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**Managing Conflict:
Effective Policies, Practices, and Programs
in a Selected Elementary School**

by

Colin Drew Sturdy



**A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
and Research in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Educational Administration**

Department of Educational Policy Studies

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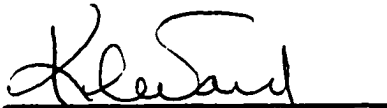
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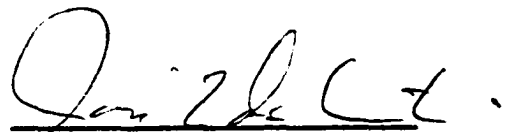
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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated, with love, to my parents,
Harry and Lillian, who believed in me,
and
to my son, Christopher,
whom I love dearly.

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to investigate the policies, practices and programs at a selected elementary school and examine the influence these aspects had on the degree of conflict and violence that was present.

The literature review focused on definitions of social conflict, sources of conflict, violence in society, as well as various conflict management strategies. The review continued, to include the prevention and intervention of violence, with a specific investigation into the impact of policies, practices and programs and their influence on conflict and violence in schools.

A conceptual framework was utilized to allow for the intersection and linkage of one specific model of organizational culture and whether or not this model was present and applicable in the selected school.

The design of the study was primarily qualitative in that it was a cross between an ethnographic and case study approach. The methodology included document analysis, semi-structured individual interviews, and observations.

At this school the research revealed that there were many policies, practices and programs in place that

confirmed the model of organizational culture that was utilized as a framework for the investigation. Respondents were, to a large degree, very aware of their values and behaviors that subsequently influenced the culture of the school, and ultimately the values and behaviors of the students that attended the school. There was evidence of tremendous consistency between and amongst the various descriptions of the policies, practices and programs in place at the school.

Findings revealed that the principal's style and commitment to the school's operation and its stakeholders was significant. Additional findings included: the importance of the school handbook and its contents, expectations for the students, the environment of the school, the effect of the discipline plan, student involvement in the school, how disruptive and/or aggressive students were dealt with, bullying, community involvement, and the various formal and informal programs at the school.

Recommendations included replication of the study in a similar setting, at the elementary, junior and/or senior high school levels. Furthermore, examining the impact of organizational culture on the planning and implementation of a new school was suggested.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The issue of conflict and violence in the schools is of considerable importance to students, staff, parents, school administrators, school district administrators and the community at large. By being aware of the behaviours, the communication, and the philosophical perspective a particular school adopts, these stakeholders can appreciate and understand the overall school culture that they create. Within the context of this culture, interactions occur and the potential for conflict exists.

The U.S. Department of Education (1975) stated that "ideally, schools should be havens where students and teachers can engage in activities related to learning free of concern about personal safety. In reality, today's schools are touched by the violence that is widespread in society"(p.1). They also outlined one of the National Education Goals as, "By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning"(p.1).

Canadian educators are also concerned about aggression and violence in their schools. In its final report, the Task Force on Violence in Schools, compiled by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation (1995), stated that "teachers are observing and experiencing an increase in aggression among their students"(p.3). This Task Force also noted the

following trends:

1. Younger age: Teachers have noticed aggressive behaviour among children as young as five.
2. More Severe Violence: A tendency to group attacks on individuals has emerged.
3. Weapons: These are becoming more common, with knives or razors being the weapons of choice.
4. Increase in Female Involvement: Teachers are noticing adolescent females as perpetrators of intimidation, harassment, or assaulting other students- usually female.
5. Verbal Abuse: Teachers and students are reporting more verbal threats against them or their families.
6. Lack of Respect for Authority: There seems to be an increasing level of challenge to authority and to authority figures, including teachers, principals, and police.
7. Gangs: An increase in informal gangs, who may be intimidating and aggressive, is being recognized.
8. Unprovoked Random Acts: There is an increase in unprovoked acts of violence, for example, students have reported increased caution in making eye contact with certain individuals (p.6).

Purpose of the Study

This study was designed to examine the policies, practices, and the programs of a selected elementary school, and their subsequent influence on reducing the incidence of conflict and violence at the school.

Statement of the Research Questions

Major Research Question

What policies, practices, and programs do elementary schools have in place that are perceived to be effective in reducing conflict and violence in their schools?

Specific Research Questions

1. What specific policies do teachers, the school counsellor, school administrators, and the school council use that are perceived to be effective in reducing conflict and violence in the school?

2. What specific practices do teachers, the school counsellor, school administrators, and the school council use that are perceived to be effective in reducing conflict and violence in the school?

3. What specific programs do teachers, the school counsellor, school administrators, and the school council use that are perceived to be effective in reducing conflict and violence in the school?

4. To what extent do the policies, practices, and programs at the selected elementary school relate to the current literature on school culture?

Need for the Study

An abundance of information and research findings exists on the phenomenon of conflict itself, within organizations in general, as well as in schools specifically. However, there is a definite lack of research examining the issue of conflict and violence in the schools, particularly at the elementary level. The literature search conducted by the researcher revealed a limited degree of information on this specific topic.

Importance of the Study

Concern is growing over the extent of conflict and violence in Canadian schools. Administrators and teachers are spending more of their time on disciplinary issues.

Contribution to Research

As stated above, little research has examined policies, practices, and programs that are perceived to be effective in reducing conflict and violence at the elementary school level. The study examined these aspects at one selected school.

The study was designed to contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding conflict and violence in the schools with particular reference to the Schein (1991) model of organizational culture. The study was also designed to contribute to the knowledge of effective ways of dealing with the conflict and violence in the elementary school.

Practical Significance

This study has these three major practical dimensions:

1. The school staff's level of consciousness of the policies, practices, and programs they use will be raised. This may result in an awareness of how these factors contribute to the overall culture in the school and subsequently may lead to even more effective ways of dealing with the issue of conflict and violence in the school.

2. Specifically, the administrative team, in analyzing the results of the study, will become more aware of the variables that contribute to effectively reducing

conflict and violence in the school. This information will be useful in helping to establish future school goals and to provide insights into what policies, practices, and programs they may wish to retain, modify, or delete.

3. Other schools, and, indeed, school districts, school boards and educational agencies in general, will receive results of the study that may influence their own policies, practices, or programs in place to deal with the issue of conflict and school violence.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, conflict, violence, policies, practices, and programs must be defined.

Conflict

There are slight variations on the meaning of this term. Katz and Lawyer (1994) defined conflict as "a situation or state between at least two interdependent parties, which is characterized by perceived differences that the parties evaluate as negative"(p.viii). For the purposes of this study, this definition will be used.

However, not all conflict can be defined as dysfunctional or negative. Nelson and Quick (1994) postulated that conflict is "any situation in which incompatible goals, attitudes, emotions, or behaviours lead to a disagreement or opposition between two or more parties"(p.390). They also suggested that functional conflict can result as it "produces new ideas, learning, and growth among individuals"(p.390).

Violence

Katz and Lawyer (1994) defined violence as "activities that include physical assault, verbal harassment, or intimidation/bullying/threats. These activities may or may not include the presence of weapons"(p.viii).

Policies

Katz and Lawyer (1994) defined policy as "a definite course or method of action selected that guides and determines present and future decisions"(p.ix).

Practices

Katz and Lawyer (1994) defined practices as "actual performances or applications. They are done or performed customarily"(p.ix).

Programs

Programs were defined by Katz and Lawyer (1994) as "the outcome of policy to provide curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular strategies for the reduction of conflict and violence"(p.ix).

Delimitations

1. The study was delimited to obtaining information from the school staff and members of the school council at one elementary school.
2. Student perceptions were not represented in this study.
3. The study focussed on policies, practices, and programs that were perceived to be effective in reducing conflict and violence in the selected school.

4. Information was obtained from interviews and document analysis.

Limitations

1. The findings were limited to information gained from the participants and documents at one school only.

2. The findings are unique to the selected school site and may not be generalizable to other elementary schools.

Assumptions

1. Respondents, who were asked to participate in the study, were aware of the policies, practices, and programs of their school that are perceived to be effective in reducing conflict and violence.

2. There is a relationship between the policies, practices, and programs of a given school and the degree of conflict and violence exhibited at that school.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis comprises seven chapters. The first chapter introduced the topic and explained the background to the problem. The major and specific research questions were listed and the significance of the study for research and practice was discussed. Major terms used throughout the study were defined. The limitations, delimitations, and assumptions of the study were stated.

The second chapter reviewed the literature on conflict

and violence in the schools, as well as policies, practices, and programs that addressed the issue of conflict and violence in the schools. Additionally, climate and organizational culture, as well as two specific models of organizational culture, were presented.

The third chapter detailed the specific research design and methodology that was used in the study.

The fourth, fifth and sixth chapters discussed the interpretation and analysis of the study data. The various categories and themes that emerged from the data were integrated into policies, practices, and programs respectively, in the selected elementary school.

The seventh chapter stated the findings of the study in terms of the specific research questions that guided the study, as well as discussing how the policies, practices, and programs impacted on the school's culture. It also provided a summary of the study, the various conclusions resulting from the study, and a number of suggestions for research that were worthy of consideration.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review is organized in the following major sections: (a) social conflict, (b) sources of conflict, (c) violence in society, (d) conflict management strategies, (e) conflict in the schools, (f) prevention and intervention of violence in the schools, (g) climate and organizational culture, (h) the concept of culture, (i) the Steinoff and Owens model (1989) of organizational culture, (j) and the Schein model (1989) of organizational culture.

Social Conflict

The literature is replete with reference to conflict between old and young, strong and weak, male and female, and rich and poor. Bernard (1949) concluded that "conflict is universal, that it is basic, pervasive, and latent, and that society must take a certain amount of conflict for granted as no community of man is free from it"(p.103). Bernard (1949) pointed out that sometimes conflict may exist in latent form for years before there is a formulation of issues or a crisis, and that it is a mistake to limit thinking about conflict to the overt phase of crisis. Bernard (1949) emphasised that, if thinking about conflict is indeed limited to the overt phase, the study of social conflict becomes merely a study of the manifestation of conflict in the form of strikes or riots. He also put conflict in more accurate historical and social perspective by observing that conflict need not be violent, that in its

most spectacular and attention-compelling form it is violent, as in wars, riots, fistfights, and persecutions, but non-violent conflict is more pervasive. Bernard (1949) stated that "without any show of violence at all there exist conflicting schools of thought, theories, creeds, and dogmas in all communities to at least some extent"(p.106).

Follett (1940) saw conflict as the essence of life, something that cannot be avoided, and something that should not be feared. "Aside from warfare, conflict is to be thought of as difference, difference of opinions or of interests. For that is what conflict means--difference" (p.30). Although some people may wish to abolish conflict, Follett suggested that she conceived of difference or diversity as life's most essential feature.

Fink (1968), after an exhaustive examination of conceptual difficulties in formulating a theory of social conflict, concluded "that the aim of developing a general theory of social conflict can best be pursued if theorists adopt the broadest possible working definition of social conflict"(p.455-56). He summarized his findings and conclusions by setting forth his definition of social conflict as "any social situation or process in which two or more social entities are linked by at least one form of antagonistic psychological relation or at least one form of antagonistic interaction"(p.456).

It is social conflict that is the foundation for the specific research questions of the study.

Dysfunctional Conflict

Lundberg (1939) represented those sociologists who see in social conflict only negative connotations, disruptive phenomena, and pathological effects. Far from viewing conflict as a necessary or positive part of social relationships, he considered social conflict a disease to be avoided. Lundberg's conclusions were arrived at as follows: Interaction among human beings is fundamental in societal behavior and such interaction is unique because it takes place by means of communication through symbolic behavior. Communication means interaction by means of verbal, gestural, pictorial, or plastic symbols, and communication is then a subcategory or form of interaction regarded as the means by which socialization takes place. Hence, the word communication is adopted to designate the basic process of sociation or societal behavior, said Lundberg. Theories such as the Lundberg theory reflect the "nonrationalistic" or "tensions" concept of conflict with emphasis upon negative aspects such as a loss of group unity or the disintegration of social structures. Within the context of such theories, conflict would retard or hinder "progress."

In the introductory pages of his book, The Functions of Social Conflict, Coser (1956) singled out Talcott Parsons, George Lundberg, (referred to above), Elton Mayo, Lloyd Warner, and Kurt Lewin, as sociologists who view conflict in

terms of a dissociating, corroding, disruptive, or dysfunctional phenomenon.

Dysfunctional conflict can often be recognized when it becomes intense to the point where others observe emotional or behavioral changes in the people involved in the disagreement. These negative emotional states and behaviors that are manifested by threats, deception, and verbal abuse often result in an attempt to control the other parties in the interaction.

Human interaction is a complex activity. People differ in their personalities, values, attitudes, perceptions, languages, cultures, and national backgrounds. These differences give rise to potential incompatibility and conflict. Katz and Lawyer (1994) defined conflict as a "situation or state between at least two interdependent parties, which is characterized by perceived differences that the parties evaluate as negative"(p.viii). Their definition would probably include a simple disagreement between two or more people. Disagreements, however, are not always negative.

Recognizing that dysfunctional conflict is present in all schools, it is important to investigate the literature on the topic.

Functional Conflict

Simmel (1955) stated that "there probably does not exist a social unit in which convergent and divergent currents among its members are not inseparably interwoven

and that an absolutely harmonious group would not only be empirically unreal but would show no real life process" (pp.15-16). He maintained that "society, in order to have any form at all and attain a determinate shape, needs harmony and disharmony, association and competition, that discords are not always negative instances or sociological liabilities, and that we must allow the total meaning of our existence to grow out of both parties"(p.16). For Simmel, every social phenomenon contains a multiplicity of formal and informal processes such as "subordination and superordination or intimacy and distance"(pp.9-10). He concluded, that because socialization always involves harmony and conflict, attraction and repulsion, love and hatred, social relationships are never pure: "There is no 'pure' conflict in social life, just as there is no 'pure' Cupertino" (p.10).

In defining conflict as difference, the essence of life and individuality, Follett (1940) affirmed that "the test of progress is neither likenesses or unlikenesses [difference], but what is done with the unlikenesses"(pp.30-35). She argued that "the appearance of difference, or conflict, may be a sign of health and a prophecy of progress, that conflict [difference] cannot be avoided and should be constructively and positively used or set to work as man integrates his interests into a new creative synthesis"(p.35).

In writing about creative conflict, Bernard (1949)

stated "that since people live in a world of never-ending conflict, mankind must learn how best to handle it, and that managing conflict constructively is a teachable skill" (p.129). He called for issues to be resolved on a nonpersonal, nonvindictive, objective level. Like Follett, Bernard (1949) made the following observation: "In fact, it is often possible for a new synthesis to arise from conflicting points of view so that, instead of either side losing any vital ground, each may gain"(p.129).

Litterer (1966) stated that conflict is a controllable element in organizations and can be adjusted to minimize its dysfunctional and maximize its functional characteristics. Litterer viewed conflict as being functional to an organization when "it energizes people to action, adds zest to certain activities, leads to needed innovation and change, serves as an essential portion of feedback in a cybernetic system, or meets the needs of some healthy personalities seeking tension" (p.36).

That is, the consequences or outcomes of a disagreement may lead to positive results. For this reason I prefer the definition provided by Nelson and Quick (1994), who stated that conflict is "any situation in which incompatible goals, attitudes, emotions, or behaviours lead to a disagreement or opposition between two or more parties"(p.390), and that it can be either functional or dysfunctional.

Nelson and Quick (1994) further contended that "...functional conflict can produce new ideas, learning, and

growth among individuals"(p.390). When individuals are engaged in constructive conflict they tend to know and appreciate the other person's perspective more fully, as well as learn about and challenge their own perspective. In the workplace this would provide for improved relationships, which may lead to improved morale, and ultimately to greater job satisfaction and productivity. Leaders need to be aware of the potential benefits and consequently encourage people to look for better solutions to problems. One must be cautious with this strategy, as there is a fine line between functional and dysfunctional conflict. Disagreements that intensify become dysfunctional conflict, which Nelson and Quick (1994) defined as "an unhealthy, destructive disagreement between two or more people"(p.391).

As some conflict is functional in nature, the research in this area was necessary, in order to fully understand the full definition of conflict.

Sources of Conflict

Conflict has many sources, the most obvious being the personal factors that arise from differences among individuals. People vary in their skills and abilities, personalities, perceptions, values, and emotions.

Nelson and Quick (1994) identified a second source of conflict that they categorized as "the structure" (pp.392-393). They identified specialization, interdependence, common resources, goal differences, authority relationships, status inconsistencies, and jurisdictional ambiguities as

the structural factors that may cause conflict.

"Specialization" refers to highly specialized jobs that involve people having very little awareness of tasks that others perform. "Interdependence" means that people are depending on others in order to accomplish their goals.

"Common resources" simply refers to the situation where parties must share resources. "Goal differences" may cause conflict if they are not compatible with others' goals.

"Authority relationships" imply a hierarchical approach to organizing, and with it comes the potential for conflict.

"Status inconsistencies" may lead to resentment and ultimately conflict. Finally, "jurisdictional ambiguities" refer to people being unsure of their actual responsibilities. Job descriptions are an attempt to clear up these ambiguities. Leaders must therefore look beyond surface conflict and diagnose the source of conflict, whether it is personal, structural, or a combination of the two.

Schmidt and Kochan (1972) provided a framework for conflict that incorporated both the personal and structural factors. Two major elements termed "perceived goal incompatibility and perceived opportunity for interference"(p.363) were identified as variables that generate conflict.

In large organizations, recognizing the source of conflict may be a complex task. Conflict may be evident in a given department, but possibly it is manifested as a

result of conflict between other departments. Its roots may be embedded in such structural factors as specialization, interdependence, or jurisdictional ambiguities. Saaty (1989) described this form of conflict as "horizontal and vertical conflict." A leader must carefully track the source of conflict to formulate solutions that are effective.

Understanding the various sources of conflict is paramount to the study, in order to address the research questions that relate specifically to perceived conflict and violence that exist at the selected school.

Conflict Management Strategies

Boulding (1968) suggested that the title of a special issue of The Journal of Conflict Resolution should have incorporated the word "management" rather than "resolution," that the distinction between constructive and destructive conflict is not the same as the distinction between those resolved and those not resolved. Furthermore, sometimes there is a need for protracting conflict and keeping it unresolved. Boulding concluded "the more neutral word, management, defined as diminishing the costs and increasing the benefits of a process"(p.410) might better describe the journal's objectives. The implications for administrative action are that when social conflict is viewed as dysfunctional, administrators attempt to avoid it, reduce it, eliminate it, or simply coexist with it. However, the view that social conflict can often be functional precipitates a search for ways of distinguishing between functional and dysfunctional conflict, and for techniques and strategies which have more to do with the management of conflict rather than the immediate termination of conflict.

To produce an exhaustive taxonomy, of detailed techniques for the management of conflict in public education, would be a gigantic and perhaps impossible task. However, several writers and researchers have formulated basic, general methods of conflict management. Boulding (1962) referred to three general methods: (a) avoidance through lack of contact, (b) conquest with the emergence of

victors and vanquished, and (c) procedural resolution through reconciliation involving value changes, bargaining where each side settles for less, and third party awards (pp.308-310). Follett (1940) also saw social conflict as being handled by three main approaches: (a) domination involving a victory of one side over the other, (b) compromise which forces each side to lose and is only concerned with what already exists, and (c) creative integration where something new accommodates the interests of all opponents. Blake and Mouton (1964) identified five possible modes of conflict management: (a) forcing method, (b) withdrawing method, (c) compromising method, (d) smoothing method, and (e) confrontation method.

Forcing Method

This method essentially uses authority, penalties or sanctions to handle conflict. Inherent in the use of this method is the suppression of conflict, whereby the expression of conflict is prevented.

Withdrawing Method

Here the handling of conflict is accomplished by steering clear of or retreating from all situations of conflict whenever possible. Inherent in the use of this method is an attempt to ignore all conflict situations by not displaying any overt concern or manifest action pertaining to conflictive issues.

Compromising Method

This method uses strategies such as yielding, twisting, turning, and bending in an attempt to find a course down the middle that splits the difference or conflict. Inherent in the use of this method is the search for an expedient means of automatically splitting the difference by an accommodation that may be referred to as a "win-win" situation.

Smoothing Method

Here conflict is handled by promoting harmonious and accepting relationships among personnel. Inherent in the use of this method is an active attempt to accentuate the positive aspects of a situation and play down or smooth over all negative aspects.

Confrontation Method

This method manages conflict through the use of an open problem solving approach that both allows and encourages those involved in the conflict to work through the ideological and emotional components of the disagreement. Inherent in the use of this method is the attempt to achieve an objective exploratory examination and evaluation of differences, so as to find a solution that is more oriented to the long-term interests of everyone concerned rather than to temporary expediency.

Using the five methods of managing conflict identified by Blake and Mouton (1964), Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) examined the use of Confrontation, Smoothing, and Forcing in

comparing productivity among six organizations. The Lawrence and Lorsch instrument consisted of 25 aphorisms or proverbs to describe the five methods of conflict management; five proverbs were used to match each of the five methods outlined by Blake and Mouton. In another empirical investigation pertaining to constructive conflict and methods of resolving superior-subordinate differences, Burke (1970) utilized the Blake-Mouton methods of conflict management and the Lawrence-Lorsch instrument. This was done to study middle-level management in an engineering department of a large corporation with divisions located throughout the United States. Burke attempted to relate the five methods of conflict management to two dependent variables: (a) constructive use of differences and disagreements, and (b) aspects of the superior-subordinate relationship in planning job targets and evaluating accomplishments.

The theory and research referred to above appear to indicate that the five general but different methods of managing conflict, as outlined by Blake and Mouton, do exist in the organizational world.

Conflict in the Schools

Conflict can be found between and among a variety of stakeholders including student versus student, student versus teacher, and student versus administrator; teacher versus teacher, teacher versus administrator, and teacher versus parent; administrator versus parent, and

administrator versus central office or other bureaucratic organizations. If conflict is not recognized and subsequently managed at its early stage, it has the potential to cause significant disruption to the efforts to achieve the school's goals.

Student Conflict

Administrators and teachers deal with many types of conflict. Reed (1983) identified 10 major incidents of actual or potential student conflict in his research, gathered from principals and vice-principals who worked in the San Francisco-Oakland Bay area. They included "tardiness, cutting class, spontaneous fighting, disrespect for teachers, disruptive school behaviour, personal rivalries, extortion, theft, racial tensions, and unprovoked assaults"(p.76).

Reed also stated that administrators cite many reasons for conflict, including "lack of parental control in the home, single parent families, low expectations of students on the part of teachers, impersonality of the school, racism, inflexibility and insensitivity of teachers, influence of television, neighbourhood and community problems, as well as value differences"(p.77).

Furthermore, Hendrick and Jones (1972) suggested "times have changed substantially since the late 1950s and these days of conflict, of alienation, of dissent; these are the days of the generation gap"(p.8). They also stated that many goals of society are not accepted, and indeed, are

being actively challenged by students. These "clients" are becoming more aggressive in their methodology. Schools are dealing with more violent behaviours than the standard misbehaviour of decades past. Goldstein (1984), in comparing behaviours in schools today with those of the past, stated that "events were so mild then compared to the aggression of today that it becomes difficult to conceptualize them as the extremes of a shared continuum"(p.5). This aggression is targeted either towards persons or property.

Schools have therefore needed to implement structural or philosophical changes. Programs to curb aggressive and disruptive behaviour vary considerably in terms of their financial support, location, conceptual base, duration, level of implementation, school district size, and other factors.

School administrators have the responsibility to ensure that this aggression is attended to by establishing acceptable conduct guidelines. Goldstein (1984) stated:

the nature of leadership and governance in a school can be a major correlate of violence within its walls. A firm, fair, consistent principal-leadership style, for example, has been shown to be associated with low levels of student aggression.(p.7)

Many schools have developed a discipline code or a code of conduct. This document provides the framework for delineating responsibilities and expectations of staff, students, and parents. Lescault (1988) suggested that "properly formulated and disseminated, a discipline code

communicates clearly to students, teachers, and parents those behaviours that are a necessary prerequisite to a school fulfilling its mission"(p.46). He also stated that this decreases the probability of behavioral digressions based on a misunderstanding of expectations. It also provides for uniformity and consistency in handling unacceptable behaviour.

Other methods of addressing conflict include using community members and parents. Reed (1983) outlined the following ways in which these stakeholder groups may help:

1. serving as role models
2. encouraging students to have more respect for authority
3. being more visible in the school
4. serving on an on-site committee to develop recommendations
5. organizing after-school activities
6. tutoring students. (p.7)

Within each classroom, teachers may assist in managing conflict by identifying students with learning disabilities, attention deficit hyperactivity disorders, those with oppositional defiant and conduct disorders, depression, anxiety, or pervasive development disorders. This needs to be facilitated through the use of expert consultants.

