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PART A: PAPERS AND PUBLICATIONS

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<http://www.ucalgary.ca/~iejll>

What We Have Learned by Building a Collaborative Partnership

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Abstract

This paper contributes to the literature on why collaborative partnerships between schools and universities thrive or fail. It describes what we have learned through a successful collaborative partnership among the Brant County Board of Education, Nipissing University, and the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation. The paper describes the constellation of factors that influenced the success of the partnership. We had a clear and compelling cause and a history of collaboration that pre-dated the partnership. Our relationship was based on shared values, purposes and collaborative skills that enabled us to resolve issues of power and voice. We were able to influence decision making in our organizations and they were able to cut through red tape to translate their commitment into effective action amidst a challenging provincial context.

Overview

In April, 1998, The Brant County Board of Education, Nipissing University, and the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation (OPSTF) launched a new professional development resource kit entitled, Action Research: School Improvement Through Research-Based Professionalism ([Delong & Wideman, 1998b](#)). The kit includes two books ([Delong & Wideman, 1998a](#); [McNiff, 1998](#)) and a video program ([Delong & Wideman, 1998c](#)). We are proud of the partnership that produced this kit because we think it is symbolic of how collaboration by a school board, a university, and a teachers' federation can provide sustained support for research-based school improvement and professional growth.

A great deal has been written extolling the advantages of partnerships in education to address a wide range of issues from school improvement to teacher education. Far less has been written about why collaborative work involving schools and universities thrives or fails ([Johnston & Kirschner, 1996](#)). We agree with [Johnston and Kirschner](#) that general factors may be identified that influence success in partnerships. We also agree that there is no magic formula for success because each partnership is unique. It is through studying individual examples of partnership that general factors and their interrelationships may be identified.

Based on our experience, we think that a collaborative partnership is affected by a constellation of factors which, when combined, drive or impede the project ([Senge, 1990](#)). In this article, we discuss the constellation of factors that affected our partnership. While contextual factors are important to the success of partnerships and need to be studied further, the key factors in our experience are the trusting relationships among the project leaders (in this case, ourselves) and between the project leaders and their organizations. The former enabled us to build understanding and agreement and resolve issues important to the project. The latter affected our ability to influence our organizations to establish and support the partnership.

Background on the Three Organizations

Our project involved collaboration by three organizations with varying responsibilities for the education of children and for the professional growth of teachers. These organizations were able to sustain support for the project while two of the three underwent substantial changes themselves. During the project, provincial legislation was enacted to require the Brant County Board of Education to amalgamate with two neighbouring boards to become the Grand Erie District School Board. At the same time OPSTF was preparing to join with the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario (FWTAO) to create the new Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO).

The Brant County Board of Education employed 1,500 teachers and provided elementary and secondary education for approximately 17,000 students in 50 schools. The board was particularly proud of its work in parental and community involvement and had partnered with a variety of local organizations and businesses to

enhance programs and services for students. OPSTF represented 13,000 statutory members, 30,000 occasional teachers, and 4,000 voluntary members. The organization had earned a well-deserved reputation for producing quality professional development activities and publications. Nipissing University, formerly a college of Laurentian University, received its charter in 1992. The Faculty of Education, which provides Bachelor of Education and Master of Education programs, has a continuous history dating back to 1909 and comprises about one third of the university's full-time enrollment each year.

Evaluating the Project

We developed the following four criteria for judging the success of our project:

Timeliness of Response: We engaged our organizations in the partnership quickly and produced the kit in a very short time - 15 months from the beginning of negotiations to the release of the finished product.

Informal Agreements: The project was established and operated on a relatively informal basis. Despite major changes in our organizations and the change of one of the project's leaders, collaboration was maintained and issues were resolved without setbacks.

Acceptance of Products in the Field: While it is early to assess the impact of the kit, there have been indications that it is considered a valuable resource. For example, Jack Whitehead, internationally recognized authority on action research at the University of Bath, U.K., has judged it unique in the world in assisting teachers to engage in action research. He has highlighted it on his widely-read action research homepage (<http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw/>).

New Collaborative Efforts: Our organizations view the project as positive and valuable and are continuing under our leadership with a new venture - the development of a refereed electronic journal entitled the Ontario Action Researcher.

Because of work-related time pressures, we did not spend a great deal of time evaluating the partnership while we were producing the kit. The project was part-time and we were also performing our regular duties. We did keep journal notes but were most concerned with the action itself. Analysis of the project, therefore, has come about as a result of writing. Each time we have written articles, we have gone deeper into the analysis. We began by reflecting individually on our own journal notes; we talked by teleconference, audio-taped the conversations, and transcribed the tapes; we wrote and re-wrote face-to-face and at a distance over the Internet; and we revised drafts based on suggestions by critical friends. The responses of the reviewers and theme issue editors of IEJLL to original drafts pushed us to further develop our understandings.

Our advice is to plan for the process of evaluation right at the start of any project despite pressures to save time by not doing so. Having learned (or is it relearned?) our lesson, we now understand that we need to include in the project plan a set of steps for collecting and analyzing data. While the evaluation should be planned, however, the plan must be flexible, individualized and self-regenerating. A checklist of fixed and formulaic steps would not have served us well, because it would not have captured the complexity of the partnership process.

Findings: Why Was Our Partnership Successful?

We have identified a constellation of six factors that worked together to influence the success of our partnership.

The project had a clear and compelling cause, action research.

A challenging provincial political context generated support for the project.

We had already developed a history of collaboration across federation, school system, and other organizational contexts.

Our relationship was based on shared values, purposes and collaborative skills.

We were able to influence decision making in our organizations.

Our organizations were able to translate commitment into effective action.

We will examine each of these factors in turn.

A Compelling Cause, Action Research

Our experience was in sharp contrast to the pain and frustration described by [Noffke, Clark, Palmeri-Santiago, Sadler, and Shujaa \(1996\)](#) as they tried to develop understanding and agreement among themselves about the focus of their partnership. We had a clear-cut purpose that we all agreed to be of worth. The compelling nature of this "cause" was shared by a network of professionals within and beyond our organizations who contributed in a variety of ways.

Action research is an approach to school improvement that honours teachers' professionalism. Individually, and in groups, teachers identify questions about their practice, make appropriate changes, and collect data to discover the impact of those changes. They record their studies and share the results of their investigations with others ([Delong & Wideman, 1996](#); [McNiff, 1998](#); [McNiff, Lomax, & Whitehead, 1996](#); [Whitehead, 1993](#)).

Traditionally, teachers have accepted the predominant role of universities in educational research and the development of educational knowledge. Top-down change ignores the experience and voice of the teacher and has been shown to be largely ineffective in creating substantial changes in classroom practices ([Fullan, 1982](#)). Action research is more consistent with [Schon's \(1983\)](#) model of Reflection in Action than with the model of Technical Rationality that supports top-down change ([Schon](#)). Technical Rationality sees professional practice as instrumental problem solving and encourages a hierarchical relationship between the experts who develop knowledge and the practitioners who implement knowledge. [Schon's](#) work called the model of technical rationality into question. [He](#) found that in areas of uncertainty (and there are many in education), effective practitioners shift from instrumental problem solving to reflective practice. They become researchers who identify a problem, develop a hypothesis, and conduct an experiment to see how it changes the problematic situation. By pursuing cycles of action research, reflective practitioners develop new practices that are grounded in the reality of their own contexts.

The emphasis in action research on writing and sharing ([Delong & Wideman, 1996](#); [McNiff, 1998](#); [Whitehead, 1993](#)), enables teachers to communicate the real changes in practice they have made and to contribute substantially to the development of the knowledge base of their own profession. From a hierarchical perspective this is a bottom-up approach to change. From a collaborative perspective, however, it suggests a more collegial relationship among schools and universities to honour what each brings to the development of educational knowledge.

The process of action research itself is conducive to the formation of collaborative partnerships particularly in its use of "critical friends" ([Whitehead, 1993](#)) to support the research process. Our partnership was also strengthened by a focus on action research and its capacity to build links among groups ([Calhoun, 1994](#); [MacTaggart, 1992](#)). Action research mitigates against an attitude of individual ownership of a project to nurture, instead, a vision of learning and growing together. This shift from egocentricity to seeing oneself as part of a larger picture ([Senge, 1990](#)) can affect the ability of both individuals and organizations to contribute to the improvement of the social order ([McNiff, 1992](#)).

A Challenging Provincial Context

[Cupertino \(1996\)](#) recognized the impact of context on the accomplishments of a partnership project. A challenging provincial context generated support for our project. Many people recognized that action research could address widespread concerns emanating from the Ontario government's massive restructuring of elementary and secondary education. Successive governments had worked to establish curriculum expectations for students and to increase teachers' and school boards' accountability for achieving them. The accountability initiatives of the current provincial government include a standardized provincial report card, standardized provincial testing, and, through the [Ontario College of Teachers \(1998\)](#), the establishment of standards of professional practice.

While the government is identifying expected results of student learning, it is not dictating the means by which those results must be achieved by teachers and schools. Because students learn at different rates and in different ways and because Ontario is a large province with a diverse population, the decision making of teachers is essential for enabling children in individual classrooms to achieve expected results. Teachers and education officials are beginning to see professionalism and practitioner research as keys to improving the quality of student learning and accountability ([Eames, 1995](#); [Laidlaw, 1996](#)). Action research is a vital means of implementing this results-based approach to education and addressing the increasing demands for accountability by parents and community ([Macbeth, McCreath, & Aitchison, 1995](#)).

The economic rationalist policies of the current conservative government and policy reversals by successive governments have created an atmosphere of cynicism among Ontario educators. Teachers have begun to see action research as a positive way to deal with their own cynicism by taking charge of changes in their individual classrooms and by seeing whether those changes improve students' learning. Teachers create and share their own living educational theories as they research their own educational practices ([Evans, 1995](#); [Noffke & Stevenson, 1995](#); [Whitehead, 1993](#)).

Within the context of rapid change in Ontario education, enthusiasm for action research influenced a wide variety of people, both within and beyond our organizations, to volunteer to contribute to the project. For example, we were able to generate over six hours of videotaped interviews with elementary, secondary and

university teachers to be used as the basis of the video program. A call for papers resulted in a rich array of research accounts and articles for the book. When we found that the kit needed clear and concise instructions on how to begin to conduct action research, Jackie approached Jean McNiff, an educational consultant from the U.K. Based on their pre-existing friendship and Jean's commitment to values and purposes we all shared, she generously donated her book, *Action Research for Professional Development: Concise Advice for New Action Researchers* (McNiff, 1998), for use in the kit.

A History of Collaboration

Kirschner, Dickinson, and Blosser (1996) recognized the need to devote considerable effort and time in school/university partnerships to relationship building. As individuals we had already developed a history of collaboration with one another across federation, school system and other organizational contexts. Consequently, we did not have to begin to develop trust and synergy at the same time we were initiating the project. We had learned that each of us consistently followed through on our commitments and that none of us played to the grandstand.

The collaborative relationship around action research began in 1994 with Jackie Delong, Ron Wideman, and Linda Grant, then an executive assistant at OPSTF. After Linda left OPSTF in February 1997 to take up new responsibilities with Ontario's new College of Teachers, Marg Couture continued the partnership for OPSTF. Linda and Marg were on staff together at OPSTF. Jackie knew Linda and Marg through OPSTF activities. Ron and Jackie had co-authored a number of articles on action research and had both contributed to the development of *The Common Curriculum: Policies and Outcomes, Grades 1 to 9* (1995), for the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training. (This policy document was the result of a six-year curriculum development initiative begun by previous Liberal Party and New Democratic Party governments. *The Common Curriculum* was repudiated after the Conservative Party gained power in June 1995 and has recently been replaced with a hastily developed curriculum that includes many specific technical expectations.)

As project leaders, we developed a strong working relationship during the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training Common Curriculum Implementation Fund Project that laid the groundwork for our action research collaboration. In early 1995, OPSTF received a grant from the Fund to investigate the use of new action research to implement *The Common Curriculum* in Ontario schools. The project involved four boards of education. Teachers learned the skills of action research and conducted their own studies. By the time the Ministry funding ran out in December 1996, the project had produced the first "*Act, Reflect, Revise*" forum and a book (Halsall & Hossack, 1996) in which the teachers shared their research.

A Relationship Based on Shared Values, Purposes, and Collaborative Skills

Our collaborative relationship was based on shared values, purposes, and collaborative skills that enabled us to think compatibly and solve problems in ways that satisfied our individual and organizational needs (Christenson, Eldredge, Ibom, Johnston, & Thomas, 1996). As we worked together, discovering our common experiences helped us clarify the values and purposes we shared. We are all teachers by profession, with significant classroom and school experience. We have all been responsible for planning and leading professional development activities and have all made it a point to learn about and practice action research. We have a commitment to our own career-long professional growth. We have developed a capacity for risk taking and honouring multiple perspectives by serving in a variety of educational roles. These experiences helped us develop knowledge, skills and values that support collaboration.

As we worked together we found ourselves employing complementary interpersonal skills. For example, there were times during our partnership when Ron focused on how to complete the task at hand, Jackie connected the task at hand to other aspects of the project to create new possibilities, and Marg clarified and reinforced positively both kinds of contributions. Our shared values, purposes, and skills enabled us to know each others' priorities and the priorities of each of our organizations so that we could resolve issues readily. A key problem we faced was how to identify and address the different perspectives of teacher researchers and university researchers. Issues of power and knowledge (Foucault, 1979) related to these different perspectives kept surfacing (like the Loch Ness Monster, we joked) usually when one partner reacted to something said or written by someone else. As we talked the matter through, we agreed that the differing perspectives on research need not be in conflict. The development of collaborative relationships between teacher researchers and university researchers (Kirschner, Dickinson, & Blosser, 1996) can enhance the legitimate roles of both in the development of educational knowledge.

An Ability to Influence Decision Making

[Block \(1987\)](#) and [Covey \(1989, 1990\)](#) have written extensively about the importance of developing circles of influence and of seeing influence as a two-way process. We were able to influence decision making within our organizations in ways that enabled them to commit to the partnership with a minimum of formality. We could do this because we had developed trusting relationships within our organizations and because we took the needs and aspirations of our organizations into account in planning and carrying out the project.

In 1996, when the Common Curriculum Implementation Fund project funded by the Ministry came to an end, no further ministry funding was available due to changes in government policies. Because teachers had responded positively to the project and because action research had the potential to improve student learning, we believed that providing sustained support for action research was necessary and desirable. Under the leadership of Jackie and Linda, the Brant County Board of Education and OPSTF agreed to cosponsor a second "Act, Reflect, Revise" forum in February 1997.

The current partnership was envisioned in December 1996 as we discussed the benefits of publishing the experience of the teachers who would be presenting at the upcoming forum. We became excited about the possibility of producing a professional development kit that would include print and video components. The video would put faces and voices to the names in the book and visually communicate teachers' enthusiasm. We decided to try to put together a partnership of our three organizations to provide resources for the project. Timelines were tight. There were only ten weeks until the forum. To make the project cost effective, it was essential to videotape interviews at the forum and to call for papers.

The positions we held gave us direct and immediate access to our chief executive officers. The Common Curriculum Implementation Fund Project had provided evidence of the power of action research to revitalize teachers and create positive changes in practice ([Halsall & Hossack, 1996](#)). We used this evidence to generate support. We shared the positive responses of teachers who had been using action research and communicated our conviction that action research had the potential to contribute powerfully to school improvement and teacher professionalism.

Within a month, we had obtained approvals to proceed. The partnership was truly a collaborative venture. It was initiated by all the partners together and was based on equity of purposes, contributions, and decision making. Funding limitations would have made it difficult for any of the partners to accomplish a project of this scale by themselves. There was a realization that the partnership would increase the breadth of support for the resulting kit and, therefore, the likelihood of widespread use.

An Ability to Translate Organizational Commitment into Effective Action

[Senge \(1990\)](#) and [Bennis and Biederman \(1997\)](#) have described the power that is accessed when organizations are able to focus their energies on clearly envisioned tasks. We were fortunate that our organizations were able to translate their commitment to the project into effective action. Following the February 1997 forum, there was a whirlwind of action to complete the project as soon as possible. We finished the video program by September 1997 and the book manuscript the next month. Editing, design, and layout began with the intention of releasing the kit at the December 1997 Conference of the Ontario Educational Research Council. However, political action by Ontario teachers in response to education policy changes by the provincial government delayed completion until March 1998.

We continued to enjoy the trust and strong support of our chief executive officers throughout the project. As a result, most of the arrangements among the organizations were made verbally and on the basis of trust. Bureaucratic procedures were minimized. Only two brief letters outlining general expectations for the goals of the project were required.

Our organizations accepted an emerging design that enabled us to complete the project while continuing our regular duties as staff. For example, Ron was assigned a practice teaching supervision route near Toronto that allowed him to attend project meetings in Brantford and Mississauga. Differentiated responsibilities that emerged through mutual decision making were based on our own individual capabilities, the voluntary involvement of our organizational colleagues, and the available resources of our organizations.

The amount of development money provided by each partner was balanced by in-kind contributions. Jackie and Ron co-ordinated development of the book and video. Marg coordinated layout, design, packaging, and production. Staff in all three organizations contributed invaluable organizational and technical work. A Brant County firm donated the digitization of the video program. Technical and support staff at Nipissing University arranged teleconferences and supplied transcription services.

Conclusions

Based on our experience, we confirm the view that general factors can be identified which affect the success or failure of collaborative partnerships. We have come to think about such factors using the metaphor of "constellations" because it enables us to focus on how factors cluster and interrelate in individual cases to drive or impede particular projects ([Senge, 1990](#)). When a preponderance of factors interact to support the partnership, it will be more likely to thrive.

When phrased as questions, the constellation of factors we have identified may provide a framework for building and evaluating other partnerships. The questions we suggest follow:

To what extent is there a compelling cause to which project leaders and organizations can commit?

To what extent does the provincial/state/national context support the importance of the partnership for individuals and organizations?

To what extent has a positive or negative history of trust and collaboration been developed among the project leaders and between the project leaders and key administrators in their respective organizations prior to the establishment of the partnership?

To what extent do the project leaders share values, experience, and collaborative skills that can be used as a basis for developing understanding and agreement and resolving issues related to the project?

To what extent are the project leaders able to influence decision making within their organizations in ways that enable the organizations to support the project?

To what extent are the organizations able to translate their commitment to the project into effective action?

For us, a key factor is the trust relationship among the project leaders that enables them to identify and resolve issues that are critical to the success of the partnership. Our experience confirms the view that issues of power and voice are far more likely to be resolved positively within the context of strong collaborative relationships and that such relationships are also important in bridging the substantial cultural differences that exist between schools and universities.

While we confirm that building relationships must be the first priority in developing collaborative partnerships, we think that partnerships have an advantage when the project leaders have a history of collaboration that predates the project. The test for the partnership may lie in the time individuals will commit to building and maintaining trusting, synergistic relationships.

There is a need for further study of the importance of contextual factors in the success of partnerships. We think that there are at least two interrelated factors that need to be considered - the context external to the partnering organizations and the context internal to each of the partnering organizations. A supportive external context provides potential motivation for action by the partnering organizations. A supportive context within the organizations removes barriers to action, makes resources available, and nurtures the collaborative process. Taking into account the contextual factors, partnership and powerful purpose are inextricably linked. Identification of a common cause, galvanized by contextual need and individual and organizational values, is a powerful motivator for productive action. When the common cause is elusive, however, there may be difficulty in generating the enthusiasm and support necessary to drive a partnership.

We believe that relationship is the key factor in bridging context and cause. Organizations should encourage staff to develop a wide range of collaborative relationships with staff in their own and related organizations and to use these contacts when partnership opportunities arise. The trusting relationships between the project leaders and key decision makers in the partnering organizations enables the organizations to provide effective support for a partnership. Interorganizational partnerships happen most effectively when the chief executive officers are in direct communication with the project leaders in the partnership and share commitment for the project.

[Johnston and Kirschner \(1996\)](#) indicated that collaborative partnerships require skills that many individuals do not possess. We agree that participants need knowledge, skills, and values that honour multiple perspectives and nurture trust, mutuality, and equity. We want to explore this more fully. There is a quality to collaborative partnerships that cannot be expressed in checklists and contracts. When you approach partnerships as you approach contract negotiation, the language shifts, the process changes, and the flexibility is lost.

Next Steps

Currently the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, the Grand Erie District School Board, and Nipissing University are embarking on a new cycle of partnership to develop an electronic, refereed journal entitled

[The Ontario Action Researcher \(http://www.unipissing.ca/oar/oarHOMEPAGE/webhomepg.htm\)](http://www.unipissing.ca/oar/oarHOMEPAGE/webhomepg.htm).

The purpose of the journal, the first issue of which is expected early in 1999, will be to provide sustained support for teachers as they develop educational knowledge through action research. As leaders of the new project, we want to continue to develop our understanding of partnership as we improve our practice working together collaboratively.

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Areas of Current Interest or
Research:

- Ontario College of
Teachers,
- Action Research,
 - Professional
Development,
- Partnerships in
Education

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Area of Current Interest or Research:

- Action Research: the nature of
educative influence as a system
leader
- Educational Change
- Partnerships in Education

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Area of Current Interest or
Research:

- Action Research in the
B.Ed. Program
- How Teachers Change
Their Classroom
Practices
 - Partnerships in
Education
- Technology in ed

2. HOW CAN I EXPLAIN THE NATURE OF MY EDUCATIVE INFLUENCE?
3RD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF THE SSTEP –
JULY 22-25, 2000

Jacqueline D. DeLong
Superintendent of Schools
Grand Erie District School Board
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I want to begin by setting this paper in a framework of explanation, role and context.

My explanation

In explaining my practice, I draw on a range of literature and theory. I do find it helpful but insufficient to explain the complexity of my practice. Because I have never felt that someone else's conceptual framework can explain my life and learning, I find some comfort working in the context of *the loss of legitimizing metanarratives* (Lather, 2000). As Lyotard writes in his book on the postmodern condition:

A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by pre-established rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgement, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what will have been done. (Lyotard, p. 81, 1986)

In one sense I am such a postmodern writer. My writing, as part of my educative discourse, is one of the ways in which I give a form to my life. In this sense I see myself as an artist who is giving a form to her own life through her productive work. In forming my life, as a postmodern writer, I am working without rules in order to formulate the rule of what has already been done.

In another sense I am constrained and supported by rules. As a superintendent of schools, my 'system responsibilities' are full of rules. There are legislative rules governing everything from curriculum expectations to educational finance to health and safety in the workplace. I have a range of responsibilities set out by the Board and to which I am accountable in my annual performance appraisal with my Director. In working as a senior administrator and educational leader within a school board I accept that I work within a context governed by rules set by the Provincial Government and the democratically elected Trustees of the Grand Erie District School Board. Yet, because I view rules as guidelines, not barriers, I am also exercising my judgement and discretion in a range of contexts and in ways which enable me to see myself as a professional educator and knowledge-creator.

One of the problems in explaining my influence as a superintendent of schools, is to embrace the position of a postmodern writer. I want to do this while at the same time coming to understand the nature of the external forces. While I will draw on the traditional forms of theory with their analytic categories, I am thinking of doing this in a way which transcends their analytic categories in the creation of my own living theory (Whitehead, 2000) of my educative influence as a superintendent of schools.

What I want to do in my research is to find a way of clarifying and communicating my living standards of professional practice. These constitute the explanatory power of my living theories. I want to do this in a way which shows that these living standards of practice are also the living standards of judgement I use in testing the validity of my claims to know my educative influence. In the way Geoff Suderman-Gladwell (<http://bath.ac.uk/~edsajw/brgeoff.mov>) talks about the criteria for judgement emerging from his students' practices in dialogue with him, so I want my own living standards of practice and judgement to emerge in the course of telling my story of my life as a superintendent of schools. What I want to do is to clarify and communicate my living standards of practice in the course of their emergence in my practice. This brief paper is an example of how I intend to do this from within the complexity and range of activities which constitute my working life as a superintendent.

My role and context

For the past five and half years I have held the position of superintendent of schools, in a large school board in southern Ontario, Canada. I have responsibility for 11 elementary schools in 14 buildings and five secondary schools, one of which is a medium security prison. In addition, currently I have a number of system portfolios which include:

1. Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting,
2. Community Relations and Career Education,
3. Staff Development,
4. Leadership, and
5. Communications.

Representing this complexity and that landscape (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) in a way that communicates that living story of my life as a superintendent is problematic. However, the focus of this paper is not to deal with all the complexities of the job but to emphasize the standards of practice which can help to explain my influence.

My holistic standards of practice as a superintendent

After continuous reflection and examination over five years "shaping a professional identity" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1999) of my life as a superintendent, I am beginning to see recurring patterns and images. First I am always, no matter the position or situation, focused on teaching and learning. Second, the most vivid images are of the people and the relationships I have developed and sustained over time. When my mind works through a direction or problem it starts with the faces of people involved as they exist for me in context and then infuses the ideas into the process. The third factor that contributes to the way I do things is that I retain a prevailing vision, a vision of good, of what the strategic direction or significant outcome will look like and retain that as a focus amidst the struggle and conflict. In fact, one of my capacities is to lift myself emotionally and intellectually above the fracas to retain that image of a better future. (Fletcher & Childs, 2000) For example, my extended paper will examine the restructuring of the school board in 1998.

It seems to me that I begin with a vision that is linked inextricably to the images of the people associated with the idea. That occurs simultaneously. The images of the people and the long term outcome wave in and out as a picture forms from the movement and integration of the ideas and the people similar to the way that watercolour works. A form emerges from the interaction of the paint, water, brush and paper. The original vision frequently alters and sometimes changes completely as a result of dialogue, reading and reflection.

Like painting canvases, I work on several plans at the same time in various stages of completion. Ideas move forward on a broken front with me working at each of them at different times, in different ways and to greater or lesser degrees of attention, concentration and time. Sometimes external pressures force my attention to a particular project because of issues like safety, budget, deadlines, timelines and government or board dictates. Mostly the pressures come from within as moral imperatives. I have a need to act, to see something get better. I find my work is very much an integrated whole based on my values and the people with whom I work. The integration provides the means to accomplish several tasks at the same time with relatively greater speed and effectiveness.

