate in the study.

The three teachers who did respond to the response statement brought to light many characteristics that they felt helped their students do well on the Canadian Test of Basic Skills. They stated that Sandy Harbour is a small community where everyone knows everyone else. The teachers know each student and each parent personally. This creates a "family" atmosphere where students, teachers, and parents are very comfortable with each other and feel they can freely discuss any issue or problem affecting the students.

Even though there is constant communication between parents and teachers after school hours within the community, the parents still report en masse to parent-teacher interviews throughout the year. The parents are very supportive of the teachers and principal and want the best for their children.

The teachers point out that the school is the pride of Sandy Harbour. Besides being the center for learning in the community it is the center of the community. The church suppers and special occasions take place in the school. The physical structure of the school building is well maintained. The support staff (janitor and

bus driver) live in the community and put in extra hours (at no extra pay) working around the building and grounds.

The teachers live in Sandy Harbour so they can be near the school and students. The teachers support each other and strive to improve the academic and personal lives of their students. The teachers constantly discuss student progress and student problems. The teachers are well qualified and partake in any in-services available, including in-services that take place in distant larger centers .

The principal is very supportive of the staff and students. The teachers are asked for their input in drafting policies, and developing and improvising curriculum. To bring John Cabot into the twentieth century, the principal worked on a proposal seeking a grant from the Department of Human Resources and Development to introduce modern technology to the school. The school received a grant for \$25,000. John Cabot Academy now has more than twenty computers with up to date software. The grades seven and eight students were in-serviced in Word Perfect 6.0.

The teachers indicate that John Cabot Academy is a multi-grade school with a low student-pupil ratio. The school has a special education unit which works in the classroom. Students are not segregated for special help. The special education unit places most of its emphasis in the primary grades so that learning difficulties can be addressed at an early age. The school has also been assigned an extra teaching unit which takes some of the burden off the multi-grade teachers.

The teachers also state that the school does not have a "strict set of rigid rules". They have student guidelines. Working within guidelines gives the students flexibility and freedom to learn. There are no discipline problems so more time is spent on task.

Finally, the teachers say there are high academic expectations at John Cabot Academy. The students are held in high esteem and are "noticed for what they do" and contribute to the school.

Northern Point All Grade, Blackwell Strait

Blackwell Strait

The 25 Protestants blend in with the predominantly Roman Catholic community of Blackwell Strait, located on the western side of the island of Newfoundland. Of the 455 inhabitants, 415 are of British origin and 40 are of multiple origin.

Of the 320 adults over the age of 15 in Blackwell Strait, 220 have not completed the high school requirements for graduation. In fact, 125 of these adults' highest level of educational attainment is less than grade nine. All of the remaining 100 adult residents received high school diplomas and continued on to a post secondary institution. Ten people received trades certificates or diplomas from recognized trades colleges. Thirty-five people received

certificates from post secondary institutions other than a university or a trades school. Fifty-five students enrolled in university. Fifteen of these students graduated with degrees and additional fifteen people received certificates. The remaining twenty-five adults received neither a certificate nor a degree.

The 115 person labour force is made up of 80 males and 35 females. Fifty percent of the male labour force is unemployed while 57.1% of the female labour force is unemployed.

The labour force is distributed across several industries. Forty people participate in the primary and secondary industries. The government plays a key role employing 35 people either full time or part time throughout the year. Fifteen people are involved in some aspect of the education industry. Health care and social services account for an additional ten people from the local labour pool and other government departments involve ten others. Trade and other unnamed industries employ the rest of the labour force.

The average household income of the 115 households in Blackwell Strait is \$43,049. Half the households in Blackwell Strait earn an average income of less than \$40,636.

The fifteen full time working males in Blackwell Strait earned an average annual income of \$25,277. The 65 part year or part time male workers earned an average annual income of \$16,701. The female workers earned far less than their male counterparts. The average annual income of the 10 full time female workers was \$16,880. The 25 part year and part time female workers earned an average annual income of \$9594.

Northern Point All Grade

Ninety students attend Northern Point All Grade. Kindergarten to level three is offered to the 51 boys and 39 girls who attend this Roman Catholic School. The student population has remained in the nineties for the past eight years but is expected to drop to the mid to low eighties by 1996.

The average CTBS composite scores for the students of Northern Point All Grade have been impressive. From 1988 to 1993, Northern Point All Grade's students have ranked above the national average four out of six years. Except for 1991, the average CTBS composite score for Northern Point All Grade has exceeded both the provincial and district mean CTBS composite scores (see Table 4.7).