Hence, Goldstein (1995) suggested that consultants "must help teachers develop a set of systematic interventions that will allow the different child to more closely approximate behaviours considered acceptable, normal, or within classroom expectations"(p.12).

School-based Violence

In recent years, violence within our schools has been seen as an increasingly serious problem. But how do we define violence? West (1993) suggested that "criminological research favors a relatively narrow, legalistic definition: violence consists of proven acts by individuals prohibited in the Criminal Code (usually including murder, assault, [most] sexual assault, arson, and robbery)"(p.6). Other definitions, of a wider dimension, include intimidation, with or without assault.

For the purposes of this study, the researcher has proposed a definition that includes physical assault, verbal harassment, intimidation/bullying/threats, and the presence of weapons. It is extremely difficult to separate, and determine, on a percentage basis, the various types of conflict and violent occurrences at any school, as many would not even be reported or observed. However, incidents that fit within this definition, reported by Day, Golench, MacDougall, and Beals-Gonzalez (1995) ranged from "minor discipline problems such as disobedience, teasing, and taunting, to obscene gesturing, verbal and physical threats, aggression, bullying, assault (with and without a weapon), vandalism, extortion, and gang-related activities"(p.13).

Regardless whether the violence takes place on or around the school premises, it affects the perpetrator and the victim, the entire student body, the staff, as well as the community as a whole.

Consequently, schools have needed to implement structural or philosophical changes. The research that will be conducted and the subsequent findings will reveal greater insights in terms of why schools are making these changes.

Prevention of and Intervention for Violence

School Boards (elected officials, known as school trustees, that manage school jurisdictions) and the schools, within each jurisdiction, have the responsibility to implement the instructional program as mandated by the Department of Education. Aggressive and violent behaviour has a significant impact on the teaching and learning cycle.

It is, therefore, necessary that schools consider the effects of their policies, practices, and programs.

Policies

In their report prepared for the Ministry of the Solicitor General of Canada, Day et al. (1995) found that, of the 126 school boards across Canada who participated in their study (60% response rate),

116 (92.1%) were involved in some manner of counteracting school based violence through either existing policies or programs, the development of policies or programs, or some other related activity such as establishing a safe school task force or committee. (p.62)

Subsequent to their content analysis procedure, they found that the degree of comprehensiveness of the policies varied considerably. Four classifications were identified, with each building on the previous type. It was presumed that the effectiveness of the various types related to the

increased degree of comprehensiveness of the four types.

The basic principles of the four types were as follows:

Type I: Response/Sanctions - punishment for misbehaviour.

Type II: Expectations for Behaviour - development of a model for appropriate behaviour with expectations for students to follow.

Type III: Identification/Prevention - strategies and programs to inhibit antisocial behaviour.

Type IV: Community Focus - inclusion of community groups in initiatives to address the problem of school-based violence. (p.76)

The Type I policies were essentially reactive in nature, in that they made provisions for dealing with violent behaviour after it had occurred.

Type II policies recognized a need to act before violence occurred. They focussed on the idea that fair, clear, and equitable rules would prevent the further incidence of inappropriate behaviour. Day et al. (1995) outlined "the development of acceptable behavioural patterns and the establishment of appropriate models to emulate in order to promote pro-social behaviour take precedence over punishment"(p.77).

Policies of Type III focused on the identification and reduction of student behaviour problems. Attention was directed towards activities designed to reduce violence by promoting positive interpersonal relations. Specific policy/program initiatives such as Peacemakers, conflict management, and peer counselling were characteristic of this policy type (p.77).

The Type IV policies reflect the recognition that the root causes of school-based violence go beyond the borders of the school grounds. Consequently, these policies acknowledged the importance of working outside the school system with community agencies. MacNeil (1993, cited in Day et al., 1995) stated that "these agencies were involved in the development of strategies to address a range of issues that are related to school-based violence, including child abuse and family violence" (p.78).

In order to address the issue of violence in Canadian schools, all stakeholders will need to be involved in collaborative planning, specifically with respect to policy development. The British Columbia Teachers' Federation (1994) delineated numerous recommendations. As a collaborative strategy, they recommended the following three practices that relate directly to policy development. "That the BCTF work with local associations and the BCSTA [British Columbia School Trustees' Association] to encourage school districts to adopt comprehensive plans to address the issue of violence in schools which may include the following:

1. clear, well-communicated district and school policy stating that violence is not acceptable.
 2. clear, consistently followed and fair school and district procedures for dealing with violations.
 3. clear, well-understood safety plans and procedures.
- (p.11)

Another recommendation they proposed stated:

that the BCTF urge the Ministry of Education to require that school boards, in consultation with teacher locals, develop and implement policies, regulations, and procedures aimed at eliminating

violence from schools, and that these policies, regulations, and procedures be reported to the Ministry of Education (p.16).

In its document, published in 1994, the Ministry of Education and Training in Ontario mandated that all school boards in Ontario:

will develop an implementation plan that considers timelines; in-service training for all staff; the effective communication of policy to schools, staff, students, parents or guardians, and the community; and the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the policy (p.8).

Eight components were to be addressed in the school boards' violence-prevention policies including (a) the school environment, (b) violence prevention in the curriculum, (c) early and ongoing identification for prevention, (d) code of behaviour, (e) procedures for dealing with violent incidents, (f) dealing with the aftermath of an incident, (g) staff development, (h) home, school, and community involvement (pp.15-23).

Many changes will undoubtedly occur over the next few years in Ontario schools. Hewitt (1994) supported this claim by stating that "successful implementation of Violence-Free Schools Policy may require some fundamental changes in curriculum delivery, early identification procedures, and the relationships between the school agencies, the police, and religious and cultural leaders" (p.5).

Practices

Practices, as an operational term, are defined as

actual performances or applications. This would include activities that apply school board policies. In-school administrators and teachers must collaborate in order to have in place an effective learning climate for the students in their care. The school and classroom context, academic and extra-curricular activities, and the social development programs that schools provide, all help to shape and build character, protect children, and prepare them to constructively be contributing members of society. Schools must pay much closer attention to school climate issues and construct school environments that encourage, nurture, and support positive values and behaviors, by respecting and responding to individual and group differences as well as similarities. Bey and Turner (1996) suggest the term "peaceable," as the goal of schools. They note that the national call to stop destructive behavior is widespread, as business and professional entities urge schools and communities to take action. One commission report states the following:

Our [schools and communities] can intervene effectively in the lives of children and youth to reduce or prevent their involvement in violence. Violence involving youth is not random, uncontrollable or inevitable. Many factors, both individual and social, contribute to an individual's propensity to use violence, and many of these factors are within our power to change. (American Psychological Association [APA] Commission on Violence and Youth, 1993. (p.14)

Ultimately, though, it is the individual classroom teachers that come in contact daily with students that have the greatest influence and the opportunity to shape

behaviour.

In terms of addressing the issue of discipline, Wasicsko and Ross (1994) offered 10 methods for reducing problems:

1. Expect the best from kids.
2. Make the implicit explicit.
3. Rewards, yes! Punishment, no!
4. Let the punishment [natural consequence] fit the crime.
5. If you must punish, remove privileges.
6. "Ignor"ance is bliss.
7. Consistency is the best policy.
8. Know each student well.
9. Use schoolwork as rewards.
10. Treat students with love and respect. (pp.248-251)

Other researchers have supported these recommendations.

Setting high expectations for students (Charney, 1993; Lescault, 1988; Hanny, 1994) is a positive step in establishing a context for learning, and consequently students will often be on-task more often.

Being specific about classroom rules, expectations and appropriate conduct is seen as a proactive step towards effective discipline (Ban, 1994; Guetzloe, 1992; Hanny, 1994; Idol, 1994; McDaniel, 1994; Mendler, 1994; Murdick & Gartin, 1993; Rutherford Jr. & Nelson, 1995; Shores, Gunter, & Jack, 1993; Thompson, 1994). Involving students in the establishment of both expectations and consequences (positive and negative) is seen as an effective strategy.

Rewards including verbal praise, written notes, phone calls or tokens, are viewed as the preferred approach in bringing attention to good behaviours. Goldstein, Apter, and Harootunian (1984) presented four types of positive

reinforcers, including "material, social, activity, and token" (p.46).

Certainly each classroom and school must be one that students enjoy attending. This can be accomplished by addressing the physical characteristics of the building itself (Heath, 1994; Noguera, 1995; Reed, 1983; Walker, 1994) as well as by ensuring that staff are caring, compassionate, and committed professionals (Ban, 1994; Curwin, 1994; Idol, 1994; Murdick & Gartin, 1993; Shores, Gunter, & Jack, 1993; Thompson, 1994; Tierney, Dowd, & O'Kane, 1993).

The teaching of pro-social, problem solving, and conflict-resolution skills are advocated in the research (Brendtro & Long, 1994; Charney, 1993; Houston & Grubaugh, 1989; Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Kauffman, 1994; Tierney, Dowd, & O'Kane, 1993; Walker, 1993) as an effective means of addressing the issue of aggressive, disruptive, and violent behaviour.

Programs

In addition to establishing and implementing policies and a variety of practices, school districts in North America have also developed or instituted a number of effective programs. Social skills training programs have been cited in use in many schools (Ciechalski & Schmidt, 1995; Day et al., 1995; Murdoch-Morris, 1993).

Conflict resolution programs have been identified as being in place in schools from every province in Canada

(British Columbia Teachers' Federation, 1994; Day et al., 1995) as well as many centres across the U.S. (Goldstein, 1995; James, 1993; Johnson & Johnson, 1995; Murdoch-Morris, 1993; Roderick, 1988). Some of these programs are referred to as peer mediation programs, whereas some centres specifically refer to one program known as the "Peacemakers" (Hutchins, 1993). Other programs include the Antibullying Intervention project implemented by the Toronto Board of Education (Ziegler & Pepler, 1993).

Roderick (1988) reported that all students in Chicago's 67 public schools take a course in dispute resolution. He also noted that "an estimated 75% of San Francisco's public schools had student mediators"(p.87). He stated, "In San Francisco at the elementary level, mediators wear brightly coloured Conflict Manager T-shirts while they settle disputes on the playground. High school mediators have a special room where disputants come for mediation sessions"(p.89).

Organizations like schools do need to consider the overall climate and culture that has developed over time and how this impacts on the behaviors of both staff and students. Hence, there is a need to investigate the research in this particular area. This research will be conducted primarily via the interview questions regarding the policies, practices, and programs that respondents view as impacting the degree of conflict and violence at their school.

Climate and Organizational Culture

The concept of organizational climate originated in the late 1950s as social scientists studied variations in work environments. Although researchers interested in educational organizations (Halpin & Croft, 1963) made the initial efforts to define and measure dimensions of organizational climate, the usefulness of the concept soon was recognized by scholars of business organizations (Tagiuri, 1968). Tagiuri observed that "a particular configuration of enduring characteristics of the ecology, milieu, social system and culture would constitute a climate, as much as a particular configuration of personal characteristics constitute a personality"(p.23).

At the superficial level, these two terms are considered by many to be somewhat synonymous, but further investigation clarifies their differences. According to Owens (1987), Peterson and Spencer (1990), and Schneider (1990), climate is the current state of shared perceptions and attitudes about dimensions of organizational life, including organizational policies, practices, and procedures, both formal and informal. Climate focuses on organizational goal attainment and measurement of perceptions in areas such as motivation, satisfaction and attitudes (Owens, 1987; Schneider & Rentsch, 1988; Schneider, 1990). Climate, then, is concerned with the extent of congruence between the values, beliefs, and attitudes of individuals; and the goals of the organization.

The focus of organizational culture, by comparison, is on the embedded patterns of behavior, shared meanings, values, assumptions, ideologies, beliefs and symbols (Meek, 1988; Schein, 1991; Smircich, 1983; Young, 1989). Schein concluded that norms, values, rituals and climate are all aspects of organizational culture and best understood in a holistic context. Peterson and Spencer (1990) offered the analogy of organizational culture as meteorological zones and climate as daily weather patterns.

Mintzberg (1989) refers to culture as organization ideology, or "the traditions and beliefs of an organization that distinguish it from other organizations and infuse a certain life into the skeleton of its structure"(p.98). Wilkins & Patterson (1985) maintain that, "an organization's culture consists largely of what people believe about what works and what does not"(p.265). Martin (1985) argues that "culture is an expression of people's deepest needs, a means of endowing their experiences with meaning"(p.95). Robbins (1991) defines organization culture as a "common perception held by the organization's members; a system of shared meaning"(p.572). Schwartz and Davis (1981) regard culture as "a pattern of beliefs and expectations shared by the organization's members that 'produces' norms that powerfully shape the behavior of individuals and groups in an organization"(p.33).

The difference between these two constructs lies in the foundational understanding of organizational culture and

climate (Peterson and Spencer, 1990; Schneider, 1990). The basic concept of organizational culture holds that it is a repository, so to speak, for the deeply shared values, assumptions, beliefs, or ideologies of its constituent members. In contrast, the basic component of climate is a common perception of attitudes toward and feelings about organizational life. Furthermore, Hoy, Tarter, and Kottkamp (1991) suggest that scholars of organizational culture tend to use the qualitative and ethnographic techniques of anthropology and sociology to examine the character or atmosphere of organizations. They note that:

researchers of climate usually deal with perceptions of behavior, use survey research techniques, employ multivariate statistics, have their intellectual roots in industrial and social psychology, assume a rational-systems perspective, and examine climate as an independent variable. (p.8)

This distinction provided the writer with the impetus to utilize a qualitative-type design study to more fully understand the interrelatedness of conflict and the management of it, within the context of a given culture, at one selected elementary school. Furthermore, contemporary models and perspectives that could be useful in this examination were identified and reviewed; all with the research questions guiding the study.

Models of Organizational Culture

Two models were chosen for examination based on their relevancy in terms of describing culture and their application to describing culture in schools. They were:

Steinoff and Owen's (1989) taxonomy of six interlocking levels, and Schein's (1991) levels of culture.

The Steinoff and Owens Model

Steinoff and Owens (1989) propose a theory of culture that posits that organizational culture is a root metaphor of an organization. They suggest that culture is not a description of what the organization is like, but rather a description of the essence of the organization. They further suggest six interlocking dimensions that define culture of an organization: (a) history; (b) myths and stories; (c) values and beliefs; (d) cultural norms (and assumptions); (e) heroes and heroines; (f) traditions, rituals and ceremonies. It is the interaction of these dimensions that, over time, constitute the complex culture of an organization.

Steinoff and Owens (1989) identified two key components in contemporary culture, those being norms and assumptions. Norms refer to the way culture is influenced by behaviors and standards that have been institutionalized; assumptions refer to those bedrock beliefs on which norms and other variables of culture are grounded.

The Schein Model

Schein's (1991) model is comprehensive in that it encapsulates significant definitional themes and contemporary research findings. Schein's Levels of Culture model includes three distinct levels.

Level one consists of visible artifacts and creations,

level two explores values, while level three focuses on basic assumptions. Schein (1991) suggests that, as one moves from the first level to the third level, there is a decrease in visibility, awareness, consciousness and concreteness. Tangible evidence of its existence and its empirical testability becomes elusive. Each of Schein's levels is described below in detail, reflecting those constituent elements or facets important to assessing and understanding a culture.

Level I: Artifacts and Creations. The first level embraces the concept of visible variables that are consistent and monolithic, for example, artifacts, technology, symbols, physical plant, and visible and audible behavior patterns. Geertz (1973) concurred that symbols are invested with meanings, and because artifacts are primarily symbols of culture, they reflect significance and emotions that are meaningful to organization members.

Organizational members create rites, ceremonies, rituals, symbols, norms, myths, sagas and stories, rewards and punishments, formal and informal rules and guidelines, customs, language and behavioral patterns common to the organization, all of which affirm the meaning and presence of an organization's culture through its symbols (Bolman and Deal, 1991; Schein, 1991;).

Rites. Trice and Beyer (1984) view rites as relatively elaborate, dramatically presented sets of activities that

combine various forms of cultural expression in one unified and integrated event, usually a public event.

Trice and Beyer identified six different types of rites often found in organizations: (a) rites of passage, which facilitate the transition of new members to an insider status; (b) rites of enhancement, usually public celebrations of and positive reinforcement for member accomplishments; (c) rites of degradation, which dissolve social identities and their power; (d) rites of conflict resolution, which reduce conflict and aggression, and restore equilibrium; (e) rites of integration or reeducation, designed to foster bonding and commitment; and (f) rites of renewal, which attempt to refurbish social structures and improve their functioning.

Ceremonies. Deal and Kennedy (1982) contend that ceremonies assist organizations to celebrate heroes, myths, and sacred symbols, thus displaying culture in a memorable form. Trice and Beyer (1984) view ceremonies as comprising several rites connected to a single occasion (e.g., retirement, graduation, and awards ceremonies).

Rituals. Trice and Beyer (1984) view rituals as planned, discrete and standardized sets of techniques, behaviors or processes that manage anxieties but seldom produce technical consequences of practical importance (e.g., student orientation, welcome-backs). Rituals are thought to communicate meaning within an organization and to

external publics by calling attention to and transmitting important values, and patterns of collective actions and beliefs. The intent is that members hold up rituals as standards against which to measure future behavior. Rituals are designed to inform members what the standard routines are and how things should be. Rituals are intended to teach tradition, social solidarity and goal orientation. Whitt, Deal, and Kennedy (1982) observed that managers engage in extensive ritualistic behavior in the name of efficiency, including the co-ordination of activity, socializing, planning, decision-making, and formal meetings. While rituals are crucial to moulding a culture, Deal and Kennedy caution that over-reliance on ritualistic behavior may produce organizational dysfunction, increased conflict and impairment of productivity.

Symbols. Trice and Beyer (1984) describe a symbol as any object, act, event, quality, or relation that serves as a vehicle for conveying meaning, usually by representing another thing (e.g., logo, mascot). Tierney (1988) concluded that symbols exist in every organization, whether or not members are aware of them. He further regarded an organization void of symbolism as an organization void of human activity.

Norms. Norms are usually unwritten and informal influences and expectations affecting the behavior and performance of organizational members. They are more

visible than values or assumptions, so they provide a more concrete means of facilitating the understanding of organizational life. Allen and Kraft (1982) stated that norms are basic building blocks of organizational culture. Consequently, it is essential that they be understood.

Furthermore:

Norms are a universal phenomenon. They are necessary, tenacious, but also extremely malleable. Because they can change so quickly and easily, they present a tremendous opportunity to people interested in change. Any group, no matter what size, once it understands itself as a cultural entity, can plan its own norms, creating a positive one that will help it reach its goals. (p.58)

Norms are communicated in a variety of ways that provide actual and potential examples of what the organization stands for. Kilmann and Saxton (1983) suggested that most members are able to identify the norms that influence their work group and potential norms that would be more effective for improving productivity and morale.

Myths, Sagas and Stories. Written and oral presentations of critical events, incidents, and legends enrich an organization's cultural heritage. The accounts are moralistic revelations of more deeply embedded values and beliefs. Transmitted and frequently embellished over time, tales of institutional success and failures assist in establishing the context of norms and they shape future behaviors.

Myths are fabricated illusions to events, which may or

may not have occurred. Myths help to explain origins or transformations of principles, structures, or processes. Myths are often employed to rationalize changes in times of uncertainty or significant realignments or adjustments. Bjoer, Fedor, and Rowland (1982) suggest that myths serve five purposes: (a) legitimating institutional actions and consequences; (b) mediating political concerns and conflicting values; (c) describing causal relationships; (d) dealing with environmental turbulence; and (e) enriching the life of the organization and its members.

Stories are generally based on actual events or incidents and contain fact, fiction or both; stories enrich both myth and saga in a narrative fashion that can be passed on to others. According to Schein (1991), stories reinforce assumptions of organizational members and serve to teach assumptions to newcomers. Deal and Kennedy (1982) suggest that story-telling serves three purposes: (a) to maintain cohesion and provide guidelines for behavior; (b) to preserve institutional values by imparting legends about heroes, villains or taboos; and (c) to allegorically describe what it takes to succeed in the organization. Others have argued that stories reflect constituent beliefs about past events, increase commitment and loyalty, and reinforce other cultural artifacts.

Sagas are generally factual recounts of the organization's past. They relate past accomplishments by leaders, individuals or groups in a heroic fashion, binding

members to a set of beliefs and values. Organizational members add their own emotions and rationalizations to create strength in the saga.

Myths, stories, and sagas are symbolic and add cultural meaning to their setting. They help members understand and make sense of the organizational environments and create a sense of organizational comfort.

Level II: Values. The second level of Schein's (1991) model focuses on values that are evident and examinable in the physical environment, and examinable through social consensus. Values reveal how people explain and rationalize what they say and do as a collective group. The second level helps people make sense of the first level - artifacts. While values do not explain artifacts, they do give rise to them (Deal and Kennedy, 1982).

Schein (1991) concluded that values serve as links between artifacts and assumptions, explaining the obvious and providing a foundation for the development of deeper beliefs. Schein (1991), Deal and Kennedy (1982), Rokeach (1968), and Bolman and Deal (1991) collectively define a value as a single belief that transcendentally guides actions and judgements across objects, events, and situations. Organizational members develop and maintain a set of beliefs about what constitutes appropriate or inappropriate behaviors, and these beliefs can be ordered in importance (Goodstein, 1983). Schein (1991) suggested that values reflect what ought to be, as distinct from what is.

Schein pointed out that the values of a group do not evolve until they have been tested and debated as to their worth in guiding situations or in resolving power. Thus, organizational values become the norms espoused by members and regarded as truths. Values give rise to artifacts and provide the rationale for them. Eventually, values become embedded in the organization's philosophy, ideology and culture.

Espoused values are especially useful to organizational members when confronted with the uncertainty of uncontrollable or difficult events or incidents. Schein (1991) suggested that, if espoused values are reasonable matched to the way the organizational participants act, the integration of values in an operating philosophy can facilitate group cohesion by providing a source of identity and core mission. Peters and Waterman (1982) concur, pointing out that those strong cultures foster an intense sense of commitment to the work setting and organization.

Value Congruencies and Conflict. Research by Bolman and Deal (1991), Deal and Kennedy (1982), Peters and Waterman (1982), Sathe (1985), and Schein (1991), confirm the guiding role of values and the strength of values in determining an organization's degree of congruence or conflict. Value systems and their intrinsic power assist in the socialization of employees in a common direction or purpose.

Level III: Assumptions. Schein's (1991) third level focuses on what he refers to as basic assumptions. They are the core or essence of the culture, are invisible and are usually taken for granted. They are not debatable or confrontable. As a reality guide, assumptions exert a powerful influence over how people think, what they believe they should exhibit as acceptable behavior in various circumstances, and what they perceive as important. When values at this level are firmly entrenched and internalized, they are difficult to identify or to articulate. Schein (1991), termed these deeply embedded values, basic assumptions. Earlier research by Argyris and Schon (1974) refers to these values as "theories in use." Wilkins (1983), using terminology similar to that of Schein, also designated these values as assumptions and beliefs. He further proposed that, in order to understand basic assumptions and beliefs, researchers must examine artifacts and interview members in as much depth as possible. Kilmann (1985) suggested that members need to share their understanding of their organization's assumptions, values and beliefs in order to understand its essence.

Building on Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck's (1961) research, Schein (1991, p.86) postulated that culture paradigms form around five categories of basic assumptions. These he identified as follows: (a) humanity's relationship to nature; (b) the nature of reality and truth; (c) the nature of human nature; (d) the nature of human activity; and (e)

the nature of human relationships.

Humanity's relationship to nature. At the organizational level, how do key members view the relationship of the organization to its environment? Do they view it as one of dominance, submission, harmonizing, finding the appropriate niche, or do they view it in some other manner?

The nature of reality and truth. These are the linguistic and behavioral rules that define what is real and what is not, what is "fact," how truth is ultimately to be determined, and whether truth is "revealed" or "discovered." They also determine how time and space are cognitively structured.

The nature of human nature. What does it mean to be "human" and what attributes are considered intrinsic or ultimate: Is human nature good, evil, or neutral? Do we develop characteristics on our own, or are they developed in a "genetic" fashion?

The nature of human activity. What is the "right" activity for human beings to do, on the basis of the above assumptions about reality, the environment, and human nature? Are these active, passive, self-developing or fatalistic? What is work and what is play?