Given these three, then I draw out the constellation of connections that will bring the vision to fruition. Mostly the connections are amongst the network of people with whom I have built relationships over time but they also include resources, political "nous" and policy direction. I will then begin to bring together the people that can make the particular direction/event happen, develop the policy or procedure and gather the resources required. I move on all these fronts simultaneously moving the processes forward. Even in very bad times and often despite terrible setbacks, I keep moving forward. I respect the past, but I find I am very much "present" in my dealings with people and my enjoyment of events as I am planning for improvement and a better future (McNiff, 1992).

Other living standards of practice I use to explain my influence as a superintendent and professional educator

Having described the way I see my influence and I want to return to this holistic view as a living standard of practice, I now want to explain my influence using my other living

standards of practice. In my explanation I am using Lather's notion of ironic validity (Donmoyer, 1996) as I seek to communicate the living standards of practice which are embodied in my practice. I know that my communications of my standards is a representation of the standards, rather than the direct apprehension of these standards as they are lived in my practice.

I want to move you to a shared understanding of my standards, through my words, to the images of the people I work with, and to the meanings of my living relationships through which my influence is felt and understood. Because of limitations of space and the complexity of my work I will bear in mind a point made by Gerald Manley-Hopkins - I do not give a fig for simplicity this side of complexity, but I would die for simplicity on the other side of complexity!

So, here is my attempt to represent four of my living standards of practice in an explanation of my influence as a superintendent. The first is a motivating pleasure, a *life-affirming energy* (Bataille, 1987), which I believe is at the heart of my influence and my first standard of practice. When I first began working with teachers conducting action research the one indicator I was looking for and clearly saw was an excitement, a fire, a light in their faces that told me that the energy, motivation, and commitment was there to be tapped. (DeLong, 1997) (see the images included in this paper at <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw/values/delong.doc>)

The second standard of practice concerns teaching and learning. I believe that I communicate to those I work with a passionate interest in their learning as they work in ways which are intended to improve the quality of students' learning. I am focusing on evidence which can be used to judge the influence of the teachers on helping students to improve their learning. The teachers' accounts are available on the website of the Ontario Action Researcher (<http://www.unipissing.ca/oar>) .

The third standard of practice concerns the critical judgements I make as part of the process of responding to and improving the quality of teachers' professional growth. Here are the kind of critical judgements I make when I visit classrooms.

In reflecting back on the visit to Geoff Suderman-Gladwell's classroom, I tried to analyze my enjoyment. I could see from performance indicators stored somewhere in my head that good practice was in operation here. Performance indicators include such factors as students actively engaged in and discussing their learning, authentic performance assessment through practical application of learning, teacher actively guiding learning not the sage at the front, a caring and respectful environment for learning, eagerness to share learning on the part of students and teacher, and so on. My enjoyment rested in both the special relationship that I have with Geoff and the critical judgment I can exercise to assess good work when I see it. Here was good work.

The fourth standard of practice concerns my tenacious and creative response to working in a set of power relations. In the extended paper on the CD-Rom of the conference papers, I analyse these power relations in terms of my experience of the restructuring of School Boards in Ontario, when it looked as if my Superintendent's post might be deleted!

Perhaps one of the clearest expressions of my influence in which these four standards of practice can be seen is in Jack Whitehead's response to Geoff Suderman-Gladwell at a Master's session on the 13 May 2000.

Jack Whitehead's response <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edsajw/brgeoff.mov>

to

Geoff Suderman Gladwell <http://www.bath.ac.uk/~edajw/jwgsg.mov>

Both Geoff and Jack are expressing the four standards of practice I have identified above. I brought them together through my influence in establishing the master's programme and in encouraging Brock to invite Jack to participate in the programme as a visiting professor. I see both Geoff and Jack expressing the above standards in their own terms in their practices as professional educators. What I think distinguishes my own standards of practice as a superintendent is that I both express these standards as a professional educator and exercise my influence as a superintendent. I have attempted to communicate this distinguishing standard of practice of a superintendent in the holistic form of my description above on 'how do I influence others'. (Black & Delong, 1999) In saying that this is my fifth standard

of practice, I do not want it to be taken as part of a list of linguistic standards. I want it be seen as a holistic living standard within which the other standards make sense to me as I seek to sustain and extend my educative influence as a superintendent of schools.

There is much evidence that the written word cannot capture the nature of my influence and therefore much of the real message is lost without the visual images that can be captured on video and multi-media. For that reason, I am supporting professional educators to use those media to develop and share their knowledge. In the visual images we can see the generative and transformative quality of the discourse which enables the creation of the knowledge that is the life and learning of teachers and administrators. Nevertheless, this paper contains a linguistic representation of parts of my life as a superintendent as I attempt to enable others to free themselves from constraints on their creativity and life-affirming energy (Bataille, 1987) and to create their own epistemologies of their lives as teachers and administrators. In conclusion, I'd like to ask for your help through your creative and critical responses in making sense of my life as I hold on to my sense of being a creative knowledge-producer and practitioner.

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MY EPISTEMOLOGY OF PRACTICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENCY

(IN ACTION RESEARCH IN ORGANIZATIONS, McNIFF , 2000)

Jackie DeLong

Introduction

In this chapter I would like to describe and explain the nature of my influence as an educational leader in a school district of over 32,000 students. The chapter is set in the context of paradigm proliferation (Lather, 2000) and new epistemologies of scholarship and practice (Boyer, 1990; Schön, 1995) at the beginning of the new millennium. There is much evidence that the written word cannot capture the nature of that influence and therefore much of the real message is lost without the visual images that can be captured on video and multi-media. For that reason, I am supporting professional educators to use those media to develop and share their knowledge. In the visual images we can see the generative and transformative quality of the discourse which enables the creation of the knowledge that is the life and learning of teachers and administrators.

Nevertheless, this chapter contains a linguistic representation of my life as a superintendent over a span of five and a half years in terms of my learning and growth. Much of that growth has come about through a self-discovery of freedom which I found through breaking out of the controls exerted in family and professional relationships. This freedom has been

expressed in my subsequent desire to enable others to free themselves from constraints on their creativity and life-affirming energy (Bataille, 1987).

My current situation

I have worked since 1995 as a superintendent of schools in a Southern Ontario school board in Southern Ontario, Canada. These years in the post have seen significant changes in administrative and organisational structures throughout the education system. An issue which has had particular significance for my work has been the amalgamation of boards to ensure the effective implementation of rationalist economic policies, a move which has resulted in substantial chaos for teachers, administrators and other personnel. Living through the chaos has been a difficult but valuable learning experience.

During those same years I have also been conducting action research into my own practice as a superintendent, collecting and analysing data, writing about what I was learning, and encouraging others to do the same. The work and research have rolled in and out and have often mixed together in the formation of waves, sometimes creating images of great strength and beauty, and sometimes of trauma and pain.

I want here to tell the story of how I have developed my own epistemology of practice of the superintendency. I hope to show how my epistemology is rooted in strong and caring relationships, and how I have enabled people to learn, and value their own learning. I believe I have enabled people to develop their own epistemologies of practice, so that they are able to reflect on their action and show how they have improved the quality of education for themselves and others.

To show that and how I have done this is of particular importance for me. I recall an episode at the 1996 American Educational Research Association annual meeting. Key members of the newly formed Special Interest Group on Self-Study were gathered in the lobby. I joined the conversation, and in response to a question about what I intended to research, said that I hoped to research my practice and demonstrate improved educational

leadership. I hoped to demonstrate this in terms of how the quality of my influence impacted on principals, teachers, and student learning. A colleague wished me luck because, evidently, to date no one has been able to do that satisfactorily. I took from the comment that the distance from my position as superintendent to the classroom was perceived as too great to demonstrate any line of influence. Showing the connection wouldn't be a simple matter, I thought, but it would be worth the effort.

The reservations of this colleague are well borne out in the invited paper to Division A (Administration) by David Clark, a Professor at the University of North Carolina, at the 1997 AERA conference, when he talked about his terrible disappointment in his and the academy's inability to capture the essence of educational leadership:

The honest fact is that the total contribution of Division A of AERA to the development of the empirical and theoretical knowledge base of administration and policy development is so miniscule that if all of us had devoted our professional careers to teaching and service, we would hardly have been missed.

(Clark, 1997)

He went on to challenge the academic community to create a new field, 'the sociology of the interesting', and to focus more on practitioner-leaders and less on publishing research papers; for it is in practice that real social change takes place, and practitioner-leaders are key agents in the process.

I took from this comment that Clark felt that there was ample propositional advice about what educational leadership might look like, but little research-based evidence to show its realisation in practice. This helped me to firm up my own resolve to theorise my own practice as an educational leader; part of my research would be to produce validated evidence that I had beneficially influenced the quality of learning for people at all levels of the educational system.

This, then, became my research project for my doctoral studies, beginning in 1996, and about to conclude, I hope, in 2000.

What does a superintendent of schools do?

There are two facets to the position of the superintendent in my board: one is the responsibility for a family of schools, and the other is a number of system portfolios. System portfolios refer to broad frameworks of educational activity, and include the implementation of policies and procedures. The portfolios for which I had responsibility on my appointment in 1995 were School-Work-Community, Staff Development, Safe Schools, Compensatory Education, and Career Education; today they are Assessment, Evaluation and Reporting, Staff Development and Leadership, Community Relations and Career Education. My family of schools in 1995 in the former Brant County area was the Pauline Johnson Family of Schools – 14 elementary and secondary schools, and about 5,000 students. Today it is the former Norfolk area: Delhi, Simcoe, Valley Heights, and GELA (Grand Erie Learning Alternatives) and the supervision of the Simcoe School Support Office and its principal-leader. The work is demanding, and over the years I have come to realise that the driving force that sustains me throughout is my vision of a school system whose purpose it is to improve student learning.

This vision of improving student learning places my own understanding of my work in a different plane from the traditional literature on educational leadership, which emphasises the functional and task-oriented nature of the work. I do not subscribe to this view. I engage more readily with the writings of authors such as Stephen Covey, who challenges the dominant theme in the success literature as ‘one filled with social image consciousness, techniques and quick fixes’, and proposes a return to the ‘Character Ethic as the foundation of success – things like integrity, humility, fidelity, temperance, courage, justice, patience, industry, simplicity, modesty and the Golden Rule’ (Covey, 1989: 18). These values are the ones that inform my work, and I systematically find ways to let them transform into educative practices throughout aspects of the system where I am able to have an influence.

What was the nature of my research?

At the same time as I was beginning my new job, I was also learning about and supporting action research processes through a pilot project that I had initiated with Linda Grant, the then Executive Assistant with the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation. By 1996 I was coming to the conclusion that I was supporting teachers in doing their action research, but not doing it myself. Here was I, one who took pride in saying that she never asked anyone to do anything that she wasn't willing to do herself, experiencing myself as a living contradiction (Whitehead, 1989) in that I was saying one thing and doing another. The situation changed when I lunched with Tom Russell, Professor at Queen's University, Ontario, and Jack Whitehead at the first 'Act, Reflect, Revise' Conference (convened by the Ontario Public Schools Teachers Federation in February). Tom and Jack convinced me that I actually had something worthy of researching and writing in my life as a senior woman manager (which still comes as a surprise to me). Tom talked about my capacity to speak with the authority of experience (Russell, 1995), and Jack was interested in taking me on as a student. I was excited about doing advanced research that was practical in nature and gaining accreditation for the work of improving myself and trying to become a better leader for my school system.

What I think my research has come to demonstrate is how I hold together many different activities, relationships and influences, and continue to address powerful politically-driven influences in the education system in directions which enable me to continue to exert my educational leadership in ways that I value. These ways primarily involve understanding the quality of my relationships with other people, and how I can influence those relationships so that they lead to learning. Understanding the nature of my educative relationships has become the focus of my research. Throughout my practice I concentrate on ensuring that the quality of relationships is educative in the sense that I support people to make their own decisions, become autonomous, and act in ways that will ensure student learning.

Given the diverse nature of my job, my relationships are also many and varied. My work involves working with senior administrators and trustees at Board level, principals, vice-principals, teachers, teacher unions, parents, students, business, industry and university personnel. I believe that being an effective leader involves creating, developing and

sustaining positive relationships built on trust and respect. A relationship of this kind is earned and requires time together. Whitehead (1993) speaks about extending educational enquiry from a personal to a social orientation so that 'educational theory is a form of dialogue which has profound implications for the future of humanity' (Kilpatrick, 1951). McNiff *et al.* (1992) see action research as a means to improve the social order. How could I do this? How could I show that my work did exist as a form of dialogue with profound implications for the future of humanity, and did contribute to a good social order? While I recognise that improving the social order is not a small task, I firmly believe that it is attainable in small ways by each one of us, and is certainly one of my purposes in my sphere of influence (Covey, 1990). How could I show that I was attaining my vision? This became a driving factor as my research began to develop.

More changes

In 1996–1997 it became apparent that the new Progressive Conservative government was going to shake up the school system. As the new Minister of Education said early in his tenure, it was time to 'create a crisis' in order to bring about change in education. In addition to reducing the power of the teacher unions and trustees, the government intended to create a new curriculum, test students provincially, change the funding policy, reduce the power of school boards, and increase the size of school boards. This caused unprecedented upheaval among the workforce, and I found myself wondering how I could continue to support practitioners to maintain their morale and commitment to education. While what was happening in Ontario was part of the wider economic rationalist policies evident in the UK, US and New Zealand, my concern still was how to support people at the local level. I still saw the development of personal relationships as the key to challenging wider global trends through a personal commitment to practice; but those relationships were in danger of erosion because of the enormous significance that external political and economic factors were exerting on people's lives.

With this in mind, I began to concentrate on supporting communities of practitioner researchers, and systematically to build up networks of support. I began to work with the

principals in my family of schools to create a ‘collaborative community of learners and to move them from dependence to independence to interdependence’ (Covey, 1990). I began to work with curriculum support members of staff; and also to work systematically to enhance relationships with community, business and industry groups to create partnerships. I aimed to involve staff and community in creating the new board. In the former Brant Board I seen the potential of building partnerships for the purpose of ‘enhancing programs and services for students’ (DeLong and Moffatt, 1996). I wanted, through my efforts to develop educational communities, to provide a counterbalance to the worst effects of technical rationalist policies which were driven by anything but educational values.

I concentrated on developing programs of staff development. This included the planning and implementation of professional development programmes for teaching and non-teaching staff, and program implementation. Action research was part of the staff development model that I created, and during this time I initiated an action research pilot project with Linda Grant and four other boards with five teachers and two school administrators. This initiative in turn led to publications (DeLong and Wideman, 1996, 1998), presentations at the Ontario Education Research Council, and presentations on a wider front, including the American Educational Research Association annual meetings.

Developing the research

As I was learning the job of school superintendent I was consistently documenting my actions and reflections through taping and transcription of meetings and workshops, daily journal-keeping, photos, evaluations of my practice by my family of schools’ principals and the director and submitting my writing to public scrutiny for response. This was hard work, for I never perceived myself as an academic, and have felt somewhat intimidated by the academic community. This however did not deter me. I spent time during the summers of 1996–1998 working with Jack, my supervisor, in Bath, UK, and I developed my range and understanding of issues in educational research. As time progressed, the focus of my research began to emerge as being an investigation of my life as a superintendent for the purpose of contributing to the knowledge base on educational leadership. I also developed

my understanding that it was not sufficient to produce only abstract accounts about leadership, as Clark says (see above). To stay true to the exciting ideas of the new scholarship (Schön, 1995), I would have to show how I was generating my own theory from within my practice, and also explain how I was generating circles of influence that would show leadership as a lived practice that had profound implications for other people's lives.

The political backdrop continued unfolding into new stories of disaffection and dismay. During the fall of 1998 there was persistent conflict between the teacher federations and the government culminating in a two-week strike of all teachers and most school administrators. A six-month term was lost to coping with the unrest and anger. The economic rationalist policies were implemented in all their realities in Ontario. Funding was slashed from anything that didn't produce and make a profit.

September 1997 saw the beginning of the preparation for the amalgamation process, with widespread structural change and re-allocation of administrative responsibilities. The government had mandated the merging of boards, none of which wanted the merger, and some put up considerable resistance. It was my job to help steer the whole process through, in spite of my own opposition to the changes that were taking place. I tend to embrace change where I see an opportunity for improvement, but I could discern none such here. However, I was still driven by my concern to maintain the quality of educational experience for students, teachers and other partners in the education system, so I directed increased efforts to trying to make the best of what I saw as a potentially disastrous situation.

The process of amalgamation was disruptive for all and characterised by an atmosphere of anger, fear and imminent disruption. Because one of the government's intentions in amalgamating boards was cost cutting by downsizing senior administration, my own job came under threat, as well as those of many of my colleagues. The crisis had been well and truly created. Early retirement was offered to both teachers and administrators close to retirement but the drain on leadership ranks, particularly principals, grew into a crisis situation as the numbers leaving increased. It was my task to solve the problem within my Leadership portfolio.

So how did I maintain my enthusiasm for my research in light of these massive structural changes with their implications of personal instability and closure? My response to the crisis was to maintain my commitment to providing a quality educational experience for students. I saw opportunities to use my influence to combat the external disruption by concentrating on building up confidence in action research approaches to professional development, and disseminating work to show its usefulness. We renewed a partnership with the now amalgamated Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario, Nipissing University and the new Grand Erie District School Board. Colleagues and I developed the *Ontario Action Researcher*, an electronic journal, of which Ron Wideman, Assistant Professor at Nipissing, and I became the editors. Our first issue was in December 1998. In the *International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning*, we describe how the quality of our relationship and trust of each other has supported us in finding opportunities for new development.

I was interested at the 1998 AERA meeting in San Diego to listen to a presentation at the Special Interest Group on the Superintendency which suggested that superintendents were interested only in power and money and not at all interested in children and learning. The presentations at this symposium were given by academics who spoke about the role of the superintendent, in a predominantly negative way. I was angered by the distortion of my reality, and suggested that the presenters might want to reconsider their conclusions. My comments were endorsed by other superintendents at the session.

The experience brought home to me the importance of generating public theories of the superintendency. Contemporary influential research is noting consistently the need for the creation of insider, practitioner, design inquiry research and the need for new policies and legitimisation from the universities for this approach (Anderson and Herr, 1999; Boyer, 1990; Clark, 1997; Donmoyer, 1996; Schön, 1995; Zeichner, 1995). It became evident to me that I was fortunately positioned in that I was able to show how I was influencing the quality of education for students through my practice as a superintendent. The generation of

my own theory became a moral imperative of essential import in the development of new theories of leadership which would have implications for good social orders.

Moving on in the research

I successfully transferred to PhD study in 1998, and now focused on generating evidence to support my claim that I have positively influenced the quality of education for people at all levels of the education system. The evidence I produce comes from a variety of sources. I can show for example how I have worked with Diane Morgan, Program Coordinator, in the Pauline Johnson Family of Schools, such that she and I have increased our knowledge about testing and ways to use the process and data in the tests themselves and in the results to improve student learning (DeLong and Morgan, 1998). I can show that my involvement with the Principals' group inspired them to monitor their practice such that they influenced positively the quality of educational experience for the teachers and students in their schools (DeLong, in press). Evidence exists of how I have supported other administrators to help those for whom they are responsible, so that the same circles of influence are evident in their dealings with people at grass roots level (Black and Rasokas, 2000; Knill-Griesser, 2000; Mills, 1999).

If I had to choose one episode that captures how I believe I have influenced the quality of educational experience for others on a wide range of fronts, I would cite my work with Cheryl Black. We tell of our work in our papers for the International Conference on Teacher Research (Black and DeLong, 1999, 2000). In the papers we deal with the concept of influence, and I will explain shortly what is of particular significance in our work for the idea of developing communities of reflective practitioners through action research.

My epistemology of educational leadership

During the summer of 1999 I began synthesising my research as my thesis. This would be the public presentation of my theory of leadership, as I understand it in relation to the people I support. I think it is worth spelling out here what that entails.

When I read traditional texts on educational leadership, I encounter a domain of propositional ideas. I read about what leaders should do, and how they might possibly achieve the recommendations. This is the situation which Clark lamented (see above).

Now let me tell you of the reality of my own practice.

In the 1998–1999 school year, I accomplished the following:

- visited all 21 schools in my family of schools at least three times and some many more times;
- created a new family of schools meeting structure with a Professional Development planning committee responsible for the staff development part of the agenda and reviewed it twice;
- set expectations in place for the school support centre;
- developed and implemented an 8-facet Leadership program;
- developed a partnership with Brock University to pilot an on-site MEd course;
- trained new support staff;
- developed and implemented processes for the provincial assessments, new report cards and enhanced assessment strategies;
- expanded the Career Education Centres and other partnerships into the new areas of the board;
- developed new leaders and expanded the action research networks across the board;
- reviewed and implemented elementary and secondary curriculum;
- extended the corporate side of staff development;
- conducted a secondary school accommodation (school closing) study.

On the face of it, I am of course busy, creating new opportunities, sustaining initiatives, conducting my work in an efficient and effective manner. Describing my work in this objective way, however, does not communicate what makes my work successful, or why I believe I am justified in calling it educative. In order to communicate the value of my work in terms of how I understand my educative influence, I need to theorise my practice as a

leader in a way that shows how the work is educationally influential. For this, I have to explain the criteria and standards of judgement I use to judge the quality of my work.

The criteria I choose for my work

I identify as a major criterion for judging the quality of my work the issue that I need to show how the work is having impact in all the contexts of education where I am active. In the list above, can I be reasonably sure that all these contexts are educative? Can I be sure that the quality of education is as active in the formal contexts of developing an MED program as it is in my informal interactions with colleagues in the family of schools? This overarching criterion embeds a set of other criteria. How can I be sure that my own commitment to educative relationships is apparent in the practices of other people? Have they learnt from me? Have I communicated to all persons with whom I am in contact what I have learnt to be necessary in educational leadership? Given the diversity and wide range of my own activity, how can I be sure that my influence is felt in all the contexts of my professional life?

At a practical level, the criteria I have identified manifest as issues of care and support. Do the people with whom I come into contact feel that their lives are enriched because of our interaction? Do we feel sufficiently confident within our own relationships that we can take responsibility for our own learning and encourage others to do the same?

My standards of judgement

I judge the quality of my work and influence in terms of the values which drive my life.

At the heart of my seemingly multitudinous tasks remains intact the sanctity of personal relationship. I believe that it is in nurturing people, in caring about them in a way that they feel valued and honoured, that I can help them to become autonomous and strive to realise the educative potential within themselves. In all my dealings with people, regardless of their rank, context, or position, I approach them with respect, regarding them as my equals and capable of generating their own creative responses. I have learnt the importance of not speaking on behalf of others; I encourage and support them to speak for themselves. I judge the quality of my work in terms of whether I live these values in my encounters with all people in all my contexts – am I the same person in an encounter with a vulnerable person

such as a student as I am in an encounter with a powerful person such as a senior administrator? Do I bring the same values of respect and honour to all my encounters?

Further, by consistently living my values in my work and never accepting any slippage between my values and my practice, am I able to influence other people to do the same? Do I live out what I say I believe? Can I show the integrated nature of my theory and practice so that the way I live manifests as a personal educational theory that potentially has influence in the lives of others for personal-social development?

Evidence

I have identified a base-line for myself in this regard. I believe that if I can show that one child benefited from one teacher, and that I can trace the quality of the relationship between the child and teacher to my influence, I can begin to think that yes, I am having an influence. Such an opportunity presented itself.

In December 1999 a delegation of three Japanese professors visited with me to learn from my experience in implementing action research in a school system. I wanted to give them a complete view of the work I am doing, and I provided a number of opportunities for them to hear the voices of the teachers and students working together. It was at a session with Cheryl's students that the evidence emerged which my colleague had challenged me to find four years ago.

Cheryl's students talked with her about their involvement in her research on her teaching practice, and their growing capacities to inquire about and reflect on their learning. Several of the students commented that they felt they were learning better because Cheryl was giving them opportunities to think critically, to speak on their own behalf, to create and voice their own ideas without anxiety, to feel valued, to believe that their contributions were worthwhile. The conversation was taperecorded, and the evidence exists in publicly available form.

This I think is a key episode to show how the students felt that the quality of their educational experience had been enhanced because of Cheryl's teaching. Cheryl relates

how the quality of her educational experience has been enhanced because of my influence (Black and Delong, 1999). At the heart of the relationships within all our contexts is the quality of relationship, the capacity to live out our commitment to education.

I like to think, following McNiff's idea of the iterative nature of generative transformational systems, that the same qualities that characterise this episode as educative are visible throughout all my work and relationships. Perhaps they are not yet there in fully realised form in all contexts, but it is clear that the influence is becoming visible as demonstrated in this episode. I like to think that I will continue to exercise my influence in all the contexts of my professional life such that, eventually, anyone visiting any context within the system for which I am responsible will encounter the same kinds of relationships and hear the same kinds of stories of educative influence.

This, then, is my educational epistemology of the superintendency. It is an educational story of educational stories, circles within circles of influence. I intend to continue trying to show how I aim to influence people in all contexts, so that the quality of education for teachers, students, union representatives, administrators, and all other participants, will demonstrate their own commitment to the kinds of relationships that will ensure that the work is a living out of educational values.

Summary

These are interesting times in which to be an educational leader. I have matured personally and professionally, and am now able more to understand the importance of the research in which I am engaged. My research has helped me improve, be accountable for my actions, and 'shape a professional identity' (Connelly and Clandinin, 1999). I am fortunate to work with many talented and caring people – staff, students, parents and community members. The growing strength of the action research movement in my board and in the province and its capacity to improve student learning sustains my commitment to its potential. I believe that my research is contributing to the development of insider educational theory. I intend to encourage others to produce their accounts of practice to show how my influence has inspired them to exercise their influence in the lives of others for personal-social benefit. If our aim as educators is to create a world better than the one we currently live in through

education, and if we feel we are in positions of influence to do so, we need to support the development of the kind of practical theory in action that will show our practices and also explain the justifications we give for what we are doing. For me, educational administration and leadership are educative, and I hope that I am contributing to a theory of education that will show that educational reality.

End note

Iterative patterns of influence are evident throughout my story. I am showing how I was influenced by Jack, and how he encouraged me to discover and develop my potentials for influence in the lives of those in my care. In turn, I have encouraged the people for whom I am responsible to do the same. In turn, we hope, the children who are the focus of the educational system will find the capacity themselves to become reflective and consider their responsibility in developing a social order in which their children will be happy to live.