Table 4.7 CTBS Scores for Northern Point All Grade

Year	Grade	School	District	Province	Canada
1988	6	75	49	45	50
1989	8	46	46	40	50
1990	4	59	51	43	50
1991	6	33	40	37	50
1992	8	65	46	40	50
1993	4	59	43	43	50

The grade six students at Northern Point All Grade wrote the Grade Six Elementary Science Assessment Test twice; once in 1990, and again in 1993. In 1990 the provincial and the district

averages on the Grade Six Elementary Science Assessment Tests were higher than the average attained by the grade six students of Northern Point All Grade. In 1993, the grade six students average score of 63.6% surpassed the district's average by 2% and surpassed the provincial average by 5.3%.

In 1993, the grade three students of Northern Point All Grade wrote the Grade Three Math Criterion Reference Test. Their average score of 73.8% was slightly below the provincial average of 74.3%. The district's average score was even higher at 78.6%.

Teachers' Perspectives

The principal of Northern Point All Grade feels there are many things that, when looked at individually, would not have any significant impact on student achievement either on the CTBS or in other areas of academics. It is only when these "things" come together that one can see a difference. The following paragraphs depict some of the many factors that, when considered collectively, contribute to the success of students at Northern Point All Grade and to the high achievement scores on the Canadian Tests of Basic Skills.

According to the principal of Northern Point All Grade, school and education are the priorities in Blackwell Strait. Many graduates of Northern Point All Grade feel they owe their success to the educational standards of the school and community. These

fishermen, teachers, nuns, homemakers, university professors and others are examples and educational role models.

The school has high academic and social standards. Students are challenged to push themselves to their potential. Teachers teach students to respect each other, their teachers and the principal. There is no double standard. The principal and teachers in turn must practice what they preach, they must show respect to each other and to the students.

The teachers of Northern Point All Grade are innovative and versatile. They are receptive to new ideas, new strategies, new techniques and welcome new technology. The teachers are not foreign to the multi-grade classroom environment. Many of the teachers were students in multi-grade classrooms and schools. They have an inside track on the needs of the students in the multi-grade system.

The teachers relate well to everyone they are in contact with. They get along well with the students, parents, and fellow teachers. The teachers are a close-knit group. The principal refers to them as the "teaching team". The teachers are involved in team teaching, share subjects, "fill in" for each other, and are resource people for each other.

The students of Northern Point All Grade are very cooperative. They do not cause any discipline problems. The students do not break the rules. In fact, the only written rules in the school are the fire drill regulations. The older students act as role models. They display a positive attitude and model behaviour. In the

evenings the older students organize after school activities such as sports and crafts.

The principal completes his response statement by saying:

If we were to peek through the classroom doors on any given day, we would witness a kindergarten or Grade One child being read to; a Grade Six student combing through an encyclopedia; a high school student obtaining a print-out from a CD-rom; another listening to a Biology lecture and a few more devouring an honours Math course through distance education.

According to other teachers at Northern Point All Grade, education is highly valued in Blackwell Strait. The emphasis on a good education has been passed down from generation to generation by most parents, teachers, and clergy and with positive results. The success of graduates from past decades gives most students the incentive to reach a high level of achievement.

All the students of Northern Point All Grade are from Blackwell Strait. No other students are bussed in. All the teachers live in the community as well. In fact, most of the teachers on staff at Northern Point All Grade are originally from Blackwell Strait and attended Northern Point All Grade in their youth. Therefore, they know every student and parent plus their home background and needs.

New teachers to the area are welcomed with open arms and are given every assistance "settling in". The new teachers are "brought up to scratch on school and community protocol". They are also informed about the economic status of the community, backgrounds of the students and general history of the area.

The teachers also point out that the low class numbers (less

than 20) have resulted in a closeness among students allowing the brighter students to be very helpful to slower ones. This also gives the teacher more opportunity for one on one teaching. The school ambience is one of friendliness, caring, and cooperation.

The teachers are very dedicated to Northern Point All Grade and to Blackwell Strait. The teachers are always available for extra help after school or may be contacted later by phone. The teachers and parents have formed a recreational committee to offer various extra curricular activities after school. Broomball, hockey, softball, and crafts are offered seasonally. With a small student population all students have an opportunity to participate.

The church holds an important station in the lives of those at Northern Point All Grade. The teachers and students actively participate in the lay ministry, choir, and the liturgy. The presence of the clergy is often felt in the school during recess and lunch with the numerous visits by the parish priest. "A very positive relationship among clergy, teachers, and students keeps everyone aware of the responsibilities to be undertaken for a successful school, church and community".