The nature of human relationships. What is considered to be the "right" way for people to relate to each other, to distribute power and love? Is life co-operative, individualistic, group collaborative, or communal? "Is it

lived out on traditional lineal authority, law, charisma, or on some other basis" (Schein, 1991, p.86)?

Schein (1991) maintains that group answers to the above areas will reveal underpinning assumptions governing individual and organizational behavior and perspectives. The more consensus in the answers, the stronger and more stable the organization. Schein maintains that cultural understanding comes from an examination of all three levels.

Hoy and Miskel (1996), proponents of the Schein model, suggest "that in strong cultures, beliefs and values are held intensely, shared widely, and guide organizational behavior"(p.132). They go on to caution that some may misinterpret a specific set of values as the definition of excellence in organizations; therefore, they qualify their thoughts by observing that what promoted excellence yesterday, does not necessarily promote it today or tomorrow. Furthermore, they state, "a strong culture can be a liability in times of rapid change because the organization's culture may be so ingrained that it prevents adaptation to new constraints"(p.132). It is very important for all members of an organization to be cognizant of this on an on-going conscious level.

In conclusion, the researcher has recognized the Schein model as the framework for guiding the study. It is the most comprehensive model, in terms of the breadth and depth of understanding and analyzing culture within an organization. As the combination of policies, practices,

and programs at the school are fundamental to the development of a culture at the selected school, the Schein model will serve as a conceptual framework, as the research questions are responded to by all stakeholders.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Chapter 3 contains a description of the research design, data collection, and data analysis procedures utilized in the study. Trustworthiness of the data is discussed along with a description of the specific measures taken to address this issue. The ethical considerations of the study, and the specific strategies adopted to address those considerations, are also detailed.

Research Design

A research design refers to the researcher's plan of how to proceed. Selecting a research design is determined by the particular subject being investigated, by the questions that it raises, and by the type of end product that is desired. The case study approach is one way of conducting educational research. Yin (1994) has suggested that the case study approach is the preferred strategy when "how" or "why" questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real-life context.

Case Study Approach

Qualitative research, in recent years, has been gaining widespread acceptance as a legitimate form of inquiry. Discussions of case studies are "embedded in the growing body of literature on qualitative research" (Merriam, 1988,

p.16). Merriam has suggested that this is so because "the logic of this type of research derives from the worldview of qualitative research which has, as its paramount objective, to understand the *meaning* of an experience" (p.16).

According to Merriam (1988), qualitative research:

assumes that there are multiple realities--that the world is not an objective thing out there but a function of personal interaction and perception. It is a highly subjective phenomenon in need of interpreting rather than measuring. Beliefs rather than facts form the basis of perception. Research is exploratory, inductive, and emphasizes processes rather than ends. In this paradigm there are no predetermined hypotheses, no treatments, and no restrictions on the end product. (p.17)

Merriam (1988) states that, although there are various kinds of case studies, they all share the following characteristics: they are particularistic in that they focus on a specific situation or phenomenon; they are descriptive, meaning that the end product is a rich, thick description of the phenomenon; they are heuristic--that is they offer insights into the phenomenon under study; and they are inductive--focusing on process, understanding, and interpretation--rather than deductive and experimental. (p.21)

The decision to use a particular research design as opposed to some other type of design depends on what the investigator wants to know. Merriam (1988) suggests that how the problem is defined and the questions it raises determine the study's design.

Because this study was designed to explore the

policies, practices, and programs that were perceived to be effective in reducing conflict and violence in a selected elementary school, it was decided that a case study approach would be optimal. It would permit the researcher to spend a considerable amount of time in the school, talking to teachers, informally and formally. The use of interviews was seen to be an optimal method of gaining insights about their personal reflections regarding the policies, practices, and programs in use at their school.

Site Selection and Access

In February of 1996 the researcher was given formal approval by the school district where the research was to take place, to contact the principal of the school within its jurisdiction, to ascertain whether or not the principal, the staff, and members of the school council would be interested in participating in the study.

The researcher was interested in selecting an elementary school that had a positive reputation, as seen by the school district's upper-level management, with respect to perceptions about its school culture and its discipline management effectiveness. The selected school was suggested through an extensive consultative process involving principals of various junior high schools who were aware of the reputation of their feeder schools. Also used as criteria for the selection of the schools were the responses that were collected from the yearly survey that all schools completed. Insight and guidance were also sought from

specialized personnel in the district's central office who worked in elementary schools as their major role in their job description.

Having narrowed the number of possibilities to three schools, the researcher visited each one and approximately one week later arranged to meet with the principal of the first school on the priority list. The school was old, constructed of brick, located in a large urban centre. The student population was approximately 200. It was located in a low to medium socio-economic area, as determined by the perceptions of the respondents.

The meeting involved a discussion of the researcher's proposed study, the method of conducting the study, and the timeline for tentative visits to the school. The principal of this school expressed enthusiasm for the proposed study and offered to take this idea to the staff at the staff meeting that week.

The response from the staff was overwhelmingly positive and the entire staff agreed verbally to be involved. It is believed, by the researcher, that this particular staff were proud of the school they worked at and subsequently were interested in further insights, in terms of why their school was seen to be effective. The researcher visited the school, was able to meet the staff informally and spent the day at the school visiting classrooms.

Data Collection

The interview method of data collection was chosen as

it provided the researcher an opportunity to understand more fully the perceptions of the participants as they described the various policies, practices, and programs in place at their school. The researcher provided the principal with copies of the written consent to participate in the study for all 17 staff members, and the two parents, to complete in preparation for the interviews. In consultation with the principal, it was agreed that an effective method of scheduling interviews would be to bring in a substitute teacher to release staff during the school day, and eliminate the need to have staff arrive early in the morning, use their lunch hour, or stay after school. The schedule was set by the principal because she had knowledge of all the teachers' schedules. The principal recommended the two parents of the school council who were interviewed. This decision was based on the fact that one of the parents had three of her children attend the school over approximately 12 years. The other parent had a child in one of the behavior disordered classrooms and subsequently could provide a unique perspective.

Over a three-day period, the researcher conducted the interviews in the infirmary of the school. This location was ideal in that disruptions were virtually non-existent and participants could concentrate on the interview and the questions. A semi-structured interview schedule was used. The audio-taped interviews were framed in order to address the research questions.

Data were collected from the interviews at the school site. The researcher also kept notes during and following the interviews, as it was necessary to record impressions and observations in the form of field notes. In addition, the researcher analyzed policies of the school that reflected the philosophy, responsibilities, and expectations of the various stakeholders.

A pilot investigation of the interview questions and method of data collection was conducted with two doctoral students in educational administration who had experience at the elementary level. These pilot interviews provided insight to the researcher in a number of critical areas including the length of time the interviews would take, and the appropriateness of the interview questions. They also provided the opportunity to generate a list of probing questions. This process assisted the researcher in considering themes that may surface during the data analysis phase. In addition, the researcher was provided valuable feedback on interviewing style and involvement while the interviews were conducted.

Data Analysis

The interviews and data were content-analyzed and summarized by using the approaches and strategies outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985). This process involved reading through the transcripts of the interviews three times. The first read provided the researcher with a general "feel" for the responses and triggered initial major categories or

themes that emerged. The second read permitted more definitive categories to emerge, as they became clearer with respect to the general overlapping of responses. The third read was a very important step as it permitted some categories to be collapsed and others to be sub-divided further.

Trustworthiness

The issue of trustworthiness of the study is central to ensuring that the research is reliable and valid. In this study, the four criteria of trustworthiness suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1985): credibility (truth-value), transferability (applicability), dependability (consistency), and confirmability (neutrality), (pp.289-331) addressed the trustworthiness of the data and the interpretations of those data.

Credibility

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that credibility is the extent to which those who were the sources of the data (p.296) see findings and interpretations as credible. The issue of member checks is an important strategy to ensure credibility. This involved verifying both the data and the interpretations with those participants who provided the specific data that the researcher collected and interpreted. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen (1993) cautioned that "no data obtained through the study should be included in it if they cannot be verified through member checks" (p.31). All respondents received a transcript of

their particular interview. They received these approximately five weeks following the actual interview. The researcher hand-delivered these to the school and placed them in sealed envelopes in their respective mailboxes in the staff room. Each was asked to verify the accuracy of the transcript, and was invited to modify it by either deleting or adding to the transcript. This procedure provided each respondent the opportunity to reflect on their responses to the research questions. Each interview was numbered, in random order. The sealed envelopes in which they provided feedback was turned in to the school secretary, who checked off the numbers when she received them in her mailbox each day. This process took approximately four weeks until all, but one, was returned. The individual who did not return his/her transcript was only on a temporary contract at the school and had left during the "feedback" time period.

The respondents were provided with a copy of the interpretations of the findings, approximately two months later, and were asked to respond to them. This was done using the same strategy for receiving feedback on the transcripts.

Transferability

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), "an inquiry is judged in terms of the extent to which its findings can be applied in other contexts or with other respondents" (p.290). The transferability of the findings of this

particular study will be determined by readers based on the extent to which they believe the context of this study matches the context of their own. The presentation in the final dissertation of "thick" descriptions, being the in-depth number of quotations relating to the various questions that were posed, also provides the necessary information to facilitate comparisons with other contexts and to test the "degree of fittingness" (Guba, 1981, p.86) with these contexts.

Dependability

Dependability refers to "an inquiry being able to provide its audience with evidence that if it were replicated with the same or similar respondents in the same or similar context, its findings would be repeated" (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.290). Le Compte and Goetz (1982) stated that "reliability [dependability] refers to the extent to which studies can be replicated"(p.35). Checking for dependability, as suggested by Erlandson et al. (1993), involves an external check being conducted on the processes by which the study was conducted (p.34). This can be accomplished by "providing an 'audit trail' that provides documentation (through critical incidents, documents, and interview notes) and a running account of the process (such as the investigator's journal) of the inquiry" (p.34). Interview notes, as well as observational notes, were maintained by the researcher.

Confirmability

The final criterion outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985) is that "an inquiry is judged in terms of the degree to which its findings are the product of the focus of its inquiry and not the biases of the researcher" (p.290). They go on to state that "this means that data (construction, assertions, facts, and so on) can be tracked to their sources, and that the logic used to assemble the interpretations into structurally coherent and corroborating wholes is both explicit and implicit" (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p.243). The combination of the researcher's notes, assistance of colleagues in the PhD program, as well as consultation on an on-going basis with the researcher's supervisor and supervisory team, in determining the categories throughout the interpretation process, addresses the Confirmability issue.

Ethical Considerations

No ethical problems occurred in the study. Involvement by participants was voluntary. They were advised that they could withdraw at any time during the study. No physical or mental harm to participants was intended or realized; the interests and protection of research subjects was safeguarded at all times. Respondents were not identified in any way. Opinions and information provided was treated confidentially. The interviews on the audio-tapes were obliterated at the conclusion of the study. The researcher was sufficiently knowledgeable about relevant literature,

procedures, risk, and possible uses to which the results of this study could be used. In accordance with the University of Alberta requirements, the research, at the proposal stage, was submitted for review to the Ethics Review Committee of the Department of Educational Policy Studies.

Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the research design and the methodological procedures that were used in this study. A case study approach was determined by the researcher as the most appropriate method to meet the purposes of the study. The chapter also addressed concerns related to the trustworthiness of the data as well as ethical considerations.

Chapter 4

POLICIES IN THE SELECTED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Policies that were investigated for this particular research endeavor include those policies in print as outlined in the Student and Parent Handbook for 1995-96. This document is perhaps the most important information source, as it is the only reference that parents and students have available for clarification of information and interpretation of the school's policies and procedures. In addition to the Handbook, the other source utilized for the study included the specific policies as recalled by all stakeholders who were interviewed.

The Handbook

The Student and Parent Handbook was distributed to every family and staff in the school. It was a 26-page document that listed the staff of the school, the Trustee appointed to the schools' area, and the Superintendent of Schools for the district.

The Table of Contents was listed next. It included the following:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| ● Hours of Operation | The District's Mission Statement |
| ● Calendar of Events | School Profile |
| ● School Philosophy | School Service Standards |
| ● The District's Priorities Plan | School 1995-96 Budget Results for 1993-96 |
| ● Parent Advisory Council | Lunch Program |
| ● Assemblies | Awards |
| ● Classroom Organization | Student Achievement and |

Growth

- How to Help Your Child's Progress
 - Study Skills
 - Extra-Curricular Activities
 - Supervision
 - Cold Weather Policy
 - Punctuality
 - Use of Phone
 - Student Supplies
 - Junk Food Policy
 - Newsletters
 - Bus Passes
 - The School's Expectations
Student Behavior Conduct
- Consulting Services Team
 - Field Trips
 - Early Departure
 - Absence Check
 - Parent Resource Room
 - Student Footwear
 - Bicycles
 - Personal Property
 - Medication Policy
 - Emergency Plan
 - Good as Gold

Each of the above was described in detail so that the school's staff, students, and parents were well informed. Most of the policies were described in a paragraph or two. Only a few required greater detail, including: (in order of appearance in the document)

- Awards: two pages
- Student Achievement and Growth: one and a half pages
- The School's Expectations for Student Behavior and Conduct: five pages

Awards

The awards were presented throughout the year and ranged from informal recognition at the classroom level to the presentation of certificates. Each month students had the opportunity to work toward a number of awards. Up to six students per month from each class could be recognized by the classroom teacher. There was emphasis on the opportunity for all students to earn an award at some time during the school year.

Types of awards included:

- *Achievement Award*

Students who produced outstanding results in accordance with individual abilities were eligible for this award. At the discretion of the teacher, this award was given in any subject area. This award was to be given only once to a particular student during a given school year.

- *Big Effort*

At the discretion of the teacher, awards were given to students who demonstrated an effort to:

- display a positive/pleasant attitude towards themselves, learning, and the school;
- reduce their number of Quiet Room referrals and detentions;
- improve their attendance;
- improve their punctuality (reduced number of lates);
- improve their organization skills;
- improve their listening skills;
- complete their assignments
- work independently;
- to improve their behavior/manners in the lunch room.

- *Music Award*

The music award was presented to one student in Division 1 and one student in Division 2. Criteria included:

- Participation in all music activities with enthusiasm;
- Putting his/her best effort into all music activities and encouraging others to do the same;
- A good understanding of the music theory and concepts discussed in class;

- A satisfactory level of skill when singing or playing an instrument.

- *Citizenship Award*

This award was presented at the discretion of each teacher to students who demonstrated outstanding qualities, which contributed to a positive, caring atmosphere at the school. Criteria included:

- Exemplification of good citizenship qualities by showing consistent, polite respect for all students and teachers;
- Demonstration and promotion of positive, affirming relationships with peers;
- The taking of initiative and provision of leadership in situations that required creative resolutions to conflict;
- Having no record of serving Quiet Rooms or Detentions in the month prior to the award;
- The award was given only once to a particular student in a given school year.

- *Sportsmanship Award*

This award was presented to a student in each classroom on a monthly basis. At the discretion of the teacher, the award was presented to students who:

- Contributed to team activities;
- Played considerately;
- Accepted losses in good spirits;
- Accepted wins humbly;
- Encouraged team mates;
- Shared equipment;
- Were team players;
- Were respectful of official's decisions.

Once again, this particular award was given only once to a particular student during a given school year.

- *Environmental Award*

This award was presented to students who demonstrated:

- Enthusiasm in practising environmental habits;
- Encouragement of others to be environmentally conscious;
- Participation in environmental projects;
- Responsibility for environmental action.

The number of times this award was presented was not delineated in the Handbook.

Student Achievement and Growth

The assessment and evaluation of student work was outlined as an ongoing process incorporating a variety of methods, taking into consideration the whole child. Three stages in the process of assessment, evaluation, and communication of student achievement and growth were identified.

- Collection (*Assessment was identified as the process of collecting information on student achievement and performance*)

Methods in assessing students' achievement that all teachers used included:

- Observation
- Oral and written tests
- Performance assessments
- Teacher developed tests
- District and externally developed tests
- Portfolios; collections of dated student work over time
- Interviews and questions
- Student writing journals

Additionally, some teachers used the following methods:

- Student self-assessment
 - Learning logs
 - Peer assessment
- Selection (Evaluation was identified as a judgement made, utilizing assessment information, relative to the graded curriculum)

It was noted that teachers at the school make judgements of achievement, performance, and effort during the school year.

- Achievement (defined as demonstration of knowledge, skills and attitudes that students were expected to learn at a specified grade level) was judged by comparing a student's work to the requirements of the graded curriculum.
- Performance (defined as how well a student demonstrated grade level expectations), was determined by judging student work relative to agreed-upon criteria and samples. Performance was rated by letter grades. It was noted that, for consistency, the following comparison applied:

Letter Grades	Percentage Grades	Descriptors
A	80-100	Work meets standard of Excellence
B	65-79	Work exceeds Acceptable Standard
C	50-64	Work meets Acceptable Standard
D	0-49	Work does not meet Acceptable Standard

- Effort (defined as the demonstration of feelings and motivation for learning) was determined by consideration of attendance, general attitude, and willingness to learn and apply oneself.

This Effort was reported in terms of:

- E Excellent
- S Satisfactory
- N Not Satisfactory

Finally, *growth* was included in this category. It was defined as the evidence of positive change in student achievement over time. This growth was determined from a comparison of annual levels of achievement.

- Reporting

Three formal reporting periods were identified. Individual Program Plans were written for students with special needs. It was noted that at the end of each reporting period, students and staff celebrated student learning through:

- Parent/Teacher Conferences in which student work was shown and progress was interpreted.
- Written Progress Reports documented student progress in each subject area. A report was sent home prior to the conference. Parents were encouraged to read the report and bring it to the conference.

Parents were encouraged to contact their child's teacher at any time to arrange an appointment to discuss methods of assessment, individual student goals and results, as well as curriculum expectations.

The School's Expectations for Student Behavior and Conduct

This section was by far the most detailed and comprehensive section of the Handbook. It began with a brief paragraph, philosophical in nature, to set the stage for the policy, then continued by outlining four objectives of the policy. They were:

1. To improve communication between students, parents and the school concerning expectations for appropriate student behavior.
2. To assist students in the development of respect for the rights, feelings, and property of others.
3. To assist students in the development of self-control and a positive self-concept.
4. To make students aware that they are accountable for their decisions and actions.

The policy consisted of three major components:

- A. Recognition of appropriate student behavior.
- B. Expectations of how students will behave.
- C. The steps followed when students choose not to cooperate.

Recognition of Appropriate Behavior

Here the policy stated that the school supported and rewarded appropriate behavior through many different ways. It went on to provide examples such as verbal praise, smiles, special privileges, special helpers, stickers, special jobs, lunch with a teacher, phone calls, and recognition through weekly and monthly awards.

The Four School Rules:

1. Students will show respect for authority and follow rules.
2. Students will show concern and respect for themselves and others.
3. Students will show respect toward personal and school property.
4. Students will take responsibility for their part in the learning process.

Next, the policy outlined the distinction between rules and consequences noting that the teacher and students jointly developed them. Classroom rules were posted and brought to the attention of students, and reviewed along with examples throughout the year. The consequence for not following school and classroom rules were explained to the students, which would allow each student a choice and therefore placed ownership of the behavior with the student.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

Five rights and five responsibilities were presented. Any behavior which interferes with the following student rights, is unacceptable.

RIGHTS	RESPONSIBILITY
1. Everyone has the right to be safe in the school.	1. My responsibility is to make sure that no one feels threatened or in danger.
2. Everyone has the right for his/her property to be safe.	2. My responsibility is to respect other people's property.

3. Everyone has the right to be happy in the school.

3. My responsibility is to treat others with care and to respect others' differences.

4. Everyone has the right to learn.

4. My responsibility is to follow the rules of the school and to support the right of others to learn.

5. Everyone has the right to hear and be heard.

5. My responsibility is to value others' points of view and to express mine in a respectful way.

Consequences for Not Following Class Rules

Each class was expected to develop, post, and practice class rules, consequences and rewards. The policy then outlined seven steps when classroom rules were not followed. They were:

Step 1 *Low Key Strategies*: the teacher would use strategies such as verbal reminders, standing close to the student, eye contact, etc., as interventions to stop inappropriate behavior.

Step 2 *Detention (optional)*: students were assigned 15 or 30 minutes in the Detention room or classroom after school. During this time they were required to complete teacher assigned work. Attendance was taken and there was teacher supervision. Teachers all rotated through on this responsibility. If the assigned time was more than 15 minutes, then students were required to phone home and inform their parents.

Step 3 *Informal Talk*: the teacher would talk privately with the student to develop a plan to change behavior.

Step 4 *Behavior Plan*: an individualized plan was developed and tailored to identify goals, rewards and consequences. Parents were informed.

Step 5 *Student Plan of Action*: the teacher, principal, parents, and student were involved in developing a Student Plan of Action that was acceptable to all parties. All parties were required to sign the Plan.

Step 6 *In-School Suspension*: the parent was notified that the student would be serving a suspension of one half to five days in the school's Study Room. The student was required to bring a lunch when suspended from class for one or more days. The student was expected to complete teacher assigned work before returning to class.

Step 7 *Out-of-School Suspension*: the parent was notified that the student was suspended from school for one to five days. During this time the student was required to complete teacher assigned work.

Major Offences

Students who were involved in major offences (defined as *serious* instances of misbehavior) were to be brought to the office to see the principal or principal designate. These offences were those which:

1. Threatened the safety or dignity of others.
2. Interfered with or threatened the orderly functioning of the school.
3. Were repetitions of minor offences. The recurrence of these offences and failure of a

student to change his/her behavior fell into this category.

It was noted that *any activity that involved violence was considered to be a major offence.*

The principal, the student and, if possible, the staff member would discuss the chain of events that led to the serious misbehavior. Parents were informed about the incident, the consequence, and the plan of action. The severity of the situation determined the consequences. It was stated that, if a student were involved in serious instances of misbehavior, then parents *would be involved* with the school in working out a behavior change plan. The following actions were identified as possible consequences for serious misbehavior:

1. Logical consequences (e.g. Cleaning up mess, restitution of damaged property);
2. Withdrawal of privileges including recess, intramurals, clubs, field trips;
3. In-School suspension of one half to five days;
4. Referral to outside agencies;
5. Out-of-School suspension for one to five days.

The following statement was included concerning Major Offences:

Please remember that MOST students behave appropriately and will never be involved in procedures for major offences.

Consequences for Misbehavior Outside of the Classroom

Students were assigned to the *Quiet Room* by a staff

member after the demonstration of inappropriate behavior on the playground and in the lunchroom, hallways, entrances, washrooms, or coming to and from school. The Quiet Room was in operation during recess. During this time, students were expected to complete work assigned by their classroom teacher. Parents were to be informed if a student's Quiet Room referrals totaled five per month for grades 1 and 2 or 10 per month for grades 3 to 6.

When a student was assigned to the Quiet Room the misbehavior was discussed with the student. The classroom teacher was also to discuss the misbehavior with the student and emphasize appropriate behavior choices. Following are a list of behaviors that would warrant time in the Quiet Room:

Inappropriate Behavior (one period in the Quiet Room)

- Verbal teasing or name calling
- Gum chewing
- Running in hallway
- Bike riding on playground
- Boots or outside shoes on in hall
- Lining-up with another class
- Rough housing
- Inappropriate use of playground equipment

Disrespectful Behavior (two periods in the Quiet Room)

- Swearing, disrespectful/abusive language
- Spitting
- Throwing objects (snowballs)
- Lining-up late
- Pushing in line
- In out-of-bounds area

Defiance of Authority and Endangering Safety of Self or Others (*three periods in the Quiet Room*)

- Physically abusive behavior
- Damaging property
- Leaving school grounds
- Coming into the school before the bell rings without permission
- Staying in the school without permission
- Poor school ambassador (if a member of the community reports an incident of misbehavior to the school)
- Skipping Quiet Room

As well, students who came late to school would have to make up for lost time in the Quiet Room. Any infractions by students in grades 1 or 2 would result in only *one* period in the Quiet Room. The Rules for the Quiet Room follow:

1. No talking or noise making.
2. Students complete work assigned by their homeroom teacher.

The Interviews

Each participant in the study agreed to be interviewed. This particular section includes samples of participants' responses to the six guiding questions that related specifically to policies at this school. Each sample is representative of a unique contribution that provides insight into the question that was asked; and ultimately the themes that emerged. Appendix C lists the entire Interview Schedule. Responses were clustered into the following four categories or questions:

1. What policies does your school and classroom have in place that address student conduct or behavioral expectations?

2. Who was involved in the development of the policies and when did this come about?
3. Why did these policies come about? Were they developed on a proactive or reactive basis?
4. What has been the reaction to the policies?