Thank you, Jack, for your leadership in inspiring me to develop my own epistemology, and thank you, colleagues, for listening to me while I encourage you to become leaders in your own right.

3. MY LIVING EDUCATIONAL THEORY:

My Standards of Practice/Standards of Judgment (2001)

How do I represent my claims to know my living educational standards?



Jackie Delong
Superintendent of Schools
Grand Erie District School
Board
Brantford, Ontario
Canada.

This photo of me was taken at a social event on December, 16, 2000.

It seems to me that the written word is limited in its capacity to represent my life as an educator and *insider* researcher. (Anderson, 1999) Much has been written about the

acceptability of alternative forms of data representation (Eisner, 1997); however, there appear to be few exemplars to follow. Certainly narrative is one useful form of representing my life that I will use but the printed word is confined both my capacity to creatively describe and explain and the limitations of the language to capture aesthetics, spirituality and emotion. On the cover of Ben Okri's *Birds of Heaven* (1996) is the reminder:

'We began before words

And we will end beyond them'.

I intend to use still photos and where possible video-clips to enhance the capacity of the words. The voices of the people in transcribed conversations, interviews and reports who have lived with me through these years of my research will be added to my own voice in my stories, journals, letters and reports.

Much of my data collection, analysis, synthesis and writing revolves around the role of the professional educator, around my role as teacher and a learner. *What I think distinguishes my work as a professional educator from other professionals such as architects, lawyers or doctors is that I work with the intention of helping learners to create themselves in a process of improvisatory self-realisation (Winter 1998). Stressing the improvisatory nature of education draws attention to the impossibility of pre-specifying all the rules which give an individual's life in education its unique form. As individuals give a form to their lives there is an art in synthesising their unique constellations of values, skills and understandings into an explanation for their own learning. I am thinking of the art of the dialectician described by Socrates in which individuals hold together, in a process of question and answer, their capacities for analysis with their capacities for synthesis. (Whitehead, 1999)*

To attempt to create a holistic picture of my learning and improvement as a superintendent of a large rural and semi-urban school district in Ontario, Canada, Grand Erie District School Board (GEDSB) over 5 years is to challenge traditional forms of data representation and research in educational administration. I wish to bring my voice into the knowledge base of educational leadership to respond to Beatty, 2000: *Indeed, what is missing from the*

knowledge base for the emotions of leadership are the voices of leaders themselves. (2000, p. 332).

In Peter Mellett's Review (2000), a clear description of my intention is articulated:

Writers associated with the academy, educational action researchers, and those from other arenas who comment on their endeavours, are all making claims from within their writing to have knowledge. My own claim is that the writers of good-quality educational action research accounts are making a claim to know their own form of life: I am suggesting that, through our practices and our texts, we are making a claim to knowledge *and a claim to life*. We link their own lives with the lives of others in order to bring about an improvement that is life-enhancing and life-affirming. We are showing how we strive to live out our values of freedom, democracy, and justice in our shared lives.

How will I validate my claims to know my standards?

First I would say that my voice informed by the description, explanation and synthesis of the dialogical and dialectical processes that I have used to research my practice over 5 years which is embodied in vast amounts of data is one means of validation:

As action researchers we each ground our epistemology in our own personal knowledge and theorize from that standpoint, each 'I' being conscious of having taken the decision to understand the world from his or her own point of view, as a person claiming originality and exercising personal judgement responsibly and with universal intent (Polanyi 1957). My dual aim in writing this text has been for it to be acceptable from the point of view of current accepted standards of scholarship whilst, at the same time, giving a flavour of where a new scholarship (Schön 1995, *ibid*) that embraces personal knowledge might lead. Those of my readers who arrive at a similar sort of comprehension through a dialectic of question and answer should understand

how it is that this text and the selection of papers that follow reflect *what it is to ask, what this thing, research-based professionalism, is.* (Mellett, P. 2000)

Second, the voices of the people in my personal and professional life that have worked collaboratively with me, at times, as co-researchers, provide evidence to substantiate my claims. And third, the available academic literature in the field has both informed and denied my learning. Where it has validated my epistemology, I have recognized that valued support and challenge. Where it has denied my practitioner's knowledge, '*I' being conscious of having taken the decision to understand the world from his or her own point of view, as a person claiming originality and exercising personal judgement responsibly and with universal intent* (Polanyi 1957). (Mellett, P. 2000), I have confronted that challenge with my own way of knowing. (Belenkey et. al, 1997) Many writers, researchers, thinkers have influenced my thinking and theorizing. Some, like my direct superior, Peter Moffatt, Jack Whitehead, Jean McNiff, Tony Ghaye and Sandra Webber and Claudia Mitchell influence me positively through direct dialogue, shared experience and relationship. Others, like Stephen Covey, Carol Gilligan, Mary Catherine Bateson, Jean Clandinin and Richard Winter influence me through their writing. Still others, influence me because of a negative response to them in direct contact or through their writing. Because I disagree with them, academics such as Ken Leithwood and Jeff Thompson have pushed me to examine my experiences and clarify my reasoning and values.

What approaches did I use to unpack these standards, here?

Over several months late in 2000, I read and reviewed and sifted and reflected on my collection of data – documents, transcripts, e-mail printouts, reports, publications, conference presentations, validation papers, photos and charts - spread over an old pool table extended via other surfaces. Visiting and revisiting the data has been essential to understanding because it is *difficult for the action researcher to grasp everything at once and data may need to be revisited in the light of new experiences.* (James, 1999) I re-read my narratives of school board amalgamation, supporting action research projects, creating

the Masters program in partnership with Brock University, my published writings, my performance evaluations and looked with new eyes at the hundreds of photos I'd taken over the five years. The standards emerged as I peeled back the layers while I turned my life in my mind and looked at new faces of the whole. I found that standards connected and overlapped and I allowed them to do so. For some time I deliberately avoided forcing a form on my theorizing, fearful that my need to control would limit the opportunity to learn more deeply through the process of writing, reflecting and re-writing. I found that each piece of writing changed my knowledge and increased my capacity to theorize. As Van Manen (1988) says, *we are unable to do much more than partially describe what it is we know or do. We know more than we can say and will know even more after saying it.* (James, 1999)

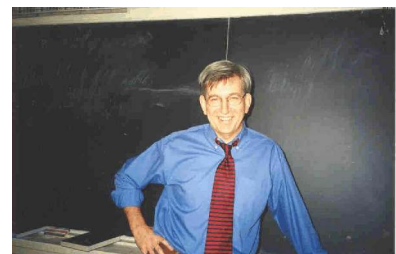
While I do not expend much energy on the qualitative-quantitative debate, I do want to recognize that while my work is that of an individual influencing individuals, it is in a systems' perspective that I have much to contribute. There appears to be a dearth of stories of the lives of systems leaders and in particular of those telling their stories from within the system. Kushner (2000) says, *the bi-polarity is not a bad thing, were they to collide in ways that are constructive in developing sophisticated notions of educational worth, But they rarely do. Educational policy is largely denied the insights of those whose research speaks of direct experience.* (p.206) This research describes and explains the impact on policy of direct experience-mine.

In describing and explaining my standards I have included a number of vignettes that I intend to give life and vitality to my standards. I wish most fervently to avoid the *linguistic checklists* (DeLong & Whitehead, 1999) prevalent in the work of professional bodies like the Ontario College of Teachers and the (UK) Teacher Training Agency. More complete narratives that help to explicate my standards fully are documented in Part II of the thesis - The Evidential Base. And yet, here I am presenting nothing less than a list of standards like posts in a fence. I'm finding that representing *lived experience* (Van Manen, 1990) in a messy process of *improvisatory self-realization* (Winter, 1998) challenging and less than

satisfactory when what I have produced appears to be clearly-defined but lifeless categories and lists of what I call 'my living standards.' There is a certain irony there.

I struggled with this problem for several months, During a January 20, 2001 overseas telephone conversation with Jack Whitehead, I decided to see if integrating a few of the thousands of photographs from my research would assist in giving life to the standards. For me, photos are a powerful way of relating to individuals. When I am working, thinking or planning, I am holding people in mind. *The value of the single photograph lies in its potential to help uncover layers of meaning.* (Mitchell & Weber, 1999, p.101) The photo or *vernacular portrait* (Mitchell & Weber, 1999, p.77) links the image to the person with an immediacy that helps sustain the feeling or thought. It is inherent in the sanctity of the personal relationship and a means to create a link to another person with a permanent record. Photographs enable me to make connections with and among people and events, both within my research and my life. Moreover, I have in mind to test out the idea of integrating some *more fluid than frozen* (Mitchell & Weber, 1999, p. 193) video clips as well to pursue *image-based research* bearing in mind Jon Prosser's (1998) view that it *plays a relatively minor role in qualitative research.* (p. 97)

I don't think what I have described here quite gets at what the process has been but I will keep working at it. It seems to me that unpacking, unravelling, the peeling back is part, that creating and re-creating is part and that within this continuous spiral (McNiff, 1992) more clarity of understanding and knowing is emerging. On a metacognitive level, the cycles occur and on a dialogic and dialectic level, they occur in my daily life. On Feb 5, 2001, at our regular Monday morning meeting, James Ellsworth, Curriculum Co-ordinator, shared with me that he found my thesis writing to date to be fascinating and engaging, unlike any research that he had read before. He said that he thought the photos were like the native wampum in that the stones on the leather thread provided touchstones for the natives to remember stories and the photos do the same for me. They have great depth of meaning for me and seeing them evokes memories, emotions and thoughts. They also reveal facts that I had been unaware of. An example here is the obvious strain that I



was experiencing at the time of the launch of the Action Research Kit, a strain that I thought I was successfully hiding from the world. The photos revealed the truth.

Another example of the revelations that photos have provided has to do with my personal journey. As I looked through several years of photos I could see the love I poured into my children. When I surveyed the photos of various male friends, a light penetrated the darkness of the key to the lack of permanency in those relationships. Because I had been so deeply damaged in my marriage, I was protecting myself from feeling deeply so that I wouldn't be hurt. Consequently, I kept relationships at a surface level and then wondered why I was bored with them after 3 or 4 months. Like the child who won't attempt a task for fear of failure, I resisted deep emotion and maintained a high wall to protect my feelings. The poet Dante began his Divine Comedy: "In the middle of the journey of our life, I came to myself in a dark wood." I feel that I have some guidance and direction from this light in a long darkness.

How do my living standards emerge from my practice?

My standards of practice are the values that I hold myself accountable for in my daily life and work. They are *living* because they emerge in the living of my life according to the values that I hold to be true and at the same time changing and refining as a result of life's experiences. I am in agreement with Susan and Thomas Kuczmariski (1995), *that values stem over time from four factors: 1) family and childhood experiences, 2) conflict events which evoke self-discovery, 3) major life changes and experiential learning, and 4) personal relationships with "important" individuals.* (P. 43) The process of researching my practice has driven me to bore into the depths of my being to uncover and discover what I stand for and who I am; to reveal the ontological nature of my being. It has been an unrelenting poking and probing to find understanding and explanation for my values. Those standards are confirmed or denied from critical incidents that are described by some * as moments of surprise. I would describe them as incidents that evoke anger, feelings of violation and on the other end of the continuum, moments of real joy and pleasure. Reflecting on incidents that elicit strong emotion forces me to confirm my adherence to my

values or to see myself as a living contradiction not living my values as fully as I would like (Whitehead, 1989). These critical incidents are frequently painful and I respond by wanting to deny my actions or the response of others to my actions. Over the course of researching my practice by addressing questions like, “How do I improve my practice?” I have become more capable of facing these incidents for all that they can teach me so that I can improve. I see “improvement”, much like Dewey’s preferred expression, ‘growth’. (Ryan, 1995), as a positive force although I recognize, and must remind myself, that others may see it from a deficit perspective. It seems to me that educators are in the improvement business.

One of the individuals that I claim to have influenced and who has validated that claim is Cheryl Black. I find her definition to be a clear explanation of standards which she says emerged from having read one of the earlier versions of my standards. It comes from her final paper for the Reflective Practice Masters course that Susan Drake and I taught in the fall term of 2000:



Cheryl Black, elementary vice-principal, Masters student, friend and colleague for 20 years.

My standards of practice would be different than the standards of any other person because every person is a different combination of values. That is what makes each of us unique. Therefore, if my standards were based on my values, then my standards are just that, mine! The ability to show that my values are evident in my practice and, the knowledge that they make a difference in student learning, will go a long way in helping me define my role as an administrator. (Black, 2000)

Because my responses to critical incidents are both cognitive and emotional, they can provide opportunities for learning and improvement. Much of the research on leadership has focused only on the cognitive and behavioural aspects with researchers looking for models and frameworks to understand the world of the educational administrator. (Bennis, 1989; Leithwood et al., 1999) As an emerging leader, I was encouraged to practice

emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) and to recognize that *The hierarchical relationship between reason and emotion has particular implications for life in organizations—for leaders and for followers—in that it is often played out as one of mutual exclusion....that same is synonymous with unemotional is re-enacted continually.* (Beatty, 2000 p. 334). Brenda Beatty (2000) found in her research that the emotional side of the leader is usually ignored. *Indeed, the emotional causes and effects of so many conditions, to which a leader may deliberately or inadvertently contribute, remain under-explored, while the emotional processes of the leader her/himself remain virtually uncharted territory.* (Beatty, 2000, p.333) Fortunately, the work of Noddings (1984), Gilligan (1982) and Shakeshaft (1987) and others supports what I have learned over time and through experience - that subverting emotions is not antithetical to being an effective leader through caring, connecting and relating.

In fact, I find anger is a useful emotion if I use it to motivate me, incite me to respond in productive ways to improve my practice and the social order. (McNiff, 1992) Such an event occurred on November 3, 2000 at a presentation of the Ontario Ministry of Education (MET) at a regional meeting of The Ontario Public Supervisory Officers Association (OPSOA). After a full morning of provincial directors of MET telling us that what we thought mattered little since the government was going to implement its mandate irrespective of our concerns and only if we were particularly devious would we influence decision-making, I became increasingly outraged. The final straw was the description of the plan for teacher testing and accountability. After four years of work by Linda Grant and Fran Squire and many others at The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) to develop standards of practice for the province, the MET had taken over the task to once again develop standards of practice.

When I asked if this had not already been done, the presenter seemed surprised that anyone noticed this redundancy and feebly indicated that the past work would be taken into account and that the new standards would be more useful for implementation. In any case, a project team was being hired to create these more quantifiable standards to ensure uniformity and accountability across the province. It was useless to push any further and one is naïve to go

head to head with a government this powerful and insensitive. However, I know that I have and can create space strategically for professionals to be *creatively compliant*.

The more I thought about this, the angrier I got. As I analyzed my anger I recognized that I was the problem and the solution. I was a *living contradiction*. I recognized also that increasingly of late I have felt silenced. In my performance reviews over the years, I have been criticized for pushing too hard or for not accepting 'no' for an answer. It's been occurring to me lately that I have kept my tongue and resisted argument for the sake of peace at the Executive table. Even when I challenged the MET staff, I felt that my colleagues from Executive Council disapproved of my challenge to the Ministry. This is clearly eating away at me. In an interview this week, McGill University ethicist, Margaret Somerville said: "Sometimes, it is unethical to avoid controversy." (Greenspan, E. Is this a guy with something to hide? Globe & Mail, Nov 9, 2000, p.A23) That indictment appears to be true of some of our politicians as well as of me.

When I described the incident at the OPSOA meeting to the Brock Masters students the next day, I stressed to them the significance of what they were doing in researching their practice for the purpose of improvement in student learning. External standards deny what we believe but we are so weak in the exemplars. I exhorted them to write and publish their *living educational standards of practice* so that we, as professional educators, can demonstrate to the politicians and the public that we are professionals who hold ourselves accountable. We need the evidential history that is a track record in practice. Just articulating the theory of being accountable or of how it might work is clearly insufficient and not compelling. The Masters group can provide the exemplars and build that evidential history. At the same time that I was asking them to articulate and publish their standards, I committed to doing the same. I could hear the significance of sharing my anger in the words of Trudy Gath, one of the Masters students, in her January 2001 paper:

Upon a response to my proposal from the Research Ethics Board, my perceived progression came to a screeching halt. The Ethics Board rejected my proposal, as I had thought they would, but they wanted me to change and clarify fifteen aspects! My first reaction was extremely

negative, as I took their response personally. (I have to learn not to take things personally.) Upon reflection, I tried to see what I could learn from the experience. From my journal:



Trudy Gath, core French teacher, Masters student

I feel like I am going to scream and never stop once I begin. I just received a response from the Ethical Review Committee for my research project. The Committee, all high and mighty, says that I need to resubmit my proposal. They sent me a list of fifteen items that need to be addressed before I may have

permission to proceed with my work. I see that they expect me to explain, explain, and explain until I am blue about how I can continue to study my own practice.

I am so upset by this because now, I will spend another four hours or so explaining, revising, photocopying, and wasting paper when I could be reading relevant material that pertains to my topic, literature that may help me to improve in what I am doing! I am angry at the fact that I need someone from a committee to give me permission to research my own practice! I am fuming at this setback.

From the above setback, I learned to try to understand the position of the Ethical Board in that they have a job to do to ensure the safety of human participants in research projects. I realize that I cannot be a special exception to the bureaucratic rules that exist. I must exercise “creative compliance” and just work around this obstacle. After all, I have managed to overcome many other obstacles before. Regardless, I must push on with my research in my own, very ethical, ways. To my great relief, my proposal was accepted by the REB last week.

Discovering that my anger can be productive, rather than destructive makes me feel better about my emotions because I feel they are helping me to learn. I am learning that one must know oneself before lasting changes and

improvements can be made in practice. “Clearly, self-knowledge makes a difference; it provides us not only with the tools to learn but also with a foundation for all we do with students.” (Cohen, 1999, p.19)

In analyzing my anger at the ministry session, I was reminded of the Miller and Boud's (1996) *denial of feelings is a denial of learning* and extrapolated that to a growing realization that what the conservative government has tried to attain is a complete eradication of emotion from education. The evidence lies in that fact that they have ignored what is the basis of much of what happens in any school but particularly in secondary school out of classroom activities. Coaching and directing plays and bands is volunteer activity that comes from goodwill and commitment to the well-being of students. It appears that politicians think in market policies, bottom lines, profit margins and four-year election cycles.

I heard the same mentality in the MET presentation that teachers would be tested using quantifiable standards, now being called “standards of learning”, that would go beyond the new OCT Standards of Practice. It is definitely problematic that feelings, caring and commitment can't be easily quantified:

Emotions and feelings are key pointers both to possibilities for, and barriers to, learning. Denial of feelings is a denial of learning. It is through emotions that some of the tensions and contradictions between our own interests and those of the external context manifest themselves. (Miller and Boud, 1996: 10 in Ghaye & Ghaye, 1998: 81)

This engagement with the political, this insight into myself, will evoke my standards of practice which are my living educational standards and show the meanings of my educational values that have developed and emerged over the last 5 years. The articulation of those standards is a creative process that includes my anger at the power of politics, the pleasure and joy in influencing by creating conditions, encouraging and supporting teachers to research their practice. The emergence of my values as a professional educator must be

made communicable and understandable. There is a creative tension that emerges from the anger, the passion between what is being done *to* teachers and what can be done *with* teachers. In the work of Paul Begley (1999), there is some good rhetoric about the nature of values. I believe that I can take this forward and onto a different 'embodied' base by taking values to be embodied forces/power for action and meaning. I think that Bernstein's (*The New Constellation* 1993) 'ethical imperative' is pertinent:

“ ... to listen carefully, to use ... linguistic, emotional, and cognitive imagination to grasp what is being expressed and said in 'alien' traditions ... [without] either facilely assimilating what others are saying to our own categories and language ... or dismissing ... [it] as incoherent nonsense.”

At the Delhi DSS graduation on November 3, 2000, a young secondary English teacher, Carolijn MacNeil, introduced herself to me saying that she was conducting an action research project with James Ellsworth, Coordinator of Assessment and Accountability for GEDSB, on using portfolio assessment in her classroom to improve student learning. She was very animated and impressed that she had talked to me in person and had used the Action Research kit (DeLong & Wideman, 1998). Later Cathy Bauslaugh, one of the principals in my Family of Schools (FOS) whose son had graduated in the ceremony, informed me that Carolyn had shared her excitement later at the pub and on Sunday evening (Nov 5, 2000) I received the following e-mail:

Hi Jackie,

It was wonderful to meet you at the Delhi Commencement/

I hope that I did not come off as a crazy lady, but I am really fired up about Action Research and my own personal project:

How can I use Portfolio's in my classroom to help students take more responsibility for assessing and monitoring their work? How can I

encourage students to view the act of learning more important than their MARKS!!!?

I want to thank you for supporting Action Research and encouraging teachers to become responsible for their own professional development. I will keep you posted about the police college. My husband says that action research is the buzz word around there now.....what a concept!!

Carolijn MacNeil
English teacher Delhi

I enjoyed the interaction with this teacher whom I had never met before as well as the sheer delight, energy and affirmation to counterbalance the ugliness of the politics earlier in the day. I think I can claim some influence here in that I supported and encouraged James, proposed and received the money from the Educational Change Fund to conduct the project, and wrote the kit with Ron Wideman that she was using. In addition, her principal, John encouraged her to get involved and he is one of five principals this year conducting an action research project as his performance review process. The evidential base for these crystalized claims to my influence are to be found in portfolio of narratives in Part Two of the thesis.

Another victory narrative (MacLure, 1995) is the story of my work with teachers using test results to improve student learning. It is a story of influence. As one of the principal investigators of An Action Research Approach to Improving Student Learning Using Provincial Test Results (Wideman, Delong, Hallett & Morgan, 2000), I supported teachers to improve their practice and student learning by using test results:

Abstract

During the 1999/2000 school year, seventeen elementary school teachers and five consultants from two Ontario school boards, conducted action research based on the 1999 EQAO provincial test results for Grades 3 and 6 and the use of feedback/corrective action to improve those results. Paired with a "critical friend", individual teachers analyzed their schools' results and identified areas for improvement. They identified action research questions, investigated the questions in their own classrooms, collected data to evaluate the impact of their work, and recorded their investigations. The teachers' own assessments and the 2000 EQAO test results indicate substantial success. Teachers began to see provincial test results as friendly data that schools can use to improve student learning, and action research and feedback/corrective action as powerful methods to do so. The study contributes to understanding how provincial testing can be used to improve student learning and what constitutes effective teacher in-service education.

These teachers, I believe, are evidence that researching your practice brings improvement in teaching and student learning. (See Chapter Five: Findings in Wideman, DeLong, Hallett, & Morgan, 2000) This work is one of many that have been collaborative works with Ron Wideman:

This is a photo from (Wideman, DeLong, Hallett, & Morgan, 2000) of my friend and colleague



Another aspect of the living reality of my life as a superintendent is the fact that taking time for this reflection and self-study is an indulgence that is only possible after I have completed the preparation for the tasks of the week ahead. These tasks include: answering e-mails, responding to phone calls from staff and parents, processing paperwork such as mileage claims, leave and expense forms, reporting to the Board on test results and preparing presentations such as Special Education for a Family of Schools meeting, or Assessment and Accountability for a professional development program for all school administrators. Despite the fact that these tasks come first, my fury does not subside but serves to stimulate my creativity and focuses my attention on the nature of power relations and ways to respond creatively to power and politics. I need to engage in the controversy but also need to be prudent and find an appropriate stance so that I don't get eliminated from the fray and so that I can *influence social formation* (Bourdieu, 1990).

When I examine the nature of my influence, I feel that I model *creative compliance* and being a *living contradiction*. I am not sure whether I exhibit a multiplicity of selves or as Bateson (1990) says, not *a purity of will*, but *a divided will* which may be a *higher will*. Just as I work constantly with a "parking lot", with the ability to hold so many relations and projects and ideas on the go at the same time, I know that is part of my capacity to get things done on several fronts at one time. I describe this facility more fully in Standard Six.

In this work I attempt to answer the question, "What kind of superintendent am I?" and to make the *tacit explicit* (Polanyi, 1962) through my own *way of knowing* (Belenkey, et al, 1997). *By living values that are embodied in our practice [and] their meanings can be communicated in the course of their emergence in practice.* (Whitehead, 1992, p.193). Frequently in a relative state of *dynamic equilibrium* (Ghaye & Ghaye, 1998, p.36) my values emerge in my practice but do change and modify. My values have been challenged by provincial testing of students, by the dominant philosophy of market forces and by imposed changes such as amalgamation that appear to have no relation to improving

student learning and frequently place me in precarious stability. (Schein, 1969). I find myself to be a *living contradiction*. That tension *in holding certain values and experiencing their negation at the same time* (Whitehead, 1992, p.6) has provided me with a context in which to test my values and to validate the standards by which I wish to be judged. Those standards are the values by which I live my life. I have engaged friends and colleagues to hold them under review. As Polanyi (1962) suggested, I have made and continue to make to make them public so that I can be held accountable for them.

My living standards are shared in two parts: standards as a superintendent and holistic standards. The logic of this separation is that the standards by which I wish to be judged as a superintendent are more specific to that role. The holistic standards pervade both personal and professional and as well tend to overlay the other standards. The division may be simply that the living educational standards are epistemological and the holistic are ontological, the difference between knowing and being.

What are these living educational standards by which I wish my practice as a superintendent and professional educator to be judged?

I am attempting to communicate my standards of practice derived from reflection on the values that matter to me. I hope that by being in touch with those values I will be able to make a significant contribution to the knowledge base of educational leadership. I wish to engage with the ideas of David Clark (1997) on the need for educational leaders to engage in research on their own practice and I hope to avoid concluding my life with his negative assessment of his influence on educational leadership. The values that I am articulating are grounded in my practice, in what I know from reading and dialogue, from experience and from reflecting on that experience. Through writing about my values that emerge in my practice, I am able to construct and deconstruct the transformation that has taken place over the six years of the research and to understand what has moved me forward.

There is no significance to the fact that there are ten standards, nor is there any hierarchy of importance. The following standards, which are continuing to emerge, are the values that I

hold and intend to practice in my professional life and for which I wish to be held accountable.