Cormack All Grade, Jubilee Junction

Jubilee Junction

Jubilee Junction's population of 755, is a composition of many characteristics. This English speaking community has fifteen residents who are bilingual. Although the majority of residents are of the Roman Catholic faith, there is a strong minority of 70 Protestants. The family trees for the people of Jubilee Junction may be more difficult to trace than for those in other communities. That's because 230 of the residents of Jubilee Junction have backgrounds of multiple origin. They may be part British, part French, or part aboriginal. The other 525 residents are of the stereotypical Newfoundland English-Irish background.

There are 510 adults living in Jubilee Junction (aged 15 or over). These adults have attained various levels of formal education. One hundred sixty-five adults in Jubilee Junction have not attained a grade nine level of education. One hundred fifty-five others have entered the high school system but failed to earn credit for a high school diploma. The remaining adults in Jubilee Junction fulfilled the necessary requirements for high school graduation. Fifty high school graduates decided not to pursue post-secondary studies. Seventy men and women attended university. Fifteen of these individuals received degrees. Another ten received university certificates. The other 45 people who attended university received neither a degree nor a certificate. Forty

other adults attended a trades college and received either certificates or diplomas.

Compared to other regions of the province, Jubilee Junction's unemployment rate is not as high. Of the 210 male labour force 28.6% are unemployed. The female unemployment rate of 37.9% when combined with the male's rate of 28.6% translates into a 33.8% unemployment rate for the entire labour force of Jubilee Junction.

The 345 person labour force is widely distributed over several industries. One hundred sixty members of the labour force are evenly divided between the primary and manufacturing industries. Transportation and construction absorb another forty members of the labour force. Thirty men and women are involved in the trade industry. The three levels of government play key roles in Jubilee Junction. Eighty-five people are involved in education, in health and social services, and in other government departments.

Forty-five men and twenty women worked either full time or for the full year in Jubilee Junction. The full time male average annual salary was \$26,938. The full time female average annual salary was slightly higher than their male counterparts at \$30,078. The 170 male part-year or part-time worker earned a much higher salary than the part year, part-time female worker. The male part-time salary hovered at the \$14,000 mark while the 140 female part-time workers only earned \$7664.

The average annual household income of the 185 households in Jubilee Junction was \$43,727. The median income was \$5000 lower at \$38,345.

Cormack All Grade

Cormack All Grade is a Roman Catholic School located on the Avalon Peninsula. There are 190 students and 15 teachers at Cormack All Grade. The student population has been steadily declining since 1986 and this decline is expected to continue into the next century.

From 1988 to 1993 Cormack All Grade scored higher than the provincial and national average CTBS composite scores once. In four other years Cormack All Grade has scored at the provincial mean CTBS composite score. During the same six year period Cormack All Grade's average composite CTBS score beat the average CTBS score of its district twice and tied it three times. 1993 was the only year that Cormack All Grade scored below its district average and provincial average on the CTBS composite test scores (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8 CTBS Scores for Cormack All Grade

Year	Grade	School	District	Province	Canada
1988	6	54	46	45	50
1989	8	40	40	40	50
1990	4	43	43	43	50
1991	6	37	37	37	50
1992	8	40	37	40	50
1993	4	31	47	43	50

In 1987, 1990, and 1993 the grade six students of Cormack All

Grade wrote the Grade Six Elementary Science Assessment Tests. In 1987 and 1993 the district and provincial average composite scores on the Grade Six Elementary Science Assessment Tests exceeded the average composite scores attained by Cormack All Grade. In 1990, the grade six students of Cormack All Grade narrowly surpassed both its district and the provincial average scores by .4% and .9% respectively.

The grade three class of 1993 wrote the Grade Three Math Criterion Reference Test. The grade three students of Cormack All Grade did exceptionally well. The average score for Cormack All Grade was 87.3%. This average score surpassed the district's average score of 76.3% and the province's average score of 74.5%.

Teachers' Perspectives

The principal of Cormack All Grade outlined five points which he thought contributed to his school's success on the Canadian Test of Basic Skills. First, the principal says that there is a concentration on class time. Teachers are encouraged to make class effective and challenging.

Secondly, the principal indicates that the school's special needs department assists the administration in the "channelling" (assignment) of teachers. The special needs department identifies students with learning problems and in conjunction with the principal channel personnel to assist these students.

A third contributing factor is the awareness on the part of

parents that school means better opportunities. Parents encourage their children to study hard and to do well in school. The parents also support the efforts of the teachers and staff of Cormack All Grade.

The school has a warm and inviting climate. The teachers and students are very friendly and enjoy coming to school.