What policies does your school and classroom have in place that address student conduct or behavioral expectations?

Overall, the entire school staff, of 17, and the two parents who were interviewed, had a range of awareness of the policies of their school. The parents' responses were considered to be in the "good" range, whereas the staff's responses were excellent, as determined by the researcher in comparing the relative familiarity with the published policies in the Handbook.

Parents

One parent, whose family had involvement with the construction of the school itself, stated:

Well, actually my father's family came to this area. I think it was in 1912. We've just done a history book on the community because it was the anniversary of the community league, the 75th anniversary this year. So he helped, actually, to carry bricks or whatever when it was originally being built. I went here in the, probably late 1950's, 1956. I have three children and they've all gone through here.

I think mostly I notice even in my kids they're much more open. They find it easier to talk to their teachers. I know when I was in grade one, being scared silly to say any words. And, speaking for my children, I think it's great that they respect the teachers yet they don't have anything holding them back from going up and speaking their minds. They're more outgoing that way.

Here, in the last few years they've set up a definite conduct book and the consequences and what not. And I don't remember having anything definite like that

before.

This parent eluded to the apparent openness that this school had in terms of being able to speak to teachers and not feel intimidated by them. Also noted was the concrete description of expectations and consequences that this school had, relative to her schooling years.

Another parent also made reference to the policy after putting into perspective the reasons why she transferred her son to this particular school:

My older son was diagnosed most recently with the last year and a half, as having Tourette's Syndrome. Previously he'd been diagnosed as having attention deficit, and it looks like there's a bit of an obsessive-compulsive disorder in there. Prior to having the diagnosis, from kindergarten, grade one, two and three, we've gone through a whole battery of tests to try to find out and isolate what the issues were. His last teacher, she was going through personal problems and such and she didn't have the patience to deal with my son. I found that the environment became abusive and I transferred him here.

The discipline policy was one of the very first things that was handed to me. It was laid out. It was clear-cut. The children are aware of the expectations. It's something that is incorporated throughout the classroom activity, in all facets of what they do. And it was nice to see. I hadn't seen that at the other school, which was unfortunate because I tried to get some idea as to what consistency was and there didn't seem to be. Here, they're aware of consequence and action and it's promoting accountability and responsibility. Those are things that I find valuable.

These comments made reference to the fact that a discipline policy was in place at the school and that it was adhered to on a consistent basis.

Support Staff

It was found that other staff members, non-teaching

staff, were aware of the policies, probably to a greater extent than the parents. But then, they work at the school on a daily basis and are most definitely an integral part of the overall team.

Their unique contributions included:

In our parent handbook I know that they have a policy to bring out students who have inappropriate behavior and to try to correct that behavior. That's a policy, to make students aware that their behavior is inappropriate and go through the steps to correct that. That's a policy. They have the awards system in place here. Once a month they have the assembly. And the 'Good as Gold' luncheons and the ribbons and certificates. That's really important.

The handbook is handed out at the beginning of the school year. It's discussed with parents and the community, sort of on an ongoing basis. It's addressed at staff meetings. They are to behave here as, in a reasonable sense, as they would at home. There are policies that come forth at the beginning of the year through the newsletters and they're in the rooms as well for everyone to read, in a conspicuous place, as to those items.

This group identified the handbook and how well it is laid out as an important contributor to the policies. They also highlighted the behavior policy and rewards systems in place.

Certainly, the teaching staff was most familiar with the policies of the school, as they were the stakeholder group that implemented the policies on an ongoing basis. As there were various degrees of awareness overall, for the purposes of comparison this writer has chosen to group the responses into three distinct groupings; the teaching assistants, the primary teachers, and the upper elementary teachers group that included the principal.

Teaching Assistants

The teaching assistants emphasized the expectations that staff had for the students at the school. They referred to a strict policy that enabled teachers to carry out their duties as far as teaching the curriculum was concerned. Reference was also made to the points system in place, in some classrooms, that worked as an incentive for students to maintain positive behavior.

Responses were most interesting and included:

We expect that when the teacher tells the children that it's her teaching time or her time to talk, we expect that they are going to sit and listen. If they don't listen then they are asked to go to time-out chairs. They sit there just long enough for them to realize that they're supposed to be listening to what the teacher says. Depending on the situation, of course, too.

When they come to the library, I inform them of what I expect. I don't expect the same behavior that you do in the classroom, simply because they have a little more freedom. I want them to feel comfortable in the library. I don't want them to feel intimidated and I don't really believe firmly in the really quiet atmosphere. I try to keep them on task. If there are groups and they're talking about books and they are not out of hand, then that's okay. Once they start tearing around and, then that's when I run into problems. But I always have principal support, always have teacher support. If they misbehave and I can't deal with the situation myself I have all those backups.

Behavior-wise, there's a very strict policy, but it's for all students. I think basically what we're trying to do is to teach all of these children the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic. But without the good behavior it's very difficult to do this. So we find that we have to work a lot on the behavior first in order to get the basic that we want to do.

In our classroom we use a point sheet where the students come in and they have 17 points at the beginning of the day. And whether a student keeps

those points is up to him, through his behavior. The students are aware of the behaviors that are there. We have calling out at their desks, name-calling, aggressive behavior, attitude, those are just some of the things they can lose points on. So in our room, that sort of policy is brought to the students at the beginning of the year and enforced throughout...everyday. Outside policies are the school policies. Things for safety like no snowball throwing; they get quiet rooms, running in the halls, they get quiet rooms.

Primary Teachers

The primary teachers noted the importance of developing classroom rules with their students and having them aware of the steps of their classroom discipline plan, and the consequences that followed, for inappropriate behavior. They also stressed that support of the parents was an important link in the system.

They included such important quotations as:

At the beginning of the year in September, I sit down with the children and they make up their own rules. And they're made up on the basis of how the children see themselves as being treated. So with politeness, we have to be polite. Please and thank-you are important. The big one is 'no pushing', the physical meanness. Those are just reinforced during the year; that we treat each other with kindness. It also comes up in social in emotional health and we cover it again. Whether it's inside or outside the school there is a quiet room policy. For example, if one child pushes another child on the playground, they lose one recess. They get privileges taken away.

I find for myself the biggest help has been a close involvement of parents. I find that if students know that their parents know that there is a problem and you're talking to that parent daily or weekly, the behavior improves dramatically. In some situations it's even meetings, weekly meetings with parents. And also homework books, where you can write about what kind of day the student's had as well. So that would be initiated and there's that continuing communication between home and school.

Because it is a 'young grade' classroom, we have to always go gentle when we're disciplining the children and we're explaining expectations to them because they are really in the initial stages of the learning process. The policies that we follow in the classroom are patterned very much on the school discipline policy, which is outlined in the handbook. And, you know it crosses over very easily into the classroom.

Well, because I teach the little, little ones, they're very basic. Very clear. Basically this school is a safe, happy place for everyone who comes. Everyone has the right to be who they are here and to be safe. We have a basic system of just 1-2-3 warnings. Because we learn by having a chance to make mistakes. And depending on the child and the incident, it's for a short time, but it depends on the child. The younger children are not part of the quiet room system, but they know all about it.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

This group of teachers emphasized the need for the establishment of rules and consequences, and the use of the Quiet room. They also referred to recess and after-school behavior and how the school dealt with those problems. The responses from these teachers that capsulated what they felt was important follows:

What comes to mind is that we have set up rules and regulations and there are definite consequences if these are broken. And the kids know it. The expectation is that students do 'community service' when they break classroom rules. Community service includes washing dishes, picking up stuff off the floor, emptying compost buckets, etc.

I think we have a pretty good system of setting up rules. We have our quiet room policy that deals with misbehavior outside the classroom. And we also have steps in place where misbehavior in the classroom, if it's escalated, it gets dealt with in study room, time-out, and then our conduct policy also deals with in-school and out-of-school suspension. So we have a wide variety of steps that are consistent for misbehavior, that you know that if you have a talk with your teacher, the next step is that you're going to get

phone contact with the parent and then you're going to end up with more severe consequences, a behavior plan with principal. Those policies are set out in the student handbook and make sure that all parents and students are aware.

We have recess rules particularly; if for example, kids do not behave in a certain way, they get quiet rooms. Which means they miss recess. And that is our school-wide way of dealing with problems outside. They're also supposed to behave in a certain way in the hall. They carry hall passes if they go out of their classroom during school time. That way we know that they have permission to be out.

If there's bad behavior of the kids on their way home and the neighborhood people complain, which has happened a few times, that is dealt with in the school.

After the kids are finished lunch, the lunch kids go outside and lunch aides (two of them) stay outside on supervision. Usually there're four people outside; teachers or aides at any given recess. The ratio is pretty high. And I think that helps. We also have things like grade six's that are door monitors.

Who was involved in the development of the policies and when did this come about?

Awareness of the development of the school's policies also ranged from limited knowledge to a very thorough understanding of how they were developed over time. The major factor that contributed to the diverse understandings appeared to be the length of time that the individual had been at the school or had children attending the school.

Parents

It was clear that these parents felt that they, as a parent group, did provide input into policy development. This input was provided primarily through the School Council meetings. The development of the policies as highlighted by

the parents are encapsulated in the following comments:

Actually, just in the last couple of years this occurred. Basically, I recall last year. Well, I know that the teachers and the principal, of course, and even myself as a member of the PAC are definitely consulted and any contributions we have are definitely considered.

Yes, there was a change in the policies and I think it was parents that were involved. I know parents would have had input, as I recall some of the discussions at the time. That whole topic came up at the table. There was quite a bit of discussion on it. The principal was wonderful in explaining a lot of stuff. It's just one of those things, but the principal handled it very well.

Support Staff

The support staff also had involvement in the development of the policies as members of the school staff. Each seemed to have his/her own degree of involvement as it affected him/her directly. One particular staff made the following reference to their involvement:

Well, I was partly involved because I had a concern about the cleanliness of the school and the way the school was being left at the end of the day before cleanup began, in the classrooms. This all started about the spring of 1991 under a different principal. It was generally agreed upon by most of the staff because there were other related issues as well. They were talked about during staff meetings in the spring and then they were implemented the following fall. Now with the new principal I know that I've got them in a newsletter form, and on the wall of my office. But it's information that should be somewhere in a conspicuous place. It's handed out at the beginning of the school year. It's discussed with parents and the community, sort of on an ongoing basis.

Teaching Assistants

The teaching assistants articulated that they were involved in the development of the policies and that their contributions were provided formally at the staff meetings.

Two particularly important comments follow:

At the school level, the staff is definitely involved in all of them. At the beginning of the year or any time during the year at staff meetings. This staff at this school is definitely involved in all the policies, or anything, with regard to anything that goes on. It's excellent that way in this school. In the classroom, there's always in our room two people in the room at all times. We have, generally, weekly meetings, sometimes daily meetings, because we change the way things are done quite often. But it's always done together. The school policies are also always a together thing. It's never, I don't think, very rarely something comes down from administration that we do not get a say in discussing.

What I hear is that because of the area that this school is in, it's kind of a rough area. And before certain people started at the school there were no set policies, but once these policies were set, like the quiet rooms and quiet lunches there were things that just happened in the school. Since these have come into effect the school has become a much safer and much more enjoyable place to be at.

Primary Teachers

This group of teachers eluded to the fact that the principal and the staff, with input from the parents, formed the policies. It was noted that there were policies in place, but they were taken to a "new level" upon the arrival of the new principal, who has been at the school for the past three years. These teachers' important quotations include:

The principal and the staff, to start with. I believe the parents have been involved too at the meetings, the parent council meetings that are at the school. The principal meets with them, along with a few teachers. It's pretty much whoever would like to come, plus I think there has been a teacher that has been elected to sit in every time as well. I know that they have had some input as well. I don't know how much input the students have had, but I think it's mostly been staff.

The school policy was set up by the staff shortly after the new principal came onto staff. We sat together and had several very intense sessions discussing what we felt would be an effective discipline policy for the school. What would work for us, as teachers, within the community that we're working with, and the children that we're working with. We looked at what were realistic expectations, what would be realistic follow-through and what could be a common discipline plan that everyone could adopt. Then from there we started talking about different classroom policies; what were general expectations in the classroom. Each teacher took it from there and used their own style and their own expectations and adapted it to their classroom. Because our school discipline policy focuses very much on discipline outside the classroom, at recess time, and in the halls we had to set up an after-school D.T.[Detention Room] to support what was going on in the classrooms. It was set up as a consequence and children from the classrooms went there. But there's been such an improvement in discipline in the school that that wasn't really deemed necessary by many teachers this year. Consequently, we haven't had an after-school D.T. room this year.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

This group of teachers confirmed other comments that indeed the development of the policies was initiated by staff, and also by the principal herself. There was input provided by parents directly at the School Council meetings. Students, parents, and staff all contributed in some way via the questionnaires they completed each year. Staff considered the responses and made appropriate adjustments to the policies based on this form of feedback. Their most significant responses included:

When I first came here I noticed that there were a lot more misbehaviors than I did in a smaller school setting with a different population. So I found that very different. You know, people have to be willing to make changes that are on a positive note. When the new principal came to our school, the quiet room was proposed as a way of dealing with misbehaviors out on the playground. We all agreed that most behaviors

within the classroom, we could maintain. Most of us could maintain it in a positive light. I think that when you have a principal that is interested in being very firm, then you've got it made. I think that there has to be support from your administration, so that when things don't work there's someone there to say, "Oh, but it is going to work, but you do have to follow these rules." This school believes this and so I think that helps a lot. We have all sat down and helped to write our policy together, which I think makes sure everyone buys into it. I think that's a key point. We're part of the process, so we have ownership for it and that's why it works for us.

Well, the students, parents, staff and administration fill out a survey. It's tabulated by the school board. The questions are tabulated and then we get the results back and we can look at the kind of concerns, and how many parents are in favor of others. The same with the students, and staff. I think that the quiet room came about as there were some concerns about behavior out on the playground; what do we do when such-and-such happens? And at first we used to have a lot of kids sitting in the office. And so from there we moved to also look at having an alternative, which the study and quiet rooms are, because they have to bring work with them, appropriate work. So in a way we're always looking after their learning. If you are happily engaged in learning, you're less likely to be misbehaving.

Why did these policies come about? Were they developed on a proactive or reactive basis?

The responses for the rationale of the development of the policies varied between the respondents. Some viewed it as needed, and therefore reactive, given the discipline problem at the school. Others viewed the implementation as a proactive move, that reflected societal changes with respect to conduct and behavioral expectations.

Parents

This was the only area in which parents did not provide feedback. After reviewing the transcripts in detail the

writer recognized that this particular aspect of the policy development was not included in their interviews, a clear oversight by the researcher.

Support Staff

The support staff responses were mixed in that some indicated that discipline, in general, needed to be reviewed, whereas others indicated that they were not clear why it was being addressed, given their brief time on this particular school staff. Examples included:

I think because our discipline was getting out of hand. And I don't think we have agreement on how we felt discipline should be handled. I think it was just sort of out of hand.

I think it was a combination of being proactive and reactive in nature. However, I was at another school before this issue was addressed originally, so I certainly showed up somewhat in the middle of it. It was already a talked-about issue.

Teaching Assistants

This particular group felt that it was developed for the health and welfare of the students, as a result of the change in administration. Significant comments included the following:

I think the particular reason would have been just for the health and welfare of the students. This has to come first. I know that the issues we did discuss were sometimes a reaction to something that happened, but generally not. Generally it's a discussion on what we think would be the best for the students.

Probably it developed due to the new administration. Yes, administration initiated this change.

Primary Teachers

This group of teachers viewed the changes as positive

and necessary. Examples included:

The spirit of the changes has been proactive, for certain. Again, I'm new so I speak from a bit of a different perspective. The school and area have a certain reputation of toughness. Our district policy has put an emphasis on what they call discipline in the last several years. And a school-developed conduct policy was a priority when I first came; I think for both of those reasons. I know it's been an absolute priority of our principal and our staff worked very hard to develop what we thought was a fair and reasonable policy that would assure parents that we were keeping their children safe and also teaching them about the reality of consequences.

We knew that something had to be done to keep the school a safe place and to help make it safer than it was because there was getting to be too much fighting and violence. When I got here about six years ago, it was a much tougher school than it is now. It's a completely different atmosphere now than it was. Even in my classroom I would have fights breaking out and really nothing in place to help me deal with the problems. The students had no idea where 'things' would go after there was a problem in the classroom, hallway or playground. I didn't know--there was nothing set up. Now it is much better because we know exactly what is going to happen. We can call down the principal. Or we've got the teacher aides in the BD rooms that can come in to help. It's just very reassuring and everything's in place.

The thing we do that is proactive is that every month there are skills to be practised within the classroom so that all classes are working on a skill. A lot of it just has to do with treating each other with politeness. Like, not interrupting, raising your hand, considering the other people around you. It seems to me it's all tied in together to how we treat each other with respect.

It was found that most of these teachers, although they would like to have been seen as being proactive, definitely viewed the adjustments of the policies as reactive. They noted that incidents of fighting and discipline problems were on the rise and it was necessary to implement a consequence system. This system gave the students

predictability, in terms of what would happen if they "broke" a rule. It also gave the staff and parents a plan that they could follow or follow-up on when problems did arise. They viewed the policies as fair but also necessary in order to provide a safe environment for everyone.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

Most of the teachers in this group felt that the development of the policies were ultimately reflective of a reactive mode.

In reviewing them, I think it was more a reactive basis. We did see a need for a more firm discipline policy to be in place. So I know that's why we developed what we have now. We have a Quiet Room. That's basically where the kids go when they have broken the rules. I do know, I'm almost positive, I would say that it was a reactive basis. But it's also proactive too; maybe a combination. We wanted to do something about it and yet we were reacting to problems, specific problems that we were having.

I just think that they do change because times change. I think we read more about violence in the schools than we really see in this school. We're perceived to be an inner-city neighborhood but this school doesn't, and I don't think has ever had, the real inner-city feel that some schools have. This is a neighborhood where we have a real core of very solid families who often grew up in this neighborhood. A quarter of our school turns over every year, more or less, and that tends to be the problem. Not always, but because these kids are not used to how things are, they tend to rock the boat sometimes. And they just have to be brought into the policies of this school. I do think we're trying to go with proactive as much as we can. But then you have to react when something happens. I know myself when I'm thinking of the last few years I don't think I've had to deal with so much, in the way of problems outside. I think there probably was a little more roughhousing before. Also, we have a lot of people out on supervision. I've never been in another school where there were so many people out on supervision.

This group identified the policies as generally reactive in order to establish a firmer discipline plan at the school. Also noted was the point that there were many adult supervisors outside, on the playground, and this contributed to the decrease in the number of behavior problems.

What has been the reaction to the policies?

Overall, all stakeholders were pleased to very pleased with the policies that were present during the research study. Many comments indicated that there was a need for the change, as well as a need for more definite policies.

Parents

Parents who were surveyed definitely were very supportive of the policies of the school. They made references to the many facets of the school operation that were positively affected by the policies. For example:

It's been positive. I think that they [the students] realize too that they need some sort of behavior patterns of what's acceptable and what's not acceptable. And if they want to learn, they like to have a little bit of order to proceed with their studies. I think these kids definitely need discipline. And I think they're very fair. If there's any problems on the playground at recess, at lunch hour, whatever, they know that there is a consequence. They lose some sort of a privilege if they're misbehaving.

I've found that the feedback that I have had in general conversation has been positive. There was one incident about six weeks ago on one of the parent advisory committees. There was a parent who was questioning how the children in rooms four and five [the two BD rooms], don't want to get quiet room. They all want to make sure that they're behaving and they don't get DT's, they don't get the quiet room. They [the students] understand what it is that will prompt them to be

disciplined. The students in those rooms really appreciate the point system as an incentive. The kids, they understand. They don't have a problem with it. So, I'm pleased with the policies and the expectations and the interaction.

Looking at the two schools my child has had experience with, I noticed at the other school there were quite a few problems that didn't seem to be handled. There seemed to be more incidents of playground violence and that sort of thing than what I've noticed here. The kids coming home and telling me stories are nothing in comparison to what I'd seen at the other school.

Parents viewed the policies as necessary and fair.

They felt that students needed to know what was expected of them and what the consequences would be if they didn't follow the expectations.

Support Staff

This group was completely supportive of the changes in the policies. It was found that they recognized the need for students to have boundaries set. The influence of the new principal was again identified as a major influence on the policy changes. Highlights of their responses included:

I'm very pleased with the policies because it sets limits for the children. They know them, and they can live within those boundaries and those limits. If they don't have limits then they can run the school. The children want to be in a school where it's safe and they're valued. This is a school where they are. And, I'm pretty sure the parents feel the same way.

I think it's been really positive. A few years ago we did have a lot of discipline problems but I'd say since the new principal's been here, we've really tightened up. There's also a big difference in our school as far as the discipline. I think it's a much more, a much more positive attitude here.

So far, since I've been here, since January of '91, the numbers [satisfaction levels] keep going up; the responses of parents in the community. The policies have definitely made a positive effect on behavior.

Teaching Assistants

The teaching assistants were found to be very positive and supportive of the policies in place at the school. They felt the policies were fair, and having guidelines for students made for a very effective discipline approach. The quiet room was noted as a significant contributor also.

I think parents have been more than 100% responsive to the policy on, whether it be the junk food rule, the discipline policy, or the lunch room policy. I think the parents, I would say 99% are in favor of any of the policies. Most of the students are too. Obviously the ones that the students aren't in favor of are things like, "I can't bring a chocolate bar to school". But for the most part they don't complain. They know that that's a rule and that's it. We have good parent support here, generally speaking, for things like that.

What I hear is that because of the area that this school is in, it's kind of a rough area, and before certain people started at the school there were no set policies. But once these policies were set, like, the quiet rooms, quiet lunches, there were things that just happened in the school. Since these have come into effect, the school has become much safer and much more enjoyable to be at. I find it works excellent because the children know that you don't have to stand and argue with them. They know what the consequences are for certain misbehaviors.

Well, I've just come here this year and when I started going through some of the policies I realized that there's a lot here. But it works. It's so good that it works. You find there's less fighting on the playground. There's less racial interaction on the playground. I know personally in our classroom, without these policies we'd have, a couple of our students would not be able to cope. They like them because they know what's expected of them. Without them they would have no guidelines on how to get through the day.

They [the students] think they're fair because we do get input from the students. When we decide to put something in we always run it by our students. Most of

the time they think, "Yeah, that's a good idea. Because that's helping us". I think it's great to include the students in the decision-making about those policies.

The discipline policy at this school is very effective. They have initiated a discipline policy and each child is expected to adhere to rules. If they don't, then they get the time to spend in the quiet room. I think from the parents' point of view it was overwhelming. Initially, I think the staff did well, but it was something of a new issue being that instead of just going with the curriculum and trying to deal with it, problem students individually in the classrooms on their own, it was made to be a school-wide effort. We had kids who were concerned about the conditions of the classroom. We had less fights on the playground. Although we did have certain problem students at that time. Basically problems with how the students respected other students and staff.

Primary Teachers

It was found that the primary teachers were very positive in their reactions to the policies. They found the school to be safer and a more enjoyable place to be at. The policies were "cut and dry" and this predictable aspect made an impact on the degree of problems and fighting on the playground.

I'm one of the newer staff here but from what I've heard in terms of the school's history, and from what I have seen since I came, there is just no doubt about what the system here is in terms of rules and consequences. The children know clearly and they tell each other outside on the playground and in the halls all the time, things like, "You're chewing gum. That's a quiet room" or "You're doing this, and that's a quiet room." It's not debatable. So there's a clear sense of that and it's contributed very much from what I've seen, to a sense of equality and of safety. And because of the nature of our population too, we sometimes have to give more serious consequences, and we do. Things are very cut-and-dried here. Which is in this regard excellent.

I feel it's very positive. They do feel safe. I think they feel important. And they feel upheld or supported

by the adults, that one of the things we will do is make sure that if they are in any danger there will be consequences for the children who cause the issue.

I think the teachers all appreciate it. One part of it is that, you write up the little traffic ticket and it goes into the office. Then the name goes into a book, so it is kept track of, and how many offences the child has and when they get too many, their home is contacted. So there is follow-through, which is great.

The teachers feel very positive about the changes that they've seen in the school. It's really helped create a positive school climate. Children now feel that it's a safe place to be. They feel the rules are just. They know that if someone offends them in some way, that person will be dealt with and they will not be just victimized and that it will be ignored. They feel there's a fairness in the school. They are very supportive of toeing the line when it comes to those rules and they also encourage other children to do the same. It really makes it much more a climate where learning can occur. At one time we had kids bouncing off the walls.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

This group was very happy with respect to the policy changes. They noted the students knew the policies and for the most part, did not complain when consequences were implemented, as they were predictable. Again, the quiet room was perceived to be a positive contributor to the overall discipline plan.