1. Creative compliance in response to negative policies
2. Fairness and equity: focus on rights of children
3. Focus on children by partnering with parents and community: collaboration and involvement
4. The sanctity of personal relationships
5. Showing care through empathy, listening for the concerns of others, support and time spent

6. Reflection, inquiry, research and action

7. Sustained support of action research to improve student learning
8. Commitment to task, high expectations, drive and accountability for results
9. Professionalism and professional behaviour

10. Responsibility to act locally and publish globally

Standard One: Creative compliance in response to negative policies

During the six years that I have been a superintendent the political landscape has changed remarkably. With the election of the conservative government in Ontario we started down the same path as the UK in the oppressive policies of economic rationalism. Up until that time, it seemed that I could envisage and implement an agenda of constant improvement

with a view to a better future for our children and their education. I naively thought that I could continue with this momentum under the new market-driven policies. The culture changed dramatically. While this change began to roll over us before amalgamation in January 1998, the full force of the wave hit at that point. It seems that we have been trying to catch our breath ever since and that there are only small spaces where I re-capture the beauty and joy of the educational experience that had existed prior to amalgamation. Beside my natural disposition to be an eternal optimist, it is those small spaces that motivate me to keep pushing and driving forward toward a better world for students and educators. In addition, I simply refuse to accept failure and acceptance of the status quo. The pressure to use the capacities and influence that I have, to make improvements also motivates me. I can; therefore, I must.

One of the forces that has transformed my practice has been the economic rationalist policies of the Ontario government, policies that unfortunately are common world-wide. (Whitty, 1997, MacTaggart, 1992).

Part of my obligation as a leader is to carry the hope for the people for whom I am responsible. My own concern or depression cannot be visible. If the leader despairs, others give up. There is no room for defeat when you have the responsibility of preparing the next generations for the future. And yet, there have been times when I have allowed my concerns to be visible. While people expect me to be strong and positive, they also need to see that I feel vulnerable and unsure and yet keep the faith to move on. In order to accomplish this mandate, I have learned to be prudent. Running headlong into a mammoth (read “Progressive Conservative government”) is unlikely to be productive. I have learned to be more patient, more subtle and more strategic in challenging the powerful forces that interfere with the important relationship for learning between the child and the teacher. Those skills of diplomacy continue to develop so that I am more frequently able to accomplish what I want without alienating those with the power.



This is a photo from (Wideman, DeLong, Hallett, & Morgan 2000) of my friend and colleague for over 30 years, Diane Morgan, former Coordinator of Assessment and Accountability, now retired and working as a consultant on contract.

A case in point is my role in provincial testing. I have not valued standardized testing except for some specific purposes such as the investigation of a child's learning difficulty. After I was able to reflect with Diane Morgan on the fact that provincial testing is criterion-based and can provide useful data for improving the teaching and learning of language and mathematics (DeLong & Morgan, 1997) and given that it is mandate that demands compliance, I have learned to be *creatively compliant*. The creative part is the fact that I have also been able to assist teachers to conduct action research as a means to use the testing data to inform and improve their practice. Another useful impact of testing occurred at the November 20, 2000 Board meeting when I presented the results of the provincial testing in the spring of 2000. The chair of the board commented that she thought we should be considering additional resources for the schools with low achievement. That was the first time I had hear the issue of Compensatory schools articulated since the formation of the new board. That is a value of mine – providing extra supports for needy children in low performing schools (see Compensatory Education). The test then had provided data to support compensatory education.

On the other hand, sometimes compliance is just that – compliance to act in violation to your values. At the board table as a member of the Executive Council I have recommended

the cancellation of programs such as Music support teachers and Reading Recovery not because they weren't valuable and good for students but because there was no money in the funding envelope to pay for them. The same applies to the accommodation studies for which I was responsible. Despite my belief that small schools provide good education and are the heart of small communities, the studies recommended the closing of 6 small schools in my family of schools. If you look at the big picture and recognize that if the money is a limited resource and that the board has the responsibility to provide for the needs of all the students, it becomes weighting one value over another. Spending over budget in one area robs another area of their fair share. . Generally I work with the people and the organizational structures within the system to make it better, to widen my circle of influence (Covey, 1989). My standard on this is that the same opportunities to make change are not available if you separate yourself from the system. I try to make a difference for children and families by working and researching *as an insider* (Anderson & Herr, 1999) to improve the organization.

Standard Two: Fairness and equity: focus on rights of children

These are not the same. As with my value on compensatory education, fairness is giving more to the needy children so that they have an equal opportunity to achieve. It doesn't mean treating all children the same. I believe in extra supports for the children who need them. If that is a socialist philosophy, so be it. I think I counter the accusation of being a "bleeding heart" with the notion that for us all to fully benefit from the wealth of this country (UN study), we need to provide extra supports for those who haven't benefited from the wealth. This, you recognize, is at odds with the conservative government. For them it is survival of the fittest and unfortunately children are vulnerable and don't make a profit. In the current climate and with an aging society, health care, reducing taxes and making money are the priorities. Children cost money. Unfortunately the impact of reducing services to children and families will not be evident for 20 years and governments think in four-year cycles. Without pressure on governments who rule by polls, there will continue to be little emphasis on education and more parents with money will choose

private schools and the poor will suffer. It is appalling to see and read of the thousands of children that live in poverty in a rich country like Canada.

To correct what is missed in the narrower perspective of 'human capital' and 'human resource development', we need a broader conception of development that concentrates on the enhancement of human lives and freedoms, no matter whether that enhancement is – or is not – intermediated through an expansion of commodity production. Amartya Sen (2000)

The evidence in my data archive resides in the my work in compensatory education, in the Pauline Johnson Family as well as in my current family in allocating extra resources to schools with high needs (as identified with EQAO results, social assistance recipients and average income statistics). (see *Compensatory Education*)

Standard Three: Focus on partnering with parents and community: collaboration and involvement

No matter whether I am talking about my own children or the children of the school system for which I am responsible, I think children come first. The most influential people in a child's life are the parent/guardian and the teacher, in that order. Continuing the standard above, I believe the overworked adages that our children are our future and that it takes a whole village to raise a child. *The evidence is beyond dispute. When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in schools but throughout life.* (Henderson & Bela, 1996) If that were the standard of our society, systems would be different. My anxiety is that children are not always valued. The current emphasis in Canadian society seems to be on making money for material things and not on providing emotional and social supports for children.

This following chart that was presented by James Dininger, President and CEO, The Conference Board of Canada at the Ontario Hospital Association in Toronto on Nov 6, 2000 was a shock to many of the health professionals and governors in the audience:

Both James Nininger and Dr. Nuala Kenny, Head of Bioethics at Dalhousie University, Nova Scotia talked about the improvement in spending on Health but talked about the ethical issues surrounding the de-emphasis on education. When I spoke at the conference I tried to engage health professionals in the need to share the wealth of health care and to partner with schools and families to improve the plight of children and educators.

Building community and family partnerships has been and continues to be one of the foci of my work. It is clear in the reports on the EQAO action plans – 1998-2000, in media reports (see Nov 21, 2000), in Communications (Communications Strategic Plan, October, 2000), in the role of School Councils, in the levels of involvement (DeLong & Moffatt, 1996) that I feel strongly that parents can make a difference in the achievement of their children and need to be engaged as partners.

As our School Councils struggle to find a meaningful role in the work of schools, there is increasing pressure for them to engage in the role of creating the home-school link. (Murphy, 2000) With the GEDSB emphasis on literacy and improving student achievement, during 2001 I made a concerted effort to engage School councils and municipalities in supporting the initiative. One of the action research projects using portfolio assessment under James' guidance is investigating the relationship between parental involvement and John Kinnear, one of my rookie principals, is researching his practice in parental

involvement. The Vice-chair of the board, Lori Burroughs, recruited the mayor and community officials to become involved and scrounging for prizes. It was surprising and affirming to see how willingly groups and individuals committed to the cause.

Standard Four: The Sanctity of Personal Relationships

One of the discoveries from ‘researching my practice’, or ‘living my research’ (because it is difficult to separate the two. I guess that makes sense in a self-study), is that I am better able to teach and build relationships when I share anecdotes from my life’s experience. Part of my growth has been a recognition that unless I am prepared to give up some of my privacy and let people into my world by telling stories, I struggle to build positive relationships. A case in point was November 18, 2000 when I was leading a discussion with the Masters group on *living contradiction* (Whitehead, 1989) and the tension that comes from having your values denied. We talked about alternatives to resolving the tension through head on aggression such as working to change the situation or system or walking away from the situation.

I shared two stories of experiences where I had determined one of these was the better option. In the first case I talked about my values conflict over mass testing of student and my internal struggle with that especially give the fact that this is major part of my system portfolio and that our board results are not good. Despite that tension I continue to work at making the process work for students. In the second, I shared the story of leaving a job that I loved because of a difference in values with a superior and after having tried to build a relationship with her for 3 years, I knew that I my best choice was to find a new job. It is difficult for me to build relationships with people if I only allow them to see single dimensions of competency or intelligence and not the doubts, concerns and setbacks with which I live and struggle. As Susan Drake (1992) says, “You teach who you are.” I would add that to teach and to relate to others, you must share the stories of your experiences so people know your values and can share your journey.

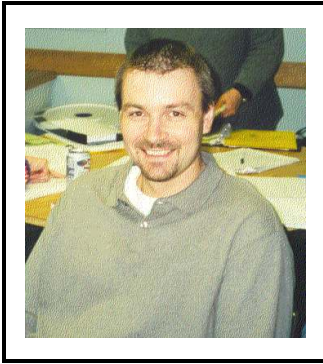
I try to preserve relationships at all costs. As with all of my partnerships, I start with the relationship and then worry about the details of the arrangement. I had a vision of what the

Masters cohort group might look like but I could not make it happen without the right relationship. My relationship with Susan Drake has had an eight-year history, starting first with my responding positively to her writing on integrated learning. Then I invited her to work with the principals in the North Park Family of Schools where I was principal from 1992-1994. Then we met through the Ontario Educational Research Council (OERC) at annual meetings, conferences and then as board members. Finally in 1999 Susan and I met over dinner with Ron, and Jack and the opening seemed there with the new dean at Brock, Michael. The full process of creating the masters program is described in Part 2: The Evidential Base. Over the next year the implementation of the program deepened the relationship among Susan, Michael, Jack and I. We became not just colleagues but friends.

After the 2000 OERC Conference and a very successful presentation by the Masters students, the four of us went out for a celebratory dinner. In the post dinner conversation, Michael dropped the bomb that I was no longer going to be one of the instructors because several of the students had complained of power issues. I was totally shocked. I asked how many students were concerned. He replied about a third. I had a great deal of difficulty comprehending this. How could I have been so unaware? This was totally contrary to what I intended and I said so. I also said that if this was the case, I agreed that I should withdraw. I was still bothered that I was surprised by this and that I was perceived in that way. Jack was surprised as well. I left the restaurant in dismay and defeat. Also angry. I felt there was more to it. Why wouldn't he tell me the whole story? I felt that the trust that had built up over two years had been broken. The rest of that night and the next day I reviewed and reflected on the conversation. What had started out as a perfect day was in ruins.

My nature is to confront. After thinking and talking with Jack and Cheryl about these events, I called Michael at home the next day. I asked him if he could tell me more about this situation so that I could understand. I explained that it was important to me as a superintendent and as a researcher to understand when I am perceived as abusing my power. He said that some students were experiencing concerns about my position power as an instructor in the course.

Standard Five: Showing care through empathy, listening for the concerns of others, support and time spent



Phillip Sallewsy, core French teacher, Masters student

The significance of telling the narratives struck me when one of the masters students, Phillip, a young man who is a very good teacher as well as a good student and who has great potential to be a school administrator, asked to talk with me privately. He talked about a situation where he was in conflict with a superintendent in another board and showed me e-mails where he had asked for a post-interview and been refused. He is a young man in a hurry and had been using an unproductive approach to problem-solving. I asked him if he still wanted a job in the other board. When he answered in the negative I asked him why he would continue the battle. He felt that he had been treated unjustly and was worried that his reputation would be damaged in discussions among superintendents. I replied that under the right to privacy legislation, he could not be discussed without his permission. When I assured him that his reputation was intact, that I cared about him and that he had a bright future in our board, he seemed to relax and concluded that it would be prudent to walk away from the conflict.

I was reminded once again of the importance of *spending time* (Backus, 1998). He had mentioned as well that he had phoned another superintendent to get some feedback from a job rejection in our board and his call had not been returned. His face seemed brighter and his walk lighter when he left. The conversation had the same effect on me – I was tired and not feeling well but I felt good that he felt comfortable to share his concern, I had attended to his concern and had showed that I cared. As Cheryl affirmed, *Listening is caring. Sometimes (and I forget this) people only need to vent. They don't need you to do anything, just listen. The fact that someone cares enough to listen and, the importance they place on that person's opinion can make the listening the most important act A reaction is not necessary many times. The difficulty is knowing which time is which.* (Black, e-mail, 01/04/01)

Another of the Masters students, who is very young and a real delight, has taught me a great deal about the meaning of support. She has reinforced my commitment to getting the voices of teachers into the public arena as part of the knowledge base of teaching and learning and being a professional educator. Julie White has “real knowledge” of what it means to be a dedicated teacher but goes through periods of self-doubt. Despite getting recognition in a variety of venues (board meeting, conference presentations, large-scale research studies), she doubts her knowledge. With very little effort on my part I send her the message that she is valued and can produce good and important work by just being herself, by doing it her own way:



Julie White, a classroom teacher whom I have known since 1999, is presenting to the Grand Erie District School Board meeting on her action research project, “How can I improve the writing skills of my Grade 4 students?” June, 19, 2000.

When Julie was having difficulty with an assignment for a Master’s course, I talked with her both on e-mail and on the telephone to listen to hear concerns and encourage her to believe in her own capacities. Her response told me that I had been helpful:

Dear Jackie,

I just wanted to thank you for helping me get a handle on the review. I have to tell you, at the start of the article, I felt completely lost. It seemed as if it was over my head, but your guidance made me realize that I did understand it in my own way, and could relate it to my practice. My response didn’t need to be written with big words. It was just a response from me being myself.

While reading *Awakening Brilliance*, I came across a quote:

“Teacher’s who come to a place within themselves where they’re happy and proud of who they are, have internal feelings of self-worth and self esteem. Then their ability to pass on these good feelings to their students multiplies a hundredfold.”

I just wanted you to know that although there are some times I doubt myself, become confused like in the review, or just feel like I have no time to myself, the Master’s course, my research, and your help and advice always seem to put me back on track and feeling good about myself. Monday’s after the Master’s course always seem to be the best for me. I guess it’s the good feelings I drive away with on Saturday afternoons. Just wanted to say Thanks.

Julie White (e-mail, Dec 2000)

In leadership roles, I recognize that there are different balances at different times on people and task. A focus on people or on caring can be viewed very differently. When I became the supervisor for my new family of schools in the former Norfolk area, the definition of “caring” was one of overt, demonstrative, “flowers and chocolates” type of caring. This had never been my way and some staff found the change uncomfortable and felt that I did not care. I say “some” because I was to learn that the “caring” had been for a limited, privileged few and not available to all. James and Peter Rasokas, principal-leader in my area office, and several others have described my kind of “caring” as extensive, purposeful and sustained support for people.

Standard Six: **Reflection, inquiry, research and action**

I have a firm belief in the value of reflection in and on action (Schon, 1983) and the importance of inquiring into my practice but that is combined very definitely with the expectation and obligation to act to improve the way we do things. I believe that I have a



Ron Wideman and I have been co-writers of many articles and a Kit, colleagues and friends for over 7 years.

responsibility to share what I know and to encourage those that I influence to do the same. In the video in the Action Research kit (DeLong & Wideman, 1997), in answering the question, “What do you need to be an action researcher?”, Peter Moffatt replied, “You need an inquiring mind.” I believe that is an answer to the question, “What do you need to be a reflective practitioner?” While I think there is more involved in action research than reflection, I am in agreement

with him. To be an action researcher, you need also to act to improve the world in which you operate and further, to be an educational action researcher, you need to improve education. First, I believe I model that behaviour as I investigate my practice as an educational leader, Second, I encourage and support educators (in its broadest sense – support staff, elementary, secondary and university teachers, educational assistants and instructors) to research, improve their practice share their new knowledge with their colleagues.

When I provide supports to teachers to conduct action research, I am clear that I expect a written report and some way of sharing their research. In order to define the means of sharing, I like Peter Moffatt’s way of stating that they share *on a stage where they are comfortable* (Moffatt, 1997). It is in the public accountability and publication that a knowledge base of the messy and largely unquantifiable world of teaching and learning becomes accessible to the practical world of educators. It is also a means to virtually eliminating the gap between theory and practice when the practitioner is the theorist and the theory develops from the immediacy of practical need to improve student learning. In *Teacher Research and Educational Reform: Ninety-third Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education (N.S.S.E.)* Susan Lytle and Marilyn Cochran-Smith make the same point:

Research by teachers represents a distinctive way of knowing about teaching and learning...[Teacher research] will fundamentally redefine the notion of knowledge for

teaching, altering the locus of the knowledge base and realigning the practitioner's stance in relationship to knowledge generation in the field. (1994, pp.35-36)

In my research and indeed my workday world, I find academic theory from university researchers informs my practice when it supports or challenges my thinking in an area that I am investigating in my life as a practitioner. Without that hook on which to locate the theory it becomes merely an interesting but useless idea or concept.

In the groups with whom I frequently work, it has become almost a joke to follow any proposal with “And how will you know that this is improving student learning? While I do not lay claim to having accomplished this single-handedly, I do claim that there is a stronger sense of “asking hard questions” and to greater accountability for results in the Grand Erie Board. I want to be held accountable for results and expect the same of others. Reflection requires action to bring results and improvement.

Standard Seven: Improving student learning through sustained support of action research.

As I was teaching the masters class on Nov 18, 2000 I reflected on the journey I had travelled from 1996 when the 5 teachers and two school administrators started courageously down the unknown path of researching their practice through action research. From those early days when Jack Whitehead was exhorting us to get the research of teachers accredited in the academy and many thought he was “off his rocker”, it is a recognizable step forward to the fall of 2000 when Susan Drake and I were teaching the Grand Erie – Brock University cohort masters group of 15 Grand Erie staff and 2 teachers from another board based on Jack's work. While one of my objectives was to give a voice to teachers' knowledge, it was overall to encourage and support teachers and administrators to conduct research in their schools in order to improve their teaching and student learning. Bob Ogilvie (2000) describes this rather well:

The history of the Brock/Grand Erie Masters Cohort I think bears this out. It began as the brainchild of Grand Erie Superintendent Jackie DeLong in the spring of 1999. She envisioned a co-operative venture with a university which would provide an opportunity to both further her work in action

research and develop a more coherent leadership pool within the Grand Erie Board. Negotiations with several education faculties brought her into contact with Dean Michael Manley-Casimir of Brock University and an agreement was forged between the Grand Erie District School Board and Brock University to offer a highly concentrated Master of Education program to a minimum number of Grand Erie educators. Whether the concept continues life as a repeated series of Masters cohorts remains to be seen, but certainly that is goal well worth pursuing. Education desperately needs capable, knowledgeable leaders, and this cohort could be a means of more properly meeting that need, whether its graduates pursue administrative roles or not.

The process over 5 years has been filled with successes and failures, of three steps forward and two steps back, of persistence and hard work and of willing pioneers as well as naysayers and blockers. The M. Ed. was just one piece of the puzzle that was action research in my board and across the province. In that time teachers' research in the former Brant Board, now Grand Erie DSB and across the province had been published in a wide range of journals and publications. These include: Act Reflect Revise, Revitalize (1996), the Action Research Kit, School Improvement Through Research-based Professionalism (1998), The Ontario Action Researcher website <http://www.unipissing.ca/oar> (1998-2000), and the Education Quality and Accountability Office (EQAO) (2000). Their research had also been presented at four Act Reflect Revise conferences (1996, 97, 98, 2000) and at the Ontario Educational Research Council Conference (2000).

There are many indicators of progress. For the first time, a session on action research workshop was delivered at a board-wide administrators' conference in Grand Erie on Nov 16, 2000. In the session on the EQAO study (Wideman et al, 2000), Margaret Juneja shared her research on using grade 3 test results and the corrective action strategy (Sutton, 1995) to improve learning. (See also Neeb, White) Provincially, nationally and internationally, I have been recognized and invited to speak on my experiences and research:

- December 8, 2000: OERC Award for Leadership in Action Research

- January 25, 2001: Brock University Principals' Course
- April 7, 2001: International Conference on Teacher Research
- April 21, 2001: Quebec Conference

Another indicator of the progress is that people that I coached and supported are action research leaders in the board and in the province. People like Cheryl Black, seen here in frames from a video-tape of an interaction with a student which shows the depth of caring and joy in their relationship. This clip from her research on her life in the classroom demonstrates the values she holds that are her standards of practice. Further, it provides evidence of my support of her research on her practice.

Whether we think about emotional literacy in terms of my relationships with staff, family or here in Cheryl's rapport with her student, it is essential to take it into account as a value I

hold. In this series of photos taken from a videoclip, a student in Cheryl's music classroom sees a bit of lint on Cheryl's jacket and feels sufficiently safe to thoughtfully remove it and cause that joyful expression on each of them. See that the student is still holding the emotion as the world moves on. Precious moment.

This is a territory of distinct awkwardness and discomfort for many academics and politicians and yet it is being embraced by some British politicians:

James Park, the director of Antidote, told The Observer:

It always matters that we are sufficiently in touch with our own emotions to be in touch with those of others. The pace of change is so fast now that

people need emotional literacy to steer them through the choices and be able to cope with it.'

Antidote aims to create a 'listening culture', putting emotional literacy at the heart of the education system. But it does not stop there. It aims to create emotionally literate economic policies, declaring: 'Market-centred forces persuade many to deny support for those public services and welfare measures that promote the well-being of the wider community.'

(Browne, A. 2001)

<http://www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/Archive/Article/0,4273,4120743,00.html>

I was interested in a website called Antidote dedicated to emotional literacy in which Susie Orbach says:

Emotional literacy means being able to recognise what you are feeling so that it doesn't interfere with thinking. It becomes another dimension to draw upon when making decisions or encountering situations. Emotional expression by contrast can mean being driven by emotions so that it isn't possible to think. These two things are often confused because we are still uncomfortable with the idea of the validity of feelings.

We allow them in certain kinds of endeavours and exempt them in others. There is a real difference between bringing emotional literacy to the political agenda and substituting emotions for a political agenda. There is a real difference between bringing personal issues into the political framework - relations, work and home, parents and children - and understanding the political nature of such relations.

Everywhere we witness the depoliticisation of our culture. Rather than deepening the political by linking what people feel and the conflicts we need

to come to terms with, we strip the emotional of its connection to the political. Emotional literacy by contrast increases political literacy by joining issues where they need to be joined and separating political and emotional issues when they have become fused. It's not a substitute for political expression but a strengthening of it. (Orbach, 1998)

In the Antidote website, the authors talk about the discomfort many feel when the topic of emotional literacy is articulated: We were joined by academics, management, consultants, diplomats, environmentalists, lawyers, all people who were excited by the notion of pursuing an agenda that brought emotional literacy to the public debate. But despite this prestigious raft of supporters the idea of Antidote and of emotional literacy made some people very uneasy. They could sense that we were saying something valid, but it was just that bit out of reach. <http://www.antidote.org.uk/wisantid.htm>

The problem lies in the fact that the description and explanation of the life of a professional educator is severely limited if emotion is eliminated from the understanding. In the photos above the value of the visual image in helping to communicate the meanings is clear to both Cheryl and me. I hope that the reader can 'see' the quality of the relationship in the images. The complexity of using language to communicate the meanings of emotions (attached to fundamental values) has been recognized by many researchers and the recent moves in the UK government and the antidote web site emphasize the importance of emotional literacy. For that reason I intend to include it.

In September, 2000, I created guidelines for classroom research and was able to convince Planning Council (albeit reluctantly and after a considerable struggle) to set aside \$35,000 for school-based classroom research and an additional \$20,000 for two system action research projects, one on portfolio assessment and one on student-led conferencing from the Educational Change Fund.

My involvement on the Ontario Educational Research Council (OERC) Board as President-elect and my work on the annual conference is another vehicle for supporting action research. I have encouraged and supported teacher researchers to present their research at this conference for the years of 1999 and 2000 and brought Jack Whitehead to speak to the gathering. At the 2000 conference 15 Masters students (teachers, consultants and school administrators), 4 consultants and 3 teachers presented their action research projects and 3 other teachers attended with my support. The GEDSB group represented a significant number of the group in attendance. As I watched and listened to the Masters Students present, I was inspired by their capacities. In his Reflective Practice paper, *Cohort Story: Re-Searching Together*, Bob Ogilvie (2000) captured the event:



Nancy Carroll, grade 3 teacher, Houghton Public School presenting at OERC, 2000

We are lined up side by side in a manner that reminds me of Monday Night Football where players introduce themselves in little video clips....

“Phillip Sallewsky, Intermediate core French, Grand Erie District,...negotiating curriculum”. □

“Janie Senko, Grade 5, Grand Erie District,... integrating curriculum”

“Marilyn Davis, Secondary English, Grand Erie District.... improving student writing”.

And so it goes, through all thirteen of us.....not linebackers, quarterbacks and kickers, and hardly the Miami Dolphins, but a real team nonetheless. We are the Brock/Grand Erie Masters Cohort, and seated in a row on either side of Jack Whitehead, we recite the litany of our names, jobs, and thesis/project topics to the assembled audience at the 2000 Ontario Educational Research Council conference. I am the first to speak and as we move down the line I am at first attentive to the audience, but then quickly drawn back to a focus on us, for I am forcefully struck by how articulate, clear and confident we have all become. This is not at all the nervous,

halting and uncertain group which began together fifteen months ago, and I wonder yet again about the process that has enabled this to be so.