Finally, the principal feels the fifth contributing factor is most important and encompasses all the other contributing factors. The philosophy of Cormack All Grade is "the student comes first". All school policies and school decisions made are child-centered.

Only three of the fifteen teachers completed the response statement. The three teachers feel their comments are reflective of the entire staff.

The three teachers feel the staff as a whole is very effective and is a major contributing factor to the students' success on the CTBS. The teachers are experienced and competent. They are good leaders with many student followers. Unlike many other small rural schools, Cormack All Grade has several specialist teachers on staff. These include music and French teachers. All teachers are imaginative and innovative. Where change is needed the teachers are "willing to take the bull by the horns" to implement this change.

According to the teachers, being a teacher in an all grade school has its benefits. The communication lines are always open among teachers. As students advance from primary to elementary to junior and then to senior high teachers are cognizant of the

transition. Teachers of higher grades can easily and readily access information on students' past academic experiences. Continuity is maintained from one grade level to the next.

The teachers also feel the community has a high standard of living. The weakening fishery has not impacted the community to any great extent. Other industry nearby has kept the people of Jubilee Junction in fairly good economic standing.

Members of the community support the school as well. The church, Knights of Columbus, and the community council come together to host functions, assist in awards, and provide some economic assistance. Sports groups and the scouts supply many extra curricular needs. The town also has a public library available to the students, school and staff.

Cormack All Grade has several role models who help promote the value of education. The teachers are the "front line" role models who are seen every day by the students. Older students in the school also stress the importance of doing well in school and their actions exemplify good behaviour. Past graduates are also good role models. The alumni credit education with their success in their chosen areas of work.

Academics and time on task are a priority at Cormack All Grade. One teacher says, "The general orientation of the curriculum is towards providing specific end results. To put it bluntly, [Cormack All Grade] is not a wishy washy school. One hour per day is allocated to the math programs in the elementary grades. The expectation is there for teachers to make good use of the

allocated time. The [teachers] do".

Finally, the teachers feel parental and administrative support are also partially contributory factors for the students' success in their educational endeavours and on the Canadian Test of Basic Skills.

Daniel's Cove School, Deep Shallow Harbour

Deep Shallow Harbour

No information was available at Statistics Canada. Please refer to the introduction in Chapter 4.

Daniel's Cove School

Daniel's Cove School is a small Pentecostal School in a rural area of the Avalon Peninsula. Each morning the 45 boys and 53 girls in the kindergarten to grade nine school, are greeted by their seven teachers. As with many schools in Newfoundland Daniel's Cove School is a victim of declining enrolments. Based on the parameters of this thesis, Daniel's Cove has been very successful with the CTBS. From 1988 to 1993, Daniel's Cove students have consistently scored at or above the provincial mean for CTBS composite scores. In fact, Daniel's Cove's average CTBS composite scores surpassed the national average two of those years.

With regard to its district, Daniel's Cove's average CTBS composite score was higher five out of the six years and equalled the district the other year (see Table 4.9).

Table 4.9 CTBS Scores for Daniel's Cove School

Year	Grade	School	District	Province	Canada
1988	6	52	44	45	50
1989	8	40	28	40	50
1990	4	63	39	43	50
1991	6	47	30	37	50
1992	8	40	37	40	50
1993	4	47	47	43	50

Daniel's Cove's grade six students have been equally successful in scoring higher than its district and the province in the Grade Six Elementary Science Assessment Tests. The tests were written in 1987, 1990, and 1993 and Daniel's Cove scored 61.0%, 63.7% and 66.9% in each of the respective years. These average scores surpassed the district's average scores by 2% to 4.9% each year. The margin was twice as much again for Daniel's Cove School over the province.

In 1993, the grade three students of Newfoundland and Labrador wrote the Grade Three Math Criterion Reference Test. The provincial average score was 74.3%. The school district average was 74.8%, slightly higher than the province. The average score for the grade three students of Daniel's Cove School was 79.3%, exceeding both the district and the province.

Teachers' Perspectives

Four of the seven teachers on staff at Daniel's Cove School answered the response statement. The teachers pointed out that no single factor in and of itself could contribute to the students' consistently scoring well on the Canadian Test of Basic Skills. Each point brought together as a whole, though does account for the students' success on the CTBS.

One of the points raised by the teachers is school size. Since Daniel's Cove School has a low student population, people get to know each other very well. The teachers get an opportunity to see both sides of the students' lives. The classroom provides an insight into the academic abilities of the students and the personal contact between a teacher and a student allows the teacher time to get to know the student.