I wasn't here the first year they were in place but I got the impression that for some teachers, the change in the policies was very new. That they'd never experienced anything like it before. But I've found that the teachers are very supportive of it, that they really like the structure. They know that if something happens, what the next step is. There's a whole series of steps that you can do, or it's serious you can jump a step. But you do know that if there's any problems, the office is going to support you. Even when I talk to the "good kids", they really like a structure. They know that it will be dealt with and the situation will be resolved. So I think they're really happy. They feel safe and that things will be dealt with. You can

see the children processing, "Should I go this next step? Because I know that I will have consequences."

The kids know exactly what's expected and they know what the consequences are when they don't measure up. Certainly it makes things easier if everybody knows what the expectations are; for the staff and for the kids, they're clear-cut. I've seen quite a difference since we've instituted what we call our Quiet Room. The kids know there's certain infractions will get them either one recess period, two, or three in the quiet room. We've got some hard-core cases, kids that it hasn't been quite as effective on, but for the average population it has been.

I see it as a positive change. I've seen a decrease in swearing, name-calling. I've also noticed that the kids don't kick or they're not as willing to hit out or strike out at somebody. They'll first come and tell us. At the outset, I'd say our number of quiet rooms was very high when we first instituted the policy. And as time went on the children understood that if they were going to re-offend they'd be back there again. Then they start to think about their behavior more. Because they didn't like missing their recess, right?

Summary

The chapter provided responses to questions regarding the policies of the selected elementary school, and a detailed examination of the Handbook, which was distributed every year to all students' families and staff. These contributed significantly to the categories that emerged during the analysis of the information. There were certainly enough references from all stakeholders that indicated that everyone, to some extent, had involvement in the development of the Handbook. It was extensive in that covered many aspects including the school's philosophy, expectations and operation. It was very clear that all stakeholders were pleased with the Handbook.

An analysis of the interviews with respect to policies of the school was then undertaken with four distinct categories of questions. A summary of each follows.

What policies does your school and classroom have in place that address student conduct or behavioral expectations?

All groups, other than the parent group, indicated a very good awareness of the policies in effect at the school. It was felt that the parents had a limited awareness of the policies due to the fact that they did not work at the school and consequently did not have a "working" knowledge of them. The staff, by comparison, dealt with the policies on a day-to-day basis, implementing and following them on a comprehensive basis.

Who was involved in the development of the policies and when did this come about?

Respondents, in general, had a very thorough understanding of this aspect of the policy development. However, their extent of understanding did seem to be correlated with the length of time the particular individual had involvement in the school. Virtually all respondents identified the policy development process, as they noted that staff were primarily involved, and that the parent advisory group were certainly consulted for their input. Some respondents were aware of the use of the results of the school district's questionnaires.

Why did these policies come about? Were they developed on a proactive or reactive basis?

Responses related to the rationale for the development of the policies were very interesting as they ranged widely within and among the groups that were interviewed. The parents were not directly questioned about this aspect of the policies. This was not asked as their responses to questions previous to this indicated that they had very little to contribute; therefore the researcher elected not to ask this particular question of them.

All other groups were mixed in their responses. Some felt the development was a reaction to the increase in conflict, whereas others felt it was due to the change in the principal of the school, who was being proactive. The changes that she proposed were seen to be in the best

interest for the health and welfare of the students.

What has been the reaction to the policies?

Respondents were unanimous here as they felt the policies were a positive contributor to the development of a culture of safety for everyone. They were all very pleased with the predictability and consistency of the policies. It was also noted that respondents perceived the students were pleased with the changes as it clearly established order and the students perceived the policies to be clear and fair.

Chapter 5

PRACTICES IN THE SELECTED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Practices, for the purposes of this study, were earlier defined as actual performances or applications. They are done or performed customarily. The interviewees identified many practices that were ongoing at the selected elementary school. It is the thesis of this writer that the combination of all practices contributed significantly to the overall school culture, which in turn, contributed to the perceptions and realities of what was acceptable behavior and effort expected from all stakeholders.

School Culture

Please describe the school climate.

The respondents were asked to describe the climate of school, as it was felt that this term would have been more familiar to them. The researcher, recognizing the difference in definition of the two terms, has used culture throughout the chapter, as the responses in fact, did reflect their perceptions of the culture of the school. It was described by the various stakeholders in many ways, but the overall theme was that the culture was a positive, caring, and consistent environment. The respondents generally felt they, as a group, were committed to setting up a culture that was a safe, positive environment for the students.

Parents

It was found the parents were pleased with the principal's beliefs and co-operativeness in working with them. They also expressed the view that the staff was a positive and committed group.

I find it's very community-oriented. The staff I find to be proactive rather than reactive. The principal in particular I see to be somewhat of a visionary. At the same time I see she takes a lot of value from the input from all of the parents that come in to the meetings. I've found that she's open to communication and receptive to ideas and suggestions. I have one girlfriend of mine, she's working with NAIT and she's in human resources. She's offered to come in and do team-building seminars or sessions with the staff as well as the parent advisory committee, to develop our missions, goals, and visions and that. The principal has been extremely supportive in trying to get it off the ground and getting it to happen. Our chairperson on our parent advisory committee has been just excellent on it too. Very supportive. We've got some people who are a little wishy-washy, but it takes time. But, [overall], we've been quite fortunate as far as being heard and getting support to put things forward.

Support Staff

Findings revealed that the support staff identified the environment of the school to be friendly. They also highlighted that they felt supported at the school and that the environment was a pleasure to work within.

I think it's a good climate. I think it's a relaxed climate. I also think it's a good place to work. People feel there's a lot of support. I think there's not anyone you can't go to for support.

Teaching Assistants

It was found that the teaching assistants reiterated comments made by the support staff in that they were very comfortable with the school's climate and found it to be a

caring and friendly environment where everyone was supportive of each other. It was noted that the relatively small number of staff contributed to this environment.

The school climate's really good. The teachers are very caring. Students are caring. They want to learn. They want to feel safe so they like the way teachers interact with them. It's a warm and friendly place to work in. And I think for both staff and students.

Primary Teachers

The primary teachers summarized the climate as being calm and welcoming. They also noted that the students had a level of acceptance of each other that was quite unique, in addition to working with a committed staff.

The school climate? Quiet. There's a quietness about it, a calmness. I'm coming out of a school that was the same number of children, but where the discipline policy didn't exist. And it was like, children in the office, raising voices; there was hysteria. And that doesn't exist here.

We have a very small, close-knit staff that care very much for each other and their students. It is a small school where everyone knows everyone. This also helps to make it a friendly place. I am so fortunate to work in a school like this.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

It was very clear that, in describing the school's climate, there was a high degree of consistency in responses, that were reinforced by this particular group of teachers. They noted the environment was warm, caring, friendly, stable and safe for students. They were very supportive of one another. Also noted was the fact that the teachers were now doing more supervision than before. This

latter comment was made previously in response to other questions.

It [the climate] is very positive. I do know our students feel safe here. A lot of these kids come from dysfunctional families. Things are quite chaotic at home. And I feel that at least that they know things are stable at school. They know what the expectations are; it's always the same for them. I think that this provides a safe environment for them, sort of a port in a storm.

How did the climate develop?

The development of the school climate was generally credited to the staff's initiative. Many of the responses indicated that this group was responsible, but not solely, for introducing a number of rituals and policies that formed the present school climate. The home and school relationship was also described as a contributing factor.

Parents and Support Staff

There were a small number of responses from both of these stakeholder groups and subsequently the writer elected to group them together. This may have been due a lack of awareness of how the present culture came to be, as these groups perhaps did not have as significant an involvement in the overall operation of the school. Their responses were as follows:

I think just our staff. I think we really have, just a staff that is really caring and concerned about the other staff members and about the students. And I think it's just a good mix.

I think strong leadership and a good team.

Teaching Assistants

It was found the caring component and teamwork, with

special reference to the leadership of the principal, contributed to the development of the school's climate. The size of the school was found to also be a contributor.

Through very caring people. Our staff, all of our staff. Probably from, my opinion, from the staff down. 'Cause the staff really work well together. They're very helpful. They're very caring, for each other. They are very quick to help, when you see a problem in a room or with another student. And they all know most of the students in the school. We have a lot of extra things that we get to know the students in. This is probably the first school I've been in in 12 years that I have known probably one-third to one-half of the students by name.

Primary Teachers

The principal and the staff as a team, were found to be a significant factor in the development of the school climate, with particular emphasis on the school's discipline policy. Again, the small school environment, in addition to how accepting people were towards each other were found to contributors.

I think a lot is everybody, the attitude, everybody accepts everyone as an individual and as the special person that they are. I guess going back to the rules too, that these guidelines have been set up. We do teach appropriate behavior. I guess accepting the differences, students accepting each other's differences, teachers accept differences and the students know that.

A small staff works together as a team very well. Some of the people have been here a long time so there's always the tradition, the richness of what's worked before and what hasn't to draw on. There's also a new principal and a smaller group of new people so there's a nice balance there. 'Cause we're small, we have to work together a lot. There's a small but very active group of parents in the school who are also the nucleus of the community league and things that go on around the school. Altogether it's just a nice climate to walk into. And it's a great climate to be a part of.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

Findings reflected the home and school relationship, in addition to the teaching of pro-social skills. Again, the discipline policy was also found to be a contributing factor to the development of the climate.

Well, speaking personally I really believe in having a good home-school relationship. And in order to do that you have to welcome the people from home into the classroom. So I guess it's partly personal philosophy too. And enough of us have that philosophy that it happens. Another thing is pro-social skills; teaching kids how to react with one another and how to be agreeable with one another. It just transfers over to having people be welcomed into the school and welcoming each other. "To create a warm and caring environment". Those are the words I often use in the class. You know, if a child speaks out of turn or says something nasty to another child I say, 'Are you helping to make this a caring place or are you taking away from that?' I think just saying it over and over again and explaining to kids that the reason they've got a quiet room for fighting is that's not allowed because this is a caring place.

If you were a visitor to the school, what impression would you leave with?

Findings for this aspect of the overall school climate indicated the friendly, warm atmosphere, the cleanliness of the school, the approachability of everyone, the orderliness, and the mutual respect that staff and students show for each other, all were impressions a visitor would leave with.

Parents

Findings from this set of interviews reflected the caring and friendly atmosphere at the school. Student pride was evident, in addition to their warm and welcoming disposition.

Well, the school's always very clean. There are lots of pictures and artwork and what not displayed throughout. So that's definitely positive. Usually you're met with smiles and 'good morning' or whatever.

I found that everybody's involved in it. It's not just the teachers. The students, they're very active in their environmental programs, you just take a look at what's on the walls. They're proud of what they're displaying. They take pride in the school. The kids are warm and welcoming. I've never walked into a school where I've had a little guy sitting at a table selling books and offering cookies and coffee. I've walked into a school where the stuff has been set out and there's nobody around, but here the kids are involved. They are also involved on the PA system, at report time. "These meetings are over, the next ones are scheduled to begin", for example. And it's neat. Because they look forward to it.

Support Staff

This stakeholder groups' responses indicated the following findings: (a) people would leave with a good

impression, (b) a welcoming atmosphere was evident, and (c) it was a clean school, that was filled with students' artwork displayed everywhere. Significant responses included:

I think you'd leave with a good impression. I've often hear people who come in [say it's positive]. They feel welcome here; they feel good about the school. You don't see students running loose in the school.

Well, when I first came in here I was immediately drawn to how the office looked. It's nice and clean and it's welcoming, right away. There are flowers and pictures, happy pictures around. And the bulletin boards are all full of the children's writings and drawings. That's really important. It gives the children a sense of self-esteem, that their art work or writing is being shown. It's like putting their artwork on the fridge at home. It's the same thing in the school.

Teaching Assistants

Comments from this group lead to similar findings noted previously such as impressions that the school was friendly, caring, welcoming, and that people were helpful and approachable. The most significant responses included:

If I was a visitor to the school I would come in and I would see that it is a safe school. It's a school where I'd bring my children. It's a friendly school, it's open. You can walk into any classroom at any time and feel that there's learning going on and feel that there's caring going on. I think that's the big thing about this school, it's the caring of the children.

On any general day, I would say that they would have to get a good feeling. Most of the staff that is around that you see first is always, 'Can I help you with something?' You know; they're always met. And they're all usually like that. A lot of the students, the older students, are like that. They can sort of talk to greet somebody at the door.

Primary Teachers

Findings indicated visitors would feel that the school

would be seen as a happy place, there's a sense of order, the staff are approachable, and that generally one would have a good feeling overall.

It's a happy place. It's a very mixed population, in terms of ethnic groups, in terms of income levels. We don't at this school have to or try to hide anything. We have children who have angry outbursts right in the office, in our main area because of the way we're set up. That happens and it's dealt with. It's our staff, our principal; they're very approachable by any visitor that came in. And it's small enough that if you came in as a visitor, you might be asked to help out to do something.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

Safe, comfortable, friendly, settled, and positive were found to be descriptors of the impressions that a visitor would leave the school with.

I think it's very settled. That's always what we work for, is this settled, focused atmosphere where children know that if they need help they can ask for it. But their expectation is to do their job, the task at hand, whether it's to walk down the hall quietly or to read a book or to go and get their science supplies and start their experiment. And that they know what's expected of them. They don't feel that things are loose, that they can [get] carried away, get out of control.

Classroom Practices

What kinds of activities, practices, and rituals contribute to the climate in your classroom?

Parents and Support Staff

Due to their lack of involvement in the actual classrooms, these two groups were not able to make comments with respect to this aspect of practices in the school.

Teaching Assistants

Practices found to contribute to the classroom climate

included the teaching of social skills and the use of the communication book with parents.

There are many social aspects. We have children that come from various backgrounds and they deal with things in different, in a whole different light. They deal with things with aggression instead of trying to reason it out. In our room they're comfortable with doing that. If they get angry they can call out, to a point. And then we'd have to take them out of the classroom. But these are the things that we have to teach them before they go into an integrated situation. So it's a learning, it's a behavioral learning class, along with an academic class.

Primary Teachers

It was found that students working co-operatively, encouraging the positive in students' accomplishments and behaviors, and reinforcing the rules and expectations for students, were all valuable contributors to the classroom climate.

I try to give all of them a fair amount of my personal time every day. I do work in small groups but I also do try to sit down and read or work with each one for a few minutes every day. I think the Quest program, which we use, [also helps] focuses again on co-operative learning, co-operative work together. I just think that that really does make a difference.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

This stakeholder group made references to many activities already referred to. Findings indicated that (a) everyone was expected to work at his/her own ability level and others should support each student, (b) a team approach to learning and working was utilized, and (c) goal-setting and flexibility in programming for students was also found to contribute to the classroom climate. A significant example of their responses includes:

We have a team approach to learning and to working. We understand and accept from the beginning of the year that all of us have different strengths and weaknesses. So when we're, when I group my kids at the beginning of the year for a seating plan, they're in groups and I try to match kids who are a little more able with kids who are less able. And reinforcing all through the year that it's okay that somebody might have some difficulty with a particular area and it's okay that somebody happens to be exceptionally good at it.

What kinds of incentives and awards for positive behavior, work and effort do you use in your classroom?

Generally the responses to this category of information gathered included such things as: token systems, point systems, integration into regular classrooms, food (candy) incentives/rewards, marble jars, treble clef on a staff, a weekly Good as Gold prize, phone calls home, notes sent home, extra free time, movies, a games afternoon, stickers, extra computer time and so on.

Parents and Support Staff

These two groups did not have information to contribute due to their lack of involvement directly in the classrooms.

Teaching Assistants

It was found the teaching assistants highlighted a point system within the classrooms they worked and integration of BD students into the regular classrooms. An example includes:

In our classroom we have our own token things like at the end of the month for good behavior they get to go to the Trading Post and purchase something with their points that they have made. As we have only boys in our small classroom, it's all geared for boys, like cars, different types of cars. And we do have puzzles and games. They like to buy things, three or four of them like to buy things for their mom or sister or

brother, so we usually have something in there that encourages them to buy for somebody else so that they just aren't spending it on themselves.

Primary Teachers

Findings identified: (a) notes, (b) free time, (c) stickers, (d) extra computer time, (e) working in another classroom, (f) a weekly Good as Gold prize system utilizing stars, and (g) homework completion incentives were the types of incentives and awards the primary teachers used in their classrooms. An example includes:

We have a weekly "Good as Gold" prize given out. What I've done is I've put a star up for each child and if they do not get a quiet room during the week their star stays up. At the end of the week, I buy a prize for them and we just have a little celebration in the class. I also find they're not as disruptive in class if they know that unfinished work is homework. So we have a homework "challenge". If they bring back their homework for two weeks in a row there's a little something for them in place as well.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

Findings reflected these teachers used a variety of incentives including: (a) a "marbles jar" that leads to a movie or a games afternoon, (b) a "treble clef" in music class, which may lead to a listening afternoon, popcorn, or a music bingo game, (c) a points system that lead to intrinsic rewards, and (d) a homework book system. A notable example of their responses includes:

We have a marble jar. I know some of the other teachers do too. You reward good behavior by putting marbles into your jar. And I occasionally have to take them out. That [system] is quite a positive. I've been doing that now for 11 years. And it doesn't matter what grade I teach or in which area, they all...want to have that jar. It's not class without that jar. And at the end we usually have a movie or a games

afternoon. It's their choice what we do and we take a vote on it and we choose together. And in music I have a discipline system a little different than the regular classroom. Everyone has a staff. I have a treble clef on a staff. Each class has a note, and for every class they behave their note moves up. And at the end they earn a class reward of a listening afternoon or I bring in popcorn or we play a music bingo game or some sort of thing for the half-hour. That works really well, to reward good behavior.

School-Wide Practices

What type of extra-curricular opportunities are offered at the school?

Findings included: (a) intramurals, (b) the environmental program, (c) a math club, (d) a craft club, (e) students acting as ambassadors for the school, (f) students being patrollers, (g) students hosting at Parent/Teacher Conferences, (h) students being classroom monitors, and (i) students assisting at community functions.

Parents

As with some other categories the parents did not have enough information at hand to contribute here.

Support Staff

This group identified various clubs including the following:

The club activities; the computer club, chess club, and the environment club. The chess club was already here when I arrived. The environment club didn't start for, until two years ago, full-bore, I mean. Before that it was sort of semi-active as it was only handled by one teacher at that time. Now it's school-wide. The computer club was begun this year, mainly because we received a number of computers to fill a classroom. And we changed that classroom, which was originally a storage space for broken or unused furniture, and it was turned into a computer lab.

Teaching Assistants

This group added that intramurals were offered at the school.

We have intramurals. Of course, some aren't here at noon and can't get back. But for the most part they are encouraged to [enter] intramurals.

Primary Teachers

Most responses are repetitions from other groups, but a painting club was also identified.

Well, there is the intramurals. There is the environmental program, which most of the kids in the school are very aware of and much involved in. The school is right now an Emerald School, working towards Earth and the kids take a great deal of pride in that. There are many different clubs that the kids are involved in. Most of the teachers have taken on an activity here or there to give the kids something else besides the academic, the school program. There's also a math club, a painting club, and a craft club.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

This groups' responses complemented the other groups contributions, but they also included activities where the students took an active role.

I have the oldest kids in the school. I feel that the grade sixes have a great deal of responsibility to be the ambassadors to the school and to set examples for the younger students. They also engage in other monitor positions around the school, like emptying the compost bins and taking the tetra paks out and all those [kind of] environmental stuff. We're having this function; for example, tonight and the grade sixes are going to be hosts. Community service is a big thing. And lots of rewards for putting in the time and effort to be a volunteer.

What type of incentives and awards for positive behavior, work and effort do you use in this school?

Findings identified two general types of incentives and

awards; tangible awards and practices. Tangibles included: (a) hot chocolate, (b) goodie bags, (c) iced tea, (d) certificates, (e) pizza lunches, (f) patrol luncheons, (g) Christmas dinner, (h) Easter egg hunts, (i) pop, and (j) ribbons with the school logo on it. Practices included: (a) awards at weekly and monthly assemblies, and (b) student photos being taken and posted.

Parents

Parents who were surveyed did not have enough direct knowledge with respect to this aspect of the schools' practices, even though there was references throughout the transcripts of their involvement in the school.

Support Staff

The findings within this group included: (a) the Rotary Club's involvement with the school, and (b) the luncheons, ribbons and certificates as being incentives for students. A couple of significant responses included:

In the office, I'm given names of students for sportsmanship, achievement, citizenship, big effort, and good as gold [recognition]. They get ribbons with the school logo on it, good as gold luncheons, one student from each classroom. And we have that lunch once a month. It's a pizza lunch put on by one of the teachers. We order pizza in and pop for those groups of kids. And that's a real reward. They really like that and they really look forward to doing that.

Certainly our assemblies and theme days. I think the Rotary Club has done a lot for us. We have a Christmas dinner, Easter egg hunts and that.

Teaching Assistants

This group highlighted the luncheons, patrols, assemblies and the corresponding awards.

Our kids really enjoy the assemblies. They enjoy the fact that we have our, what we call our Good as Gold boxes. And everybody on any given day in your room, every classroom has this box. And if they have a good day their name goes in the box. And when you get to the assembly each room has a name drawn out of that box. And they get their Good as Gold pizza luncheon.

Primary Teachers

This group of teachers also identified the assemblies and the draws as incentives.

This assembly is where we hand out different awards. So a teacher would try to give every student in the class a chance to win one award. Sportsmanship, excellent effort, citizenship, and environmental. We have different awards and so students really try to do a good job in all these areas with hopes of being chosen for one of these awards. It's a very special thing for them. There's also the Good as Gold draw at the assembly where every week that goes by that they haven't had a quiet room they get to put their name in for this draw for a pizza lunch. There's also for perfect attendance.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

It was found that the assemblies and awards, luncheons, hot chocolate, goodie bags and special events were incentives too. Significant responses were as follows:

We have monthly awards. And so they really build, because for some of the kids, they like to dedicate that month to improving [something specific]. I've had students even in my behavior class say, "You know, I'm really going to work on sportsmanship because I've never had a sportsmanship award.

I know I've given students an academic award that aren't necessarily the top academic student in my class, but somebody who's really improved in several areas, really jumped from where they were at, gotten better. The Big Effort award you would certainly give that to any student that's really trying hard to improve. Maybe they haven't but they're really trying hard. So awards address that.

What other activities can you identify as contributing to the school climate?

The responses from stakeholder groups were varied with respect to "other activities" which contribute to development of the school climate, but following were the findings: (a) integration of older students and younger students, (b) using student surveys, (c) social events at the school, (d) involvement of the Rotary Club and the Capital Health Authority, (e) the staff's commitment to the students, and (f) the welcoming atmosphere in the school.

Parents

It was found that the communication between the teachers and the parents, the reading programs, and the students having the opportunity to provide feedback and have input into school decisions, were all other activities that contributed to the school climate. An example includes:

They integrate some of the older kids with the smaller ones to help them out with reading programs, do one-on-one reading together. I've seen them get involved in those kinds of things. There's good feedback coming from teachers as far as where the kids' strengths and weaknesses lie. And it's not just academically, it's social as well. Which is really of value.

Support Staff

Findings included the contribution of the community and how the school and community work together, as contributing to the school climate. The following quotation underlines this collaboration:

There's a dance at the community centre this evening. It's not co-ordinated by the school. I think it's co-ordinated by the community or the parents in the

community. But a lot of them of course have students in the school. And the school does promote that. We often make decorations and stuff to go over there. And a lot of the staff often go.

Teaching Assistants

The assistants added that social events and the Meet-the-Teacher Night were activities that contribute to the overall climate of the school. An example follows:

Well, we have social events at the school. We have of course Meet-the-Teacher Night. And that is very welcomed. I think it's nice for people to socialize. People, parents, can come into the school at any time to talk about their children. The teachers are definitely dedicated. And they will do, will sort of go out of their way to help the children at all times.

Primary Teachers

This teaching group identified many activities that other groups contributed, but also made references about the community and social events.

This year we had [Meet-the-Teacher Night], again beginning with food but it just seems to be a real, it turns it into a social night. That really adds to a feeling of comfort in the school, I think. And we went over our new report card, which we had just assigned, and explained what it meant, how we go about achieving the marks. So the communication was there, parents had a chance to again talk to us about what was on there, why it's on there, and give us their input. We have our yearly Christmas concert too. And last night, I'm sure you already heard but we had our Healthy Night, focusing on community health. And that was tremendously successful. I think we had between, just guessing, between 200-300 people. And everybody involved.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

This group of teachers included many previous comments, but highlighted the involvement of the Capital Health Authority.