One of my purposes in negotiating the cohort model for completing a Masters degree was to give the students as much support as possible and one of these was a supportive, interdependent group, a group that stayed together through the learning process. I agree with Bob Ogilvie's (2000) observations about the value of the cohort to build community:

While this cohort and my participation in it has become the focus of my study, I believe an increased understanding of "cohort-ism" can also be of real value to teachers in general. I believe that the ten principles of reflective practice (Ghaye and Ghaye, 1998) can apply just as much, and in some cases more so, to collective reflection-on-practice than they do to individuals. The possibility of improving emotional environment through purposeful cohorts, groups or communities of reflective learners may help teachers succeed instead of merely survive in the current educational context. Stephen Covey (1989) contends that, "Dependent people need others to get what they want. Independent people can get what they want through their own effort. Interdependent people combine their own efforts with the efforts of others to achieve their greatest success." As a personal value, I too believe that togetherness, cooperation and teamwork are distinctly better than working alone to achieve many goals. (Ogilvie, R. 2000)

The 2001 OERC Conference, which I will co-chair with Cheryl Black, will be held in Brantford on December 7-8 and the program will feature Jack Whitehead and our researchers. Two of the students will present with me at the Quebec Conference on April 19-20 and one will attend with my support. My commitment to sustained support of action research continues.

Standard Eight:

Commitment to task, high expectations, drive and accountability for results

It seems incompatible to stand for task and results and at the same time care for individuals. I don't think it is. Without the drive to improve, the systems and supports would not be created. In fact the underlying purpose is a care for people. When I push an agenda or direction, I see a vision of what can be. I pull and sometimes push people in that direction, towards that vision. I know that they don't always see the vision until they are closer to it. For that reason I try to engage them in the activity based just on faith and trust. I know that I can't make the vision happen but they can and I'm there for the support systems.

My penchant for commitment to task needs to be held in check. I have had frequent feedback that I need to remember the impact on people especially with my high energy level. I regularly remind myself that others don't always have either my passion or my energy. Still it is that passion and energy that gets things done. It is an assumed fact that I work hard. As Maria said to someone's concern that a certain project would be hard work, "I'm not afraid of hard work. I work for Jackie Delong!" (Morgan, D. Nov., 2000)

Standard Nine: Professionalism and professional behaviour

Other than injustice to children, nothing angers me more than unprofessional behaviour. A recent experience shows this. At a meeting with colleagues and the director, where I was not in attendance, a principal in the system criticized my performance although she had not approached me on the topic. The director recommended that she put her criticisms in print. The following e-mail was sent to the director with a copy to me. I subsequently investigated to check on the accuracy of the criticism and found it to be this person's opinion and not shared by the persons I contacted as well as those contacted by one of my colleagues.

A number of administrators were impacted by the way the whole group session was initiated. It was felt that the manner in which the questions were posed and presented was condescending and a "slap

on the wrist'. Having it impressed upon us that those who had access to the results had beaten themselves black and blue over the data, there was not one reference to the hard work that has been done by the principals at the schools. Nor was it recognized that we will be the people who face the public and the community reaction. Instead, many felt that it was one more time we had been told that principals are not doing their jobs.

People definitely need to feel support and backing as we face the harsh realities that the EQAO data presents to us. We are part of the system, the problem and the solution. Not only do people need some system support as to direction and focus on literacy, but they need to know we are valued and in-serviced for the work ahead.

We appreciate the opportunity to raise such concerns and will be pleased to be a part of any further dialogue that allows principals to feel they are a vital and respected part of the system.

November 22, 2000.

Further I looked back at the questions I had used in overheads for the group session, a direction that we had discussed at Executive Council. Her accusations appeared to me (and several others) to be unfounded or at least over-reactive. As Paula Rasokas says, "You ask hard questions, Jackie." They were hard questions including:

- Who should be responsible for solving this problem?
- What can we do to support you to improve literacy?
- How will you hold yourselves accountable?
- How can we help you to raise test scores?

Over the years I have learned the importance of being extremely conscious of sharing information that was not public information and of making negative comments about fellow

educators. The Teaching Profession Act 13 (1) (b) prevents members of the federation from making negative comments about a fellow member and the College of Teachers rules on these behaviours under its Code of Ethics. Notwithstanding these regulations, it is behaviour that lacks integrity. Since the e-mail was sent to the director, I did not respond directly to the writer. On January 15, 2001, the principal called me requesting an opportunity to apologize. At a private meeting on January 19, 2001, she confessed to “unprofessional behaviour” and committed to me that it would not happen again. I accepted her apology.

On the positive side, the issue prompted me to check out the impact of the message at the administrators’ in-service session. I found that it had prompted a much closer analysis of the test results by principals and much more dialogue on the topic was occurring than I had observed in any other year of the test. I had several in depth discussions with principals and support staff on the meaning of the test results. Many of the presenters at the session had been contacted for follow-up sessions with school staffs. While it had not been my intention to send a message that principals were not valued, I did want to stimulate dialogue on, and attention to, the issue of low test results. I have resolved to work more closely with the schools in my family with the lowest achievement. Clearly, I don’t *avoid controversy*. (Somerville in Greenspon, 2000)

Standard Ten: Responsibility to act locally and publish globally

By producing accounts of my life as a superintendent, by making explicit my educational standards of practice in the context of this local and global standards movement (OCT, 1999; TTA, 1998), I feel that I am contributing to the knowledge base of practitioner research that will inform my work and the work of others. This work is set also in a global context because of national and provincial government agencies that seem to stifle what is important in their standards of practice. In Ontario the Ministry of Education is reinventing the standards set by the College of Teachers (1999) because they need to be more useable which means “more measurable”. (OPSOA Meeting Nov 3, 2000) Moreover, the voices of the administrator’s are missing in the published work. (Connelly & Clandinin, 1995, Anderson & Jones, 1999) If people like myself and Sylvia Jones (Jones, 2000) don’t make

the effort to publish, the academy will continue to assume that the researchers in the universities hold the only knowledge about the lives of teachers and administrators.

What are my holistic standards of practice?

By holistic standards of practice, I mean the ways in which I see myself operating which I consider my best practice – ways in which I regularly, though not always, act that appear to me to represent good educational leadership. They are standards that seem to permeate my personal and professional life and represent values that I wish to live by. I did not include them in the ten standards specific to the role of superintendent because they have an umbrella effect and frequently include and connect more than one of the ten.

Standard One: Teaching and Learning

My life has been primarily composed of various reincarnations of teaching and learning. In the years when I was more focused on one or the other, one or the other may have seemed the primary activity. I think of the years until I was 21 when I was a student and then became a teacher – there seemed to be a clearer line between the two but since then the line has been blurred. Even when it would seem that I was primarily a teacher, I have been in a learning mode whether taking courses or learning a new skill on my own. This has become even more blurred through my research. On a meta-cognitive level, as I am teaching in a forum such as the leadership program, I am thinking about what I am doing, what I am learning and how I can improve another time. It is like a constant pressure or buzz that has an energy of its own. Another example is my work with Maria. While I teach her skills such as organizing a leadership program, she teaches me efficiency in organizing computer files. Watching her grow has been a real joy for me and I have learned about my capacity to influence. More recently as an instructor teaching the Masters group I am a teacher in the more traditional meaning of the word. However, as I teach, I learn about myself and as I articulate my experiences to demonstrate them as narratives I learn as I teach and *I am what I teach* (Drake, 1997).

In my personal life, the role of parent as teacher recurs through the lives of my children as I assist them by sharing my expertise, an expertise that they have come to value more as they grow older. I see in their responses to life the values that I hold and have encouraged in them. I have been an active volunteer in the community, for most of my life and during 2000, they were both volunteers with the United Way, an organization where I had been local president.

Standard Two: A vision of good

I have a tremendous need to contribute to making a better world. One of the attractions of action research is the commitment to improving the social order (McNiff, 1992), When I set out to make things better I have an overriding vision of what that might look like. I often underestimate the obstacles in the way because my nature is to focus on the positive and to find ways around the obstacles and solutions to the problems. While I have experienced failures, they have usually been temporary or a means to another equally good end. The successes have certainly outweighed the setbacks.

By and large my experience has been that when I set out to create a new direction, people come on board to help me get there. That positive view of the world has caused me problems in my research because my inclination is to forget the problems once they have been solved. In two of my validation group meetings (1999, 2000), the feedback has been that I forget to include the dark days in getting to a vision of good and therefore the stories become *victory narratives* (MacLure, 1995). Leaving out the means to overcome obstacles does not help others see the reality of the world of a superintendent.

The story of the amalgamation of school boards 1998-2001 has not been a victory narrative and my personal crisis of job loss, March, 1998 was truly a dark day. Nonetheless, during this time period my personal drive and need to see a better world has driven me to improve the lives of the educators taking the Masters program, the students and teachers involved in action research projects and the recipients of the community work I do. That vision of something better sustains me in the tough times and I keeping the goal in sight maintains

my commitment. There is some evidence that I am contributing to an improved social order. (McNiff, 1992). There is still much for me to do.

Standard Three: Faces of People: Family, Friends, Colleagues

At the same time that I have a vision of good, I see the faces of the people that can help bring the vision to fruition. These two standards really occur at the same time. As I described in part two, the two flow in and out together to create the proposed future state. I never see myself as carrying the flag out there by myself; it is always a vision of me working alongside a group of friends and colleagues with the same purpose in mind. I have been very fortunate that people have chosen to work with me on these projects. I think that is partly to do with the fact that I won't ask anyone to do anything that I haven't or wouldn't do. Usually my role is more front-end loaded and once the project gets going I provide less frequent intervention but still sustained support.

It is the sheer pleasure of seeing the faces of the people enjoy the work, see the improvement and experience the success that sustains my commitment and drive despite the challenges that can make the life and work temporarily disappointing. People (including the director) both at work and in my family will tell you that I push, at times, too hard. People will also tell you that I provide the supports for people to try to improve. And the pushing includes myself. On my birthday, January 27, 2001, my son gave me a card that featured a middle-aged man in a tutu addressing an elderly woman saying, "Would you quit pushing me, ma! I don't want to be a ballerina." On the inside, it said, "Birthdays are a time to take stock of your life and lay the blame on your parents." My son wrote, "I do blame you. For all the good things now coming my way. Thanks. I love you. Dean." I had encouraged him to stay in school and now he was seeing the value in that. His face beamed. I do push but I can see a better future. He could, too.

Standard Four: Flow: integrating, connecting and relating

I want my life and work to be a seemingly effortless flow. I work hard at making it appear to be so. And I recognize that it is an image that is rarely achieved in fact although frequently in appearance. When I am responsible for an event, I want it to happen without glitches so that the event is planned so that people feel valued. I feel that when meetings or workshops are well-organized people do better work because there are fewer distractions and they can concentrate on the task at hand.

I also see an important role for myself in making connections. When I am responsible for an event I help draw people together who have common interests. When I am teaching skills or knowledge I make a point of making the connections or relevance of the learning. Integration was a key principle in the writing of *The Common Curriculum* (1994).

Multi-tasking is just the way I live and act. I am rarely doing anything in isolation so one act can benefit several directions that I am working on. While I rarely work on one thing at a time and my random nature can be an asset or a liability. (DeLong & Wideman, 1997), I have the capacity to *hold together the one and the many* (Plato) at the same time. I can be very focused on a particular result while completing many other tasks. Contrary to popular belief, *the divided will* (Bateson, 1992) may be an advantage. This may be akin to the concept of the *multiplicity of selves* (Childs & Fletcher, 2000) but I don't see any change in myself only in the way that I am performing. I am, however, able to lift myself out of a situation with deliberate focusing of my thinking as evidenced in the presentations of School Accommodation Studies. (See *Planing Above*, 2000)

One of the strategies that I use to retain good ideas when I don't have the time to focus on them is to use a 'parking lot'. When an idea or connection occurs to me whether in my work day or when I am writing my thesis, I record the idea in a Parking Lot which may be a new document in a computer file or a note in my planner. When I have time, I go back and think about how I might use it. This action may occur many times before I actually use the idea.

Standard Five: Educative Influence

I think this is the all-embracing standard for me. If there is one expectation I have of myself, and I know there are many, the one that is the most important and significant is that I am having a positive, beneficial educative influence on people and systems. Like, Jack Whitehead (1999), I have tried in my research to understand the nature of my educative influence (DeLong, 1999). Educative influence may be the essence of educational leadership. If I am not influencing people and systems toward improvement for the purpose of improving student learning, I feel that I am not being a good leader. That influence comes from building positive, caring relationships built on mutual respect, reflective practice and commitment to continuous improvement and results.

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4. KNOWLEDGE-CREATION IN EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION THROUGH PRACTITIONER RESEARCH.

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Jackie Delong, Grand Erie District School Board, Ontario.

Presented at AERA, Seattle, 14th April, 2001

In keeping with the conference theme: What do we know? How do we know it?, the paper explains how practitioner researchers can contribute to the knowledge-base of educational leadership and administration. Jackie Delong is a superintendent of schools who is engaged in an action research enquiry into her own learning. (1995-2001). She is explicating the standards of practice and judgement which can be used to test the validity of her knowledge-claims about her educative influence. Jack Whitehead is a university academic who is researching his own supervision of Delong's research programme in relation to the creation of a thesis which demonstrates her originality of mind and critical judgement in contributing to the knowledge-base of educational leadership and administration. We have included as an Appendix the proposal we successfully submitted to AERA in August 2000 so that you can check that we are doing what we said we would do in April 2001, here in Seattle. In this proposal we focus attention on the words of David Clark in an invited address to this Division in 1997.

The honest fact is that the total contribution of Division A of AERA to the development of the empirical and theoretical knowledge base of administration and policy development is so miniscule that if all of us had devoted our professional careers to teaching and service, we would hardly have been missed. (p. 5)

As Jackie's supervisor, Jack had suggested they attend this session because its focus, on the search for authentic educational leadership in schools and universities, appeared relevant to Jackie's research. We shared our mixed emotions after the session. We felt exhilarated by his conclusion that more research was needed by practitioners into their own practice. We felt saddened by the poignancy of seeing a committed researcher looking back on his life-time's commitment to a field of educational enquiry with a feeling of some despair. We both expressed the hope that our collaboration might lead to a more hopeful conclusion!

Like McIntyre and Cole (2001) we believe that:

“Performance of the research text is an embodiment and representation of the inquiry process as well as a new process of active learning. The possibility of active learning in each performance or recreation of the text exists through our ongoing commitment to maintaining the conditions of our relationship. Each performance is an experiential basis for reflection, analysis, and learning because in relationship we are ‘participants-as-collaborators’ (Lincoln, 1993, p.42). Together we were able to draw out each other’s knowledge and strength.” (p.22)

Hence we are video-taping ourselves to help our learning to move forward as we reflect on our experience.

Our research takes place in four contexts. Jackie researches her practice as a Superintendent in the Grand Erie District Board in Ontario. Jack researches his practice as a professional educator in the University of Bath. We come together as researcher and supervisor at the University of Bath and as collaborative researchers at the American Educational Research Association.

Again we agree with McIntyre and Cole (2001, p.23) in terms of our collaborative relationship that it has developed through mutual trust, respect, and care and that the risks inherent in any collaborative self-study (Lomax, Evans, Parker and Whitehead, (1999) require particular attention to these qualities.

The developing epistemology of my practice as superintendent: Jackie’s story.

I want to take you immediately into an aspect of my practice through a video-clip of a meeting in which I am receiving the assessment by the principals and vice-principals of my practice in a process of democratic accountability. I will explain the significance of this form of accountability as my story unfolds below.

The italicised paragraphs which follow are taken from a re-draft of the Abstract I worked on following a conversation Jack will be referred to later.

This story is concerned with the creation and testing of my own living theory of my learning about my educative influence as a superintendent of schools, an educational leader and insider researcher (Anderson & Herr, 1999) living in turbulent times - 1995-2001. It is a journey of professional learning and self-discovery through research-based professionalism as I ask, research and answer the question, 'How can I improve my practice as a superintendent of schools in a southern Ontario school district? (Whitehead, 1989).

It represents and demonstrates my originality of mind and critical judgment as I describe and explain my living standards of practice that can be understood through my values for which I hold myself accountable. My originality of mind is being expressed through narrative and image-based forms of communication (Prosser, 1998; Mitchell & Weber, 1999) in which I describe and explain stories of myself, a self-discovery of my need for internal and external dialogue, of how I hold together continuously in a living, dynamic way, a plurality of actions. I describe and explain my work in my many portfolios including the birth and growth of an action research movement in a school system that is restructuring amidst the impact of economic rationalist policies.(Whitty, 1997)

This story serves to focus my critical judgements on the clarification and use of the values that have emerged in my practice as I am able to construct and deconstruct the transformations that have taken place over the five years of the research and to understand what has moved me forward. The meaning of those values that I am articulating are grounded in my practice and constitute my living standards of practice and judgment in my explanations. They emerge through reading, dialogue and reflection on my experience as I account for myself in my practice by continuously moving forward while holding on to the sanctity of personal relationships and democratic evaluation within a hierarchical system and power relations.

My contribution to the scholarship of enquiry emerges from my storying and re-storying, my dialectical and dialogical processes and an analysis and synthesis through the writing of

my thesis. One of the obstacles to this clarity is that I take much of my political *nous* as natural and obvious and so embedded in the way I do my work that it has been very difficult to uncover. My process of learning, as distinctive as fingerprints, (MacBeth, J.) emerges from stories of victory and ruin (MacLure, 1996) of my various roles in the school board-senior management relationship, in my family of schools and systems portfolios and in my relationships imbued with life-affirming energy (Whitehead, 1999) and vitality (Tillich, 1952) as I educate social formations.

Given the constraints of time and space in this form of presentations I will concentrate on my commitment to values of democratic and non-hierarchical relations. and improving teaching/ learning/ schools and school systems.

Democratic and Non-Hierarchical Relations

An earlier paper on *'Continuously regenerating developmental standards of practice in teacher education: a cautionary note for the Ontario College of Teachers'* represents my response to an imposition of checklist types of performance review procedures that is contrary to my value of research-based professionalism in which teachers take responsibility for their learning and improvement. I actively encourage teachers and administrators to take control of their learning. (Barkans, MacDonald & Morgan, 1996; Black, 1997; Rasokas, 2000; Quigg, 2000)

In the Family of Schools Principals Evaluations of my Performance coordinated by two veteran principals in the families, Lorne Berry (1995-1997) and Keith Quigg (1998-2000), I wanted to learn from my principals and vice-principals what I could do to improve my practice as a superintendent through a democratic evaluation process. In addition, I want to educate social formations (DeLong & Whitehead, 2000) by breaking down the hierarchical structures in the system so that principals engage their staffs in creating learning organizations (Senge, 1990) where they can learn from their teachers and teachers can share the responsibility for the learning in the classroom with their students. In the video that I directed and produced, "Improving Schools Through Action Research" (DeLong & Wideman, 1997), Tom Russell said,

“there is a certain discomfort in discovering that you could have been doing something better....(He’s) always struck by how the students in a classroom can be critical friends. They seem to know what it’s safe to say to a teacher and what is not. The saddest part of teaching perhaps is when the teacher never asks at all.”

When Cheryl Black, a secondary school music teacher, presented her paper ‘*Valuing The Student Voice in Improving My Practice*’ at OERC on December 3, 1999, I felt my educative influence as she said, “This group of students and I, are partners in the learning process and I now feel accountable to them for the quality of work I do.” She was also submitting to democratic evaluation with her students and together they were creating an environment for sharing and learning:

Somewhere in the midst of our daily routine, my students have found the confidence to be honest with me, and, somewhere in the same place, I have found the courage to be honest with my students. We have all grown and been changed by our connections. Some might argue that the time we spend building relationships in our classroom would have been better spent in more structured learning, however, Glasser(1993) believes that “the better we know someone and the more we like about what we know, the harder we will work for that person.”(30) My students are demonstrating “conscience of membership”.(Green, 1985) They are accountable to each other rather than only to me. In fact, they discipline and support themselves thus creating a partnership of learning rather than a ‘teacher-down’ approach. They have improved their singing ability and learned a great deal about music, in general. However, I maintain that the ability to build honest and healthy relationships is a skill that is only developed in unique circumstances and, it is impossible for either the teacher or the learner to remain unchanged. (Black, 1999)

Commitment To Improving Teaching/ Learning/ Schools and School Systems

Even prior to my being appointed superintendent, Peter Moffatt, Director of Education, and I had shared the belief that increasing parental involvement in students learning would increase achievement. Since 1992 we had been looking for avenues to increase parental and community involvement in schools. In 1996, we published a summary of our activities designed toward 'Building a Culture of Involvement in Brant County' in ORBIT Vol. 27, No. 4 1996. I had just spent a year implementing the new School Councils and brought that recent experience to the article. Although we have written many board reports and collaborated in many projects, it was the only publication that we co-authored.

By the end of 2000, the year-long project for EQAO managed by Ron Wideman, Diane Morgan, Kathy Hallett and I *An Action Research Approach to Improving Student Learning Using Provincial Test Results* was finally submitted and approved. In it, teachers and consultants from my board and the Nipissing Parry Sound District Catholic School Board explained how they used their provincial test results to inform an investigation of ways to improve their teaching and student learning through an action research process. My role was mostly encouragement and support; my friend, Diane Morgan, now retired, was the project coordinator.

There were some important ways in which I was influential. It is important to integrate into accounts those sometimes tense and difficult experiences which are often part of projects designed to improve learning. I insisted on the questions using the "T" as essential to the process. Against some resistance from the University of Nipissing I persisted until the teachers names and photos were included with their work. On the other hand, I was not able to resist a common format to the narratives and my involvement in a separate literature search which seemed to me to be separated from the process of the enquiry. Partnerships are about give and take. The teachers' findings about effective teaching and learning strategies in their classrooms were, to me, inspirational. Several of the narratives have been published in full in Ontario Action Researcher and have been presented in the board and at OERC. The teachers recorded their belief that having gone through this process their teaching improved, the students' learning improved and that this had a positive impact on

the test results the following year. The improved test results tend to support the teachers' beliefs.

One way of improving a teaching/learning/schools and school systems is to improve the quality of the leadership. When it became evident to me that Jack's message of accreditation for action research was beginning to take root and knowing that one of the recent skills essential for being an effective school administrator is the capacity to analyze and use data to improve student achievement I created and implemented (1999-2001) the GEDSB-Brock University M.Ed. program with Susan Drake and Michael Manley-Casimir. As well Jack and I have been instructors of the program. It is mostly a victory narrative but the university as vampire (MacLure, 1996) has been at work in the ethical review process in the sense that the institutional power relations are at work in ways which could, so easily, distort the teachers' knowledge through the pressure to conform to scholarly standards of judgement which were not created from the disciplines of educational practice (Lyotard, 1984, p. . One of my priorities in this program was that the research would be conducted in our schools and improve the learning of our children. One of the students, Bob Ogilvie (2000), wrote a paper for the Reflective Practice course that Susan and I taught 'Cohort Story: Re-Searching Together' that describes their experience. In September, 2001, there will potentially be fifteen contributions to the knowledge base of teaching and learning from practitioner-researchers.

I cite my performance reviews by Peter Moffatt (1995-2001): Performance Reviews: Jacqueline D. Delong as evidence of my influence on teaching and learning and school improvement. Peter has been a strong influence on me and been a critical friend over 19 years. I am fortunate to have a boss who shares my values and is a friend. In addition, we have written hundreds of papers, projects, proposals, reports and policies and procedures over 6 years. Some of these include:

Brant County Board Of Education: Policies and Reports:

1995: School Councils; Safe Schools

1996: Co-operative Education; Partnerships

1997: Compensatory Education; Co-operative Education

Grand Erie District School Board:

1998: EQAO Action Plan; Assessment Policy

1999: EQAO Action Plan; Career Education; Volunteer Policy

2000: EQAO Action Plan; Career Education; Communications Plan

2001: EQAO Action Plan; Leadership Programs; Staff Development
Model

One of the ways I intend to influence school systems is through my research and writing. In this paper for the 2001 Annual Meeting of AERA in Seattle, 'Knowledge-Creation in Educational Leadership and Administration Through Practitioner Research.' I want to get my insider, practitioner knowledge into the knowledge base of educational administration so that school and system leaders can see that there is no single model of how to be an effective leader but that each of us needs to develop his/her own standards of practice. I want to build the bridge that Joseph Murphy (1999) said no one is interested in building.

The supervisor's influence on DeLong's inquiry: Jack's story.

One of my pleasures in supervision is at the time when the researcher forms a clear abstract of the thesis which draws attention to the way in which the researcher's originality of mind and critical judgement have engaged with the knowledge-base of the field of inquiry. For me, the definition of what counts as a contribution to knowledge is essentially related to how the researcher's originality of mind and critical judgement has enabled questions of the kind, 'How do I improve my practice?' to be asked, researched and answered in the course of the enquiry. Because of the importance of this definition I want to focus, through a video-clip on my influence in the expression and communication of Jackie's definition of how her originality of mind and critical judgement has been expressed in the process of her knowledge-creation in educational leadership and administration.

In the video-clip I am focusing attention on my frustration in not being able to understand clearly how Jackie's Abstract is focusing on her originality of mind and

critical judgement. I am saying that I feel sure that the separate components I can see in the Abstract will constitute a Ph.D. Thesis but that I can't see how Jackie has shown her readers that she is meeting standards of originality of mind and critical judgement. I want to explain my educative influence in relation to the transformations between the Abstracts.

Jackie's Abstract 9th March 2001

This thesis is a journey of professional learning, reinvention and self-discovery through research-based professionalism in asking the question, 'How do I improve my practice as a superintendent of schools in a southern Ontario school district?' It represents and demonstrates my originality of mind and critical judgment as I describe and explain my living standards of practice for which I hold myself accountable.

The values that I am articulating are grounded in my practice, in what I know from reading and dialogue, from experience and from reflecting on that experience. Through writing about my values that emerge in my practice, I am able to construct and deconstruct the transformation that has taken place over the six years of the research and to understand what has moved me forward.

Through narrative and image-based research I describe and explain the birth and growth of an action research movement in a school system that is restructuring amidst the negative pressures of market policies.

Jackie's Abstract 12th March 2001 following conversation with Jack on the morning of 12th March (see the italicised paragraphs in Jackie's story above for this Abstract).

Before I present the values I use to explain my educative influence I want to focus attention on the importance of defining the living standards of practice and judgement which can be used to test the validity of such explanations.