Many small schools experience a high rate of staff turnover because the younger teachers want and need to get experience before applying to a larger school in a larger center. This is not the case at Daniel's Cove School. The teachers "are here for the long haul".

Another contributing factor to the students' success is that most of the children come from traditional two parent families. The traditional "solid" family structure leads to a consistent, secure, disciplined home life. A secure home life usually leads to better school life.

The teachers claim that there is a good rapport between

teachers and parents. The teachers agree to monitor the school work and the parents agree to monitor the homework. The parents also feel the students must be in school to maximize their learning capacity. This has led to a low absentee rate at Daniel's Cove School.

The teaching staff feel that the principal is in control. Discipline matters are taken seriously. Discipline problems are dealt with immediately and students are held accountable for their actions.

The teachers conclude by saying all the teachers contribute to the students success on the CTBS. The teachers are very qualified, keep the students on task, and are available for extra help after school.

Birchy Cove Academy, Wilson's Brook

Wilson's Brook

Wilson's Brook is a small community of 180 people along the south coast of Newfoundland. The residents of Wilson's Brook are mostly Protestants with fifteen residents being of the Roman Catholic faith. The people of Wilson's Brook have strong British roots. Twenty-five people are of backgrounds of multiple origins. Everyone else is of British origin.

In Wilson's Brook many of the 130 adults have less than a high

school level of education. Thirty adults have not reached the grade nine level while sixty have not completed the high school requirements for graduation. Of the forty adults who received high school diplomas twenty attended university. At the date of this census none of the university students had completed a degree or certificate program. The remaining twenty adults did not pursue post-secondary education.

The labour force is made up of 45 men and 25 women. All of the women are working. The number of men unemployed is very low considering the unemployment situation in Newfoundland. It stands at 22.2%. When looking at the total workforce in Wilson's Brook the unemployment rate is 14.3%. This is well below the provincial average which is usually around the 20% mark.

The labour force is split over four main industries. Thirty-five people rely on primary industries for work. Twenty people are involved in manufacturing and construction. The remaining members in the labour force are involved in trade.

The average incomes for the forty households is not available. Statistics Canada cannot release this information because it may reveal the identities of individuals in this small community.

Birchy Cove Academy

Birchy Cove Academy is a small rural Protestant school on the South Coast of Newfoundland. The twenty-eight boys and twenty-six girls who attend this all grade school receive instruction from

five teachers. The student population of Birchy Cove Academy appears to have peaked. The population forecast shows a decline to the mid forties by 1999.

Of the ten schools in this thesis study, Birchy Cove Academy has scored the highest average CTBS composite score with an 83 in 1988. Of the six period from 1988 to 1993, Birchy Cove Academy has scored above the national mean CTBS composite score three times. It has surpassed its district and provincial mean scores four out of the six times. For reasons not pursued in this thesis Birchy Cove Academy scored extremely low in the other two years (see Table 4.10).

Table 4.10 CTBS Scores for Birchy Cove Academy

Year	Grade	School	District	Province	Canada
1988	6	83	50	45	50
1989	8	55	43	40	50
1990	4	28	35	43	50
1991	6	16	33	37	50
1992	8	65	31	40	50
1993	4	47	39	43	50

Birchy Cove Academy has also been very successful on the Grade Six Elementary Science Assessment Tests administered in 1987, 1990 and 1993. The Grade Six Elementary Science Assessment Tests are broken down into four categories: scientific processes; life sciences; physical sciences; and earth sciences. For each subtest and each composite score, Birchy Cove Academy out-scored the provincial average. Birchy Cove Academy's average composite scores

for the tests were 69.0%, 61.0%, and 78.7% for 1987, 1990, and 1993 respectively. The corresponding provincial scores were 56.6%, 57.5% and 58.3%.

In June 1993, the grade three students of Birchby Cove Academy participated in the Grade Three Math Criterion Reference Test. The average mark for Birchby Cove Academy students was 82.4%. The district average was 78.9% and the provincial average was 74.3%.

Teachers' Perceptions

All the teachers of Birchby Cove Academy were interested in the thesis study in which they were asked to be participants. The teachers felt the study was important enough to them to have a general staff meeting on the response statement. At the conclusion of the meeting, a single copy of the group's responses was forwarded by the principal. The teachers attributed the school's above average CTBS scores to four factors.

The first factor is the multi-grade classroom structure of the school. This structure "allows a teacher to have a student for three to four years. If all the objectives are not covered one year or the student has not quite mastered the required material the teacher has 30 months instead of 10 months to aid a student".

Because of the small class sizes with several grades, newer teaching methods are employed to make class time very effective. Among the methods used are co-operative learning and peer tutoring.