The Capital Health Authority has chosen our school to, I guess be the place where community services, where services in this community can set up displays to show the people in this community what services they can expect or take advantage of. And according to our principal we were chosen because the public school nurse likes us, likes our school because we're so friendly, or she feels welcomed here. So she recommended that we, that our school, be the site for this.

Student Behavior

Describe how students relate to each other at this school.

Findings indicated a shared feeling reflecting that the students generally got along very well with each other.

Examples of types of practices were identified that respondents felt supported this belief. Comments indicated what consequences were implemented when problems did arise.

Parents

Findings included: (a) students' positive behavior and consideration for each other, and (b) students were well aware of the school's expectations and consequences. The following is a significant example:

For the most part, I think they're very aware of each other and very considerate. You always get one or two that sort of go their own way and maybe don't always think of somebody else. But for the most part, anytime I've been on a field trip; they've been well behaved. They know what's expected of them and they usually act accordingly.

Support Staff

This group's findings indicated that (a) the students treated each other, generally, with respect, (b) the students knew each other very well, and (c) the students were friendly.

I think overall they really weld to each other. A few of them will come in the office in the morning [for disciplinary reasons] and they'll leave holding hands. And they're just, they're buddies, you know? They just treat each other, I think overall, with respect.

Teaching Assistants

Findings reflected how safe and comfortable students felt at the school.

Fairly good. We do have altercations out on the playground, sometimes in the school itself. But I would say that most students feel very comfortable in the school. And with all children, because our BD kids are integrated outside with the regular population. And downstairs in the lunchroom. They feel quite safe with having them out there, because of the policies in effect and the close supervision.

Primary Teachers

Findings identified that (a) students celebrate each other's successes, (b) the school staff had been together for some time, and (c) they have cross-graded activities.

Because we're a small school and because the staff has mostly been here a long time, most staff has taught most children. So everybody knows everybody else, which makes it harder to get away with things and it makes it, well nobody feels alone or estranged in this school. There are quite a few cross-graded activities and lots of family groupings in this school because it's like a community school. I think there are great relations between students. Most students eat their lunch here; they're here all day together. The teachers know them; they know all the teachers. I think it's basically very positive.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

The construction of the new playground and that some students felt the school was a "home away from home" were the two major findings from this group's contributions. An example follows:

Mostly they relate quite well. There are always some

kids who seem to have this chip on their shoulder and don't relate to others generally or often it's not so much generally, they don't relate to two or three specific people. If we have problems it tends to be like, this person doesn't like this person and they are never going to like this person because it's a small school, they have to be in the same class if they live in the neighborhood and they might be in the same class for four or five years and it builds up. Sometimes that goes on. We try to defuse that, obviously, by talking to the kids, talking to the parents, and we go through a lot of this stuff.

How is the disruptive student dealt with in your classroom and school?

Findings with respect to how the staff dealt with the disruptive student indicated: (a) the consequence they employed was based on the severity of the disruption, and (b) these consequences were consistent with the consequences that were delineated in the Handbook referred to previously in the thesis.

Parents

Findings indicated that parents were aware of possibilities such as: (a) verbal warnings, (b) students could lose points within the classroom, (c) the lose of recess(es), (d) students may have to serve a detention(s), (e) students could be sent to the quiet room, and (f) students could possibly lose certain privileges. A sample response follows:

I know that they [staff] ask the students to settle down. They're given an opportunity to correct it. And they're warned. If they're not going to listen and it gets out of hand, then they end up with a detention or lose points, etc. They may lose a recess. They may end up in quiet room if they're disruptive or whatever.

Support Staff

It was found that a variety of consequences were implemented in dealing with disruptive behavior, both in and out of the school building. Two pertinent quotations follow:

Well, there's the quiet room. I guess they are given so many opportunities to change their ways. If they don't and it continues, the disruption during class time or during actual instruction, what'll happen is that student will be sent down to a study room where they will finish their work there and then they return to the classroom. It's sort of a cooling-down room. Not necessarily a time-out room, but it's a study room, it's quiet, it calming, I would say. It used to be the counsellor's office.

There's a study hall, there's time-out rooms, talking with teacher and principal, depending on the degree. The quiet room is down in the old music room that the children go to during recesses. So they are assigned a quiet room depending on their behavior.

Teaching Assistants

It was found that this group was very descriptive in outlining the consequences for the disruptive student. They indicated the distinction between whether the behavior was within the school, or out on the playground.

The disruptive student in the school, we have what we call study rooms down in the office. And a staff member or teacher will take this child, with work, down to the study room. And they will complete their work by themselves in the study room. Door closed, there's a little desk in there, actually it's built in, with a chair. The students in our room [BD], often they don't make it to the first step. When they're mad, they're mad, you know. So we give them choices. For example, if they refuse to sit in their chair and do that [assignment], then we tell them, "You have a choice. You can either sit at your desk and do it, or you can go to the time-out room". This is after everything else has been tried in our classroom. Well, if they are disruptive they are sent out of the room. Then the teacher talks to them.

Primary Teachers

Findings reflected that this group of teachers used outside assistance for testing and setting up individualized programs.

A disruptive student in the classroom would be given a warning as to what the problem is and what the expectations are; what steps would be followed through to what consequences. For example, "I'm going to count to three and at three you'll have to leave the classroom". That would be quite a serious consequence. If there is a serious problem it is brought to the principal's attention. If the child is taken to a time-out room downstairs everything is documented. And depending upon what has been documented, the principal usually takes steps from there. Involving the parents or involving some outside assistance with regards to testing and follow-through and setting up a program for that child may occur.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

At this level, findings included: (a) the use of an isolation box in the classroom, and (b) that students used problem-solving to deal with their issue. One quotation includes:

If it's quite a serious misdemeanor, like hitting someone, which doesn't happen very often, it's an automatic detention. If it's kind of teasing back and forth that kind of got out of hand, I have them talk to each other and give the Why message, which is from the grade four Skills for Growing [Lions Quest]. Where they have to say why, what the behavior was that was bothering them, and what they should do next time. I find that really helps. And usually it ends; they apologize. And if they don't, if they can't come to some sort of agreement then I tell them to wait until after school and we'll try to solve it then, while we're sorting paper.

What degree of bullying do you believe is occurring at this school?

There was consistency among all the stakeholder groups

insofar as they all felt that instances of students bullying one another were a very minor concern. It was found that some provided insight into why they felt bullying was not a major issue at this school, whereas others felt that it was an issue in the past, but that the recent changes in the discipline policy and other factors contributed to the decrease in occurrences.

Parents

This group was found to give examples of bullying instances with respect to their own children and how the school handled it. One parent compared the degree of bullying at this school to another school her child had attended. One responses in particular highlighted this:

I haven't seen as many instances of bullying here as I've seen elsewhere. The other school was extremely bad. My older son, he's having quite an issue with anger right now. And he's directing it at the aide in the class. I've got this huge pillow at home and I said, "Look, you've got anger, you've got to deal with it". He wanted to sleep it off. [I said] "You can't do that any more. You've got to start handling it". So we brought out this pillow and he started tearing at it and just trashing it. And at first I asked him, "Okay, who's this? Who are you doing in now?" I figured he's got to get it out. At first it turned out to be his brother. Second it turned out to be a kid that he was in school with from kindergarten to grade four. And this is two and one-half years since he's been out of that school, but that anger is still there.

Support Staff

Again the findings indicated that bullying was a very minor issue at this school, as supported by the following:

I see very little of that [bullying]. I don't even know if that happens once a week. Because I would see them in the office then. I would see them being brought into the office to have that dealt with. Our

principal would take them into the office and talk with them, at a round table, and find out what happened and let them know that their behavior is unacceptable. Probably a quiet room would be assigned. So that the next day they would have to go to quiet room, depending on what the situation allowed for; they would maybe have to serve one or two or three recesses depending on what they did.

Teaching Assistants

This stakeholder group was found to recognize that bullying does occur, although they didn't state to what extent, and that there were policies and consequences in place to deal with it. One pertinent response follows:

Bullying. Yeah, I guess there have been. They are both brought in. It is discussed. I'm speaking of this, as if we're talking about two students together rather than a group of anything. It would be talked about, 'You get your turn and you get your turn' type of thing, discussed. They would have to apologize to each other; they would probably [both] get a quiet room and miss their recess the next day for doing that.

Primary Teachers

It was found that this group of teachers recognized, for the most part, that bullying did occur but that it is minimal. It had been seen as a problem in the past but the school policies were perceived to be a major contributor to solving this problem. Significant responses included the following:

Oh, the bullying thing. I had a couple in my room. One wasn't letting up. So I sat down with him and I got a book on why bullies hurt each other, why they're hurting other people. It took a long time. I think we dealt with that issue for about three days.

Bullying used to be a big problem. Bullying doesn't occur so much now because that's one of the rules. If you're bullying someone you're not allowing them to play. You're assaulting their well-being on the playground and you lose your playground privileges.

You're in the time-out room. So it really is very rare. And then there are tons of teachers on supervision all the time. There's generally two from the regular school staff and one from the BD program is usually out there watching their children, or else the principal.

I don't think we have that problem. I mean, there's always a bit of that. But I've noticed a real decrease in it, especially this year. Because we're small, a bully can't hide either.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

Findings reflected that most of these teachers felt there wasn't much bullying at the school, but that if it was present, it was dealt with quickly and fairly, by utilizing quiet rooms or in-school suspensions. It was found this bullying occurred mainly after school and that parents were contacted. A significant example follows:

There aren't too many. I think there are a few students that we've had in the past who are the bullying type, no doubt. There seem to be less. I know that some people have left this school because they don't really like the discipline policy. Because everyone is held accountable for the student's behavior. You know, the principal doesn't hesitate in phoning. So the bullying first starts with, usually find out about it by reports from students on the playground. And that results in quiet room. If you get 10 of that nature... then the principal becomes involved.

How is the aggressive or violent student dealt with in your classroom and school?

Findings identified: (a) these students were removed from the classroom, either on their own, or with assistance, and brought or taken to the time-out rooms by the office or seen by the principal, (b) the younger students were taken to the office to be spoken to, (c) the majority of the

students were taken to the time-out rooms to 'cool down' and regain their control, and (d) the staff had been given an in-service on the use of non-violent restraint techniques.

Parents

This group mentioned the use of the time-out rooms as well as relaying a story of the need to restrain a student.

One example includes:

They're usually removed from the classroom. Then they'd be taken in to the principal and they have the time-out rooms.

Support Staff

The time-out rooms and the involvement of the principal were found to be utilized by this group. One significant comment includes:

Aggressive? Probably time-out and then try to work through that while you're in time-out. It's an isolation room where students have no other material in there with them. It would be used as a last resort. First they would be talked with and then a study hall, if they could cope with that. It depends on the degree of self-abuse or whatever's going on with that child at the time, how long they would be in there. But they are talked to. Depending on who it is, they may go directly from time-out, if they're calm enough, and go right back to the classroom.

Teaching Assistants

It was found that some of this group, depending on which classroom they were working in, had a time-out room just off their classroom. The regular time-out rooms by the office, as well as other strategies to assist those children who were out of control, were found to be effective. A pertinent response follows:

[If they are aggressive or violent] they're gone. Then

it's a time-out room. You try to watch for this ahead of time. I try and after a couple of months you can pretty well tell when this child is going to, you know, if he's getting prepared to do this. You can tell just by his demeanor, by his body language, by everything, that this is a situation that you have to watch. If they choose to go the other way, I try to do it positive. I try to do a positive behavior management with them. I try to praise the student next to him rather than bringing out his, a negative for him, I will give a positive to somebody else first. That's what I would prefer to do. It doesn't work all the time. So if he is going to be very aggressive, then we try to talk to him, "You have your choice. You either stop this aggression or you have to be put in the time-out room." They don't choose, but they end up in the time-out room. It's just because once they've gone, they just don't stop. If you can transport him, again depending on the size of the student, you can do this on your own, if not, then he's transported to the time-out room [with help].

Primary Teachers

It was found the student would go to see the principal, or taken to see the principal, if necessary. Findings also indicated: (a) the student would be talked to, (b) sent to the study room; the "thinking room", or (c) to the time-out room, depending on the severity of the behavior. A sample includes:

In kindergarten this rarely happens. But I have, last year, I had some children who were quite severely in need of behavioral assistance and they had to spend time in the thinking room, we called it. And sometimes restrained to the point of just held so they wouldn't hurt themselves, in that room and talked back into themselves. Hugged, held, whatever, at that age until they were able to retain their dignity, which of course they lose when they do that in the classroom. So we have to get them away so that they are not hurt further by what's happened. It's also for the other children; they don't need to be exposed to that always. But the child's dignity is what's most important so they are removed. And if need be, whatever they need they receive away from the classroom. Restraint, talking, then they are always invited back.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

These teachers were quite consistent in that the findings indicated the time-out rooms would be used. Also found to be effective were: (a) behavior plans, and (b) in and out-of-school suspensions. A significant quotation includes the following:

Well, if things get really wild, then we have detention rooms downstairs. Yes, time-out rooms. They go in there and they do their work in there to settle down. Sometimes a child just needs to walk outside the door and just calm down for a little while, if it's something minor. But if it's serious and they're really not doing any work or they're being very disruptive in class then they go work in the time-out rooms. If this happens often, we document pretty well everything that happens in the time-out rooms so if this happens very often then the parent is called and made aware of what's going on. If it goes on and on and on it can lead to in-school suspensions and out-of-school suspensions.

Summary

The chapter has described findings relative to the practices of the selected elementary school. Four major categories emerged during the analysis of the interviews with all the stakeholder groups; School Climate, Classroom Practices, School-Wide Practices, and Student Behavior. Within each of these major categories responses were further divided into units of responses that related to the type of activities and actions that contributed to the overall school practices. Questions posed to the participants included the term climate as the writer felt that this term would be more familiar to them as opposed to the term culture. A summary of how each stakeholder group follows:

School Culture

It was found that all groups responded similarly in that they saw the "climate" as one that was community-oriented, positive, caring and "team-oriented." Further descriptors of the culture of the school were: (a) committed, (b) predictable, (c) orderly, and (d) cooperative. These terms were used repeatedly by many respondents as they described the people and the overall "feeling" of the school. Many credited the staff and the new principal for the development of this positive culture that included mutual respect between staff, students and parents.

Classroom Practices

Understandably the parents and the support staff were not able to contribute much to this category due to their detachment from activities that went on directly in the classrooms. However, it was found that the balance of the staff gave many examples of the type of practices that contributed to the positive culture previously described. The reward systems, involvement of the parents, flexibility in programming, and the importance of routines were found to be effective practices.

School-Wide Practices

The parents did not have enough of an awareness to contribute specifically to this category. However, it was found that all other groups contributed many comments, overlapping across groups quite often. Findings identified:

(a) intramurals, (b) clubs, (c) student ambassadors, (d) award and incentive systems, (e) integration of older and younger students, (f) social events, and (g) the staff's commitment to students in general.

Student Behavior

Parents were not very knowledgeable regarding the incentives used to promote positive behavior, but did emphasize the consequence systems in effect. It was found that all groups felt the students got along well with each other and identified a number of factors they felt contributed to this atmosphere.

Findings identified: (a) all stakeholders had a high level of awareness with respect to the discipline policy, (b) the size of the school was a factor, (c) rapid correction of behaviors was important, (d) students felt safe and comfortable at school, and (e) cross-graded activities were all viewed as positive contributors to the culture.

There were many unique practices and circumstances, that favored the development of such a positive culture at this particular school. All schools have some form of a discipline plan in effect, but the policy and the implementation of it, at the school where data were collected, were very well advertised, known, and followed. The other factor that stood out, from other schools the researcher has been familiar with, was the degree of commitment of the staff toward the students.

Chapter 6

PROGRAMS IN THE SELECTED ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Introduction

Programs, for the purposes of this study, were earlier defined as the outcome of policy to provide curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular strategies for the reduction of conflict and violence. The respondents identified a number of programs that the school was operating that addressed this issue. It is the thesis of this writer that the combination of these programs, in conjunction with the policies and practices outlined in Chapters Four and Five, contributed significantly to the overall culture of the selected elementary school which in turn affected both the extent and the perception of the extent of conflict and violence that was prevalent.

The Interviews

What programs, instructional or extra-curricular, do you use that deal with the affective domain of education?

The responses to this question were varied. Findings revealed both formal and informal programs that contributed to students relating to people in a positive manner, self-esteem building, and relationship building. Also found were the various clubs offered at the school.

Parents

This group was understandably not as aware of the various programs in place because they were removed from direct contact with the curriculum and specific involvement in the classrooms; but it was found that they were aware of the Quest [Lions] program, the various awards at the school, and the use of co-operative learning groups in classes.

Following is an example of a response to the question:

The Quest, yes, I know they were doing that. The teachers were trained. I don't think they all got it at one shot. You know, a couple went at different times for the training. Even parents could go. And that was a few years ago. It hasn't been mentioned lately.

Support Staff

As with the parent group, it was found that these respondents were not able to contribute as much information as the actual staff who worked directly in the classrooms, but it was found that students were being taught social skills and student responsibility on an on-going basis. A pertinent example of this includes:

I personally went to the [Lions] Quest program. I do know we're constantly trying to teach positive and pro-social skills. I know it's an on-going program.

Teaching Assistants

The teaching assistants were more familiar with the types of programs that were being utilized in the classroom and the school. Findings revealed the teaching of social skills and acceptance of responsibility for the environmental recycling program at the school level. It was

also found that this group identified the integration of the BD students, an emphasis on respect for one another, students showing good manners, and personal health and hygiene as the focus of program efforts. One quotation follows:

This the teacher deals with all the time in the classroom. Definitely we talk to the children, or the teacher talks to the children in circle time all the time about this. Being kind to one another and treating everybody with respect and that kind of thing. We insist that the children have good manners in the room, that they treat everyone with respect and are kind to one another.

Primary Teachers

Findings extrapolated from these teachers noted a number of programs, both formal and informal, that they felt contributed to reducing conflict and violence in their school. The findings included: (a) informal talks with students, (b) direct instruction through the curriculum, (c) the teaching of Pro Social skills, (d) the use of the Lions Quest program, (e) ideas they have extracted from other resources, and (f) the use of role-playing and mime.

Specific quotations included:

We use the Quest program in our school. We have every day certain children set apart as "special" or "super", which is pretty typical in a classroom. I use music, dance, movement an awful lot. For individual expression, because I think that's the greatest lesson in the affective realm; that being that "we're not trying to make you the same as everyone else here. We're trying to respect who you are. So we need to see who you are and you need to not be afraid to express that in whatever it is. But how you express yourself cannot harm another person." We talk in terms of all the curricular areas, in terms of art, we do a lot of art too, just a child presenting, explaining their work to the class and then the class responding positively

to their work. And always positive, although questions are allowed. The Quest stuff is Health, but Health is everything that we do all day, too.

We use the proactive skills and we have one a month at the school. This month it's positive decision-making. And within those programs we teach all kinds of skills. Last month I think it was listening. In kindergarten we do a lot of mime and acting out, a lot of role-playing for all those kinds of pro social skills.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

Many findings from this group had been mentioned by the other groups, but they also added some unique ideas. For instance, it was found: (a) the use of instructional strategies, (b) classroom meetings, (c) extra-curricular activities that build children's self-esteem, (d) accessing the behavior consultants within their school system, and (e) the use of the "care kit" were all perceived to be aspects that dealt with the affective domain of education.

Well, we all use the Lions Quest program, Pro Social skills, and I also believe all our clubs certainly help kids feel good about themselves, and feeling good about yourself means you're not going to be a fighter or a person that bullies other people. I know myself, I took teacher effectiveness training years ago. That's when I became aware that there's a real need for teachers to teach kids how to get along with each other because maybe it's not happening in some homes.

We have the child safety, the care kit, things like that. We have patrols and there's just sort of caring kind of; be protective of others, care for others, look after others. The Quest program is done through general day-to-day living in the school. It's just the way we are; the way we behave. And it tends to work fairly well that way.

Are students being taught how to deal with conflict and what programs are being used to teach students social skills?

Findings noted programs that were identified overlapped

somewhat with the previous category, but, again, some unique contributions were presented. It was found: (a) teachers included the use of problem-solving, (b) co-operative learning groups was utilized, (c) conflict management strategies were used by both staff and students, (d) students were taught decision-making skills , and (e) anger management strategies were taught. The parent group and support staff did not have any contributions for this category. The teaching assistants provided the following significant example:

Teaching Assistants

It was found this group emphasized the importance of role-playing to re-enact a particular problem; thereby giving the students an opportunity to practise more appropriate responses. Also found was that they were "catching" students doing things well. They referred to this as keeping the positive in mind, as opposed to looking or reacting to the negative behaviors that children displayed.

We try to do work on what we call anger management and things like that. We do act out certain things. When everybody is in a really good mood then we're able to act out something. I will handle it the wrong way and say, 'Now, how do you think that could have been handled; what do you think I should have done?' Which sometimes they remember Monday and forget on Tuesday. So we have to just keep doing them. It's just rote, over and over and over again. But we do do that, so that they can see how foolish they look when they do it. So they're becoming much more aware in our classroom [BD] of how, really how silly the behavior is.

Primary Teachers

Findings here showed that a number of these teachers, in dealing with the issue of interpersonal conflict, focussed on the monthly Pro Social Skills programs, and the need to discuss issues as they arose with the younger students. Emphasis was on the need for daily attention to this issue.

In my case it's a very important part of what I do because, especially the younger children, a lot of them come with no skills, no history except punching and kicking. On a school-wide level, that is just beginning to happen in a structured way, that we've started with these monthly skills. And conflict management is coming up, but I would like to see, to have a school-wide procedure that all children could almost mime, mimic, whatever, when it started to happen, to stop and think, 'What are the steps?' So that everyone from K-6 knew what we had agreed on as an effective way to stop the escalation and talk about what had happened.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

It was found that this group highlighted: (a) individual counselling by teachers and the principal, (b) the use of the Lions Quest program, and (c) utilization of the Pro Social Skills program.

I think most of us sit down and deal with it. The principal does a lot of conflict management. Everyone is allowed to tell their part of the story. We don't assume that anyone is not telling the truth unless we find out differently. And we don't assume that no one is involved unless we've heard them, say, we've heard that this is not related. But I think having our principal really makes a huge difference, because she's a psychologist. So a lot of the counselling roles that were done by a counsellor I think she's taken on as part of dealing with the problems.

Are there plans to implement future programs that address the issue of conflict?

The parent group was not able to offer any suggestions regarding the future programs, as they were not directly involved in the school's programming priorities or staff meetings where these types of topics would be discussed initially. It was also found that there were very few responses from the support staff and the teaching assistants. Overall, the others groups collectively suggested some excellent programs being considered for the future.

Support Staff

This is where the notion of teaching respect for other cultures was found:

I don't know if you could include something like this, but it would be nice...to maybe formalize a program for respect. Or for other people's cultures. And, because they have the native program here once a month where, [someone] comes out and sits with the children in this native circle program. So that's really good. It would be nice to have sort of a cultural respect so that they could all understand each other's lifestyles and respect them. The ethnic backgrounds because there's quite a diverse range here at the school.

Teaching Assistants

Findings revealed moving away from the tangible reward system, and moving slowly when introducing anything new to students.

It's very difficult to introduce too many things in any given period for these children[BD]. They just don't adjust to change or a whole bunch of new programs. So I think in a classroom such as this you know that you can work on this for this year and you can go maybe to

the next step or another program a year after because they're again generally there for two or three years. Or they're moving from our classroom into the next classroom. You have to feel these students out and see what works for them. Because it may not work next year. If you have a few new ones you may have to change your strategy again.

Primary Teachers

Findings uncovered: (a) it was important to deal with the health and safety of the students, (b) a desire for continuation of the present programs, and (c) integration of the Pro Social skills into presentations at assemblies, would all be in the future plans. One quotation follows:

One of the priorities, apparently, that comes through the school board, deals with the health and safety of the student. So the school has to follow through and make it a priority.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

It was found that these teachers saw future plans that included: (a) the older students could perhaps teach the pro social skills to the younger students, (b) the development of a formal procedural system that all teachers could consistently use with students on the playground when dealing with problems the students were having, and (c) advertisement of the Pro Social skills in the school. One significant example includes:

I think, for conflict solving it's good to be dealt with as a structure and then deal with informally. You know, on the playground or when two kids come in and they're fighting or whatever and deal with them privately, if you can. But it's also nice if they have some steps and then you have those steps in your head about what to go through with them to reinforce it.