I want to stress the importance of pleasure in what I do. It is a pleasure for me, in my work as a supervisor of practitioner-research, to contribute to the expression, definition and communication of the living standards of practice and judgement which characterise both educational practice and claims to know such practice. Here are some moments to share on the video-clip of 20th March where I am focusing attention on Jackie's capacity to relate her embodied values of students' learning to her understanding of how to influence system responses to support students' learning.

In the lead up to this conversation, on Thursday 15th March Jackie showed me an e-mail she had received, the day before, from Carolijn Mac Neil, a teacher in the GEDSB.

"I talked to John Verbakel and I emailed Dave Abbey. Nowit was like magic!!. All of a sudden I was swept up by the action research SWAT team. James Ellsworth called me and asked me to be part of a portfolio team receiving funding for action research. Several special dates were discussed where training would be given and opportunities to share with other practitioners given. Dave Abbey emailed me back with all sorts of suggestions. Lynn Abbey phoned and agreed to be my "Critical friend" or Mentor as we like to call it. John agreed to let me go on several PD days for my project. I knew that I was in a learning curve here and it is really exciting. I am going to really think things through before I meet with Lynn on Monday.

What impassions me about portfolios? I have the boxes set up in my room and each of my students have a file folder. What is the deal here? I know all I have heard from colleagues in the past is that portfolios do not work. They are a pain.. Why do I refuse to listen to this banter. Why am I so excited to try them in my academic class? Where will I start. What type of portfolio will it be? What purpose will they serve. What do I want from my students. How will the portfolios fit in naturally with the classroom work? I know one thing : I want my students to take more responsibility for their learning. I want them to use suggestions that I

give to revise reflect and modify but how does one do this? I think I will discuss some of this with Lynn.”

My first response was to feel Jackie's pleasure in the affirmation she felt that her work was being appreciated and used. My second was to share the laughter about the idea of an action research SWAT team! The e-mail kept coming into my mind as having something significant to say about Jackie's system's influence. So did ideas from Edward Said (p. xii-xiii) about culture and from Bourdieu (p. 91,1992) about the habitus which influences the reproduction of social formations. My intuition began working on the idea that this e-mail was showing Jackie's *system's* influence' as having pervaded the culture of the board. I mean this in the sense that her influence was being felt through the actions of others who had been directly influenced by Jackie, in face to face communications.

In the video-clip I can be seen and heard, raising the idea of Jackie's influence on a 'system'. Jackie's story above shows has integrated in her story above, her response to the conversation in the section on commitment to improving teaching/ learning/ schools and school systems.

At this point I want to draw attention to the 'embodied' values I believe that I express in my educative relationships and which can help to explain the nature of my educative influence in the processes of knowledge-creation with Jackie and the other practitioner-researchers whose research programmes I supervise. I think my embodied values are explanatory principles because my experience of their negation is sufficient reason for me to explain my actions as I seek to live my values more fully in my practice. I think my values are the standards of practice and judgement I use in accounting to myself and others for how I live my values more fully in my practice. I am hopeful that we are both expressing in our own ways, in ways which can be further revealed in the video-tapes of our presentation, the embodied values we use to explain our educative influence. I see Jackie wanting to explain her influence in relation to her embodied knowledge as a superintendent of schools. I see me wanting to explain my influence in relation to my embodied knowledge as a professional educator. I see us both wanting to explain our embodied knowledge as

educational researchers in which we are working to contribute to the knowledge base of our vocations in education.

My embodied values as explanatory principles and standards of practice and judgement

A life-affirming faith in the embodied knowledge and knowledge-creating capacities of practitioner researchers.

As an educator, supporting the educational enquiries of practitioner-researchers I hold firmly to the view that the practitioner-researchers already embody much of the knowledge which the research can make public. In saying this I don't want to be misunderstood. I see the practitioner –researcher embodying the knowledge I want to help to make public. In the process of working on ways of communicating the embodied knowledge in enquiries of the kind, 'How do I improve what I am doing?', I see knowledge-creation at work. The way I communicate this valuing of the 'embodied knowledge' and knowledge-creating capacities of practitioner-researchers has been reflected back to me by Robyn Pound a researcher who transcribed the following from one of our conversations from 1996:

Robyn Pound - Here is an example of an affirming experience which encouraged me to give credit to my own voice. After a presentation I made during my first year, Jack Whitehead replied by saying:

'At the moment the power behind what counts as knowledge is in the academy. It is not in the form of knowing that you have. I genuinely believe that you have the form of knowledge that I am interesting in helping to make public.... If we to take the view that you are starting to work with parents of young children and that the 'knowing' they have is developmental. It's emergent, but never-the-less is actually superior to the 'knowing' that is in the academy at the moment about what you are interested in. You would have the personal and professional knowledge together (parents and me). We (the academy) would be the learners. Over a few years our task would be to learn what it is for you and your parents to become good parents with your help and support. We would be subordinate, in terms of our learning, to the personal and professional knowledge which

you and the parents actually have as you are working with the child to become better parents.’ (Taped presentation, BARG, 7.10.96).

I think that I carry this belief of mine as an ‘embodied value’ of my own which I think communicates to Jackie, and other practitioner-researchers I work with, a passionate valuing of their ‘embodied knowledge’ and ‘knowledge-creating’ capacities. With working in education I think the emotional intensity of my commitment carries the additional meaning that in creating publicly shareable knowledge, from and in their practice, they are also creating themselves. I am meaning this in the sense of exercising some originality and critical judgement in the creation of our own forms of life in our educational enquiries. This is why I value what I do in education and educational research so highly.

Communicating a life-affirming energy

In the face of the certainty of death I feel a life-affirming energy which I associate with Bataille’s idea of assenting to life up to the point of death and with Foucault’s ideas on the uses of pleasure. In my educative relationships I feel alive in a way which I believe communicates both a life-affirming energy and pleasure. I am stressing the pleasure associated with my life-affirming energy because I believe that it is crucial in explaining my educative influence in the processes of knowledge-creation with practitioner-researchers. Let me see if the words loving and creative spirit carry any meaning for you. I do believe this pleasure and energy has a spiritual ground in the experience of the state of being grasped by the power of being itself. Paul Tillich’s work on the Courage to Be, helped me to articulate this point. I don’t want to say anything more about this spiritual value, embodied in my practice. I simply want to acknowledge its presence and hope that you can feel this spiritual, life-affirming energy through my relationship with you.

Engaging with the life-affirming energy of practitioner researchers

As I engage with the life-affirming energy of others, in my educative relations, I think of education in terms of forms of enquiry through which we create our own forms of life in relation to the certainty of death and other influences. I associate the ‘giving of form’

with my aesthetic values. I think of the art of living in terms of giving form to life itself and I seek to express my value-laden practices as an educator and educational researcher in a way in which you will experience as aesthetic in the sense that I can be seen to be influencing the educational development of myself and others in ways which are assisting in the creation of a form of life. When I say this I do not want to be understood as saying that I have educated anyone other than myself. Because I associate education with learning and knowledge-creation I think each individual makes sense of their own experience in a way which is uniquely their own through an engagement with their imagination and creativity. I do however think that I can claim to have an educative influence. In this presentation I am seeking to bring into my claims to educational knowledge a form of aesthetic knowing which is focused on the expression of an influence within the creative formation by another of their own form of life.

Sharing insights from passionate educational enquiries.

The practitioner-researchers I work with often comment on ‘Jack’s latest book’. They don’t mean my own! I know that I have an enthusiasm for sharing insights from the work of others that are influencing my own enquiries. So, as I seek to share my insights with Jackie I am focusing on a creative and critical engagement with the ideas of culture from Edward Said (p, xii-xiii, 1993) and the ideas of a ‘logic of practice’ and the ‘habitus’ from Pierre Bourdieu (p.91, 1992).

As we work at improving our contributions to the knowledge-base of educational leadership and administration we want to share, in a process of democratic accountability, both our success criteria and the evidence we use to judge our success.

Jack’s success criteria

We want to end our presentation by re-visiting David Clark’s statement that:

The honest fact is that the total contribution of Division A of AERA to the development of the empirical and theoretical knowledge base of administration and policy development

is so miniscule that if all of us had devoted our professional careers to teaching and service, we would hardly have been missed. (Clark, 1997, p. 5)

In an attempt to avoid such a retrospective analysis of one's productive life we want to offer for your evaluation the success criteria we use to judgement our own contributions to our chosen profession, education.

Jack's criteria are focused on both the reconstruction of educational theory and his educative influence in the learning of other students of education. He wants to look back on a productive life in education with the knowledge that he has contributed to the development of living forms of educational theory which can be related directly to the education of individuals and to the education of social formations. He offers as partial evidence of his success so far, the following living theory theses and dissertations from the living theory section of [actionresearch.net](http://www.actionresearch.net):

EDUCATIONAL KNOWLEDGE CREATORS

1995-2000

Austin, T. (2001) *Treasures in the Snow: What do I know and how do I know it through my educational inquiry into my practice of community?* Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath. In the Living Theory section of <http://www.actionresearch.net>

Adler-Collins, J. (2000) *A Scholarship of Enquiry*, M.A. dissertation, University of Bath.

Cunningham, B. (1999) *How do I come to know my spirituality as I create my own living educational theory?* Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath.

D'Arcy, P. (1998) *The Whole Story.....* Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath
Eames, K. (1995) *How do I, as a teacher and educational action-researcher, describe and explain the nature of my professional knowledge?* Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath

Finnegan, (2000) *How do I create my own educational theory as an action researcher and as a teacher?* Ph.D. submission, University of Bath, under examination.

Holley, E. (1997) *How do I as a teacher-researcher contribute to the development of a living educational theory through an exploration of my values in my professional practice?*

M.Phil., University of Bath. Hughes, J. (1996) *Action planning and assessment in guidance contexts: how can I understand and support these processes while working with colleagues in further education colleges and career service provision in Avon.* Ph.D. Thesis, University of Bath.

Laidlaw, M. (1996) *How can I create my own living educational theory as I offer you an account of my educational development?* Ph.D. thesis, University of Bath.

Loftus, J. (1999) *An action enquiry into the marketing of an established first school in its transition to full primary status.* Ph.D. thesis, Kingston University. Evans, M. (1995) *An action research enquiry into reflection in action as part of my role as a deputy headteacher.*

Ph.D., Kingston University

Whitehead, J. (1999) *How do I improve my practice? Creating a discipline of education through educational enquiry*. Ph.D. University of Bath.

Jackie’s success criteria

I judge my success on my capacity to live my life according to my values which are my standards of practice and judgment. As I attempt to share my embodied knowledge with clarity and elegance, I find that they are still emerging through the writing of the thesis: the sanctity of personal relationships, the focus on children, democratic and non-hierarchical relations, commitment to improving teaching / learning /schools and school systems, encouraging practitioner knowledge through action research, and professional accountability. And, as I have written every year in my goal package: Finding the meaning of balance. I do not want to end my professional life feeling as David Clark did; I do wish to contribute to improving the social order. (McNiff, 1992)

What is the evidential base that I am living these standards of practice and judgment? First, the answer lies in the data archive of the five years of research that describes and explains the knowledge embodied in my practice. Second, the evidence that the meanings of the standards have emerged through my practice is in my draft Ph.D. submission to the University of Bath. It is my hope that this Ph.D. Thesis can join those in the living theory section of actionresearch.net – soon!

PART B: ORGANIZATIONAL CHARTS

1. SUMMARY OF SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES SEPT-DEC. 1998.

GRAND ERIE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

**SUMMARY OF
SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES
September/December 1998**

	C. K. Armstrong Superintendent of Schools	J. D. Delong Superintendent of Schools	D. G. Dunnigan Superintendent of Schools	J. L. Grant Superintendent of Schools
F A M I L Y	BURFORD/ WATERFORD C. Lefebvre	DELHI/NORFOLK/ SIMCOE/GELA S. Munroe-Chanda	CAYUGA/DUNNVILLE/ HAGERSVILLE/PORT DOVER J. McQuillan	B.C.I./TTSC/ NPCVS J. Scott
S	<u>HUMAN RESOURCES SERVICES</u> Staffing	<u>ASSESSMENT/STAFF DEVEL. & COMMUNITY RELATIONS</u> Assessment & Reporting	<u>CURRICULUM SERVICES & TEACHER DEVELOPMENT</u> Curriculum Policy	<u>PLANNING & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES</u> Technology for

Y S T E M	Collective Agreements Contacts & Negotiations Interviews & Selection Process Human Resource Services Abuse/Harassment & Intimidation Investigation Occupational Health & Safety Teacher Transfers Timetabling In-service - Hiring/ Selection, Performance Evaluation Attendance Management (Staff) Freedom of Information Employment Equity Non-Teaching Staff Certification Programs	Early & Ongoing Identification Evaluation & Promotion Provincial Testing Reporting to Parents Career Education Cooperative Education Ont. Youth Apprenticeship Program Trades Training Liaison Compensatory Education Continuing & Alternative Ed. Staff Development Model Leadership Training Orientation for New Employees District P.D. activities Models for Parental/Community Involvement Volunteer Recruitment & Training Partnerships Education Week	Program Council Program RDI System Program Initiatives System Curriculum Teams ESL Day School French as a Second Language Native as a Second Language Liaison with Native Advisory Council Enrichment Early Literacy JK/K Registrations Teacher Professional Development Course & Textbook Approval Contest Requests Student Presentations to Board Guidance Programs	Learners: Infusion & Computer Plans Use of Computers & Internet Copyright and Licences Software Audits Technology Innovations Design Tech/Fam. Studies Staff Training Administrative: Information Services Software applications & upgrades-Comm./Bus./HR Planning Model Planning & Procedures Council Enrolment Projections & School Boundaries Classroom Spaces System Areas of Emphasis School Year Calendar School Improvement Plans
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SUMMARY OF SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

September/December, 1998

W. R. THOMAS Superintendent of Schools	G. S. Kuckyt	J. G. Townsend Sept.-Dec.	P. C. Moffatt
CALEDONIA/ PAULINE JOHNSON/ SPRUCEDALE K. Waite	SUPERINTENDENT OF BUSINESS & TREASURER B. Headon	ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR J. Boule PARIS FAMILY C. Lefebvre	DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & SECRETARY W. Hibbard J. Boule
<u>SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES & STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES</u> Special Education Model Identification, Placement & Review (IPRC) S.E.A.C. Liaison Guidance Counselling	<u>BUSINESS & FINANCIAL SERVICES</u> Business Functions: - Finance/Accounting/ Payroll - Budget/Purchasing	<u>PLANNING AND PROGRAM</u> Student Presentations - Board Administrative Council Transition	<u>SYSTEM OPERATIONS</u> Secretary to Board Board Agendas, Minutes Board Records

Individual Student Assessment System Special Education Classes Allocate Ed. Assistants Applications to Provincial Schools Individual Education Plans Standards for Student Support Services Violence Free Schools Program Child Abuse Protocol Health Unit Liaison Student Attendance Management - S.A.L.E.P. - Home Schooling	- Transportation - Facility Services Service & Business Contracts Benefit Plans Insurance Contracts Business Partnerships Acquisitions/Disposal of Sites Five Year Capital/Renewal Program Inventories Board Archives Education Centre Tuition Agreements	- Program Council - Planning & Procedures Council Requests for Contests Learning Materials - Purchase plans - Board brochure - School visits - JK Implementation Plan - Review of Outdoor Education	Policy Recommendations And Procedures Correspondence Administrative Council - Executive System Directions Central Filing System Contract Administration Communications Director's Newsletter Annual Report Student Admissions (Non-resident) Scholarships Requests for Circulation Trustee Orientation
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2. SUMMARY OF SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES SEPT. 1999.

GRAND ERIE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

SUMMARY OF SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

September 1999

	W. K. Bell Superintendent of Schools	J. D. Delong Superintendent of Schools	D. G. Dunnigan Superintendent of Schools	J. L. Grant Superintendent of Schools
F A M I L Y	BURFORD/PARIS/ WATERFORD Chris Lefebvre	DELHI/NORFOLK/ SIMCOE/GELA Sue Munroe-Chanda	CAYUGA/DUNNVILLE/ HAGERSVILLE /PORT DOVER Joan McQuillen	B.C.I./TTSC/NPCVS Jennifer Scott
S Y S T E M	<u>HUMAN RESOURCE SERVICES</u> Staffing Collective Agreements Contracts & Negotiations Interviews & Selection Process	<u>ASSESSMENT/COMMUNIT Y RELATIONS & CAREER DEVELOPMENT</u> Assessment & Reporting Early & Ongoing Identification Evaluation & Promotions Provincial Testing	<u>CURRICULUM SERVICES & TEACHER DEVELOPMENT</u> Curriculum Policy Program Council Program RDI System Program Initiatives	<u>PLANNING & INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SERVICES</u> <u>Technology for Learners:</u> Computer Plans Computer & Internet

Human Resources Services Abuse/Harassment & Intimidation Investigation Occupational Health & Safety Teacher Transfers Timetabling In-service - Hiring/Selection, Performance Evaluation Attendance Management (Staff) Freedom of Information Employment Equity Non-Teaching Staff Certification Programs	Reporting to Parents Career Education Cooperative Education Ont. Youth Apprenticeship Prog. Trades Training Liaison Compensatory Education Continuing & Alternative Ed. Staff Development Model Leadership Training Programs Orientation for New Employees District P.D. activities Models for Parental/ Community Involvement School Council Liaison Volunteer Recruitment & Train. Partnerships Education Week Classroom Research	System Curriculum Teams French as a Second Language Native as a Second Language Liaison with Native Advisory Council Enrichment Early Literacy JK/K Registration Notices Teacher Professional Development Course & Textbook Approval Contest Requests Student Presentations to Board Guidance Programs Violence Free/Safe Schools Programs	Usage Copyright and licenses Software Audits Technology Inservice Design Tech./Fam. Studies Staff Training Administrative Technology: Information Services Software applications Planning Model Planning & Procedures Council Initiative Process System Areas of Emphasis School Improvement Plans Enrolment Forecasts & School Boundaries Classroom Spaces – Planning Magnet Programs School Year Calendar Media Services
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Grand Erie District School Board

SUMMARY OF SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

September 1999

W. R. Thomas Superintendent of Schools	G. S. Kuckyt	P. C. Moffatt
CALEDONIA/PAULINE JOHNSON/SPRUCEDALE	SUPERINTENDENT OF BUSINESS & TREASURER	DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & SECRETARY

Kim Waite	Bev Headon	Wendy Hibbard Jeanne Boule
<u>SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES & STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES</u> Special Education Model Identification, Placement & Review (IPRC) S.E.A.C. Liaison Guidance Counselling Individual Student Assess. System Special Ed. classes Ed. Assistants Assignment Applications to Prov. Schools Individual Education Plans Standards for Student Support Services - Assessments - Speech - Behaviour Violence Free/Safe Schools Policy ESL Day School Child Abuse Protocol Health Unit Liaison Student Attendance Management - SALEP - Home Schooling - Home Instruction	<u>BUSINESS & FINANCIAL SERVICES</u> Business Functions: -Finance/Accounting/Payroll -Budget/Purchasing -Transportation -Facility Services Service & Business Contracts Benefit Plans Insurance Contracts Business Partnerships Acquisition/Disposal of Sites Accommodations Plan (Facilities) Inventories Board Archives Education Centre Tuition Agreements	<u>SYSTEM OPERATIONS</u> Secretary to Board Board Agendas, Minutes Board Records/FOI Policy Recommendations & Procedures Correspondence Administrative Council - Executive System Directions Central Filing System Contracts Communications Director's Newsletter/Report Accommodations Plan Student Admissions (Non-resident) Scholarships Requests for Circulation Trustee Orientation Website Content Integrated Database Safe Schools Project Management

3. SUMMARY OF SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES JAN., 2000.

GRAND ERIE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

SUMMARY OF SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

January 2000

	G. M. Anderson	W. K. Bell	J. D. Delong	D. G. Dunnigan
F A M I L Y	BCI/TTSC/NPCVS J. Scott	BURFORD/PARIS/ WATERFORD C. Lefebvre	DELHI/NORFOLK/ SIMCOE/GELA/ SPRUCEDALE S. Munroe-Chanda	CAYUGA/DUNN- VILLE/ HAGERSVILLE/ PT. DOVER J. McQuillen
S Y S T E M	<u>Planning, Accommodations & Parental Involvement</u> <u>Planning Model</u> Planning Council (Chair) Areas of Emphasis School Improvement Plans Educational Change Fund School Year Calendar <u>Accommodations</u> Enrolment Figures Projections Boundaries Classroom Space KP Admissions (Out of Area) <u>Community Relations</u> School Council Liaison Parental Involvement Volunteers Education Week <u>Safe Schools</u> Policy Violence-Free Inclusive Schools <u>Programs</u> Design Tech/TIS/Family Studies <u>Brantford S.S.C. - T.R.C.</u> Supervision	<u>Human Resources Services</u> <u>Human Resources Services</u> Staffing Staffing Projections Collective Agreements Contracts & Negotiations Interview & Selection Investigation of Abuse, Harassment & Intimidation Occupational Health & Safety Staff Transfers Attendance Management (Staff) Employment Equity Performance Review <u>Staff Development</u> Hiring/Selection Performance Evaluation Disciplinary Practices Staff Certification (First Aid) Attendance Management (Staff)	<u>Assessment, Careers & Communications</u> <u>Assessment</u> Assessment Techniques Reporting Early & On-going Identification Provincial Assessment Results Promotion <u>Career Education</u> Cooperative Education OYAP Magnet Programs Trades & Training Liaison Partnerships <u>Staff Development</u> Corporate Model Orientation for New Employees District PD Non-Teaching Classroom Research <u>Leadership & Career</u> School Leadership Program Building Capacity AQ & Master's Programs GrEAT New Administrators <u>Communications</u>	<u>Curriculum Services & Teacher Development</u> <u>Curriculum Services</u> Curriculum Policy Program Council (Chair) Program R.D.I. System Initiatives System Curriculum Teams French as a Second Language Native as a Second Language Native Advisory Council Enrichment Early Literacy KP Registrations Learning Materials & Media Contest Requests Student Presentations Guidance Programs Teacher Advisor Groups Safety Programs (Students) <u>Teacher Development</u> Curriculum Training Integration of Technology

			System Plan Communications in- service	<u>Cayuga S.S.C.</u> Supervision
			<u>Simcoe S.S.C.</u> Supervision	

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SUMMARY OF SENIOR ADMINISTRATIVE RESPONSIBILITIES

January 2000

W. R. Thomas	G. S. Kuckyt	P. C. Moffatt
CALEDONIA/PAULINE JOHNSON K. Waite	SUPERINTENDENT OF BUSINESS & TREASURER B. Headon	DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION & SECRETARY W. Hibbard J. Boule
<u>Special Education & Student Support Services</u> <u>Special Education</u> Model Identification, Placement & Review (IPRC) S.E.A.C. Liaison Individual Student Assessment System Special Education Classes Educational Assistants Applications to Provincial Schools Individual Education Plans	<u>Business, Information & Facilities Services</u> <u>Business Services</u> Finance - Investments, Borrowing Payroll & Accounting Budget Purchasing & Disposal Transportation Service & Business Contracts Benefit Plans Insurance Inventories & Archives Trust Funds Business Partnerships	<u>System Operation</u> <u>Board Operations</u> Secretary to Board Agendas & Minutes Policy Recommendations Correspondence Orientation & In-service <u>Administrative Council</u> Executive Council Agendas Coordination Goals and Review System Directions <u>Central Operations</u> Procedures

<u>Student Support Services</u> Standards for Assessments Standards for Speech Services Standards for Behaviour Services Child Abuse Protocols Health Unit Liaison Liaison with Community Services Attendance Procedures S.A.L.E.P. Home Schooling Home Instruction Student Welfare Procedures Ontario Student Records	<u>Accommodation & Facilities</u> Facilities Services Property Management (Sites) Accommodations Plan Energy Agreements Facilities Renewal <u>Information Technology</u> WAN & Internet Administrative Technology Network Development Software Applications & Licences Staff Development - Technology E-mail & Telephone <u>Education Centre</u> Supervision	Requests for Circulation Safe Schools Central Records & FOI Contracts Student Admissions (Non-Resident) Scholarships Accommodations Plan (Coord.) Project Management Staff Involvement <u>Communications</u> Annual Report News Releases & Letters Website Content Integrated Database
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Location of Grand Erie District School Board

In Ontario



Grand Erie District School Board
Education Centre
349 Erie Avenue, Brantford N3T 5V3
519-756-6301/519-756-9181 (fax)

FACT SHEET

The Grand Erie District School Board is a medium sized school board in the province of Ontario. It encompasses an area of 4,108 sq. km. in south-central Ontario and encompasses the City of Brantford and the Counties of Brant, Haldimand and Norfolk. Major cities and towns are: Brantford, Caledonia, Cayuga, Delhi, Dunnville, Hagersville, Paris, Port Dover, Simcoe and Waterford. The area's population is approximately 214,000.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Grand Erie District School Board is a partnership of proud and unique communities. Our mission is to nurture and develop the potential of all students by providing meaningful learning experiences.

VISION STATEMENT

The Grand Erie District School Board respects the individuality of all students in their pursuit of knowledge, skill and values to become productive citizens.

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS

Elementary

JK-2	2	
JK-4	2	
JK-5	5	
JK-6	16	
JK-7	3	
JK-8	40	
1-8	1	
2-8	1	
3-6	1	
4-8	1	
5-8	1	
6-8	3	
7-8	3	
French Immersion (JK-8)		2
Enrichment	1	
Total	82	

Secondary

High Schools	16	
Magnet High Schools	1	
Alternative Schools/Programs		2
Schools with Daycare Space		6

STUDENTS

Elementary (FTE)	19,666	
Secondary	12,170	
Special Education designated*		3,700
ESL designated*	100	
Native as a Second Language*		60

* included in elementary and secondary enrolments

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PART C POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1. STAFF DEVELOPMENT MODEL, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Grand Erie District School Board
Staff Development Model

Board Mission Statement

The Grand Erie District School Board is a partnership of proud and unique communities. Our mission is to nurture and develop the potential of all students by providing meaningful learning experiences.

Board Vision Statement

The Grand Erie District School Board respects the individuality of all students in their pursuit of knowledge, skills and values to become productive citizens.

Definition of Staff Development

The process by which employees develop their knowledge and skills to become more effective in their workplace responsibilities and professional roles.