A third factor which the teachers felt contributed to Birchy Cove Academy's above average CTBS scores was "time on task". Wilson's Brook is an isolated community. This limits the number of extra-curricular activities, especially during school time for intercommunity/interschool activities. This means very little instructional time is lost.

The fourth factor focuses on curriculum. With such a low student population from grades kindergarten to grade twelve no specialty courses can be offered. The teachers on staff therefore, put an emphasis on the basics - "the three R's".

The combination of these four factors have enabled the students of Birchy Cove Academy to consistently score above the provincial average for CTBS composite scores.

Chapter 5 - Summary and Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize and comment on the responses of the teachers to the response statement. A comparison of the teachers' perceptions from each school was taken to see if there were characteristics common to small rural schools that scored at or above the provincial average of the CTBS.

Conclusion

According to Ministers of Education and Undersecretaries of State for Education in many areas of North America, larger central or regional schools are "better" than smaller rural schools (Edington and Martellaro, 1984). Newfoundland's Minister of Education, Chris Decker, has used the CTBS as a benchmark when comparing Newfoundland to the rest of Canada. The CTBS scores rank Newfoundland schools near the bottom in Canada. On a provincial level, small rural schools in Newfoundland rank at the bottom of the scale.

The purpose of this thesis was to find out why ten small rural schools in Newfoundland consistently scored at or above the provincial average for Canadian Test of Basic Skills composite scores. Since this is not the norm - larger schools do better - an answer to this enigma would be of interest to educators involved

with small rural schools.

A brief profile of each school and its community was compiled to get an image of the economic and social backgrounds of the people and to view the school rankings on several standardized tests with an emphasis on the CTBS. Teachers from each of the ten schools were then asked to give their perceptions on why their schools consistently scored at or above the provincial average on the CTBS composite scores. When the responses were compiled an analysis was undertaken to seek commonalities among the ten schools.

Backgrounds of Communities

Although the central focus of this thesis was to study teachers' perceptions on why they feel their respective schools consistently score at or above the provincial average on the CTBS composite scores, a brief historical and socio-economic background was compiled for each school and respective community. As is indicated (Profiles, Chapter 4), the backgrounds of each school varies considerably.

Of the ten schools and their respective communities, five are Protestant, four are Roman Catholic, and one is Pentecostal. Based on this data, religious denomination is not, in and of itself, a contributory factor in scoring at or above the provincial average CTBS composite scores.

The populations of the ten communities indirectly involved in

this study also vary. The definition for rural states that a rural population is below 5000. The populations of the communities in this study are considerably lower. Two communities have over 700 residents while three communities have under 350 people. In fact, one community has fewer than 200 residents. The other communities in the study have populations between 400 and 500.

Rural Newfoundland is usually thought of as a community with high unemployment because of displaced fishery workers. Even this scenario is not commonplace among the ten communities. Two communities have less than 20% unemployment which is near the provincial average. Two other communities have unemployment rates in the 30% to 40% range. By Newfoundland standards this is not high considering the devastating effects of the collapsed fishery on other communities. The remaining communities have between 52% and 64% of their respective labour forces unemployed. This certainly places these communities on a lower socio-economic level than the other communities connected to this study.

Lower student achievement levels have sometimes been associated with low literacy rates among parents (Galton and Patrick, 1990). In communities with higher literacy rates student achievement rates are higher. In the case of this study the author is using the percentage of adults with less than a grade nine education to judge literacy rates. In three communities approximately 25% of the adult population has less than a grade nine education. In two communities over 40% of the adult population has less than a grade nine education. The remaining

communities have between 30% and 39% of the adult population with less than a grade nine level of education.

By perusing these brief historical and socio-economic accounts of the communities connected to this study, one can see that there are no characteristics common to all the communities. The populations are different, the employment levels are different, the levels of education are different, and the religious denominations of the communities are different.

Perceptions of the Teachers

The methodology used in the collecting of data for this thesis was a response-statement completed by the teachers of the ten schools in the study. Since the response-statement was open-ended, the participants were left to respond solely on their own "gut" instincts. There were no guiding questions to stimulate responses. By relying on perceptions only, one can never really anticipate the outcomes of the teachers' responses. As well, other contributing factors may not be reported because it may not have occurred to the teachers at the time.

The responses varied from teacher to teacher and from school to school. Some teachers presented responses exclusive to their own schools. Others presented responses common to several schools in the study. There were however, no responses common to all ten schools included in this study. A common theme did emerge. Many of the teachers stated that no one characteristic can account for

the consistent above average scoring on the CTBS; it is the combination and integration of many characteristics which bring about this success. Each school's combination of factors may be exclusive to its respective school alone.