Do you see a need for any future programs or plans for the school?

Responses were certainly varied with respect to how the various stakeholder groups perceived future program needs at the school. It was found that each group perceived the various needs based on their own particular job description or involvement at the school.

Parents

It was found that perhaps a different acronym for the Behavior Disordered program be used, rather than BD, as some students would belittle students in this class. One possibility found would be BIC (Behavior Improvement Class). Another finding uncovered that a better understanding of the discipline plan would be helpful. This would have implications in terms of communicating further with this special group of parents. A third finding made reference to the small degree of segregation these special needs students were getting at the school. Again, this would suggest that the teachers, administration and parents involved should be coming together to discuss this particular issue, as it is indeed an important one.

The school as a whole, I'm very pleased with it to be fair.

I am pleased. I've found that they're receptive and understanding. The information is available; the help is there when needed. The bit of difficulty I do have, it comes into the BA [Behavior Assistance]. I've heard several different acronyms and several different definitions and I did talk to the principal about this before. It was referred to as Behavior Disorder. Right away a student is attached to that. Other kids

have a tendency of picking up on it. And they've taken BD and they've come back and they've told the kids that they're brain-dead and brain-disordered and stuff like that.

Support Staff

Findings here dealt with the feeling that there's less structure in the homes of the children attending the school, and the school is feeling more pressure as a result.

I think we always have to address that problem. Unfortunately a lot of students aren't getting this kind of structure at home [and so] more and more pressure is put on schools to [help] students. I think because parents are busy and a lot of students, they just don't get the kind of structure and kind of positive feedback; the kind of expectations that they really need. Some kids just don't have, their parents obviously just don't have expectations of what we think good behavior is.

Teaching Assistants

Findings suggested this group's satisfaction with the status quo:

I think with the implementation of discipline the way we have it now, I think it's very, very effective. For all of the school and I think it's definitely effective in the kindergarten room. When we see something that is not, that needs attention, well, of course it is addressed right away. And of course then there is no problem.

Primary Teachers

Findings indicated satisfaction with the existing program and especially with the work of the principal:

No. I honestly couldn't be happier with what's in place. Again, the principal has just done an amazing job. And her energy is never-ending. We know exactly where we're headed. But it's always open for discussion and we can modify it if we need to and, with our budget too, the way it's done, we sit down as a staff, we set our goals, our objectives, exactly what we're going to be doing. And we have lots of room for personal development in the way of in-services and

things. So for me everything's wonderful. We have a lot of support and so on.

Upper Elementary Teachers and Principal

It was found that this group of teachers saw the need for: (a) possible programming needs for more education or awareness of the BD children and their issues, (b) programs that deal with multiculturalism, and (c) programming the teaching of the pro social skills at the school-wide level. This would suggest that the school administration and teachers need to put these issues on the table for discussion and ultimately decide on whether they need to modify or implement some further changes to the school's program. One particular quotation follows:

Well, just to carry on with what we're doing, get everybody on board with it. I do have a concern about racial tensions. You know, we don't have a lot of that at this school but you might hear the odd comment about, 'You're an Indian' or 'You're dark' or whatever. So maybe programs that deal with that ... multiculturalism. That fits in really well with the different Social Studies. But no, I can't think of anything else. I think this system is working really well for us right now. And until it breaks down there's no need to fix it, right?

Summary

The chapter presented the findings with respect to the programs of the selected elementary school. Four major questions were presented for which respondents provided their perceptions and beliefs regarding the various programs. Respondents identified both formal and informal programs that contributed to the overall school programs that dealt with the issue of conflict generally. A summary

of each of the four major questions follows.

What programs, instructional or extra-curricular, do you use that deal with the affective domain of education?

There was considerable overlap of responses within this category. Findings reflected: (a) programs such as the Pro Social skills, (b) the Lions Quest program, (c) the use of role-playing to re-enact problems and subsequently look for solutions, (d) the awards program that recognized courtesy, citizenship, and sportsmanship, and (e) the building of student self-esteem was identified on many occasions, particularly as respondents referred to informal programs and intramurals.

Are students being taught how to deal with conflict and what programs are being used to teach students social skills?

Again, the Pro Social skills and Quest programs were found to be emphasized. However, there were also a number of informal strategies found that included: (a) anger management alternatives, (b) the use of co-operative learning groups, and (c) individual counselling by the teachers and the principal.

Are there plans to implement future programs that address the issue of conflict?

Findings revealed that responses varied in this category as each of the stakeholder groups related to their own areas of responsibility, as well as the school-wide needs in addressing this issue. It was found: (a) there was a perceived need for a formal program for the teaching of

respect or cultural awareness on a school-wide basis, and
(b) that they would like to replace the tangible reward
system with more "community based" rewards.

**Do you see a need for any future programs or plans for the
school?**

Findings included: (a) perceptions that students should
take further responsibility for their actions, (b) some
anger management courses for students should be offered, (c)
a belief that programs should be developed to deal with
multiculturalism and racial issues, and (d) a perceived need
for increasing the awareness of issues that were related
specifically to the BD classes.

All of these findings dealt with the informal and
formal programs that could or should be included at a future
time.

Chapter 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The Purpose of the Research

The study was designed to examine the policies, practices, and programs of a selected elementary school and their subsequent influence on reducing the incidence of conflict and violence at the school. These aspects, collectively, influence the culture of any school, and consequently, the culture became a focus of the study. The Schein model of organizational culture was identified as an appropriate model for describing the culture in the selected school.

Conclusions

In this section, relevant conclusions related to the findings are provided. A discussion of the potential implications for the selected elementary school's policies, practices and programs is included. Finally, implications with respect to linkages to contemporary research, specifically the Schein model of organizational culture, are provided.

Policies of the Selected Elementary School

Knowledge Base of the Policies

There was a range of awareness of the policies of the school. Parents had the least "working" knowledge of the

policies as found in their responses. Findings that support this conclusion are found in their responses to the first research question asking about the policies the school has in place. Parents could only discuss, in a very general way, the policies. Their responses were more in the form of describing how students were behaving at the school, as opposed to directly answering the policy question.

The staff, by comparison, were much more familiar with the policies. The classified staff was not as knowledgeable as the certificated staff. This was evident through the interviews. It was found that the classified staff made references in a general way regarding the policies, whereas the certificated staff were able to specify particular policies that were indeed found to be in the school's Handbook.

Principal's Style and Commitment

The current policies were in operation prior to the researcher's involvement. The policies have been reconstructed and shaped by successive staffs and school councils' values and beliefs. There was a relatively significant change in policies when the incumbent principal was appointed three years prior to this study. This was confirmed as *all* stakeholder groups identified the principal's addition to the staff as a key, in terms of initiating changes to the previous policies. This addresses theory regarding the principalship and leadership style.

It is clear, from the findings, that the principal used

a consultative and participative decision-making approach to the development and refinement of school policies, with particular emphasis on the discipline policies. The principal was found to be the initiator of the policy changes, however, it was evident that the entire staff concurred with, and ultimately implemented the policies, in conjunction with the principal. The formal involvement of staff was generally at staff meetings as found in the transcripts from staff responses. The school council's involvement was seen to be at the SAC (School Advisory Council) meetings, as identified by parents in their comments. It was also found that there was informal input via direct conversations with the principal, by both staff and parents.

I believe that the principal's leadership style and genuine care for students and staff is fundamental to the development of the policies of this school. This role-modeling is perceived to be a significant influence on the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of the staff, students, and to a lesser degree, the parents of the school.

Importance of the School Handbook

The school's philosophy is included in the school's Student and Parent Handbook. The first statement highlights the involvement by *students*, as it states that "children share in the responsibility for their learning and behavior, and as individuals should encounter challenge and success." Two other statements relate directly to the involvement of

parents: "ongoing communication between the home and school concerning student growth and achievement is both desirable and necessary"; and "a positive partnership between the home and school should be encouraged for the benefit of the child". The culture of the school, as outlined in the Handbook, provided an environment of safety, support, and compassion.

The Handbook also included sections that encouraged parental involvement through the School Council, volunteerism, assemblies, tips on health, homework assistance, reading at home, as well as study skills. Parents were specifically invited to use the Parent Resource Room, that housed information on child development, child rearing, curriculum and parenting. One policy that was not common to many schools was called the Junk Food Policy. This was essentially a ban, whereby students were not permitted to bring chips, pop, candy, gum, or other types of junk food to school. The rationale provided was that, "We feel that this policy has several positive results - a cleaner schoolyard and building, generally healthier students, fewer dental problems due to tooth decay and an improved awareness of the importance of good nutrition." There was clear support for this policy as found by both parents and staff. The interview information suggested that, given the lower socio-economic area of the school, nutrition, cleanliness, and health in general, were quite a concern. This policy was put in place to address these

concerns specifically. This finding was common throughout staff responses.

The Handbook was very well-written, comprehensive, and contained valuable, clear information for staff, students, and parents. It contained the most important aspects of the school's operation and philosophy. I do, however, feel that a section on the BD classes is essential to include, as these classes are special in nature, and parents, in particular, need to know the type of criteria the students met, to be placed in these classrooms, in addition to the support systems that are in place to accommodate the students' special needs. This information regarding the BD classes was found in parents' responses to the question that dealt with any future needs they perceived necessary at the school.

Expectations for Students

With respect to expectations for student behavior and conduct at the school, the Handbook went into great detail. As indicated previously, five full pages were dedicated to this topic. This indicated the commitment to safety and reduction of conflict and violence in the school. The Handbook's introductory paragraph was an excellent summary of the belief system in place. It stated:

Students should feel safe, happy, and valued in our school community. One of our shared responsibilities with parents is to develop and promote the growth of student self-discipline and to encourage and reinforce appropriate behavior. All students have the right to learn and consequences have been developed for students who infringe on the rights of others. Developing

appropriate behavior is a learning process and we accept that individuals make mistakes. Our Behavior and Conduct Plan helps students understand why certain behavior is inappropriate and assists them in formulating plans for future appropriate behavior. We believe that it is always important to leave the individual's dignity intact. We also believe that it is important to model and reinforce appropriate behavior and to recognize, on a regular basis, students who are exhibiting such behavior.

This philosophy was found to be confirmed by many, many responses from *all* of the stakeholder groups that were interviewed. It was referred to time and time again, as a valuable document that provided everyone with abundant information regarding the school's philosophy and operations.

Another important aspect of the school's philosophy was found to be the recognition of students' achievements in terms of behavior, academics, sportsmanship, music, art, environmental concerns, and effort. Each of these were outlined in detail in the Handbook and references to this positive reinforcement system were abundant throughout the interviews with all groups.

It is the writer's contention that the emphasis on clearly stated expectations and student recognition are significant contributors to the culture of this school. The combination of very specific expectations and consequences is, in my opinion, a real strength of the policies that are present. I believe that when students are aware of the "boundaries," up front, they are less likely to act in ways that disrupt others and create disciplinary problems.

In summary, the policies of the school had been honed through an involvement process including all stakeholders, although not formally involving students. They were very well advertised and known by everyone. The policies were followed very consistently. All stakeholders who were interviewed agreed on the need for, and fairness of the policies.

Practices of the Selected Elementary School

This section dealt with the second major research question relating to the specific practices that the staff and parents used, that were perceived to be effective in reducing conflict and violence in the school. Practices were defined as actual performances or applications that were done or performed customarily. A plethora of practices were identified by all stakeholder groups, which, in essence, formed the overall school culture.

Environment of the School

Overall, it was found that the respondents consistently described various practices, thus the culture, as a positive, caring, orderly, consistent environment that was formed by a committed group of individuals over time. When policies were discussed, it was found that many respondents referred to the visionary style of the principal as instrumental in practices that were evident. The environment was found to be an active, student-oriented, friendly place to be. Although the size of the school is not a "practice", it was found to be an important variable

by a number of respondents. The school was described as a "second home" for students, that was welcoming, safe and secure.

These practices were in place on both a classroom and school-wide basis, which, once again, contributed to the consistency that was important for students, staff, and parents alike. The teamwork approach that was found to exist between the staff and parents was seen to contribute significantly to the culture that was developed, even though most agreed that the staff, led by the principal, was primarily responsible for the initiation of many of the practices.

The commitment by staff to provide an environment of safety and genuine concern for the students in their care made a tremendous impact on the school's culture. They are to be commended for placing students' needs first.

The Effect of the Discipline Plan

The discipline plan was found to be the underlying factor that provided the impetus for a good deal of the approved practices. It certainly provided a solid framework for the school's operation. This plan was found to contribute significantly to the positive, albeit structured, environment that was present. There was indubitably orderliness in the school, as well as a mutual respect that staff and students showed for each other.

As a visitor to the school, one could not help but note how friendly students and staff were. They were all very

helpful and approachable. Artwork and students' work in general, was most visible, which indicated clearly that there was pride in the school. There was found to be an aura of calmness, and yet structure, at the same time.

Within the various classrooms, it was observed to be positive, with incentive points systems in place. There were positive, respectful staff interactions with the students. During this writer's visitations, parents were frequently seen in the school, indicating a confirmation of the teamwork approach that many referred to in the interviews. Another example of this teamwork included the use of communication books. It was found that all classrooms had rules or expectations posted, and it was clear that students were well aware of them. On several occasions, this writer overheard students "coaching" each other if they were "breaking a school rule."

Each classroom was found to have its own type of incentives and rewards for positive behavior, work and effort put forth. This was found to contribute to the positive atmosphere, as students were provided rewards and feedback when things they were doing were appropriate and of a quality level. On a school-wide basis, the assemblies and subsequent recognition of students was also an important variable that was found to contribute to the overall positive school culture.

I believe that the discipline plan is not a "stand alone" plan at this school. There was a great deal of

evidence that the plan was interwoven in virtually all of its practices. The staff seemed to unconsciously deal with, in a proactive way, the issue of discipline, as they went about their day to day involvement with students in a caring fashion.

Student Involvement at the School

The school was an active one, with many extra-curricular activities offered, that were supervised by the teachers. It was found that students were keen to participate and took pride in their involvement, particularly when it came to events that brought the community into the school.

Students in the school were seen to socialize with each other very well, with a perceived lower level of behavior problems in both classrooms and playground. This is something that was identified by all stakeholder groups. Students were well aware of the discipline plan in their own classrooms and in the school. The use of the quiet room was a unique type of "detention room" and most students were very cooperative while they were in the room. This indicated an acceptance of the overall school discipline plan. Students also were generally respectful of each other. Those who needed to be dealt with, were dealt with swiftly and with their dignity intact. Even those students, often the BD students, who had to be escorted or restrained and taken to the time-out room, were accepted by other students as simply having some problems.

This writer believes that student involvement is very important if they are to take pride in their school. This was most evident at this school and the staff and parents are to be commended for providing the framework for such involvement. I feel that this contributes greatly to the school's culture. I do need to reiterate that what is absent is a formal opportunity for students to be involved in shaping the school's policies and also to be given a greater opportunity in the decision-making process. This can be accomplished by simply forming a "student council", as well as by having student representatives at the School Council meetings.

Disruptive Students

For dealing with disruptive students, again, a plan was found to be clearly in place for each classroom, that was molded from the school-wide discipline plan. A series of strategies were identified for students to correct their behavior. If they were not able to do so, then incremental consequences were implemented. This system was found to be very effective as students moved from one grade to the next.

The Quiet Room and study room were found to be effectively used by staff to deal with students who were breaking "rules" on the playground, in the classrooms specifically, or within the school as a whole. The movement of students from the study room to the time-out room happened when students refused to do the work that had been assigned, or they "blew up" and were out of control. If

students had been in the time-out room as a result of their inappropriate behavior, then they had to sit in the study room for five minutes to show that they were back in control and ready to return to the classroom setting.

I believe that the use of the school's "quiet room" is very effective and is a unique method of dealing with students who require discipline. It is very predictable, and again, this writer believes that students work and behave far better in such an environment. It is viewed as a necessary consequence and is followed consistently by the staff.

Aggressive or Violent Students

The aggressive or violent student often went directly to the time-out room to "cool down." They were removed from the classroom, either on their own, or with assistance, if necessary. It was found that many of the staff had received instruction on non-abusive restraint techniques. The BD classes had time-out rooms just off their classrooms, in addition to those by the office. It was seen to be common practice that most students, who made it to the time-out room, often ended up speaking with the principal as well. All visitations to the quiet room, the study room, or the time-out room, were kept in a logbook for monitoring purposes.

I believe that the school's method of dealing with aggressive or violent students is very appropriate. It removes the student immediately from the environment that

they are in and subsequently allows other students to continue their learning process, without a tremendous disruption. It also preserves the problem students' dignity, in that they are not seen by the other students venting their anger over a prolonged period of time; they are removed and taken out of visual range from other students. I would certainly suggest that all staff receive non-abusive restraint teaching, and furthermore, that they are provided a refresher course, perhaps every other school year.

Bullying

Interestingly enough, it was found that most of those that were interviewed felt that bullying at the school was quite minimal. They did suggest that those who were caught bullying others had swift consequences, so as to nip it at the "bud stage." The perceived relative absence of bullying at the school could suggest that the culture may be a contributing variable. Another possibility with respect to the perceived small degree of bullying may be that, because it was not defined for the respondents, they may have perceived bullying as only physical abuse or overt intimidation. This may have contributed to their belief that bullying was not overly prominent.

I believe, based on 20 years experience as a teacher, that bullying does occur whether teachers recognize it or not. It is often so covert that students themselves don't recognize the action as bullying. Simple put-downs,

ridicule, or name-calling that is internalized by students is a form of bullying that often gets overlooked or is not dealt with, often because it is not even brought to the attention of the staff. The term bullying is not mentioned at all in the Handbook. I believe that it needs to be included and that it be clearly defined.

Community Involvement

Community involvement at this particular school was also found to be a contributing factor to the positive culture and atmosphere. A pot-luck dinner was utilized for Meet-the-Teacher Night and again at other functions that brought parents into the school. This was a unique way of making these standard events more of a light-hearted method of socializing. A similar style was used when staff and parents met for the purpose of disseminating and sharing of information. This was intended to create a climate of support, easiness, and a feeling of being welcome at events that usually seemed so formal, and sometimes perceived to be intimidating for some parents.

These initiatives are, in this writer's opinion, effective and necessary in light of the fact that such a high proportion of tax payers now have "empty nests". I believe that this school is well on its way to include the community, but I feel that it should be even more aggressive with respect to bringing in community resources to the school.

Programs at the Selected Elementary School

The third major research question dealt with the specific programs that the staff and school council used that were perceived to be effective in reducing conflict and violence at the school. This included formal and informal programs that were being utilized. Programs, as stated earlier, were defined as the outcome of policy to provide curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular strategies for the reduction of conflict and violence.

Informal Programs

Although the definition of a program suggests a formal process, findings showed that a number of strategies were informal in nature, in that they did not follow a specific format as a curriculum-based program typically did. One example of an informal program, that this writer concludes is effective in reducing the degree of conflict and violence, is the personal attention that staff give to the students. The care, compassion, and genuine positive belief that their students can be, and are, positive youngsters, permeate throughout the school's culture. Virtually every respondent, at some point in the interview, highlighted just how caring and committed the staff was towards the students at the school.

This modelling of behavior and expectations, is a powerful influence on how the students' see themselves, with respect to their self-esteem, and ultimately, how they treat each other, as well as the staff. It can be concluded that

this intangible respect and mutual caring for each other is a definite contributor to the overall positive culture at the school.

Formal Programs

Two very specific formal programs were used and perceived to be very effective. These programs were the Quest Program and the Skills Streaming Program. The Quest Program, developed by the Lion's Club, had been taken by most teachers, and some parents, with plans for other staff to get involved with the program. It is based on the foundation of a positive model of interpersonal relationships, building respect for one another, sharing of feelings in an appropriate fashion, communication skills, and generally a program that involves a high degree of role-playing, focussing on the affective domain. Many staff and parents referred to this program as the initial formal program that was utilized at the school. It was, in fact, the very program that is currently being modified and developed by a steering committee, made up of many stakeholders that work with students in the Province of Alberta. It is an initiative called Safe and Caring Schools in Alberta. It is interesting to note that this provincial initiative is based on the Quest Program.

The second formal program that respondents identified was the Skill Streaming program developed by Johnson and Johnson (1995). This is a program that involves numerous topics that are role-played by the students, led by the

teaching staff, that utilizes very well laid out, and easy to follow, lessons. The school staff indicated that they had plans to highlight this program even further, by role-playing the 'topic of the month' at their assemblies, which students value so much. The intention is to highlight the topic of the month through an advertising strategy around the school. I believe that both these formal programs do indeed contribute to the school's overall culture. It has been my experience, however, that the lessons, particularly the Skill Streaming ones, often are taught in isolation of a real day to day problem. That is, following the role-playing, not often does the skill get referred to when a true incident occurs at the school. It is my belief that the entire staff, and parents too, understand the skills so that they have the opportunity to reinforce them when they observe a given problem on the playground or at home.

Other Programs

Strategies that also contributed to the culture of the school were the utilization of consultants by the teachers. This type of professional development was encouraged and supported by the school. Ultimately, students would benefit from the strategies that staff would gain.

Some other programs that were found to be effective included co-operative learning groups in the classrooms, where a group of students work together on a given task. This alleviated the pressure on each individual student and gave them increased confidence in themselves as a

contributor, as well as provided opportunities for students to interact and problem-solve together. This particular curricular strategy has tremendous potential for giving students the opportunity to share, understand, and appreciate each person's perspective and contributions as an individual, but in the context of a group decision-making environment. It can produce positive changes in how students see each other and how they ultimately interact with each other, in and out of the classroom.

Although co-operative learning was identified by some staff, I did not witness many classroom arrangements that were utilizing it. This may have been due to the limited amount of time that I was able to get directly into the classrooms for personal observations.

Anger Management

Anger management sessions, or lessons, were concluded to be activities that contributed to reducing conflict and violence in the school. The old adage of, "It's okay to be angry, but what you do with it is what counts," summarizes the philosophy of this strategy.

Daily attention to the various formal and informal programs seemed to be a powerful aspect when it came to the implementation and retention of the intended outcomes. This repetition, or practice, either by modelling or role-playing, seemed to be very effective in instilling and reinforcing the need to show compassion, empathy, respect, and acceptance of individual differences of any people the

students' interacted with, in the course of the day.

This was most evident in the school in which the research was collected. All staff were found to be very consistent in the low-key approach they used in dealing with difficult students. This modelling was perceived to be very effective in reducing incidents of conflict and violence. Another possibility would be to have the counsellor, or principal, in this particular school, teach formal sessions to students who have shown a need for such interventions.

Possibilities for Improvement

In terms of looking forward and considering what may be worthwhile reinforcing or implementing in the future, I found that a more prominent view of the Pro Social skills, perhaps by highlighting them at assemblies, or advertising them more often in the school, was found to be worthy of consideration. Some respondents thought that an even more structured program for conflict resolution, on a school-wide basis, should be considered. This proactive view with respect to future programs, is an important indicator that respondents were concerned with mitigating conflict and violence at the school.

It is my belief that this would be a very positive direction for the school. It does presently have in place a number of positive policies, practices, and programs, but giving conflict resolution and communication skills an even greater emphasis would be recommended.

It was also suggested that the rewards, generally at

the higher grade levels, could be moved to a more intrinsic level. However, it has been my experience that those elementary students, even at the higher levels, grade five and six, still value, and are motivated by, tangible rewards, which would make this a challenging move. It was found that a few respondents felt that possibly a formal program to teach respect for other people's culture should be incorporated, and this writer agrees. This could be accomplished through the formal curriculum, perhaps in a health class format.

Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to give their personal perceptions of overall future programs that could, or should, be considered for implementation. I would conclude that perhaps a greater involvement of the students in positive decision-making should be considered for future planning, as this was identified by many stakeholder groups. This could certainly be an aspect that would empower students even further, create more responsibility, ownership, and pride in the school. This is a component that is missing or under-utilized in this, and, indeed, many elementary schools.

Behavior Disorder Program

Another conclusion relates to the need for more fully understanding the behavior program. This was found by respondents in the context of two different aspects; the need for a greater understanding of the BD program, and the students that are involved in it. The major issues found

were that it was the perception that some staff, and parents too, were not fully appreciative of the type of issues facing the BD students. Secondly, that the students' behaviors were a reflection of their personal frustrations in attempting to deal with their personal issues. Having taught an elementary BD class in the past, I can appreciate this perspective. I would concur that if a school has a BD program housed within its building, it is imperative that *all* stakeholders be made aware of the program's objectives, and what type of issues the specific students bring to the school. This is a vital link in the overall communication process.

The Discipline Plan

I conclude that there is a need for all staff and parents to be even more aware of the school's discipline plan. Although the Handbook did dedicate a substantial degree of content to this end, and students and teachers were well aware of the plan, it was found that the other stakeholders, i.e., teacher aides, support staff, and the parent group, be given a more in-depth understanding of the philosophy and procedures of the discipline plan. This writer strongly recommends that this become a reality. It would possibly reduce the number of misunderstandings, and ultimately achieve more consistency in terms of the implementation of the discipline plan.

The Theoretical Concern

To review, Schein (1992) defined culture as:

A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. (p.12)

He notes three major elements that need to be considered when analyzing a culture; the problem of socialization, the problem of "behavior," and, lastly, whether a large organization can have *one* culture.

The problem of socialization is often viewed from the perspective that a culture is primarily that which is passed on to new generations of group members. Schein feels that this only gives the observer information about surface aspects of the culture. He sees the "heart of the culture being revealed to members as they gain permanent status and are allowed to enter the inner circles of the group, where group secrets are shared"(p.13). He further suggests that, in order to get to these deeper levels, one must try to understand the perceptions and feelings that are evident during critical situations. This would then be followed up with interviews of both the "old" and "new" members in order to gain a more accurate picture of which deeper-level assumptions are actually shared.

Schein does not include overt behavior patterns in his definition of culture. He suggests that formal rituals, for

example, would reflect cultural assumptions. These deal with how we perceive, think about, and feel about things. He states, "Overt behavior is always determined both by the cultural predisposition (the perceptions, thoughts, and feelings that are patterned) and by the situational contingencies that arise from the immediate external environment"(p.14). He feels that behavioral regularities could be a reflection of separate, but similar, individual experiences or common situational stimuli that are found in the environment in which the members are interacting.

The notion of a large organization having only one culture is an interesting and complex question. Schein (1992) suggests that, "Our experience with large organizations tells us that at a certain size, the variations among the subgroups are substantial"(p.14). He further notes that, if certain assumptions are shared by these subgroups, then one can legitimately speak of an organizational culture. However, a number of discrete subcultures may have their own integrity. Schein further suggests that with time, or over time, social units will produce subcultures that are a normal process of evolution.

How does his definition and subsequent breakdown of the definition, interface with an organization such as the elementary school that was selected for study? This writer, in analyzing the definition, and the culture of the school, that influences the degree of conflict and violence present, feels that there is a strong correlation, and indeed the

policies, practices, and programs do, in fact, reflect the culture, as defined by Schein.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Schein (1992) identified three levels of culture. They were:

- Visible artifacts and creations
- Values
- Basic assumptions

Reflecting on the relationship of his theory, including the three levels, to the policies, practices, and programs at the selected elementary school, it is evident that the research confirms the degree of accuracy of his model. The visible artifacts and creations were referred to frequently by the various stakeholder groups.

Rites, in the form of public events, as described by Trice and Beyer (1984), were commonplace at the school.

Examples include the following:

- Potluck lunches.
- Celebrating staff birthdays.
- Snacks or other things at staff meetings.
- Extra-curricular activities
- Involvement with the community.
- Student artwork displayed throughout.
- Student involvement in environmental programs.
- Students doing public relation activities.
- Students involved on the PA system.
- Classes are made to go down the halls quietly.
- Trading Post is used for students to purchase something with their points they earned for displaying good behavior.
- Weekly Good as Gold prize given out.
- Grade six students act as hosts.
- Community service is a big thing with lots of rewards for putting in the time and effort to be a volunteer.

Deal and Kennedy (1982) contended that ceremonies assist organizations celebrate heroes, myths, and sacred symbols, thus displaying culture in a memorable fashion. There were many references in the transcripts to confirm that ceremonies were evident. The following are excellent illustrations of the ceremonies:

- Ribbons with the school logo on it are given.
- Good as Gold luncheons.
- Awards are presented at our assemblies including sportsmanship, achievement, environmental, citizenship, and big effort.
- Assemblies, theme days, Christmas dinner, and Easter egg hunts.
- Patrol luncheons.
- Celebrations for attendance, and recognition of their birthdays at assemblies.
- Yearly Christmas concert and Healthy Night, focusing on community health.
- During Education Week, it's another family night.

Rituals are another level or form of artifacts referred to in the Schein model. They are intended to inform members what the standard routines are and how things should be. Examples from the research gathered include the following:

- (from the 26 page Student and Parent Handbook)-The education of children is a co-operative effort involving school, home and community. We urge you to take an active role in this process. Feel free to visit the school, volunteer your time or communicate often with your child's teacher. All parents are encouraged to join the School Parent Advisory Council where parent input is vital.
- (the School Philosophy from the Handbook)
 1. CHILDREN share in the responsibility for their learning and behavior, and as individuals should encounter challenge and success.

2. LEARNING involves the whole child in a meaningful, continuous, and lifelong process.
3. LEARNING occurs at different rates and in different ways, necessitating a variety of approaches.
4. The SCHOOL is organized to provide a caring, safe and supportive environment that will accommodate individual student differences, develop an attitude of respect for others, and encourage feelings of self-worth in our students.
5. The CURRICULUM is a mandated guide that applies to all students but is subject to professional interpretation based on student needs.
6. ASSESSMENT and EVALUATION is an ongoing process incorporating a variety of methods, taking into consideration the whole child.
7. Ongoing COMMUNICATION between the HOME and school concerning student growth and achievement is both desirable and necessary.
8. A positive PARTNERSHIP between the HOME and school should be encouraged for the benefit of the child.

Following are other rituals:

- Discipline policy is distributed every year.
- Parent Handbook includes policies on behavioral expectations and reward systems.
- Point systems are used to reinforce positive behaviors.
- Students are expected to complete assignments.
- A close involvement of parents helps to reinforce behavioral expectations.
- Students are given the responsibility for their actions.
- The Quiet Room policy deals with misbehavior outside the classroom.
- The study room, time-out, and then the conduct policy deals with in-school and out-of-school suspensions.
- Inappropriate behavior of the students on their way home is dealt with in the school.

Symbols can be described as any object, act, event,

quality, or relation that serves as a vehicle for conveying meaning, usually by representing another thing (e.g., logo, mascot). The respondents identified a number of these symbols. The first symbol noted was the symbol of a steam engine on the front cover of the Student and Parent Handbook, with the caption stating "On Track for the Future." This symbol could be interpreted in a number of ways. It could be representative of a school whose philosophy was progress-oriented. The school could be seen to be on the "right track" with a destination in mind. It may be progressive in that it could be seen to be taking the students in its care, on a trip that will equip them with the necessary tools, skills and attitudes to prepare them for the future. As an engine, the school could be seen to be a leader that has taken responsibility for its "passengers." This would suggest that the school would care for the safety and comfort of these young "passengers."

A number of symbols were found. These symbols collectively were seen to form the basis of the overall school culture. Following are examples of the symbols:

- The school's always very clean.
- Usually you're met with smiles and 'good morning'.
- Students take pride in the school.
- It's a friendly, safe, and open school.
- Staff give a fair amount of their personal time every day, working in small groups or one-on-one.
- Parental involvement is significant.
- Each day is treated as a new day.
- A certain structure is in place, including routine.
- Intramurals or clubs that address interests of the students are offered.

- Grade sixes 'volunteer' for lots of activities- hosts at Parent/Teacher Conferences, patrolling, and environmental activities.

Norms are usually unwritten and informal influences and expectations influencing the behavior and performance of organizational members. Norms are communicated in a variety of ways that provide actual and potential examples of what the organization stands for. There were numerous examples of the norms of the selected elementary school that reflected the general culture the people worked in. Additionally, specific references to behaviors and expectations that influenced the degree of conflict and violence in the school were identified.

- People feel there's a lot of support.
- There's a general feeling of calmness in the school.
- Everyone knows what's expected of them. They know what to expect of their students. Students feel secure when they come to school because they know that things are in place, so they can work within the boundaries.
- Everyone works together to make the friendly atmosphere.
- The principal is very fair.
- The teachers discuss rules with the students. I think you'd leave the school with a good impression. I've often heard people who come in and say [it's positive]. They feel welcome here; they feel good about the school. You don't see students running loose in the school.
- Encouraging the positive is very much a covert theme.
- Staff expect everyone to be treated with kindness.
- There's a team approach to learning and to working.

Myths, sagas and stories are written and oral presentations of critical events, incidents, and legends that enrich an organization's cultural heritage. They are symbolic and add cultural meaning to the particular setting.

In the selected school, they help all stakeholders understand and make sense of the environment and create a sense of comfort within the school. Examples of these follow:

- (from the Student and Parent Handbook)- "Our staff are dedicated, conscientious and caring professionals, who are very much concerned with all aspects of the growth and development of our students. We have a close working relationship with our parents and community and we enjoy a wonderful family atmosphere. The community, through the School Playground Society, must be commended for the tremendous effort in fundraising and the installation of our new playground. In 1994 we entered into a partnership with the Rotary Club which will expose our students to the larger community. Our partnership has enhanced the school program by providing speakers, technology support, special activity days, and a weekly fruit snack. The school is proud of its environmental initiatives. We became an environmental JADE school last year and we are actively involved in reducing, reusing and recycling. We have a compost unit on the school grounds and a number of worm bins in the school that eat our garbage."

Other identified myths, stories and sagas include:

- "Well, actually my father's family came to this area. I think it was in 1912. We've just done a history book on the community because it was the anniversary of the community league, the 75th anniversary this year. So he helped, actually, to carry bricks or whatever when it was originally being built. I went here in the, probably late 1950's, 1956. I have three children and they've all gone through here."
- "What I hear is that because of the area that this school is in, it's kind of a rough area. And before certain people started at the school there were no set policies, but once these policies were set, like the quiet rooms and quiet lunches there were things that just happened in the school. Since these have come into effect the school has become a much safer and much more enjoyable place to be at."
- "What I understand is that the principal has been here three years, this is the third year and that before that things were maybe a little out of control that way. When the new principal came, things changed. So I would imagine the principal initiated the changes."

- "We knew that something had to be done to keep the school a safe place and to help make it safer than it was because there was getting to be too much fighting and violence. When I got here about six years ago, it was a much tougher school than it is now. It's a completely different atmosphere now than it was. Even in my classroom I would have fights breaking out and really nothing in place to help me deal with the problems. The students had no idea where 'things' would go after there was a problem in the classroom, hallway or playground."
- "We're perceived to be an inner-city neighborhood but this school doesn't, and I don't think has ever had, the real inner-city feel that some schools have. This is a neighborhood where we have a real core of very solid families who often grew up in this neighborhood. A quarter of our school turns over every year, more or less, and that tends to be the problem. Not always, but because these kids are not used to how things are, they tend to rock the boat sometimes. And they just have to be brought into the policies of this school."
- "I'm one of the newer staff here but from what I've heard in terms of the school's history, and from what I have seen since I came, there is just not doubt about what the system here is in terms of rules and consequences. The children know clearly and they tell each other outside on the playground and in the halls all the time."

The second level of Schein's model focuses on values. These are espoused to reveal how people explain and rationalize what they say and do as a collective group. This second level helps people make sense of the first level - artifacts. These values serve as links between artifacts and the third level - assumptions. They explain the obvious and provide a foundation for the development of deeper beliefs. Examples of values that were found include the following:

- "They [the students] are to behave here as, in a reasonable sense, as they would at home."
- Behavior-wise, there's a very strict policy, but it's for all students. But without the good behavior it's very difficult to teach the actual curriculum.

- The staff all thought it was a wonderful idea to implement the Quiet Room because up to that point they didn't necessarily think there was a lot of consistency as far as consequences given out for certain behaviors.
- The reason [for the discipline policy] was for the health and welfare of the students.
- "It's very positive [the school climate]. I do know our students feel safe here. A lot of these kids come from dysfunctional families. Things are quite chaotic at home. And I feel that they know things are stable at school. They know what the expectations are; it's always the same for them. I think that this provides a safe environment for them, sort of a port in a storm."
- A small staff works together as a team very well. Some of the people have been here a long time so there's always the tradition, the richness of what's worked before and what hasn't, to draw on.
- The staff really believe in having a good home-school relationship. In order to do that they feel they have to welcome the people from home into the classroom.
- Names of students for sportsmanship, achievement, citizenship, big effort, and good as gold are given recognition. They get ribbons at assemblies, with the school logo on it, and good as gold luncheons, one student from each classroom. There's a pizza lunch put on by one of the teachers.
- They have social events at the school including Meet-the-Teacher Night. And that is very welcomed.
- There's an intangible aspect whereby the staff is really, really committed to making the school a second home for some of these children.
- The expectations are that the children have respect for one another and for themselves, for possessions and belongings.
- Informally, the students, are given responsibilities that they have to go by. If they know that a sibling is going to be away then it's their responsibility to come to the office and let the office know so the parent is not phoned.
- The school does an environmental lunch. During lunchtime when people are throwing stuff away, they make sure that things that can be recycled are recycled, things go into compost that can, and then just the garbage goes to the garbage.
- The staff all use the Lions Quest program, Pro-social skills, and also believe that all the clubs help kids feel good about themselves.
- Staff try and get the students to solve their problems, express their point of view, and listen to other people's point of view.

Schein's third level focuses on what he refers to as basic assumptions. They are the essence of the culture; invisible, and usually taken for granted. When values at this level are firmly entrenched and internalized, they are difficult to identify or to articulate. Schein termed these deeply embedded values: basic assumptions. In reviewing the respondents' transcripts, there were many examples where they couldn't specify a particular view or rationalize what the school was actually doing that was bringing about a certain culture or why the students were the way they were. Following are examples of these assumptions:

- "For example, a push, which didn't actually hurt a child, is made out to be a thing you cannot do. They don't start fist fighting, and that was the case at my other school. They've, I don't quite know how to explain it, but they've made a big deal out of the small offences. And it's done so that it doesn't seem to have escalated."
- "Quiet Room is a big deal in our school because it handles a lot of things that other policies don't handle. There's no line-up in the office; there's no taking up class time sorting these things out every day. People know the consequences very well and so then there are no questions."
- "Yes, there was a change in the policies and I think it was parents that were involved. I know parents would have had input, as I recall some of the discussions at the time. That whole topic came up at the table. There was quite a bit of discussion on it. The principal was wonderful in explaining a lot of stuff. It's just one of those things, but the principal handled it very well."
- "If they [the students] don't have limits then they can run the school. The children want to be in a school where it's safe and they're valued. This is a school where they are. And I'm pretty sure the parents feel the same way."
- "There's a feeling of openness, a feeling of commitment to what we stand for and also to individual children's needs. There seems to be a lot of integrity here."

- "It's [the culture] been developed through very caring people. Our staff, all of our staff, how do I put this, the leadership in our school sort of sets a tone for the rest of the staff."
- "I think it's a very positive atmosphere in the school. I've heard a number of visitors say it as soon as they come in. I spent a very short time subbing and I knew when I walked into a school, I don't know how to explain it. You know the minute you walk in the door of a school, whether or not it's a comfortable place to be. I'm not sure what it is, where that happens, but here it's very comfortable, it's very safe, it's very friendly."

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Summary

The literature and this study confirmed that organizational culture, in the context of the selected elementary school, the blend of policies, practices and programs, did indeed influence the degree of conflict and violence that was present. It was perceived to have reduced the presence of conflict and violence.

Schein's theory, including artifacts, values and basic assumptions, was identified repeatedly throughout the responses from all stakeholder groups that participated in the study. This was evident in each of the major areas of study; the policies, practices and programs of the selected school. In fact, within each of the major categories, the sub-categories also reflected his conceptual framework.

All stakeholder groups must recognize that through their own deliberate and incidental actions, they do create, transmit and embed cultural manifestations that influence and shape the multiple realities of life in the school. It is critical that these actions and behaviors be linked to a well designed and thoughtful action plan that allows for the stipulation of what the school is about, while providing for the emergence and development of individual and group values and beliefs. The congruence of or the lack of congruence of these cultural manifestations impacts on the fit between what is and what is expected. The culture of the school is certainly one that evolves and changes by and through the actions of all stakeholder groups. The key, then, is to

bring these actions and beliefs to the conscious level and be cognizant of the powerful impact of them.

The leadership of the school was identified, on many occasions, as one that influenced, directed or orchestrated the change in cultural perceptions. This certainly has implications for the type of leadership style that is present in all schools. Additionally, there are implications with respect to the influence that the leadership style has on the overall culture that is created and reflected by all stakeholders who work in, and have contact, directly or indirectly, with the school as a whole. The beliefs and values that are espoused by the leadership do, indeed, have a domino effect with respect to how the staff interprets and behaviorally carries out these beliefs and values. This, in turn, impacts on how the students and parents respond, ultimately establishing the foundation for the cultural presence in the school. The implications, for the leadership in the school, centre on their ability to create a dynamic culture, wherein the leadership processes, organizational and physical structures accommodate various diverse subcultures. In doing so, the leaders must preserve the integrity of the overall culture and school functions. The leadership at this particular school had a positive impact and influence on the subgroups that led to a mutually acceptable and effective culture that empowered individual and group participation.

The school was rich in ceremonies, rites, rituals,

symbols, norms, myths, sagas and stories which served to create the sense of identity that many respondents articulated consistently, between and among the various subgroups. Overall, this richness led to a culture that reflected warmth, care, commitment, professionalism, structure, predictability, safeness, openness, and fairness that made the environment ,described by many, as "a happy place to be."

One of the strengths of the study was the rapport that was developed by the researcher with the staff at the school through visitations prior to, during, and following the formal study. This provided an opportunity to view the various subgroups, including the students, at work, while there was not a "pressure" on them. A couple of respondents did express a slight degree of nervousness during the actual interview, and related it specifically to the use of the tape-recorder.

The use of the individual interviews was particularly beneficial for two reasons. First, they were accomplished over an intense three-day period, which did not allow for much sharing of the content of the questions between the respondents. Second, the interviews were accomplished on an individual basis, and consequently each respondent's perspective was truly their own, without the influence of anybody else to direct or influence.

The document analysis was also a powerful aspect of the study as this represented the structural operation of the

school, including all the formal policies, procedures and expectations that were documented and therefore available to all for reflection and scrutiny. The philosophy of the school and its staff was particularly relevant as this was confirmed by their values, behaviors and beliefs that were identified through the interviews and the observations. There was only one interview transcript that was not returned; therefore, the high degree of staff involvement solidified the strength of the study with respect to the concept of trustworthiness.

The interview questions were classified as semi-structured; a basic set of questions were presented to all respondents, with various probing questions that were prepared for clarification purposes. A few of the respondents were not clear on the intent of several questions, and consequently this would suggest that perhaps the pilot examination may have been expanded to include even more individuals who were not as familiar with the inner workings of a school and the corresponding language or "buzz words" that, as educators, we sometimes take for granted.

The observations were also beneficial in that they proved to confirm the responses of the various stakeholder groups. Observing the language (both verbal and non-verbal), actions, behaviors, and relationships of all stakeholders between and among the various subgroups provided the researcher with valuable data that did indeed confirm statements made through the interviews, and

statements made formally through the Student and Parent Handbook.

There was an apparent linkage of the school principal's personal philosophy, her beliefs, vision, values and actions, to the actions of the subgroups. Many respondents perceived this to have had a great impact on the culture of the school.

The study did not include the students' perspectives, and this is one aspect where input would have been valuable. Although information was gleaned through observation, the opportunity for the students to provide an interpretation of how they saw the school and the interrelations of the various subgroups, may have been another vehicle that would have further strengthened the trustworthiness of the study.

Finally, although parents and support staff were involved in the school's activities and policy development, the findings suggested that it was not to the same degree as for the teaching staff. This is probably the case in most schools, but perhaps a greater involvement would hone the cultural influences and behaviors, and subsequently create a culture that would be engaged and absorbed at a richer level.

Suggestions for Further Research

I would suggest that further enquiry into the following areas would enhance the growing body of literature on conflict in the schools, with particular emphasis on the effects of the school culture, that includes the policies, practices and programs at the school(s); (1) a similar study in another elementary school where the conditions are similar to the context of this study, (2) a similar study in either a junior or senior high school where conditions are similar to the context of this study, (3) a study to examine the impact that organizational culture has on the planning and implementation of a new school, (4) research on the degree of influence that interrelationships have on the behavior of, and degree of conflict, in the school, (5) a study on the influence of a specific leadership type on the artifacts, values and basic assumptions espoused and enacted in a context similar to that of this study.

These suggestions are presented as possible areas for further research that would delve into the relationship between a school's culture and the degree of conflict and violence evident within its context. Replicating the study in another elementary, junior or senior high school would provide the opportunity to confirm the findings of this study or to uncover other factors that may be present. It would be interesting to utilize research on a school's culture when educators are planning a new school, with

particular emphasis on the staff selection process, including selection of the principal. A study on the interrelationships of staff, students, and parents, and their corresponding impact on the degree of conflict and violence found in the school would be most interesting and would add significantly to the body of literature on this phenomena.

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APPENDIX A

**Consent to Participate in the Effective Policies, Practices,
and Programs Study**

Dear colleague,

As a follow-up to the verbal consent you have provided me to work with you in my study entitled - "Managing Conflict: Effective Policies, Practices, and Programs in a selected Elementary School," I am requesting you to acknowledge your consent in written form. Please do so by signing the bottom of this letter and returning it to me, via the school office.

As participants in this study, you will be asked to engage in an interview that will be conducted during the course of the school year. The length of time for conducting the interview will vary from 30-45 minutes.

You may, at any time, withdraw your consent to participate in this study. I assure you that if you decide to opt out of this study, you need not fear any form of retribution. Furthermore, all data collected will be treated as confidential; all names and places will be assigned pseudonyms in all documents, which are to be presented at public forums or for publication. You will also be provided with transcripts of interviews, so that you can identify any data, which you do not wish me to use. Any data that you identify as sensitive, will be deleted from the record, before any analysis takes place.

Following the conclusion of this study, your school will be provided with a copy of the results of the study. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me at 492-4909 (work) or 433-4844 (home). At this time, I also wish to thank you for agreeing to work with me in this study. Your contribution is greatly valued.

Sincerely,

Colin Sturdy

I, _____ acknowledge that I give
permission to Colin Sturdy to include me in the study as
described above.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX B
RESEARCH PROJECT

April 23, 1996

by Colin Sturdy

Dear Participant,

I would like to thank you once again for participating in my research project. Your time and information, provided via the interview process, has been invaluable.

Enclosed you will find the transcription of the interview I held with you a number of weeks ago. I would like to remind you that only I have the master list, referencing whom relates to the various participant numbers. I would ask you to kindly read the document provided, and make any changes you wish. Specifically, I would ask you to consider whether you wish to add, delete, or modify, any of the information you provided. Again, I would like to emphasize that I am not concerned whatsoever with grammar, after all, speech patterns are so different than a prepared written document. It is the **content** of the information that I will be considering, so please keep that first and foremost in mind, while reading and making any changes you feel are appropriate.

When you are finished editing, I would ask you to hand in your sealed document in the envelope provided to **Val** [the secretary], who will collect all the envelopes and call me when they are all in.

Please hand in your transcript no later than **May 1st**, as I would like to get moving on the analysis ASAP.

Thanks to you all!

Colin Sturdy

APPENDIX C**Interview Schedule****Policies**

1. What policies/rules/expectations does your school/classroom have in place that address student conduct or behavioral expectations?
2. Who was involved in the development of the policies/rules/expectations? When did this come about?
3. What has been the reaction to the policies/rules/expectations from teachers, parents, and students?
4. Why did these policies/rules/expectations come about? Were they developed on a proactive or reactive basis, or a combination of these? Please elaborate.
5. Do you feel these policies/rules/expectations have made an effect on student behavior? Please elaborate.
6. Are you pleased with the policies/rules/expectations? Why or why not?

Practices

1. Please describe the school climate. How has it developed?
2. If you were a visitor to the school, what impression would you leave with?
3. What kinds of activities/practices/rituals contribute to the school climate in your classroom/school?
4. Describe how students relate to each other?
5. How is the disruptive student dealt with in your classroom/school?
6. How do you deal with aggressive or violent students in your classroom/school?

Programs

1. What programs, instructional or extra-curricular do you use that deal with the affective aspect of education?
2. Are these programs being used to address an identified need? What is the need? How were they identified?
3. What types of programs are used that teach students social skills?
4. Are students being taught how to deal with conflict, aggression, or other anti-social behaviors? Please elaborate.
5. Are there plans to implement any programs, or other programs that address the issue of conflict or human relations in general? If so, what is the need and who will design or implement the program?
6. Do you see a need for any further programs or plans?