E-Centre Training

E-centre is a web-based database program developed by CoreSolutions in association with the Hamilton-Wentworth DSB. It includes three components, a resource database, an inservice database and calendar. The resource database allows the board to post links to any documents, forms or web resources that are in electronic form. These include things such as policy documents, web sites, inservices, curriculum units and documents and forms. The inservice database allows users to search and browse through a list of workshops and courses offered by the board. The system manages registrations automatically, and includes a waiting list that automatically informs users when spaces become available in the inservice. The system is linked to the board's email systems, and allows instructors of courses to communicate with attendees at inservices. Evaluations and certificates can also be handled by the system. The system also keeps track of all personal development opportunities undertaken by users, provided they signed up for them through E-centre. The calendar portion of the database lists inservices and other events such as meetings organized by date. All portions of the database are fully searchable in a number of ways

Components

The Grand Erie District School Board believes in three main components of Staff Development:

A. Professional Development

1. Staff development is a process consisting of three key elements: professional development, career development and personal development.
2. In-service needs to be on-going and accessible.
3. There must be a follow-up and sustained support for staff development initiatives.
4. Sessions need to be meaningful and relevant for adult participants and include dialogue, interaction, application and reflection.
5. Opportunities for dialogue, research, sharing of ideas and networking are important staff development strategies.
6. Self-assessment and self-direction are essential for effective staff development.
7. Participants in staff development sessions should be given the opportunity to evaluate sessions.
8. Planning for staff development should incorporate participant feedback to provide direction for future sessions.
9. When appropriate, various employee groups should be included together in staff development sessions.
10. Available technologies should be accessed to assist in staff development activities.
11. Staff are encouraged to bring forward unique and innovative ideas to enhance the delivery of staff development.
12. Staff development should recognize and celebrate the skills, expertise and accomplishments of employees.

Strategies for Conducting Effective Staff Development

1. Provide opportunity for dialogue. Groups should be clustered for a common interest and to facilitate more dialogue.
2. Keep the Board's Area of Emphasis in mind when planning staff development sessions.

3. Include a variety of activities which appeal to multiple intelligence's.
4. Include content and expectations that are workable, worthwhile, and achievable. Instructors should use step-by step instructions, relevant modeling, authentic exemplars and practical samples.
5. Use S.M.A.R.T. (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely).
6. Encourage cross paneling discussions to bridge topics whenever possible.
7. Encourage collaborative work among staff.
8. Necessary logistics that help with workshops, training, and implementation include: using a variety of times and places *identifying mentors, leadership and expertise as support taking into account mileage and time parameters for participants *food, refreshments and resources revisiting to follow up
9. Encourage and support action research to improve practice.

*Keep it SHORT, SHARP, SHINY

LEADERSHIP 2201-2002

Leadership & Action Research Programs

The Grand Erie District School Board is committed to the recruitment, training, selection and support of exemplary educational leaders focused on the enhancement of the quality of student learning.

Leadership development is multi-faceted and cannot be captured in a model. The programs that are recommended are not mandatory for advancement. Executive Council, Principal/Vice Principal Organizations and the leaders of the various programs are committed to the following programs:

LEADERSHIP 2001 / 2002 PROGRAMS

NEW PRINCIPALS & VICE PRINCIPALS

Contact: Bob Almas / Terry Sonnenberg

Sessions that target new Principals and Vice Principals in the system

GRAND ERIE ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM (GrEAT)

Contact: Heather Gross

Three to four in-service sessions a year are provided to practising school administrators

Gr.E.A.T. CONFERENCE

Contact: Tilly Jilderda

An annual conference is organized for practising school administrators and system managers

COVEY WORKSHOPS

Contact: Don Backus

Workshops on planning and priority-setting are available to teaching and non-teaching staff and administrators

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

Contact: Dave Pyper

To assist new administrators with career planning
To provide further support for graduates of Leadership Preparation Programs
To support mentoring and encourage job shadowing
Pilot project (January - July 2001)

MASTERS IN EDUCATION PROGRAM

Contact: Jackie DeLong

Brock University and Grand Erie District School Board Pilot Partnership Project (1999-2001)
Future M.Ed. & Ph.D. programs under negotiation

PRINCIPALS QUALIFICATION COURSES

Parts 1 & 2 - July 9 - 27, 2001

Contact: Dave Pyper

ACTION RESEARCH TEAMS:

- **Brant Action Research Network (BARN)**
Contact: Cheryl Black, Heather Knill-Griesser
- **Cayuga Action Research Team (CART)**
Contact: Karen McDonald
- **Simcoe Action Research Team (SART)**
Contact: Paula Sue Rasokas
- **Secondary Teachers Action Research (STAR)**
Contact: DaveAbbey

BARN, CART, SART AND STAR are support networks for staff interested in conducting Action Research projects. For more information, contact one of the above listed individuals.

LEADERSHIP 2001 / 2002 PROGRAM (L2K)

Contact: Ruth Mills

For staff with Principal Qualifications **or**
Those who are registered in Part 1 or Part 2 of a
Principals' Course **or**
Those who are interested in leadership
positions within the next 3-5 years

The Leadership 2001 (L2K) Program is a program developed to assist new and aspiring Administrators in their role. The program consists of three Modules; each Module is four nights in duration from 4:30 pm until 7:30 pm (supper is provided). A program outline is provided below:

Module #1: Communications & Building Relationships

Sessions held on:

September 12 & 26 and October 10/24

Module Leaders: Marion Remen, Dave Pyper, Marion Dowds

Module #2: Curriculum, Assessment & Special Education

Sessions held on:

November 7 & 21, December , 2001 January 16, 2002

Module Leaders: Peter Rasokas and Ruth Mills

Module #3: Legal Issues

Sessions held on:

January 30, February 13 & 27, March 20, 2002

Module Leaders: Joann Alho, Donna McArthur, Andy Nesbitt

Location of Modules: T.B.A.

There will be no cost to the individual to participate in this program.

The format for the evenings will be as follows:

one-third lecture; two-thirds application
emphasis on case studies, in-basket and panel
discussions
use of rubrics and reflective practice encouraged

If you are interested in attending Modules 1, 2 or 3, please register using E-CENTRE
Contact person – Deanne Osborne, Training & Development Officer
GroupWise @ trgdev_officer@gedsb.net / fax 519-756-9181 / phone 519-756 6306
ext. 152

Essential Preparation Criteria for School Administrator Positions:

Creativity, enthusiasm, initiative, calculated risk-taking are important traits for School Administrators. Honesty, integrity, loyalty, dedication and paper qualifications for the position are assumed. A variety of different educational experiences is desirable to develop perspective.

- Planning effectively to achieve an articulated vision of education
- Communicating effectively through listening, speaking and writing
- Implementing and reviewing a school program
- Assessing, evaluating and reporting student progress in useful and creative ways
- Involving community partners in schools in ways that promote student learning
- Providing effective staff development for other staff members
- Implementing effective, positive and appropriate student discipline practices
- Developing and maintaining positive relationships among various groups, for a common purpose
- Demonstrating effective problem solving skills (issue framing, de-escalation, alternative generation, resolution and follow-up)
- Supervising staff in professional growth, improvement, and discipline situations
- Demonstrating effective management skills
- Using computer technology effectively

- Demonstrating effective self-assessment in enhancing the quality of student learning

Management, remember, is clearly different from leadership. Leadership is primarily a high powered right brain activity. It's more of an art; it's based on a philosophy. You have to ask the ultimate questions of life when you're dealing with personal leadership issues.

But once you have dealt with those issues, once you have resolved them, you then have to manage yourself effectively to create a life congruent with your answers...Management is the breaking down, the analysis, the sequencing, the specific application, the time-bound left-brain aspect of effective self-government."

-Stephen Covey (1989)

2. EQAO INTERIM REPORT

GRAND ERIE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD

C-3-A

Office of the Director of Education

To the Chair and Members of June 18, 2001
the Grand Erie District School Board

Re: **EQAO Interim Report**

1.0 **Background**

- 1.1 Each year Program and Assessment inform the Board of the process schools use to administer the Grades 3 and 6 EQAO tests.
- 1.2 This report continues the practice of communication to the Board about EQAO:
 - in November when EQAO results and analysis are shared
 - in March when the Board Action Plan is approved, and
 - in June when an update of the EQAO test process, of the School Action Plans, and related research is presented

2.0 **Additional Information**

- 2.1 This report includes background, sample questions, and concerns generated by the EQAO Grade 3 and 6 test, May, 2001.

- 2.2 This report includes a focus group survey of administrators about the use of School Action Plans prepared by March 1, 2001 and comments about the EQAO tests.
- 2.3 This report includes an update of the Action Research and Educational Change Fund projects conducted during 2000-2001 and connected to the EQAO testing of Grades 3 and 6.

3.0 **Recommendation**

- 3.1 THAT the Grand Erie District School receive the **EQAO Interim Report**, as contained in Enclosure C-3-A, dated June 18, 2001, as information.

Respectfully submitted,

Jacqueline D. Delong
Superintendent of Schools
Peter C. Moffatt
Director of Education

EQAO INTERIM REPORT JUNE 18, 2001

1.0 EQAO Testing 2001, Grades 3 and 6: Background, Questions and Comments

- 1.1 EQAO testing in the schools involves energy and effort all year. In **May**, schools test Grade 3 and 6 students using the EQAO format. In **October**, those results are communicated to the schools and school board. The results are analysed and action plans developed for the Board and schools in **February**. They are then shared with the school communities by **April**.
- 1.2 From **September through May**, schools, parents and support staff engage in workshops, revise School Action Plans, use EQAO sample units, engage in training and in-services connected to the test and conduct Action Research projects to improve student learning.
- 1.3 There were several Action Research projects connected to EQAO which involved **18 people directly and 9 schools**.
- 1.4 **2,039 Grade 3** and **2,252 Grade 6** students in Grand Erie were eligible to take the EQAO tests. Ontario spends approximately \$9,000,000 yearly for this test (*ETFO, May, 2001*).

- 1.5 Once again, the theme for Grade 3 was **Change** and this year the story was about *recycling*. Once again, the theme for Grade 6 was **Perspectives** and this year the story was about *meteorites*.
- 1.6 For a sample Grade 3 question on symmetry and a sample Grade 6 question on transformation see *Appendices 1 and 2*.
- 1.7 There were **four multiple choice booklets** this year and each class was assigned a different one.
- 1.8 The **Home Questionnaire** was withdrawn at the last moment this year as part of the exercise.
- 1.9 Principals were asked to forward some comments from students and teachers about the testing. **Samples of student comments** were:
- “Can we start doing bell work, math, and journals again, please.”
 - “They weren’t real math questions.”
 - “ I liked it because it was challenging.”
 - “I found it hard to explain everything; my hand got tired.”
 - “There shouldn’t be so many booklets.”
- 1.10 Some **samples of teachers’ comments** were:
- “ It’s a lot of paper and money spent.”
 - “It is difficult not to take it personally when you watch students floundering with material you know you have covered well; knowing that a few simple words of explanation would help them through.”
 - “This test seemed to evaluate intelligence rather than how well the students were taught.”
- 1.11 Some other issues and **concerns** that occurred **in the schools** were:

- A few teachers did not use the EQAO sample units because they felt it would take too much paper.
- EQAO ruled that students could not be suspended during the test, a ruling which was quickly rescinded as going beyond their mandate.
- Although it states in the *EQAO Parent's Handbook, 2001, pg. 13*, that by law parents must have their child attend school for EQAO testing, the school has no recourse to enforce the 'law'. If a parent keeps their child away for any reason, it counts against the school in the Method 1 report for all students.
- EQAO used four multiple choice questionnaires this year instead of one. Not all were equal: one had a math expectation from Grade 7; an educator ranked the reading level of the articles at Grade 7-Grade 9 difficulty; and, one had to answer 26 questions in twenty-five minutes!

2.0 Focus Group and School Action Plans

1.1 A **focus group** of 10 randomly chosen elementary principals received a questionnaire requesting feedback on the test process and experience. Their responses showed:

- over half the schools are using board plans to help with development
- the 'whole school' approach is increasing
- involving parents varies from informing through newsletters to actual input by school councils
- most reviews and revisions will occur after test results are known
- most of the problems in administration are connected to accommodations, split grades and support staff to cover needs
- the system support was helpful, especially the new template, earlier in-service, information updates, new data analysis guideline and the round table discussions format
- using the anchor booklets, exemplars, requesting support staff in-service on assessment topics, supporting research projects and providing more division meetings were all mentioned as 'next steps'
- the test was administered easily and smoothly

2.2 Schools noted some next steps for improvement:

- more schools must involve parents and school councils and include schedules and agendas to increase involvement
- more schools must be more specific in next steps, evidence as indicators, time lines and include who is accountable
- support staff will assist in data analysis and professional development as requested

3.0 Research Projects Connected to EQAO through the Educational Change Fund

2.1 There were 12 Action Research projects connected to EQAO and student improvement. These teachers were supported with 5 release days for professional development, resources and support staff to assist with the research, analysis and reports. The projects were as follows: (See *Appendix 3, Action Research Summaries*, for more details)

- Onondaga-Brant Public School and Woodman-Cainsville Public School on developing a school community approach to EQAO testing (Janet Rubas, Sue MacNeil and Brenda Hunt)
- Delhi Public School and Northview-Parkview Public Schools on the assessment strategies of portfolios to assist with reasoning and communication (James Ellsworth, Lynn Abbey, Linda Miller with Cindy Mels, Lyn-Anne Nash-Dertinger, and Anita Ricker)
- Branlyn Community Public School and Cedarland Public School on student-led conferencing as an assessment strategy (Diane Morgan with Lesley Boudreault, Todd Bannister and Deb Kekewich)
- Branlyn Community Public School on using EQAO data to improve student learning (Diane Morgan with Joanna Finch and Sue Young)
- Pauline Johnson C. & V.S. and Delhi District S.S. on the portfolio as an assessment strategy (James Ellsworth with Neal Stamer and Carolyn MacNeil)

2.2 Presentations of GEDSB research have been made at Professional Development sessions, Summer Institute workshops and Action Research conferences to promote local knowledge about EQAO.

2.2 GEDSB research is published in the EQAO research project, *An Action Research Approach to Improving Student Learning Using Provincial Test Results, February, 2001.*

2.3 A committee is producing a **resource booklet**, *Action Research in Grand Erie, 2000-2001, Fall 2001*, on research projects and the base of local knowledge developed in Grand Erie connected to EQAO and assessment.

Action Research Summaries

Appendix 3

General Findings Summary:

There were several findings in general that the researchers found:

- Portfolios and student-led conferencing are assessment strategies that can improve student learning.
- Parental involvement is crucial to improving student learning.
- Corrective feedback and scaffolding of skill sets leading to independent student achievement.
- With few exceptions, student achievement improved dramatically throughout the year.
- Pairs working in a school or the whole school commitment improve the long lasting nature of integrated change.
- With time and development of the portfolio strategy, student motivation improves through reflection sheets, corrective feedback, empowerment for their ownership of choices, and dialogue.
- It is necessary to have oral discussion for reflection and goal-setting but follow it with written thoughts in journal format.
- A portfolio can demonstrate growth and progress through evidence and reflection.
- Rubrics help with self-assessment and with setting more specific reflections and goals.
- Portfolios and Student-Led Conferencing help develop articulation and is an excellent tool to evaluate all the Achievement Chart categories
- EQAO results help teachers focus on specific student improvement; i.e., communication, reasoning skills, and parental involvement.

Action Research Comments, June 2001

Several comments by students and teacher/researchers help to illustrate the findings:

- “Instead of the usual question, 'what did you do in school this week?' and the usual answer, 'nothing much', we get a more thorough outline of what Chris is learning, and there have been quite a few topics that opened up more for

discussion. It also keeps Chris thinking about what he has done and what he has learned.” (parents of student, Chris, 2001)

- “Yet another student chose incomplete homework to place in his portfolio saying, ‘It will remind me to do my homework and to do it better.’” (Cindy Mels, of Delhi P.S. student, 2001)
- “ I perceived portfolios less as extra work and more like a huge puzzle. The challenge was to fit the pieces together to make a workable whole, whereby students build on previous success...” (Lyn-Anne Nash-Dertinger, Delhi P.S., 2001)
- “ I am proud of this portfolio item because I have mostly correct spelling, I can complete work all by myself, next time I will correct punctuation” (Kristy, Grade 2, Delhi P.S., 2001)
- "Parental involvement in this process is essential in order to improve student learning. A parent’s signature in a student’s journal does not equate with parental involvement...taking the time to read their student’s journal and to comment on their plans for improvement shows a commitment towards their child’s learning." (Todd Bannister, Banbury Community P.S., 2001)

Action Research Summaries:

A. **Susan MacNeil, Onondaga Brant P.S. - Principal**
Brenda Hunt, Woodman Cainsville P.S.- Principal
Janet Rubas, TRC - Teacher Consultant

Using EQAO to Inform Assessment Practice in the School

Focus:

How can schools use the EQAO process and the EQAO results to help in the development of teaching and assessment skills?

Process:

Rationale

staff and parents to recognize that the EQAO assessments are an integral component of program.

and from EQAO data is a foundation for consistent, precise planning and assessment.

- *The EQAO assessment models both the process and product of a program that fosters higher order thinking skills, effective communication skills, and meaningful process writing.*

A. Cont'd

Steps

- *All staff participated in in-service sessions and professional reading on the principles of assessment.*
- *Working sessions examined the content of EQAO assessments.*
- *Focus on building understanding of what reasoning "looked like" in the assessment through test anchor booklets: What questions were asked? What was a demonstration of level 3 and 4 reasoning?*
- *Working sessions examined schools' EQAO assessment results not only with staff but also with School Council.*
- *Focus on analyzing data to determine schools' strengths, weaknesses and surprises.*
- *Planning of Parent Symposium to build parental understanding of assessment practices in the school and in the home.*
- *Incorporation of analysis of results into classroom programming and assessment.*

Findings:

- *As all staff became more familiar with the content and results of EQAO assessments, negative attitudes toward the process lessened and teachers began to use the information more positively in program planning.*
- *The clear examples of what tasks would look like when related to achievement level categories and the questions in the EQAO tests, provide a teacher with models that are being used in classroom programming.*
- *With clear examples teachers were more able to track students' work within categories.*
- *Further work must be done on finding ways to get parents more involved in understanding assessment practices.*
- *Although the Parent Symposium, which was suggested by School Council, was planned and advertised to Parents on May 12, 2001, it needed to be cancelled due to lack of registrations. Although a 400 flyers were distributed for 6 different workshops, only 7 parents registered for the sessions.*

C. **Cindy Mels, Delhi Public School - K-3**

Portfolios

Focus:

How do I use portfolios to improve and motivate student learning?

Process:

Rationale

- *I had tried portfolios before and saw potential for self-assessment and empowerment.*

B. Cont'd

Steps

- I used portfolios with students to improve on their responsibility to choose and reflect on choice of work.
- *Flexibility is necessary and it was logical to use conferencing with parents as 'closure'.*

Findings:

- *I used a "Portfolio Window" for display and explanation of choice followed.*
- *Increased motivation and improvement occurred.*
- *Gradually more efficient in time and process.*
- *Multi-intelligence opportunities increase empowerment and ownership.*

C. **Lyn-Anne Nash-Dertinger, Delhi Public School - Grade 2**

Portfolios

Focus:

How can I help students develop the learning skills necessary to become life-long learners and, in the process, meet the goals in the knowledge and skills areas of the Ontario Curriculum?

Process:**Rationale**

- *Student involvement with respect to goal setting and student ownership of the portfolio was lacking.*
- *Assessment for learning is process oriented, needs dialogue and focus on improvement.*

Steps

- *I used a fat file for a writing portfolio, frequent student reflections of writing and a completion booklet.*
- *Students selected a writing sample each term for a final four-piece growth portfolio.*
- *Students developed a rubric for self-assessment and goal-setting.*

Findings:

- *Students improved in writing if it followed a multiple intelligence experience such as a drama or a reading or a field trip.*
- *The guidelines of a rubric help to make reflections and goals more specific.*
- *Portfolios incorporate curriculum expectations and promote life-long learning.*

C. Lesley Boudreault, Banbury Heights Public School - Grade 6**Student Led Conferencing****Focus:**

How can I improve my practice to increase parental involvement and facilitate student/parent communication about learning?

Process:**Rationale:**

- EQAO assessment showed there was not enough parental involvement in learning.
- We needed to supplement classroom practice with strategies to improve parental involvement.
- I wanted to use student led conferencing as the tool to increase the involvement.

Steps:

- Students practiced developing strengths, weaknesses.

- Friday Quiz
- Student generated “This Week in Grade 6” newsletter.
- Newsletters returned with parent response.
- Students directed conversation in parent interviews in December.
- Students took more initiative and newsletters became more flexible.
- Students and parents surveyed.

Findings:

- Poorest efforts of students came from students where there was no parental feedback.
- Regular parental encouragement translated into superior student responses.
- 80% of students were able to direct discussion at parent interviews.
- Newsletters resulted in fewer incomplete homework assignments, more student and parent input in comments on newsletters and interviews, and fewer calls from parents about assignments.
- Written responses were clearer, more specific and have resulted in increased achievement.
- Parents need activity sheets or suggestions for working at home with their children.

C. **Todd Bannister, Banbury Heights Public School - Grade 6**

Student Led Conferencing

Focus:

Will using Friday Response Journals and three way conferencing create a strong communication partnership between student, parent and teacher that will help improve student learning?

E. Cont'd

Process:

Rationale:

- Information in school newsletter was not getting to parents.
- I wanted to create newsletter interest by focussing on student achievement.

Steps:

- Students identify strengths, weakness and goals.
- Students write in Friday response journals.
- Parents comment and sign journals.
- Three-way student led interviews conducted.
- Students surveyed.

Findings:

- Friday Response Journals and three-way conferencing increased communication between parent and child regarding school events and student learning.
- Students realized how important identifying weaknesses and creating action plans are in order to improve learning.
- Most students were able to provide examples of when they used the Friday Response Journals to help them improve one of their academic weaknesses.
- There were mixed results when students were asked if they liked the Friday Response Journals. Some students did not like the process because their parents were more interested and involved in the events happening at school and their academic progress.
- 20 of 24 students consistently returned their journals, each week and average of 5 parents made comments in the journal.

C. Deb Kekewich, Cedarland Public School - Grade 7**Student Led Conferencing****Focus:**

How can I improve my practice to help my students think and talk about themselves as learners?

(13 boys/14 girls)

Process:**Rationale:**

- I saw the process in Australia and wanted to duplicate it.
- I wanted to improve learning in EQAO areas of weakness on the Grade 6 test, specifically explaining work and problem solving.

F. Cont'd**Steps:**

- I worked on reasoning skills using a 'Friday Journal' as a learning log.
- I used the portfolio to evaluate growth.
- I used the three-way conferencing strategy with parent/student/teacher.

Findings:

- Reflective practice, portfolios, and three-way conferencing are all effective techniques.
- The journal/portfolio/student-led conference process helped to involve parents.
- The parents must support what is happening in the classroom and be wholeheartedly

involved in their child's learning.

- Communication about school between parent and student increased. Seven of twelve respondents said the change was *dramatic*.
- *Twenty* students improved in their March report card marks and *twenty-three* students thought they were better students than a year ago.

G. Anita Ricker, Northview-Parkview Public Schools - Grade 1

Portfolios

Focus:

To demonstrate the authenticity of the drawing portfolio as a formative assessment tool.

Process:

Rationale:

- *I wanted to use portfolio to show the importance of 'listening' to students' learning and documenting as a Reggio Emilia Approach to Early Childhood Education and to use the portfolio to show drawing as a vehicle for learning.*

Steps:

- *I used 'drawing what you see' (initial phase, construction phase, refinement phase) and dialogic assessment in Autumn Harvest, Inukshuks, Snowflakes, and Postage Stamps.*
- *I used visual display of progressive work.*

Findings:

- *The drawing 'growth' portfolios showed solid evidence of student learning over time.*
- *The reflective process transformed a collection of learning samples into a meaningful picture of individual learning.*
- *Children do draw to learn and can demonstrate learning through drawing.*

H. Joanna Finch, Banbury Heights Public School - Grade 6

EQAO Results

Focus:

How am I going to be able to help my students better communicate their problem solving ideas?

Process:**Rationale:**

I needed to improve EQAO provincial test results.

- *I needed to assist students in communicating reasoning and communication skills in problem solving.*

Steps:

I developed "Problem of the Week".

- *I used scaffolding, corrective feedback and small group conferencing to self assess.*
I used journal writing for corrective feedback and reflection.
I developed Pythagoras Math Club.

Findings:

Corrective feedback helped students to identify strengths and weaknesses in problem solving.

Conferencing helped students develop reasoning skills.

15 of 23 students were confident enough to join the extracurricular math club.

21 of 23 students believe they are better problem solvers than they were at the beginning of the year.

Having a critical friend and extra eyes in the classroom helped me document what was happening in the classroom.

I. Sue Young, Banbury Heights Public School - Grade 7**EQAO Results****Focus:**

How can I improve student initiative and independent learning skills?

Process:**Rationale:**

- *I needed to improve EQAO test results by improving student achievement.*
- *I needed to assist students in taking initiative for improving their own learning.*

I. Cont'd

Steps:

- Teaching students how to structure questions so they could get help with what they did not know
- “Experiment test” in math as a corrective feedback strategy.
- Opportunities for corrective feedback in the monthly D.E.A.R reading assignment.
- Establishing “the table” that students could use for getting help, once they had a specific question
- Teaching students to predict and write their own report card.
- *Self-Assessment/Conference form for setting learning goals.*

Findings:

- Asking for help, coming in for extra help and handing work in early had the greatest impact on student achievement.
- Being “important enough” to contribute ideas to their own education improved student attitudes achievement.
- 72% of students reached their first term goals, 80% thought goal setting helped improve achievement and 82% thought goal setting improved their grade 7 year.
- 78% of students felt that working on the third page of the report card through the Self-Assessment Conference Form improved their commitment to improving their learning.
- Participating in Action Research improved my motivation to reach goals and track results.