The most common response from the response-statement was that small class size was a contributing factor to students scoring at or above the provincial mean CTBS composite scores. Teachers from eight schools used this response. The teachers stated that because of the low number of students in each class the teachers could provide more individual attention to each student.

Since all the schools in this study are small rural schools it is safe to assume that all ten schools in this study have small class sizes. Since teachers from two of the schools did not give it as a contributing factor then maybe it was because these teachers did not see it as a contributing factor. As well, there are many other small rural schools in Newfoundland which have small classes but score below the provincial mean CTBS composite score. Does this mean that those students do not receive a lot of individual attention?

Several responses to the response statement were common to six schools. The first one is that the schools are multi-grade. With more than one grade in a classroom several benefits accrue which the teachers perceive, contribute to the students scoring at or above the provincial average for CTBS composite scores. One of the benefits is that younger students hear new concepts being taught to the older students. The following year when the younger students

advance to the next grade (in the next row) they are reintroduced to this concept. The students grasp the concept quickly and easily because they have been indirectly exposed to it the previous year. This would not be the case in a single grade classroom. A second benefit is to the older student. While the teacher instructs the lower grade in the classroom the older students overhear old concepts which they were taught the previous year. This provides a review for the older student and the concept is retained longer, can be recalled more easily, and may be better understood.

A second response common to six schools (not necessarily the same six) in the study is: the teachers know all their students. Because the classes are small the teachers get to know each student at a more personal level. The same teacher will end up teaching the same students for several years. Over such an extended period of time the teacher gets a better "handle" on each student's strengths and weaknesses and gains more insight into the student. Finally, the student-teacher relationship does not end in the classroom. The teachers constantly meet their students in and around the community. Many of the communities are small and everyone is everyone's neighbour. So, the teacher comes to know the student as more than just a name in the school register.

A third response common to six of the ten schools is: there are few, if any, discipline problems. With no discipline problems the teacher does not have to take time away from the lesson to address inappropriate student behaviour. There is more "time on task".

Can or do these characteristics contribute to higher achievement scores on the CTBS? It would seem logical to say that these factors may contribute either directly or indirectly to higher achievement scores on the CTBS. Why haven't all the schools noted these responses on their response-statements?

Four Schools With Common Characteristics

While comparing and analyzing responses from teachers of the ten schools it became difficult if not impossible to find commonalities among the ten schools. By lining up the most common responses four schools emerged as having the most in common.

The four schools are: Blue Mountain R.C. School, Flat Cove; Bayside All Grade, Summerville; Northern Point All Grade, Blackwell Strait; and Darby's All Grade School, Berry Hill. Except for Bayside All Grade, the schools are part of the Roman Catholic denomination. Blue Mountain R.C. School and Northern Point All Grade School belong to the same school board and the same geographical area. Darby's All Grade School and Bayside All Grade are as geographically far apart as is possible on the island of Newfoundland and are not remotely close to either Blue Mountain R.C. School or Northern Point All Grade.

Although these four schools are separated by vast distances geographically, they may be considered "living under the same roof" when it comes to comparing their teachers' perceptions of why their respective schools consistently score at or above the provincial

mean CTBS composite scores. Even though teachers of each of the four schools have come up with between sixteen and eighteen factors as to why they feel the students in their respective schools consistently score at or above the provincial mean CTBS composite scores, six factors are common to each school. The six common responses are:

1. small class size
2. multi-grade school
3. teachers know the students well
4. few, if any, discipline problems
5. the teachers are dedicated
6. teachers have a good rapport with students.

All of these factors have appeared in the literature as being advantages or positive aspects of small rural schools. Monk and Haller (1986) discussed point 4. They state that small rural schools are usually devoid of discipline problems.

Points 1, 3, and 6 are common themes in Vincent (1994). He says small numbers of teachers and students provide the setting for closer relationships and ease of communication. This combination helps facilitate a more family oriented atmosphere. Such an atmosphere should be good for overall development of students.

These four schools have listed being multi-graded as being a factor to their students success. Miller (1991) points out that multi-grade schools have many advantages. There is individualized instruction, tutorials by older students, and a greater opportunity

for teachers to be innovative. Did the teachers who responded to the response statement have all of these characteristics in mind when they included "being multi-graded" as a contributing factor?