J. **Neal Stamer, Pauline Johnson C. & V.S./Brantford Collegiate Inst. & V.S. - Grade 10**

Portfolios

Focus:

313232

Rationale:

- *Students were too mark conscious.*
- *Students were not incorporating ‘next step’ comments into revision.*
- *Students did not seem to have realistic self-assessment skills.*

Steps:

- *Allowed students opportunities to ‘act, reflect, revise’ so that could improve upon their mark and learn from mistakes.*
- *Developed an exemplar and rubric so that criteria of levels were communicated.*
- *Allowed varied experiences for portfolio in multiple intelligences*

Findings:

- Reflection is important for students to self-assess and get a clear picture for improvement.
- The Portfolio allows the opportunity for dialogue and coaching which is so important for correct feedback and improved student articulation.
- *The Portfolio as a summative evaluation is a powerful tool*

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3. GUIDELINES FOR PRACTITIONER RESEARCH

GRAND ERIE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD
 J. Delong, Superintendent of Schools

Guidelines for Practitioner Research Funding

Background

Quality educators have always been involved in reflective practice as a professional activity. Grand Erie District School Board would like to support and extend that effort by offering research opportunities.

Expectations

1.0 Research must be conducted by the teacher/administrator on his/her school or classroom for the purpose of improving student learning.

- 2.0 The research must be conducted in a professional and ethical fashion:
 - \$ teachers have the right to investigate their practice; however, publication requires permission or anonymizing of names
- 3.0 Research must be conducted:
 - \$ by an individual or group
 - \$ informally or for credit (Master's Program)
- 4.0 The research should be a one-year project, connect to the areas of emphasis and may connect to other initiatives, such as:
 - \$ Educational Change Funds
 - \$ Leadership Programs such as L2K
 - \$ Action Research Projects
 - \$ Project Management
- 5.0 The participant(s) must be able and willing to conduct research that includes the following:
 - \$ focuses on a clear question that will improve student learning
 - \$ involves careful data collection that may be qualitative and/or quantitative
 - \$ develops findings based on analysis of data
 - \$ shares the results and reports in writing
 For example, a research question could address:
 - \$ creating a whole school approach to EQAO testing
 - \$ improving problem solving in Mathematics
 - \$ using articulation as an indicator of reasoning
- 6.0 Participants must submit a written report before the end of May to the superintendent responsible.
- 7.0 The participant(s) must be willing to share their research project. This may include:
 - \$ conferences
 - \$ websites (O.A.R.)
 - \$ network groups (Brant, Cayuga and Simcoe Action Research Networks)
 - \$ school and area professional development
 - \$ First Class Achat@ groups

D. PERFORMANCE REVIEWS AND EVALUATION

1. Annual Performance Review: 1999

Jacqueline D. DeLong

Delhi/Simcoe/Valley Heights/GELA Family & Assessment and Career Education

1.01 Introduction

Jackie, your Family of Schools and System responsibilities have changed this year. A new Family and Area created the challenges around establishing contact and credibility. Your system responsibilities were extensions of areas in which you had been successful previously. In some cases, like assessment and leadership development, they were large extensions. You have risen to the challenge. It has been a challenging and tiring year. We can, however, reflect on considerable progress in a lot of different areas.

1.02 Family of Schools

Your Family of Schools has been a completely new area. The geography, the people and the culture are different from those that you supervised previously. You have made a Herculean effort to be visible and active in the Family. This has involved a lot of driving and a lot of extra hours.

The group of principals and vice principals is quite inexperienced. Only a few of the principals have more than two years experience in the role. Seven of your principals and three of your vice-principals are in their first year. The previous culture operated with little systematic structure. Planning, at the school level was informal. Performance review expectations were vague. As a staff developer, you have provided leadership for the role and for getting to know the new culture of Grand Erie.

Your Family of Schools meetings include a strong emphasis on professional development. You have involved the principals in running the meetings and in providing feedback to you about the meetings and about the impact you are having on the Family.

As a result of the inexperience of your administrators and the culture changes, you have had to deal with a number of issues.

Valley Heights' principal operates very informally and has made mistakes with the circulation of student information. The lack of a requirement to live within resources and plan for their effective use has allowed the controversy over the Educational Assistant for the Resource Withdrawal Room to continue without

progress toward an effective solution. Expectations for school level problem solving may need to be confirmed in writing.

**Note I removed some names here.*

The establishment of the **Simcoe School Support Centre** has been a major project, in which you have taken the lead role. The Grand Erie Model was a significant change for everyone in the area. Former leaders were still around, supporting the previous practices. Karen Anderson and Mary Lou Bousefield have helped you implement the new model and changes in the support staff will further support the new model. The former leaders have, for the most part, moved on. I believe the Simcoe Support Centre is positioned to support your Family well for next year. It will experience more difficulty servicing Colin's Family, simply because of the distances.

The **Ad Hoc School Accommodation/Consolidation Committee** took a lot of work and time. You and Gerry had a difficult role to play. While the results are not definitive, I think we have raised the level of understanding that the problem of small secondary schools is going to get worse in the area. Your leadership helped keep the committee on task and timeline.

1.03 System Responsibilities

The crisis in leadership appeared suddenly, with the introduction of the 85 factor for the Teacher Pension Plan. The entire province experienced a dramatic change in their school administration and a lack of qualified candidates. Professional development has always been one of your strengths. You threw yourself into this challenge and I think the results have been extraordinary.

With Administrative Council you helped to develop the *Criteria for School Administrators*. This identifies the major key result areas for leaders and leadership development. Five levels of training and development for School Administrators have been supported.

The **Recruitment Group** is ready to talk to teachers about school administration to build the cadre of people who may be interested in pursuing the role in the future. This is a key group and the results will be long term ones.

Building Leadership Capacity is a program designed to help people obtain the qualifications for school administration. The establishment of a Master of Education program, delivered locally in partnership with Brock, is a wonderful support for these people. The creation of a Principal's Qualification program, with

a local module, is another support for these people who are 2 to 5 years away from the role.

The **School Leadership Program** will help with the final preparation for applicants for the role. Again, the local Principal's course will assist. The module that is offered locally will deal with Grand Erie systems and practices. The need for duplicate modules will be reduced and the efficiency of the preparation enhanced. One important outcome of this year's School Leadership program has been the development of **rubrics** for the Criteria for School Administrators.

The **New Administrators' Group** is a peer support group. It deals with the practicalities and the affective pressures of being a new administrator in Grand Erie. This type of flexible, timely in-service and support is invaluable. The challenge will be to ensure vitality, consistency and growth in this type of group. The quality of the in-service does depend on the membership at any meeting.

In-service for practising school administrators will likely remain a joint venture with Executive Council. An Advisory Group will be useful to identify Administrator needs and desires and Administrative Council will identify needs. I hope we will be able to plan the dates for whole group meetings, set up a schedule for a variety of smaller group offerings and build toward the Administrators' Conference as a culmination of some of the thrusts for the year.

All leadership development programs will need to remain flexible. Too much personal ownership for a program tends to restrict enrolment over time. We need to launch all the programs but the themes and the leaders need to be scheduled for change right from the outset. A variety of types of people and training routes are desirable for a system this large. Reflective practice should be a part of the training for most administrators. If, however, Action Research or Covey, or any other approach is perceived to be a requirement for all Grand Erie leadership training, we will exclude some good, potential administrators. Flexibility, availability, variety, efficiency and relevance are important factors in vibrant programs that will produce a constant flow of qualified administrators.

Congratulations on pulling together an effective Leadership continuum in a short period of time. You have involved a lot of administrators in the planning and delivery of the programs and have put us in good shape for the short term and the longer term. More people are seeing that the support is available locally.

The **Assessment portfolio** has taken on enhanced prominence. The EQAO testing is now established in Ontario and is being used for many valid, and some less valid, purposes. Diane Morgan has continued to provide system leadership in this area and will be missed when she retires this year.

A **Green Paper** on **Assessment** has been produced and circulated. It provides a basis for decision making in the area of assessment and provides some direction for in-service and growth.

Early and On-going Identification procedures have been reviewed and Grand Erie procedures developed for the in-coming Kindergarten classes. Collection of a fairly standard body of data on each child is potentially very important for the educational programming of each child. The Early part of the data collection is probably the easiest. Ensuring that the data is maintained and used for programming throughout the child's early years is a larger challenge.

The **Grade Three Action Plans** were completed and included on the EQAO Website as an exemplar. The Board was informed of school plans. Grade Six testing occurred for the first time this year, requiring in-service for another group of teachers and orientation for the students. The 1999 results will be the first real indicator of the success of our interventions. Can we make a difference in test achievement?

The development of teacher skills has focussed on **rubrics**. Teachers are becoming comfortable using rubrics and are developing skills in writing them. These skills will improve assessment and evaluation. Next year you want to do more work in portfolio assessment.

The new **Provincial Report Card** provided every school and Information Technology with significant challenges. Working through the challenged has provided opportunities for the development of assessment skills. The work that curriculum and assessment have done on the development and use of rubrics is enhancing the assessment practices.

Parental Involvement continues as a strength in most of schools. The **Green Paper** outlines the types and levels of involvement without being prescriptive. It values all types of parental involvement equally.

Schools Councils are searching for their role. You have provided liaison and in-service opportunities. The previous levels of involvement with the Board

and in School decisions varied. Therefore there has been some conflict when School Councils appear to have less influence than they previously had. The need to discuss the liaison connection between School Councils and the Board remains. You have reminded me of this need. The Board will have to address the issue in the near future. Your **School Council Implementation Team** has done a good job. You have recognized the need to revamp and renew this committee for next year.

Each School Council has prepared its **criteria for a change in principals**. Given the number of changes we experienced this year, it is important that we repeat this task early in the mandate of each new School Council.

Partnerships continue to be a productive emphasis. Your relationship with the skilled trades organization has produced a better understanding and has opened the door to some potential sharing of resources. **Take-a-Kid-to-Work, Work Experience, Cooperative Education, the Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program** and the **Career Resource Centres** are all good examples of partnerships with the business and industrial sectors, where we need to continue to build the connections

Career Education has come along nicely. The programs above are continuing. OYAP is trying to expand into other parts of the Board. The Career Resource Centres are a significant achievement. In cooperation with Human Resources Development Canada, Fanshawe College and the St. Leonard's Society, the Grand Erie District School Board has been able to establish five Career Resource Centres in secondary schools. The goal is to have a Career Resource Centre in every secondary school. Recently the Catholic District School Board has joined the partnership.

Alternative learning opportunities have undergone some changes this year. The principal changed in mid-year. The General Interest Courses expanded to Simcoe. The Alternative program is set to expand to Simcoe and Cayuga, if enrolments are sufficient. Elementary Alternative Programs are getting started, in forms other than SALEP. This Alternative Program will be offered to all areas. Other options may be desirable.

Summer school is organized and the introduction of the mandatory elementary summer school has led to expanded offerings. We will need to track the costs, especially for transportation.

1.04 Leadership Style

Jackie, you have a very professional approach to your work. You think in theories, models and system and you reflect on your practice. You actively seek feedback from your principals. This is very important. Your professionalism can intimidate others. You have the knowledge, position and bearing that gives you an upper hand in most interactions.

Many of our teachers and other staff do not have the type of mind or the knowledge you have and some find it intimidating. You do need to keep this in mind because there are occasions when it interferes with communication.

You have made a good effort to follow-up on the feedback from your last performance review. Gauging the impact we have on others is difficult because so many people will tell us what they think we want to hear. The feedback from your principals was a good idea and you certainly reflected on it.

The same components of your style that intimidate some people also contribute to your effectiveness. Your vision, planning, enthusiasm and goal-orientation are key ingredients that allow you to accomplish as much as you do.

1.05 Relationship with Board and Trustees

Your relationship with the Board continues to be one of respect and confidence. The one incident over differing expectations with regard to the Grade Three Test Results was a source of potential conflict, but it passed quickly.

You have two trustees in your area who are used to being involved in day-to-day issues in schools. Your relationship now appears to be solid, in that you are talking with them more regularly about the issues and assuring them that the issues are being handled. This relationship took a bit longer to develop because you were so busy and because your professional bearing kept them at a distance. Now that they know they can approach you, you may find they will require more time. This is probably a good investment. If they are more knowledgeable, we may be able to counteract some of the rumours.

You are pursuing with your schools the proper manner to address concerns. We will need to work with these trustees to ensure that it does not get translated as an effort to keep the trustees in the dark.

1.06 Contributions to Administrative Leadership Team

It has been a productive year for the Administrative Team. We have accomplished a lot. One of the things we have not accomplished is the development of the type of relationship we need to sustain ourselves at Administrative Council. Your area and role have removed you from the group on a more frequent basis. You found this very difficult. However, as the frustrations within the group rose, you also found that this provided you with an excuse to escape. This was probably a positive move to avoid conflict (Going to the balcony.)

*Note, I removed some names here.

Your relationship with the others seems to be based on mutual respect. They know your goals are good for kids. Sometimes you need to take a bit more time for explanation and dialogue with your peers. Help them to understand that you feel the same way about their goals.

Priorities for 1999-2000

- 7.1 Develop assessment skills among teachers through rubrics, portfolio assessment and analysis of standardized test results.**
- 6.2 Add Career Resource Centres at X**
- 6.3 Consolidate the Leadership Development program and develop a one-year overview for current administrator in-service.**
- 6.4 Orient and develop a goal package for the new Program Coordinator –Assessment and Career Education.**
- 6.5 Work with Board and School Councils to develop a liaison mechanism.**
- 6.6 Ensure effective School Growth Plans for each school in the Family.**
- 6.7 Applications and reports to obtain funding for Rural Coop and for OYAP programs.**

- 6.8 Conduct research on increasing the attainment of expectations by teaching teachers to use testing data and new strategies.**
- 6.9 Continue to build a team in the Simcoe School Support Centre.**
- 6.10 Conduct Ad Hoc Study in Town of Simcoe (Elementary)**

Summary

Jackie, thank you for accepting and meeting the challenges of your new portfolio. You have dealt with a huge amount of change and you have effected great changes. It has come at a cost to you in terms of time and energy. I am hopeful that the work we have done this year will allow us to set clearer common goals for 1999-2000 and recapture more of the enjoyment of the job.

Your Family of Schools is becoming your Family of Schools. The community is being drawn into the educational enterprise in an ever-increasing number of ways. Teachers and programs are becoming more accountable for student achievement. Career education is more firmly embedded in programs. Despite cutbacks and obstacles, we are continuing to expand the number of alternatives available to students. Reflect with pride on what you have helped to create.

June 21, 1999

2. GOAL PACKAGE AND PERFORMANCE REVIEW, 2000-2001

Jacqueline D. Delong

Superintendent of Schools

Assessment/Community Relations/Career Development/Communications

Goal Package –2000-2001

Guiding Principles

1. Keep the focus on the learner
2. Build relationships to improve student learning
3. Communicate effectively
4. Create a culture of care, involvement, inquiry and reflection
5. Be a strong contributor to the administrative/trustee team
6. Make effective, efficient use of resources
7. Reflect and model values of the community
8. Plan for student and staff growth and improvement
9. Respect tradition and respond responsibly to change
10. Model and develop leadership capacity
11. Be principle-centred
12. Improve my practice through action research

Community Relations

1. Complete partnership with Brantford Public Library to provide professional library
2. Continue partnerships with BSDG, HRDC, H-N Manufacturers
3. Continue community involvement on BGH Board

Career Education

1. Complete implementation of Career Resource Centres in all regular secondary schools
2. Support and extend career education programs including implementation of "Choices into Action"
3. Support committee to find a model for magnet programs

Staff Development

1. Support school-based research; continue editorship of OAR; support OERC/ARR Conference
2. Support Action Research networks
3. Support Project Management – Brochure on GEDSB Action Research
4. Create green paper on staff development
5. Refine corporate staff development plan
6. Provide in-service for non-union, clerical-technical and New Teacher Group
7. Supervise Training and Development Officer

Leadership

1. Support leadership programs: GrEAT, GrEAT Conference, L2K, New Principals/Vice-Principals Group
2. Support Master of Education program; plan for new cohort Sept 2001
3. Develop Career Planning/Mentorship program in L2K
4. Develop tools for New Administrators - Handbook
5. Present leadership green paper for development into policy

Assessment/Testing

1. Analyse results, write report, share local results and write and share board action plan of Grade 3 and 6 Provincial Test Results; Implement and review plan; support school action plan development
2. Preparation for, conduct and review Grade 10 Reading and Writing Test
3. Conduct action research projects on strategies to improve results, student-led conferences and student portfolios
4. Fine tune secondary electronic report card
5. Expand repertoire of assessment strategies: implement use of portfolio assessment and student-led conferences
6. Review and refine Early and On-going ID Procedures
7. Support Project Management – Guideline For Analyzing and Using EQAO Test Results To Improve Student Learning
8. Supervise Program Coordinator Assessment and Accountability

Communications

1. Work in partnership with JAN Marketing to develop and implement a strategic plan
2. Provide communications workshops to administrators, trustees, teacher and support staff groups
3. Listen to and consult with internal and external groups to assess areas of strength and weakness in communications
4. Increase system use of technology for communications esp. web-site
5. Support Editorial Board for GEDSB Newsletter and Cable TV Program
6. Support Project Management – Communications Research.

Family of Schools

1. Continue to build relationships with principals and communities
2. Build skills of principals and vice-principals in planning, curriculum and assessment, supervision and discipline, integration of computers and inquiry and reflective practice
3. Complete four PPR using action research process
4. Support Simcoe Composite
5. Integrate Sprucedale into the District
6. Complete Simcoe elementary consolidation/accommodation study
7. Support Transition Team
8. Review and modify FOS meetings to meet expectations of group
9. Supervise Simcoe School Support Office through Principal-Leader

Personal Professional Development

1. Complete writing Ph.D thesis
2. Present at AERA, ICTR, ARR/OERC
3. Find the meaning of "balance"

11/09/00/JDD

Grand Erie District School Board

Annual Performance Review: 2000

Jacqueline Delong

Delhi, Simcoe, Valley Heights, Sprucedale and GELA Family and Career Education, Assessment and Communications

1.07 Introduction

Jackie, once again your portfolio has changed during the year. Greg picked up School Councils and you assumed more responsibility for magnet programs and for the communications portfolio.

1.08 Family of Schools

Your Family of Schools has come together this year. Your leadership style was significantly different from the style the schools had experienced. Your emphasis on planning, research and involvement caught some principals off guard. In addition, they had to get to know the person from "Brant". You were a bit discouraged one year ago about the degree of acceptance in your Family.

We agreed to give it another year. The results of your **principal survey** for 2000 indicate a high degree of acceptance for your directions and your leadership. You have involved a significant number of staff in action research.

Your Family of Schools meeting includes a **professional development** component designed to build the skills of principals and vice principals. You have focused on planning, curriculum, assessment, supervision, discipline, integration of computers and inquiry and reflective practice skills. With a large number of new principals and vice principals, the skill building will have to be continuous.

You have had three consolidation studies in the Area. The **Norfolk Secondary Study** was a necessary prelude. The **Valley Heights Study** produced some very workable results. You are currently involved in the **Simcoe Elementary Study**. The principals are taking a lead in this study and are looking at the longer-term implications of enrolment decline.

The **Grand Erie Learning Alternatives** has had a busy year. The expansion to sites in Simcoe and Cayuga has been accomplished. The Cayuga operation is providing its challenges. The threat of eviction from Market Square provided addition excitement. A lease extension has reduced the imminent move from that site.

You have reviewed the Family of School meeting agendas and have incorporated principal and vice principal input. Peter Rasokas replaced Karen Anderson as Principal-Leader in the Simcoe School Support Centre in December. Peter will set his own directions for the Family. The office is running more on the model we envisaged for the system. Your principals are having direct input into the teacher-consultants positions for the Family.

1.09 System Responsibilities

In the fall you were responsible for implementing the **School Council Steering Committee** to arrange in-service for School Councils. You started the examination of structure for School Council/Board Liaison. Greg will carry that one forward. School Council Family forums were encouraged and occurred in most Families.

The **Volunteer Development** plan is being implemented this year. The Safe Schools legislation may make it necessary to look at police screening for volunteers, in addition to employees.

You have continued to work toward a partnership with the Public Library to house and circulate a **professional library** collection. Details remain but progress has been made toward an agreement.

Career education continues to prosper under your leadership. A **Green Paper on Career Education** along with a report went to the Board in June 2000. Effective partnerships with Brant Skills development Group, Haldimand-Norfolk Manufacturer's Association and Human Resources Development Canada enrich career education in our schools. **Career Resource Centres** continue to be established in additional secondary schools. Once again you have secured funding to operate these centres for next year. The schedule for implementation of **Choices into Action** was included in the Career Education report.

Exploration of **magnet programming** for the District is an important part of an integrated career education program. Without Magnet programs we will be limited in the number of specialized courses we can offer. The obstacle of transportation must be measured against the program offerings, the efficient use of staff and facilities and the reduction in capital expenditures. The commitment of principals to

the concept is a basic requirement. Planning is underway. Dialogue will need to continue through next year.

The **staff development** responsibilities are starting to sort themselves out. Dan has assumed more responsibility for curriculum in-service, including the Summer Institutes. Gerry and Bruce are providing computer in-service. Joe deals with plant and maintenance in-service. You are looking at Corporate Staff development from a system perspective. Maria has grown into the role of assisting and leading non-teaching development.

Your **Action Research** groups continue to grow. Four support groups now meet regularly within the region. Reports are being generated and shared. A significant number of Educational Change Fund requests are coming in from prospective researchers. The **Action Research Conference** was held in Brantford again this year, which allowed many of our staff to participate and present. You are also arranging for their involvement in the Act, Reflect, Revise Conference next December.

First-class conferences are being established for teachers and for interest groups within the system. This will allow more frequent and diverse contacts for all our teachers who wish to use it. Teachers have been provided with a **link to all additional qualification courses** through the Board Website.

In the area of **leadership development** you have performed some minor miracles. Despite a province-wide shortage of school administrators, we have generated enough candidates to replace the retirees. In 1999-2000 we were able to find 19 new principals and 14 new vice principals.

The **Masters of Education** program is preparing a future group. You are taking another shot at bringing a **Principals' Qualification Course** into the District. The **School Leadership Program** produced a pool of candidates and some useful leadership rubrics.

Building Leadership Capacity and the **New Administrators' Group** have provided support for newcomers. The **reception** organized in June brought out a large number of possible administrators for the future.

GrEAT had another successful year. The move to Camp trillium was well received. Sessions on Teacher Performance Reviews, Areas of Emphasis and Communication were conducted. The conference in April provided a focus for the area of emphasis on Building Positive Relationships.

With the other interest groups, you have developed a **Leadership In-service** program for the coming year. Hopefully the plan will clarify expectations and share responsibility and costs appropriately.

You should take considerable satisfaction in the leadership development aspect of your portfolio. Unfortunately, we cannot rest. The pool is shallow!

Assessment/Testing continue to become a bigger part of the Ontario Educational scene. You have produced Board Action Plans for Grade 3 and Grade 6 EQAO results. Each school has also produced plans. We are integrating these plans into the School Growth Plans. The focus on **promoting literacy** for the next three years is a direct signal of this emphasis. You have encouraged a number of research projects to investigate practices that will improve student results.

Secondary schools have spent time preparing for the **Grade Ten Test of Reading and Writing**.

Electronic Report Cards are in use in both elementary and secondary schools. The fall use of the secondary report was problematic but the winter usage went smoothly. Electronic reporting is well accepted in the elementary panel.

The **communications** portfolio is growing. You conducted the request for proposals for a marketing advisor. JAN Marketing was selected on a three-year contract. An environmental scan is underway. Four in-service sessions are scheduled for trustees, administration and school principals and vice principals.

1.10 Relationship with Board and Trustees

Your reports to the Board are well received. You are established as a leader. You work with a number of trustees on committees, as well as at the Board table.

We will still need to slow down at times to determine whether an action has political overtones. The trustees can be very jealous when we cross over into their territory. The political and values component of the job are still the legitimate domain of the trustees.

1.11 Contributions to Administrative Leadership Team

You are a leader on the Administrative Team, which is made up of leaders. As peers, supervisory officers have to respect each other for their contributions. On a few occasions this year you have lost patience with members of administrative council. Sometimes, by the conviction with which you state your views, you give

the impression that you know better than they do. Sometimes this impression comes from the fact that they are not embracing your directions for change with the same enthusiasm that you do.

Regardless of your personal opinion of another superintendent, you cannot give the impression that you are evaluating their performance. I have to assume that responsibility alone.

Over the past five years I believe your leadership has deepened. It has become more firmly embedded in guiding principles and directions. Your passion for improving education has also grown. You are able to motivate a significant number of educators to examine their practice and consciously seek ways to improve. **This is powerful stuff!** You can create change opportunities.

By the same token, I believe you have become somewhat less accepting of those who do not choose to change. Your focus on task has remained strong. Sometimes people who do not jump on board feel they are neglected or ignored. Academically you are justified in expecting people to improve. In your current role, some people will simply choose to get off the train.

1.12 Priorities for 2000-2001

- 12.1 Develop a plan for Magnet Programming in the secondary schools of Grand Erie.**
- 12.2 Share leadership for the system emphasis on promoting literacy, through helping principals and teachers make effective use of the provincial test results.**
- 12.3 Ensure effective implementation of L2K programs.**
- 12.4 Complete an agreement to bring a Principals' Course into the area.**
- 12.5 Complete a Green Paper of Leadership.**
- 12.6 Implement in-service in connection with the Communications Plan.**
- 12.7 Arrange in-service to expand the range of assessment techniques, including portfolio assessment and conferencing.**
- 12.8 Encourage the growth of Co-operative Education, Work Experience, Job Shadowing and Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Programs.**

12.9 Provide leadership for the development of a corporate staff development plan.

12.10 Others >>>>>>

1.13 Summary

Jackie, you make things happen! You are a change agent. Your capacity for work is prodigious. You have a profound influence on the people who enrol in your initiatives. Reflective practitioners, once established, will likely continue to be reflective for their entire lives.

You have made good progress with your Family of Schools and their communities. You continue to get a new supply of principals and vice principals who can benefit from your assistance and training.

At the system level you are providing effective leadership for a number of initiatives. Communication and Community Partnerships are essential for a public education system. Leadership development is perhaps the most crucial area of need.

Thank you for your dedication, hard work and initiative.

July 12th, 2000

**Peter C. Moffatt
Director of Education**