This thesis has produced more questions than answers. Could these six common responses be core factors essential to the combination of factors that contribute to equal or above provincial average scoring on the CTBS? Some of these six characteristics are common to all of the schools in the study but not all six. The comments made by Monk and Haller (1986), Vincent (1994), and Miller (1991) and the other writers referenced in this thesis, refer to all small rural schools. If all small schools possess these qualities, then why haven't all the small rural schools in Newfoundland and Labrador exceeded the provincial average for CTBS scores?

Although there was no attempt to prove anything in this thesis, there was a hope that a pattern would emerge common to all schools in the study. Although several commonalities existed among four of the schools there were also many different characteristics. The question now arises: is there a pattern which enables these students to consistently score at or above the provincial mean CTBS composite score? Or does each school have a unique combination of characteristics and factors which brings about these achievement results?

Maybe this study could be compared to the study done by Wendell, Hoke, and Joekel in 1993. They questioned middle level administrators in the United States who were deemed to be

outstanding. The administrators were asked why they felt they were outstanding administrators. The end result was "no one size fits all. All the administrators have achieved success in their own ways".

Like the Wendall et. al. study (1993) maybe these ten schools "achieved success in their own ways". Maybe there are no common elements which distinguishes these ten small rural schools from other small rural schools who score below the provincial average for CTBS composite scores. The door has now been opened for further investigation.

Recommendations For Further Study

This thesis has raised many questions and has brought to light several new areas for study. Some of these areas for further study include:

1. A more in depth study should be done on each of the ten schools studied. The study should be done on site enabling the researcher the opportunity to develop more complete in depth profiles of each school.

2. Schools that score below the provincial average for CTBS composite scores should be studied. This may produce reasons as to why the ten schools in this study consistently scored at or above the provincial average for CTBS composite scores.

3. The students' perceptions could be sought as to what factors they perceive as contributing to their consistent scoring at or above the provincial average for CTBS composite scores.

4. Are students from multi-grade schools who become teachers in multi-grade schools more effective than teachers who attended single grade schools?

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APPENDIX A

71 Lester Street
St. John's, Newfoundland
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May 24, 1994

Dr. L. Fagan
Department of Education
St. John's, Newfoundland

Dear Dr. Fagan:

I am a graduate student in the Curriculum and Instruction program at Memorial University. I have completed the course work portion of this program and am now researching ideas for my thesis. Dr. Dennis Mulcahy is supervising my work.

I am attempting to develop a profile of a "good" small rural school. To achieve this I need access to Department of Education statistics of public exam results and CTBS scores over the past five years.

This information is solely for research use and at no time will names of schools, students, or communities be used.

If you require any further information please call me at 834-1031 (work) or 747-3052 (home). Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey J. Howard

APPENDIX B

Sample Letter

Dear Sir or Madam:

I am a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Memorial University. I am conducting a qualitative study of effective small rural schools in Newfoundland and Labrador as part of my thesis requirement, in partial fulfillment of the Masters Degree in Education. This research will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. D. Mulcahy and Dr. F. Riggs. This research has also been approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education. Dr. Patricia Canning (who is not associated with the project) may also be contacted as a resource person.

After extensive examination of Canadian Test of Basic Skills scores from 1988 to 1993, it was discovered that thirteen small rural schools in Newfoundland and Labrador consistently scored at or above the provincial mean for CTBS scores. Based on this criteria I am working under the premise that these fifteen schools are effective. Through a cross-referencing of survey data, census data, and information from the Department of Education I hope to develop a comprehensive profile of an effective small rural school.

XY School, in X-Community, is one of the schools that came up in my analysis of CTBS scores. I am requesting permission to conduct a voluntary questionnaire survey at this school to be administered to the principal and teaching staff. This open-ended survey, based on the subjects' personal views, will attempt to identify characteristics and qualities which make XY School an effective school. I will also follow up this survey with phone interviews to clarify or expand on points raised in the questionnaire.

The information received will be kept in strictest confidence. Participation is strictly voluntary and candidates may withdraw at any time. All data will be reported on a group-basis only. No school or individual will be identified in this study. A summary of the research results will be available to any of the teachers, principals and board personnel involved.

Should you require additional information please contact me or Dr. Dennis Mulcahy at our respective phone numbers.

I would appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey J. Howard

Consent Form

I _____ (name) willingly participate in this qualitative study of effective small rural schools. I understand that participation is entirely voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any time. All information is strictly confidential and no individual or school will be identified.

Date

Signature

Effective Small Schools In Rural Newfoundland

Name of school:

Participant's name:

Please complete the following statement in as much detail as you can. Any and all factors that you believe are important should be included. Feel free to use the reverse side of this paper or additional sheets if you wish.

I believe the following school and/or community factors have contributed to the success of our school:



