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DEMONSTRATING STUDENT GROWTH:
A LEADERSHIP STRATEGY
FOR IMPACTING SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
AND ACCOUNTABILITY

BY

RUTH D. LeBLANC

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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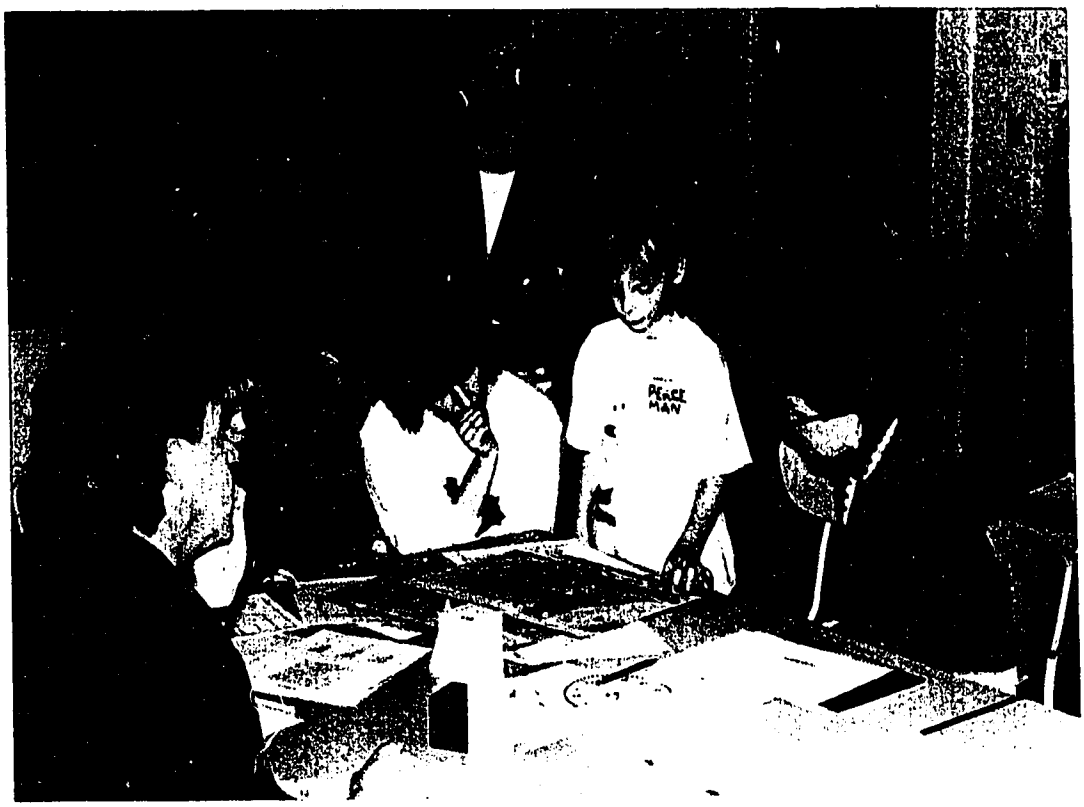

Student, Garry, and his teacher, Mr. Vermette (left) and assistant principal, Terry Tadman (standing) are demonstrating student growth to Garry's mother (centre) and little sister, and associate superintendent, Ruth LeBlanc (right).

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDY AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Demonstrating Student Growth: A Leadership Strategy for Impacting School Improvement and Accountability" submitted by Ruth D. LeBlanc in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Educational Administration.

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James Blakey

Dr. J. Blakey

Date: June 23, 1992

LOVINGLY DEDICATED TO MY DAUGHTER, DANA DIONNE LeBLANC,

WHO HAS SO GENEROUSLY SHARED ME WITH MY CAREER,

AND WHO IS AT THE IMPORTANT POINT IN HER LIFE

OF DECIDING ON HER PROFESSION.

MAY SHE FIND THE FULFILMENT IN HER CHOICE

THAT I HAVE FOUND IN MINE.

Abstract

This study describes the impact of a leadership strategy used by an associate superintendent and principals in the Edmonton Public Schools. The leadership strategy called demonstrating student growth, was used as an initiative for generating school improvement and accountability. In particular, the strategy aimed at improving student programs and ultimately, student performance and teacher career satisfaction.

The study is based on the perceptions of eight principals and the observations and interpretations of the associate superintendent. The data are consistent and plentiful in supporting the premises that leadership was provided, a focus on growth was a right focus, development and implementation processes were generally well-received and enabling, the demonstration concept increased motivation and accountability, and school improvements took place. Perhaps the strongest principal message is that the strategy was good for building on strengths and generating teacher and student feelings of success.

Specific improvements reported by the principals include: (a) concept internalization -- students, teachers, and principals developed understanding of concepts such as growth, demonstration, and assessment in relation to the curriculum; (b) program improvement -- students and teachers became more focused on goals and growth; (c) professional development

-- teachers and principals developed increased knowledge about curriculum, improved skill in identifying and articulating growth, and improved attitudes including increased confidence and career satisfaction; (d) program supervision -- principals and the associate superintendent became more knowledgeable about school and classroom performance; (e) accountability -- teachers and principals developed increased respect for stakeholder rights to information and involvement, and improved means for being accountable; and (f) leadership -- principals and the associate superintendent took initiative for improvements and developed a team approach to leadership that included key teachers.

The thesis is the story of the demonstration strategy over the first three years of its development and implementation. In some ways, it is a personal story told by those who lived it, the principals and the associate superintendent. Future use of the demonstration strategy is considered in the sections on implications and reflections.

Acknowledgements

This study has been rich with teamwork, from the inception of demonstration as a leadership strategy to the reflection afforded by this study. The principals, teachers, and students in Area 2 schools brought meaning to the strategy and made it happen -- for their accomplishments, I am proud and grateful. In particular, I wish to acknowledge the principals -- they were the key participants in development and implemention at the Area and school levels. I admire the inviting and sensible approaches that they used to involve their teachers and students in designing and performing a multitude of creative and effective demonstrations. In future years, I will recall fondly these sessions as special moments in my career. Thank you to the following principals, most of whom were members of Area 2 for the full three year period contributing to this study:

Baker, Bob
Barnett, Don
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Burke, Mike
Cleveland, Mary-Lou
Demaine, Mike
Egbert, Helen
Fisher, Warren
Fletcher, Bob
Forster, Dave
Hay, Trudy
Howard, Tom
Hughes, Mark
Jackson, Chris
Jurkat, Ernie
Kunst, Noel
McElwaine, Clint
McFarlene, Dave
McPherson, Neil
Poots, Ron
Power, Tom
Puffer, Hugh
Pushor, Debbie
Quigg, Ray
Semeniuk, Pat
Soper, Judy
Schienbein, Dennis
Vinge, Don
Voice, Brian
Westerlund, Ken
Wilson, Donna
Woitenko, John
Wynychuk, Ernie
Youck, Bernice

Eight of these principals gave generously of the their time

and insight to provide the interview data -- the perceptions upon which the study is based.

I wish to give special mention to Dr. Linda LaRocque who effectively and pleasantly fulfilled her role as my thesis advisor. With her coaching the study seemed forever interesting and progressive. Thank you also to Dr. Al MacKay and Dr. Jan Blakey for their enthusiasm, insights, and belief in me.

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Dana LeBlanc, my daughter
Neil McPherson, principal
Mary Oswald, consultant
Principal interviewees.

In addition, thank you to:

Carol Wilton, my sister and my word processing consultant.
Peter Irwin, editor and fan!

In closing, I wish to acknowledge Edmonton Public Schools for being a place where reaching high is the norm and opportunity for professional growth is omnipresent.

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Chapter 1

DEMONSTRATION AS A LEADERSHIP STRATEGY

Demonstrating student growth is the activity of showing that a student is learning and developing in accordance with curriculum expectations. To identify growth a teacher must: (a) have knowledge of a student's initial performance in relation to a specific expectation, (b) compare that level and quality of performance to current performance, and (c) determine if a more advanced level of knowledge, skill, or attitude has been achieved. The teacher must have knowledge of a wide range of curriculum against which to monitor continually student performance. Then to demonstrate growth the teacher must be able to articulate the difference in performance. Further, clear evidence of student results in the form of indicators, work samples, and profiles must be available to support the teacher's judgements.

Such knowledge of curriculum and students is the everyday business of teachers; however, the size of the challenge must not be underestimated. Nor can the challenge be disregarded -- the public is demanding results and accountability. There is a seriousness about expectations for schooling, perhaps rooted in fears related to global competition, struggling economies, and environmental issues. There is a widely held conviction that students must be given high quality schooling to equip them for future challenges.

Based upon these realizations, a group of principals and I developed the concept of demonstrating student growth as a leadership strategy. Demonstration sessions were to be held to help me, the associate superintendent, know better the schools for which I had responsibility. However, most of all, the preparation and debriefing activities for demonstrations were to be opportunities for me to provide relevant leadership, assistance, and support to principals in carrying out their roles. Likewise, the strategy was to help principals know classrooms and give them opportunities to provide leadership, assistance, and support to teachers. The story of how the strategy unfolded is told below.

Background to the Study

In preparation for the 1988-89 school term, my challenge as a new associate superintendent of schools was in designing leadership initiatives and processes to use with twenty-seven elementary, junior high, and senior high principals. My primary interest was in finding ways from a central office position to impact positively the main purpose of schools, that is, student learning and development.

I realized that first I needed to know each of the schools. I promptly reviewed information from the usual and readily available sources, such as results from provincial and district achievement tests, and district attitude surveys.

I also anticipated the kinds of information I would be likely to learn through school tours, one-on-one conferences with principals, special school functions, and staff meetings. It occurred to me that the usual avenues for interaction at the school-level were unlikely to be sufficient for zeroing in on the key matter of student learning. I knew that somehow I had to create new opportunities for reviewing student growth and influencing program improvement. Indeed, I wanted to be part of the school team to provide relevant leadership, support, and district-level liaison. Clearly, my involvement would be directly with principals and through them, indirectly with teachers and students.

While in a leadership position in curriculum and instruction some years ago, I developed a simple schema (Figure 1) for displaying the various dimensions of program and the range of activities that teachers regularly perform. The schema was intended to depict the interdependence of program dimensions -- for the wheel to roll smoothly all the spokes must be functional.

Once more the schema became useful as I reflected on the professional development topics that district teachers had experienced in recent years. I pondered about current professional development needs; that is, which "spoke" on the wheel (dimension of program) would most benefit by improvement and would most likely have positive influence on the whole program?

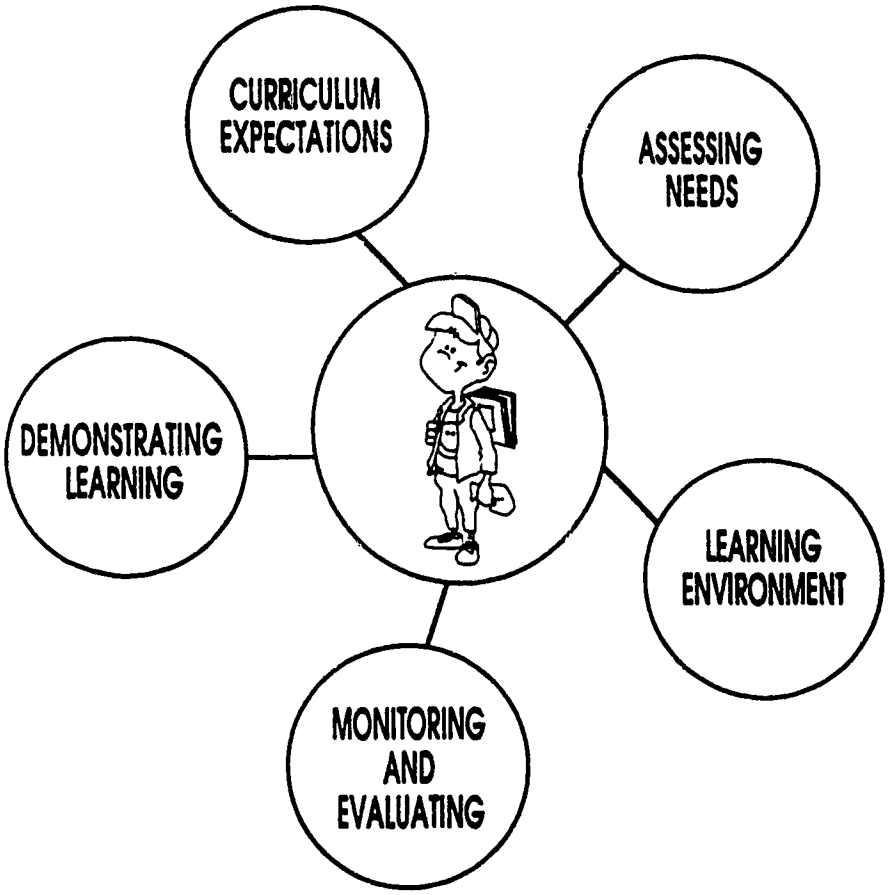


Figure 1. The Teaching-Learning Wheel

Recalling the idea that what gets measured gets taught, I turned to the monitoring and evaluation spoke. When I considered the breakthroughs being made in assessing student writing, and the current interest in student profiles, it occurred to me that a focus on student growth would be timely. I visualized the numerous benefits to students, teachers, and other stakeholders if student growth was more readily recognized. Building on success would surely result.

I sensed that the single most significant action I might take would be in asking principals to give me evidence of student growth, that is, proof of school effectiveness. A focus on growth, reinforced by actual demonstrations of it, would likely generate improvement in every dimension of program. Further, I anticipated that, if appropriately introduced and handled, the challenge would enthuse principals and teachers -- finally, an opportunity to "strut their stuff" and showcase growth that does not get recognized on paper and pencil tests. Likely, principals and teachers would be pleased if their associate superintendent was classroom-focused, that is, visibly interested in their world and willing to commit time and energy to impacting student learning.

The literature further influenced my thinking. There is ample support for: (a) innovation in assessing student performance, (b) collaborative and participatory approaches to change, and (c) demonstrating accountability. The idea of wanting principals, teachers, and students to be motivated by their successes, the students' progress, was not new but I sensed that there was much untapped potential to be realized.

Over the summer, I continued to read and ponder, and by August end I was ready for the important step of consulting the principals. I knew that it was vital to them that I not interfere with school plans already in place for the year. I proceeded cautiously ensuring that my actions communicated

accurately my intentions and commitment to support their roles. The first while was spent getting to know each other and building trust, teamwork, vision, confidence, and enthusiasm.

The principals reacted positively to my description of my role in relation to their work and they readily recommended the formation of an advisory team of principals to assist my planning and communication. The first advisory "group of seven" principals played a vital role in shaping the professional development activities of the next several years. They diligently pondered my key questions:

- What needed to happen for all teachers to be effective with all students and how could I, as their associate superintendent, help them and their schools?

- How could the twenty-seven principals work together as a leadership team to facilitate each other's preparation for performing tasks confidently and with satisfaction?

We puzzled, brainstormed, debated, and ultimately, arrived at a few unanimous and strongly felt ideas about process:

- Teamwork among principals and with the associate superintendent was needed.

- Inclusion of a partner teacher from each school in leadership development activities was needed. These partners would keep the principal informed of teacher perspective, would assist with design and development, and finally, would model implementation.

- Progress would more likely be made using a "broken front" approach in which all staff would be informed and invited to participate. However, principals would work first with teachers who expressed an interest and team building would be a major goal. Purkey and Novak's (1984) Inviting School Success was a valuable resource.

A two-day retreat (hereafter called an Advance as so named by the Area 2 principals) was organized by the advisory team and me for the principals and key teachers. We presented the following challenge to them:

> If the associate superintendent were to visit your school tomorrow, how would you show your school's effectiveness with students? How could you demonstrate the difference your school has made for one student, as an example of your school's performance?

The task was set for each school team to develop a plan for demonstration using their choice of student and curriculum expectations. Sharing sessions occurred among schools and assistance from consultants was available. At the conclusion of the two days, I encouraged principals to invite me to such a demonstration at their schools. I assured them that I would

delight in the opportunity, would make demonstration sessions a priority for my time, and would highlight their successes. We would have a pleasant and rewarding experience -- a celebration of growth with principals, teachers, and students feeling recognized and appreciated.

The Advance evaluations showed that participants had found the experience to be practical, and excitement was expressed that "we were on to something good." Additional meetings occurred over the year, mostly for principal clarification of my expectations, and to build trust and confidence, share strategies, and problem-solve. Indeed, some principals felt apprehension and anxiety. My challenge was to set the stage for risk-taking -- this was an innovative idea with a supervisor whom they did not know well.

Nine of the twenty-seven schools provided demonstrations in that first year, with two of the nine providing five demonstrations each. The remaining eighteen schools were in the development phase with principals using invitational and participatory approaches as planned. The exhilaration of the demonstration experiences at the nine schools was felt among all the schools and benefits to students, teachers, principals, and the associate superintendent were becoming apparent. However, there was also evidence that some teachers, not yet directly involved, were skeptical and anxious about possible future implications for themselves. We recognized that we would have to proceed thoughtfully and

continue to build on success.

I was sufficiently confident in the potential of the strategy to facilitate my role and responsibilities that I sketched a five year leadership plan for myself. The current year counted as the first and four additional years were outlined. The principal advisory team model had been so helpful that I planned to form a new team each year. Together we would strive to provide the right development activities for reaching more and more teachers and higher and higher levels of performance.

In the second year, the strategy for demonstrating student learning evolved through a focus on program improvement. With an increased awareness of student performance in relation to the curriculum, teachers would be in a better position to evaluate program and to make improvements as needed by individual students. Frank Smith's (1986) Insult to Intelligence was a key resource for a two-day retreat that focused schools on the characteristics of worthwhile classroom activities. The retreat evaluations showed that some schools were ready for the link to program improvement while others were not. It seemed that some schools needed more study of the demonstration concept and further workshops were planned. All of the principals provided me with at least one demonstration session and at a few schools there were several. To my delight, keeping up to the schools was becoming a challenge.

In June of the second year, I attended a course at Lewis and Clark College, Portland, Oregon to study with Richard Stiggins, director of the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory. Stiggins' work in performance-based assessment was innovative and becoming prominent. I brought back two ideas that greatly assisted our development of demonstration. The first was a defensible rationale for using teacher professional judgement. This rationale was dependent on the second idea: that each knowledge, skill, and attitude objective of the curriculum can be assessed if pre-set performance criteria are used. These ideas formed the basis for plans for the next year.

In the third year, the theme "a higher level of demonstration" led to continued development in all dimensions of demonstration: identifying growth in relation to the curriculum, maintaining portfolio records, and articulating and showing growth. Of particular significance that year was Stiggins' influence in developing performance assessment blueprints with pre-set criteria upon which to base teacher judgements. Again the schools performed demonstrations and my knowledge of their work and our needs continued to grow.

Tne fourth year (1991-92), was planned in the Spring of the third year, once more with a principal advisory team. Developments, which are now occurring with another associate superintendent (since I am on professional leave), are on the topic of communication with parents. Systems for formal

reports and conferences are being improved to incorporate the increased insight that teachers and students have about student performance.

The fifth year was to have been a reflection and refinement year in striving for yet higher levels of demonstration. Also to be explored in the fifth year was the potential of the strategy for demonstrating accountability to the greater community.

The following examples of demonstrating student growth show how the principals responded to the challenge of providing a session per year for me. There are several other variations and forms of demonstrations that occurred but the following fourteen mini-descriptions give a flavour of what the schools provided. These examples do not include specifically the sessions held at schools without me present, for example, for the purpose of teacher performance evaluation or parent-teacher conferences. Indeed, the characteristics of sessions for me and the sessions for other purposes would be similar and in some cases basically the same.

Examples of Demonstration Sessions

It is important when reading the following examples to recall that much staff interaction and development occurred prior to the demonstration, and again later in debriefing sessions. It should be noted that even though principals had

a low profile in many of the actual demonstrations, they were responsible for the production and quality of each session, as well as follow-up with teachers, students, and parents. Indeed, I, as associate superintendent, had responsibility too, in terms of the impact my initiative was having on principals and their schools.

The examples are presented in five categories that have been chosen to reflect the types of sessions developed by schools: student-led, teacher-led, teacher-student conversations, student presentations, principal-led, and community-oriented. The names of students and teachers in the examples are pseudonyms.

Student-Led Sessions

School A

At one school, the two teachers of Cory, a ten-year-old, prepared him to tell me about his learning. Cory and I met in the principal's office for approximately half an hour during which he proudly told me that the one book was a sample of his reading at the beginning of the year, whereas the second book was a sample of what he reads now. He was able to describe the difference between the reading levels of the books and he showed enthusiasm for reading as he eagerly shared details of story plot.

Cory showed me comparisons of writing samples, math assignments, and science notes, and he talked about his

performance in physical education. He spoke fondly of his teachers and the school. Although Cory was generally a quiet, reserved boy who had experienced difficulty in the earlier years, he had obviously begun to blossom and he was aware of it. The session with Cory was followed by a conference with the two teachers, as arranged by them, in which they shared observations, test results, expectations, and strategies specific to Cory's learning and development.

School B

At another school, five high school students shared evidence of their development in work, study, and personal management skills. With the help of their teacher, the students prepared the presentation and then took turns showing and explaining charts and work samples.

They invited discussion and responded confidently to questions regarding the difference such skills made to them. (All five students had previous difficulty in school.) The benefit in having acquired such skills was evident in noting the interest, quality, and pride with which they were doing their current assignments. They also provided personal testimony of improved attitude and skill.

School C

At one school, a teacher prepared a group of five students to demonstrate their growth simultaneously to their

parents. First the students toured their parents around the room to inform them of learning centres, displays, work and storage spaces, and classroom routines. Then the students seated their parents and showed them a portfolio, a journal, scribblers, and project work. The students had been coached by the teacher to follow a conference agenda and to point out examples of growth. The teacher circulated to monitor the sessions and to provide additional information as needed. At the end of the session, the parents were asked to evaluate the process. The evaluations showed that they were clearly impressed with their children and with the information they had gained.

Teacher-Led Sessions

School D

At the end of a school year, I was an observer while the teacher and a seven-year-old student, Ethan, demonstrated to his parents the growth he had accomplished. The teacher described examples of intellectual, social, emotional, and physical growth, showing "before and after" samples and records. For each example, Ethan was invited to provide his observations. The session was a natural flow of parent, student, and teacher talk. The parents were given information about Ethan's performance in relation to the graded curriculum, his work habits, and learning style. The parents asked several questions of Ethan and the teacher. The focus

on growth and future action resulted in optimism for future learning.

School E

At another school, the parents and I were observers as a social studies teacher, the principal, and assistant principal interviewed a fourteen-year-old student, Richard, about his development in social studies. Perhaps more importantly was the growth Richard and his teachers recognized regarding his attitude, work habits, and interest in leadership.

Richard did most of the talking. He was impressive in his ability to identify, understand, and articulate the progress he had made. He described specific turning points in his development and the impact upon him of specific teachers and fellow students. A particularly touching moment occurred when he told the story of his discovery of his capability in productive leadership compared to negative attention seeking.

The session ended with congratulations and handshakes from each of the adults. The parents expressed their pride, relief, and gratitude for the important realizations that their middle son had made. I think that perhaps none of us left that session untouched!

School F

At another school, a conference room was set up to display seven-year-old Shane's development in relation to

language arts and mathematics. Shane's mother and I were the recipients of information clearly articulated by the teacher and assistant principal, showing Shane's progress in various curriculum expectations.

Diagnostic reading results were shown as were explicit analyses of writing samples. In math, samples of work and test scores were shared as we were walked through Shane's progress in all the units of study. Periodically, Shane provided his perceptions and at one point, he demonstrated at the chalkboard his skill in dividing numbers. Finally, Shane shared his perceptions of his ability and development in art, his area of strength and delight.

Shane's mother was impressed and proud. I, too, was impressed and proud of Shane, and also of the staff's ability to monitor and communicate progress in relation to the graded curriculum.

Teacher-Student Conversations

School G

At one school, a seven-year-old student, Patrick, and his teacher conversed about the contents of two of his portfolios. The teacher had also been Patrick's kindergarten teacher two years earlier. Patrick's mother had saved his kindergarten portfolio and he had not seen it since June of the kindergarten year. The principal and I observed as Patrick expressed delight about each item in the portfolio as he

walked freely through it. He chuckled, squealed, and shared stories that he recalled. At times he laughed at his own work and noted how much better he had become. Several times he turned to the teacher with a "remember when" question. Later, we regretted that we had not video-taped Patrick's reaction to his portfolio so others could have sensed and enjoyed the benefits to him and the teacher.

The second part of the conversation was a review of Patrick's current portfolio. The natural and comfortable interaction between the student and teacher, together with smiles, gentle teasing, and stories of fun, were indicators of a healthy learning environment for the student. That Patrick, his teacher, and the principal felt proud was deserved. I left confident that his joy of accomplishment was an excellent beginning to life-long learning.

School H

At a second school, a high school social studies teacher and a student, Connie, discussed key concepts from a unit of study. I observed that Connie had interest in and knowledge about world affairs, and an impressive level of understanding of complex concepts. Connie described her interest as a product of the teacher's abilities -- she had become inspired. She shared that she now understood events that previously had been remote to her, and that she liked to follow current affairs. She marvelled at her interest in watching the news

on television.

Student Presentations

School I

In one variety of this model, the teacher met with me to share information about the learning of four eleven-year-old students. Then the students joined us to demonstrate particular accomplishments. Two of the students shared a rap poem that they had written. One girl showed progress in her writing samples and highlighted a report that she had just completed. She described the processes that she used in writing the report, in collecting and organizing information, preparing the outline, writing drafts, editing, and preparing the final copy. The fourth student described his challenge and progress in learning to like books and become a good reader.

School J

In a second variety of this model, an eight-year-old student, Sandra, with the teacher's help, presented a home-school project that she, her mother, and the teacher had agreed upon for developing specific curriculum objectives. She shared that the project included a planning stage at which she had made a number of decisions. She described how she had constructed a diorama. Then she shared her written description, a poster, and her evaluation of her learning. It

was obvious that Sandra was proud of her project and aware of her own progress. She expressed that, in particular, she had enjoyed "the learning she and her mother had done" in working together.

School K

At a third school, two twelve-year-old students demonstrated their learning by reporting on a science experiment, part of which they performed for me. They described processes and results, and commented on their interest in science, giving examples of its importance. They answered with enthusiasm and confidence all the questions I posed.

Principal-Led Sessions

School L

At a high school, the principal chaired sessions with two groups of teachers who described the learning and development of an immigrant student, Vin. Later, I was taken to the drama department and shown a video of his performance in that subject. Accordingly, I met all his teachers, gained insight into his total program, and became aware of the progress he was making, including social and emotional growth. This model of demonstration provided the opportunity for discussion among the teachers and with the principal and me. Evidence of Vin's determination, courage, and efforts to excel in his courses

and belong socially, while at the same time learning English as a second language and a new culture, was inspiring.

School M

At another school, I was observer as the principal and a ten-year-old student, Bobby examined his program and learning. The teacher was present to assist and guide the student as need be. The principal asked questions as he and Bobby toured the subject area stations in the classroom. Bobby shared samples of his work. At one point, Bobby performed mathematical calculations at the chalkboard and explained the processes he was using. Bobby also articulated his positive opinion of his own development.

Community-Oriented Sessions

School N

At one school, the principal arranged a breakfast meeting -- coffee, juice, and muffins, as the setting for a demonstration session. The participants were two teachers and nine grade one students. The audience consisted of approximately fifteen guests: the parents, and as the principal calls them, "V.I.P.s" from the education field and the community (who do not have children in school). The students showed their growth in pro-social skills, reading, writing, printing, and math by performing roles assigned to each of them. And perform they did! The audience was

delighted -- sometimes amazed, sometimes humored, and sometimes emotional -- as the youngsters showed just how much they had grown in their first year of school.

While the stories of demonstration are touching and suggest that exciting and productive activity occurred, there is a need for more in-depth study of what happened at schools as a result of the demonstrations. For example, in particular, it is useful to know the principals' perceptions since they had firsthand involvement.

Statement of the Problem

This study examines the usefulness of demonstrating student growth as a leadership strategy. The primary purpose is to learn what happened at schools from the perspective of principals as a result of my asking them to host demonstration sessions. For example, from their perspective did the strategy help them and me be more effective leaders, and if yes, how? I wanted to know if they were using the strategy in my absence this year (or had it been my enthusiasm and authority that carried it over the three years?). I wondered if principals felt ownership for the strategy and if they saw benefits worth their continued efforts.

The following research questions were pursued with seven principals in November and December, 1991:

1. What happened at your school as a result of the demonstration strategy?
2. What is a demonstration session? What is its purpose and key elements?
3. What impact did the demonstration strategy have on you, as principal? On teachers (due to the principal's actions)? On students (due to the teacher's actions)?
4. What impact did the schools' demonstration sessions have on me, the associate superintendent?
5. What impact did the demonstration concept have on staff development? Program effectiveness? Relationships amongst participants?
6. What involvement is there with the demonstration concept this year?
7. What element of demonstration was most difficult for you to accomplish? For teachers to accomplish?
8. How could the demonstration strategy be improved?
9. What form of the strategy would be useful for me to use with a new grouping of principals?

An interview with an additional principal occurred in April, 1992 to examine the perceptions of a member of the principal advisory committee in regard to one primary question: What happened at the Area level in 1991-2 as a result of the demonstration strategy?

Significance of the Problem

Developing processes for improving student performance, assessing and reporting student growth, and showing accountability, are pressing challenges of school systems today. The demonstration strategy, which is being used in Edmonton Public Schools, may have potential in attending to these challenges. An examination of the strategy is needed for knowing more clearly its impact and potential. Specifically, it is desirable to know principal perceptions of the impact on schools as a result of their associate superintendent using the strategy to influence school performance.

No descriptions of demonstration as a leadership strategy were found in the literature, other than in my article in Education Canada (1991). However, there is an abundance of literature supporting the intents of the strategy and elements of it. For example, there is literature calling for "more instructionally-appropriate and effective testing: authentic assessment" (Wiggins, 1990, p. 8). This is the type of assessment needed for identifying growth in the full range of curriculum expectations, that is, the content of demonstrations. Many researchers have reported on the limitations of standardized achievement tests. Stiggins (1991a) makes a strong case for the use of teacher knowledge about student performance in providing a fuller picture of

student achievement. Demonstrations are based on teacher knowledge. Current literature advocates "portfolios for learning and assessment" (Camp, 1990, p. 1) -- portfolios became a favored approach for assessing, showing, and influencing student growth in the demonstration strategy. Arter and Spandel advocate that portfolios "reflect the same broad goals that drive everyday instruction" and that "criteria used to evaluate performance of projects or products included in the portfolio be the same as those used everyday in the classroom" (1991, p. 9). An obvious way to share the results of portfolio assessment is to show and explain the contents of the portfolio, that is, to demonstrate the growth. The demonstration strategy as used in Area 2 may have potential for assisting schools in delivering on some of the characteristics described in the literature as desirable in assessment and reporting. A study is needed to understand what the principals perceived to be the strengths and weaknesses of demonstration; that is, did the strategy assist them in achieving any of the desired characteristics?

There is also an abundance of literature showing that accountability is an issue in schooling. Darling-Hammond claims that the issue of accountability is "the most pressing and most problematic of any facing the public schools today (1989, p. 59). Two recent Canadian studies, Learning Well, Living Well (Government of Canada, 1991) and To Be Our Best:

Learning for the Future (Corporate-Higher Education Forum, 1990) state emphatically that the future of Canada as a healthy country -- united and having a high quality of living -- is dependent upon an educated populace. Both studies call for improved school performance and advise that all Canadians must be informed, interested, and involved in the provision of appropriate schooling for all students. Improved strategies are needed for satisfying accountability demands, that is, for informing all Canadians about student growth on the full range of curriculum expectations. There needs to be dialogue with stakeholders on the most fundamental schooling matters -- student learning and development, resource needs, and curriculum and instruction changes. An examination of the demonstration strategy may produce useful findings regarding its potential for such dialogue.

The research findings may be useful also in adding to the rather limited amount of available literature regarding the impact of central office administrators on school effectiveness. This study is important for judging the worth of the demonstration concept as a leadership strategy.

Further, an examination of the impact of the leadership processes used may provide insights, or at minimum, may confirm current prevalent thought about effective approaches to change in the pursuit of school improvement. Whole texts have been dedicated to describing the state of education in the 70s and 80s and the problems intensified by that which

McNeil describes as policymakers "knee-jerk reform" (1988, p. 209). Such texts are: Goodlad's A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future (1984), Sizer's Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School (1984), McNeil's Contradiction of Control: School Structure and School Knowledge (1988), and Rosenholtz's Teachers' Workplace: The Social Organization of Schools (1989). The limited and regimented role given to teaching, and therefore to the learning process, is the criticism of these writers.

Fullan's (1991) description of the current school improvement efforts as no longer being "intensification" (p. 7) but rather being a "restructuring" (p. 7) of schooling, is consistent with the observations of many other current researchers. The fact is, improvement is a must. Recent research, like that of Coleman and LaRocque (1990), provides insight into the characteristics of school districts in which schools are making improvement. With these characteristics in mind, an examination of the principals' perceptions about the demonstration strategy may provide additional information regarding the nature and types of processes to use in generating school improvement.

An examination of the strategy is of immediate practical significance to Edmonton Public School district in its many related efforts to provide authentic assessment, reporting, and accountability. The Student Assessment department, Edmonton Public Schools is currently piloting a variety of

non-paper-and-pencil assessment measures. Also, consultants are assisting schools to be innovative in improving reporting, including the use of demonstration approaches.

The principals who participated in the strategy's development will be eager for the study's findings and conclusions. Of course they have a vested interest, but most of all, they will want to learn from the results. They will want to make informed decisions about what to keep doing, or to do differently, or to start doing. Teachers who have been involved will have similar interests.

Other Edmonton Public Schools associate superintendents and principals who are either currently using the strategy, considering it, or just beginning the process, will be interested in the results. Even administrators who are not using demonstration as a leadership strategy, but rather as a strategy for reporting to parents, are likely to be interested in the findings. And finally, as mentioned earlier, the findings will have particular significance to me in deciding whether to use the strategy next year, and if so, how and with what improvements.

In summary, it is anticipated that the findings will be of interest to teachers and administrators everywhere. The concept of demonstration is "a natural" for the communication of authentic assessment results, and is already occurring, if not by the label, "demonstration," perhaps by the more traditional labels, "reporting" and "conferences," or as

"portfolio sharing." However, the potential of demonstration as a leadership strategy, that is for achieving leadership results, like school improvement and accountability, is a new idea to be shared with administrators.

Assumptions

Interpretations of related literature and analysis of principals' perceptions and my observations formulate the findings of the study. Assumptions underlying these interpretations are that:

- The participants recognized the significance and genuineness of the study and provided their most accurate reflections and judgements.

- A qualitative research study was an effective approach for gaining insights into the questions being pursued.

- There is sufficient evidence to substantiate findings.

- My need for accurate information to guide my future effectiveness as an associate superintendent is stronger than any personal attachment to the strategy's success.

Delimitations

The study is delimited to the perceptions of eight of the current twenty-eight Area 2 principals of Edmonton Public Schools, who were involved in the development and implementation of the demonstration strategy.

Limitations

The study is limited to the perceptions of the principals and myself. Although it may be claimed that I have a vested interest in the strategy since I conceived of the idea and participated in its development and implementation, I can only respond, "Yes, but of more value to me is my future effectiveness as an associate superintendent. There is nothing to be gained in trying to fool myself." Indeed, I relied heavily on principal perceptions throughout the study.

The study does not profess that the demonstration strategy has improved student achievement, even though such is the perception of principals. Multiple factors influence achievement.

Outline of the Study

Chapter 1 describes: (a) the concept of demonstration as a leadership strategy, (b) the background to the strategy's

development, and (c) the research problem in examining the strategy. Chapter 2, the literature review, explores four areas to identify current thinking in each: (a) student assessment and reporting, (b) accountability in schooling, (c) impact of central office administration on school effectiveness, and (d) leadership and change. Chapter 3 contains the methodology of the study, describing the data sources, the basis for participant selection, and processes for data collection, data analysis, and findings confirmation. Chapter 4 provides the findings of the study, that is, the principals' perceptions of what happened at their schools. Chapter 5 is a discussion of the findings in relation to the literature and my observations, and provides conclusions, implications, and my personal reflections.

Teacher Lana Robertson, principal Chris Jackson, and student Kevin are in the process of demonstrating student growth to associate superintendent Ruth LeBlanc.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

First, it should be noted that demonstration as a leadership strategy for impacting school improvement and accountability was not found in the literature except in an article written by me in Education Canada (1991). However, there is an abundance of literature supporting the intents of the strategy and elements of it. Specifically, there is ample support for each of the key concepts suggested by the title of the study, Demonstrating Student Growth: A Leadership Strategy for Impacting School Improvement and Accountability. Each of the key concepts is treated as a separate topic, as explained below:

- The first topic is accountability. The factors to be considered in satisfying public expectations as identified in the literature are presented. The feasibility of the demonstration strategy as a means for addressing these factors is considered.

- The second topic, demonstrating student growth, facilitates an examination of the possible worth of the concept in achieving more effective assessment and reporting practices as known in the current literature.

- The third topic, leadership strategy, facilitates understanding the impact of the demonstration strategy as an initiative originating from an Area/district level.

- The fourth topic, school improvement, assists in understanding the impact of the processes used by the principals and me in achieving desired change.

Each of these four topics is developed in the chapter as follows.

Accountability in Schooling

Accountability in schooling gained momentum in the late 1970s in response to public perceptions of declining quality in school results and concerns about cost control. Darling-Hammond (1989) claims that the issue of accountability "is the most pressing and most problematic of any facing the public schools today" (p. 59). Of similar conclusion are two recent Canadian reports, Learning Well, Living Well (Government of Canada, 1991) and To Be Our Best: Learning for the Future, (Corporate-Higher Education Forum, 1990), that point to education as society's answer to many of its problems and challenges. Both reports expound on the significance of schooling to a high quality of living in Canada and call for school improvement. The literature is unanimous in advocating

two levels of school improvement: first, student results, and second, public perception of improved results. Both levels of improvement are basic to satisfying accountability demands.

As indicated in Chapter 1 in background to the study, the principals and I recognized our responsibility in taking leadership to improve schools and accountability. Accordingly, we initiated the demonstration strategy. Important to understanding the strategy and its impact, as well as its future potential, as perceived by the principals, is a comparison of the strategy to the factors identified in the literature as vital to meeting accountability demands. The main factors to consider in addressing accountability, as found in the literature, can be summarized as: (a) external-orientation -- managing change and keeping up-to-date with society's needs, (b) results-orientation -- delivering on expectations, and (c) service-orientation -- being responsive to stakeholder needs. The three factors are described below:

External-Orientation

Davis (1987), in his book, Future Perfect contends that for an organization to succeed in the coming decades it must manage change ahead of its time. Many authors recommend that organizations be responsive to change; however, Davis proposes that responding is not sufficient. He proposes that to compete in the new economy, organizations must anticipate changes and must be proactive in dealing with them. Thereby

the organization can influence community response to change, helping both to shape it through leadership, and to deal with it through having systems in place prior its occurrence. A review of the literature indicates that generally school systems are a long way from Davis' vision of a proactive response to change, more often lagging behind the times -- a condition that the public seems no longer willing to accept. Accountability has become an issue in schooling, perhaps first surfacing as a major concern with the National Commission on Excellence report of a Nation at Risk (1983).

As Darling-Hammond (1989) expresses, "Gone are the days . . . when schoolteachers were so respected in their office that anything within the school walls was accepted as the rightful and unquestioned prerogative of school officials" (p. 59). Fox (1990) writes of catalysts of a strengthened accountability and the Corporate-Higher Education Forum presents a list of "trends" that will "shape education tomorrow" (1990, p. 14). Whether the pressures for accountability be catalysts or trends, there is agreement that the main reasons for accountability being an issue are: economics, public perception, and school mandate. Each is discussed below.

Economics. A two-way interdependence between schooling and the economy is evident in the literature. First, the economy impacts schooling by imposing fiscal restraint and

expecting a "return on investment" (Corporate-Higher Education, 1990, p. 11). Economic recessions have brought increased competition for limited resources among health, social services, and education, and taxpayers have become more conscious about and selective in their spending. Second, according to the literature, school systems can impact the economy to the extent that students become productive contributors to it. As emphasized by the Government of Canada (1991) report, Learning Well, Living Well -- "a prosperity initiative" (p. i) -- steps must be taken "to secure our future" (p. iv) by ensuring that students are prepared to compete in the global and knowledge-based economy.

Public perception. School systems have ample reason to be concerned about their future given that more and more taxpayers do not have children in school and that schooling is being perceived as inadequate. As well as the Nation at Risk (1983), numerous other reports have confirmed to the public and educators that improvements must be made. For example, there is the Carnegie Forum's A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century (1986), Southam Press's Broken Words: Why Five Million Canadians Are Illiterate (1987), and the British Columbia Royal Commission on Education's A Legacy for Learners (1988). Studies by educators have also reported that school systems are inadequate; for example, Goodlad's A Place Called School: Prospects for the Future (1984), and Sizer's Horace's

Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School (1984). These studies have provided insights into the nature of difficulties and improvements needed, and have confirmed that public concern is justified.

School Mandate. The Corporate-Higher Education Forum observed that schools have become "residual institutions, compensating for a variety of social problems" (1990, p. 13) and that public expectations and demands of schools have become unrealistic. The Forum identifies demands such as "custodial care, socialization, basic skills, general knowledge, personal development, health services, recreation, counselling, value formation, career training" (p. 13). Consistently, the Government of Canada (1991) report, Learning Well, Living Well, purports that "a new public consensus on learning goals" (p. iv) must precede school reform. It, and many other sources, emphasize that "how well people live . . . depends on how well they learn" (Government of Canada, 1991, p. vi). In addition, various sources emphasize that schools "cannot do it alone" (Corporate-Higher Education Forum, 1990, p. vi). A new type of partnership is being recommended in which it is recognized that "businesses and universities have obligations and a strong role to play" (Corporate-Higher Education, 1991, p. 17). Accordingly, partners would take on responsibility for which they are held accountable in a lifelong education process.

Results-Orientation

The current literature on school accountability emphasizes that schools must improve student results and convince the public that they have done so. Schlecty (1990) writes, "Schools are effective to the extent that they produce results that satisfy all the constituencies that must be satisfied in order to maintain the commitments and resources needed to sustain the school in the pursuit of its purpose" (p. 55).

Many authors recognize the challenge schools face in achieving desired improvement. O'Neil (1990) states, "Perhaps the trickiest part of restructuring schools will be to completely reshape a system that has been measured thus far by compliance with bureaucratic mandates into one focused on the bottom-line -- evidences of authentic student achievement" (p. 7). This focus on the bottom-line, also emphasized by numerous other writers, indicates a seriousness in getting and showing results. This is no longer time to pit results against processes but rather, as Schaffer and Thomson (1992) recognize, a results-focus is vital to selecting and using processes efficiently, with incidents of success in achieving results "energizing the improvement process" (p. 86).

Also highlighted in the literature is the importance of educators taking initiative promptly. Mann (1990) recommends "conditional deregulation in return for more public accountability" (p. 26). He and others like Fox (1990) and

O'Neil (1990) state that if educators do not deliver then the public will resort to imposing changes. Mann (1990) proposes that to deliver, accountability must begin at the principal and teacher levels. He explains that "principals and teachers deserve the freedom to do the job, and the public deserves an accountability system that guarantees effective leaders and teachers in school buildings" (p. 28).

Service-Orientation

The literature on school accountability intimates an attitude change by educators as they realize that even though schooling is a public sector operation that it cannot count on blind support. Koteen (1989) states that

> in the private profit-oriented sector, the threat of survival compels the use of strategic process and planning in fundamental decision-making. But in government and independent non-profit agencies, where success or failure is much less obvious, the capacity for strategic formulation and execution is relatively scarce. (p. xiii)

Koteen notes further that "accountability challenges of organizations today necessitate that the whole organization be strategically effective" (p. 39) -- that all employees are dedicated to its cause and perform as "movers and shakers" (p. xiv).

Schools are taking note of who they serve and realize that the public has awakened to its investment in schooling. Schools have more clients than has been apparent previously, plus new and higher expectations upon which to deliver, and

often with fewer resources. Simultaneously, there is an expectation that pleasant and professional service will be provided. As Schlecty notes, "It is not enough for schools to produce test scores. . . . Given the critical nature of results to the survival of schools . . . educators and their critics must become more sophisticated in discussing results than is now the case" (1990, p. 55). Accordingly, there must be new forums and systems for effective communication.

Concluding Remarks: How Demonstration Links to Accountability

In the process of being externally-, results-, and service-oriented, meaningful interaction with the various stakeholders is needed. It is within this context that the demonstrating student growth strategy was initiated as a forum for discussion of the key matter of schools, student learning and development. Discussions related to demonstrations have the potential to be high-powered compared to the usual report of test results.

In the next section, the concept of demonstrating student growth is examined in relation to the latest thinking in assessment and reporting. Demonstrations are based on a focus on growth and thereby necessitate the assessment of performance. Further, demonstrations are a means for reviewing and reporting growth. The question being pursued is the feasibility of the demonstration concept as a strategy for impacting positively assessment and reporting practices.

Demonstrating Student Growth

Current literature on assessment and reporting is highly consistent. Many sources provide similar observations and recommendations regarding the numerous developments underway. Stiggins (1991a) states, "It is as if an alarm clock has sounded and assessment, the sleeping giant, has awakened" (p. 7). He describes "a fundamental shift in our assessment paradigm" (p. 5) -- an "upheaval" which "signals the end of a 60 year era of educational assessment and our passage into a whole new era" (p. 1). Stiggins explains that the era of the standardized test for objectively sorting and organizing students in linear progressions, characteristic of industrial society, has finally passed. Better systems and information are being sought. Zessoules and Gardner (1991) describe the change in philosophy as follows:

> No longer a weapon for rooting out and combatting students' weaknesses, assessment becomes an additional occasion for learning -- a tool for students, as much as for teachers, parents, and administrators to discover strengths, possibilities, and future directions for students' work. (p. 63)

The literature provides two primary reasons for a shift in the assessment paradigm. Cambourne & Turbill (1990) and Stiggins (1991a) claim that as teachers across the continent implemented new approaches to language learning, they became increasingly concerned about the gap between instruction and assessment. Stiggins credits English teachers and their lobby for more aligned assessment as having started the new era.

The second reason for a paradigm shift was occurring simultaneously and involved educator dissatisfaction with the use of test results in addressing accountability concerns. It was realized, as Schlecty says, that "People know what is expected by what is inspected and what is respected (1990, p. 111). Educators became determined to convey a more complete and accurate message through better assessment data.

The literature provides ample explanation of the nature of the new paradigm for assessment, as summarized below within three main headings: (a) conditions for assessment, (b) communicating about growth, and (c) challenges. The section concludes with consideration of the concept, demonstrating student growth, as a means for achieving assessment and reporting practices that are consistent with the new paradigm.

Conditions for Assessment

Zessoules and Gardner (1991) provide "four critical conditions for the establishment of an assessment culture in the classroom" (p. 51). These conditions are used to summarize the main points in the literature as expressed in recent sources. They are:

Nurturing complex understandings. All the authors claim that assessment and reporting practices, if done right, foster good teaching and increase accountability. Zessoules and Gardner (1991) claim that generally we have tested

> students for what they know rather than what they understand. Yet these kinds of skills have little or no relevance beyond school walls. Individuals outside of the classroom are rarely, if ever, asked to diagram sentences, draw a color wheel, complete an isolated analogy or fill in missing pieces of a mathematical formula. (p. 54)

Similarly, Wise (1990) states:

> Authentic or genuine testing promotes accountability without falling into the standardized testing trap. The importance of the approach is clear: it does not distort educational practice. If you want kids to learn to write, then you assess their capacity to write. If you want them to be able to build something, then you have to have them build something. If you want them to think scientifically, then you give them science projects or experiments. The testing system must encourage good educational practice. (p. 59)

A vital change to beliefs about assessment is described by Schlecty as a shift in purpose for assessing. The primary purpose has become to influence learning by nurturing complex understandings, monitoring progress, and making adjustments to programs as needed to keep learning continuous. Schlecty (1990) says:

> In education, there is an unfortunate tendency to assume that when performance is off there is a problem with the performers. In a results-oriented evaluation system, the primary concern is to provide data that will make it possible to assess performance, determine the extent to which performance conforms with requirements, and, where performance does not conform with requirements, provide a basis for determining why this is the case and what can be done to correct the problem. Performance evaluation seeks to solve problems; it is not intended to place blame. (p. 113)

This distinction that Schlecty makes between evaluation of the performer and evaluation of performance is a vital attitude shift and has the potential to lead classrooms to be more compassionate and better-directed.

Developing reflection as a habit of mind. Effective assessment "demands from teachers and students a commitment to the habit and practice of looking back in order to forge ahead" (Zessoules & Gardner, 1991, p. 55). Zessoules and Gardner explain that

> reflection plays a critical part in revealing the multiple layers of students' understanding. When students and teachers make use of reflection as a tool for learning and assessment, they are creating an opening that allows them to enter into students' work, making sense of their endeavors and accomplishments, and learning how they judge their success. . . . It is precisely this revelation of new understandings, this habit of reflection, that has the power to boost the silence and mechanistic approach to assessment into an active, vivid discourse between teachers and students. It is this habit that marks one of the most vivid distinctions between a testing culture and an assessment culture in the classroom. (p. 58)

The profoundness of this condition could be missed unless one recalls the all too frequent practice of student work being completed, marked, and promptly discarded with little or no reflection about learning.

Documenting students' evolving understandings. Zessoules and Gardner (1991) explain: "Powerful assessment measures should reveal more than what students know and understand. Powerful assessment must also capture how those new understandings metamorphose" (p. 58). They claim that "in most school settings, little has been done to carefully document the subtle nuances of students' development" (p. 58). Many authors recommend the use of portfolios for the purpose of analyzing and shaping development. Paulson, Paulson, and

Meyer (1991) describe portfolios as

> a window into the students' heads, a means for both staff and students to understand the educational process at the level of the individual learner. They can be powerful educational tools for encouraging students to take charge of their own learning. (p. 61)

They define a portfolio as

> a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of self-reflection. (p. 60)

What is key is a "broad look at learning" within a relevant context, and with the student as "a participant in, rather than the object of, assessment" (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991, p. 63).

Assessment as a moment of learning. Zessoules and Gardner (1991) state that "the notion that assessment can -- and should -- be used to provoke further learning (or to inform of instruction), stands far beyond the usefulness of standard assessment practices" (p. 60). Of similar conviction, Arter and Spandel (1991) promote "assessment in the service of instruction" (p. 1). They explain that the process of having students involved in assembling and assessing work for portfolios has the potential to develop responsibility, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Specifically, they discuss the potential benefits of involving students in development of criteria for judging merit. They say:

> For one thing, those who set the criteria must think very carefully about what it is they value in strong performance, and this helps clarify instructional goals and expectations. Also, to the extent that criteria are shared, students are made part of the evaluation and receive the power that goes with that specialized knowledge -- power to recognize strong performance, power to identify problems in weak performance, and power to use criteria to change and improve performance. (p. 3)

Consistently, Wiggins (1991) promotes the use of standards "for evoking quality student work" (p. 18). He explains that standards imply "a passion for excellence and habitual attention to quality," and adds that high standards "are revealed through reliability, integrity, self-discipline, passion, and craftmanship" (p. 18). Wiggins recommends standards as

> specific and guiding pictures of worthy goals . . . not stiffer test-result quotas but a vigorous commitment to intellectual values upheld consistently and daily in the face of entropy, fatalism, and the occasional desire on everyone's part to not give a damn. (p. 20)

The new assessment paradigm is focused on facilitating learning, gaining good information about the progress of learning for facilitating more learning, and satisfying accountability responsibilities.

Communicating About Growth

With new and better information acquired through performance-based assessments, new systems of communication about student learning are evolving. The most basic and important communication is an integral part of the teaching-learning process, the dialogue between teachers and students

as they develop criteria, assess work samples, judge progress on curriculum goals, and document observations and new goals. Another vital communication is that for satisfying accountability obligations. The two most commonly suggested approaches to communicating are the sharing of portfolios and the viewing of performances.

A vital point addressed by only a few of the authors is the importance of having progress to show. For example, as noted above, Wiggins (1991) is concerned that schools improve and that students strive for quality. Accordingly, he recommends the use of standards to serve as goals and benchmarks for judging quality. He also promotes portfolios as means for assessing "over time and in the context of numerous performances" to observe "patterns of success and failure and the reasons behind them" (p. 705).

Likewise Foster (1991), in describing the new assessment methods resulting from the Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990, explains that according to local school board policy each school must regularly report progress to the students and parents. Specifically, "the assessment will consist of comparing the performances of each student over a period of time with the level of attainment expected on each learning objective at certain points in the educational program" (p. 35).

Another direction regarding communication suggested by the literature is the increased involvement of students in

reporting processes. The most frequently mentioned process is that of authentic student performances, as explained by Wiggins (1989):

> Authentic assessments replicate the challenges and standards of performance that typically face writers, businesspeople, scientists, community leaders, designers, or historians. These include writing essays and reports, conducting individual and group research, designing proposals and mock-ups, assembling portfolios, and so on. (p. 703)

Another form of student involvement in the communication process is suggested by Little and Allan (1988) in a book titled, Student-Led Teacher Parent Conferences. This book was used extensively as a resource by Area 2 schools. As the title suggests students report their progress to their parents.

A communication challenge identified in the literature is that of providing parents and students with accurate information. This and other challenges associated with assessing and reporting are described in the next section.

Challenges

There are two main challenges identified in the literature. The first was mentioned by several writers and involves the issue of trustworthiness of assessment data. The second, teacher professional development, was identified in only a few sources.

Trustworthiness of assessment data. A common concern is

the problem of establishing the trustworthiness of assessment. A point made by Wiggins (1989) and Stiggins (1991a), and ascribed to by many other writers, is that professional judgement must have an elevated place in the new assessment paradigm. Wiggins (1989) says, "We seem unable to see any moral harm in bypassing context-sensitive human judgements of human abilities in the name of statistical accuracy and economy" (p. 703). In fact, central to the new paradigm is acceptance of professional judgement in performance-based assessment. The key to strengthening professional judgement, according to Stiggins (1991a), is that there be "an appropriate method of sampling the desired [student] behaviors or products, and a clearly articulated set of performance criteria to serve as the basis for evaluative judgements" (p. 2).

Teacher Professional Development. The second challenge, which is related to the first, involves teachers being "assessment-literate" (Stiggins, 1991b, p. 538), a matter of increased importance as teachers are relied upon to make informed judgements. Stiggins' research indicates that the vast majority of teachers do not have explicit assessment training. He explains further that "most decision-makers -- educators and noneducators alike -- are not sufficiently literate in the basics of assessment" (p. 535) to be knowledgeable in making decisions. He advocates that "all who

presume to assess, evaluate, and act on student achievement data must come to understand the full range of possible student achievement targets and assessment methods at our disposal" (p. 536).

Concluding Remarks: The Link Between the Literature on Assessment and Reporting, and the Demonstration Concept

The intent of the demonstration strategy was to achieve precisely the kinds of advancements the literature describes as the new paradigm, for example: teacher literacy regarding assessment literacy, complex understandings by teachers and students, reflection by students and teachers, increased student involvement, informed teacher decisions, and improved communication with all stakeholders. It is useful to the study to examine principals' perceptions of the impact of the demonstration strategy in light of the characteristics of the new assessment paradigm.

Leadership Strategy

Schlecty (1990) presents a basic premise to be considered when "leading a system through change" (p. 127). He claims:

> Whatever moral authority resides in, or is bestowed upon, the school system, that authority resides in the office of the superintendent. . . . The superintendent can delegate to others nearly anything he or she wants to delegate (so long as the board consents) except the moral authority that resides in the office of the superintendent. In the long run, therefore, who the superintendent is, what the superintendent values, and

> the style of operation supported by the superintendent will be manifest throughout the school system. (p. 128)

Similarly, Fullan (1991) states, "The district administrator is the single most important individual for setting the expectations and tone of the pattern of change within the local district" (p. 191).

The interest of this study in superintendent effectiveness and district-level impact stems from the fact that the demonstration strategy was initiated at the Area-level by an associate superintendent. Since Area 2 has twenty-eight schools and approximately 12,000 students and 700 teachers, it is in some ways like a school district. Accordingly, the literature on district effectiveness is likely to have relevance. The main point, though, in reviewing literature on district impact is that it exists in the literature, whereas Area-level information was not found.

Although there is ample literature on leadership and on the culture of an organization being set by the superintendent, there is limited information on the relationship of the superintendent's performance to the learning of students. The primary reason for the lack of empirical data may be that the relationship is indirect, that is, through principals and teachers. However, the literature does intimate that superintendent performance is significant to the quality of a school district.

In fact, current sources are describing a new form of leadership that differs significantly from that of the

bureaucratic era. Descriptions of characteristics of the new paradigm are presented in various ways and by many writers, and although their labels differ somewhat, their messages are consistent. The consistency may arise, at least in part, from a strong and abundant research base available on change -- research that undoubtedly is impacting practice and further research. The topic, change, although an integral part of the leadership topic and covered to some extent in this section, is reviewed separately in the subsequent section. First though, what are the characteristics of districts that have been found to have a positive impact on schools?

Rosenholtz (1989), in a study of 78 elementary schools in eight school districts in Tennessee, distinguished the districts and superintendents as being either "moving" or "stuck" (p. 210). She stated, "Superintendents ranged from makers of professionalism who worked frontiers, found new channels, and invented new lives, to those who thought they could regulate every aspect of teachers' lives" (p. 210). She explained:

> Strict regimentation and harsh coercive measures were not the bailiwick of moving superintendents. Rather their agenda for schools and teachers within them aimed toward innovation and growth. Coaxing improvement from principals and teachers seemed achieved through superintendents' technical knowledge, encouragement, and presence. Appropriate affect and leadership tended to mute the tension schools experienced in dealing with the less able teachers or principals; there was, in fact, some indication that being treated professionally turned more than a few of them around. As advocates of professionalism and all that it entailed, superintendents tended to nurture those freedoms without paying the price of systemwide anarchy. Instead, they held schools

> accountable for the commitments they had made, and having promised, schools had moral reason to keep them. (p. 210)

Similarly, McNeil (1988) describes "contradictions of control" based on her 1977 study of schools in which she traces "the source of control in the classroom back to the controlling policies of the administration" (p. xx). She found that "discipline, order, completion, timelines, appearances, and test results were important to looking good" (p. 78) and were the prime motivators of administrative behavior, and ultimately, teacher behavior. Further, she found that it was typical for "administrators to be passive in academic concerns" (p. 117).

McNeil's descriptions of the result of a "general school climate of getting by" (p. 134), and a lack of a common purpose for learning, are clear and all too real. For example, she describes "defensive teaching and student apathy" (p. 209). She reports that teachers talk of individual differences and being opposed to tracking, but "these same teachers applied their spoon-feeding techniques to all levels once the levels were mixed" (p. 180). She explains that the teachers controlled students with forms of knowledge control involving "fragmentation" -- reducing content to pieces that could be managed by students of many levels; "mystification" -- avoiding a whole series of presentations of a complex topic until everyone understood; and "omission" -- preventing the intrusion of verbal students' ideas into the pace of the

lecture (p. 166).

The picture portrayed by McNeil is disconcerting and should be ample motivation for administrators everywhere to ensure healthier environments for the schooling process. The significance of "ethos" -- the "norms and practices" (p. 3) of schools and school districts is an outcome of a study by Coleman and LaRocque (1990). Their study is of ten school districts in British Columbia. Like Rosenholtz (1989), Coleman and LaRocque distinguished between "stuck" and "moving" districts. They concluded that

> six focuses of administrative and instructional effort appeared likely to constitute a positive ethos in school districts: paying attention to instructional issues, requiring school accountability, managing change and improvement, eliciting commitment, treating members and clients with respect, and gaining community support. (p. 4)

Coleman and LaRocque observed that positive district ethos "has classroom, school, and district-level consequences" (p. 24) that result in "high levels of student achievement at modest costs, in a professionally satisfying environment" (p. 24).

Coleman and LaRocque's perception of how a superintendent achieves positive district ethos is colorfully presented in their metaphor of the administrator as a skilful gardner:

> The gardner uses time well, encourages the industry of others by developing shared information about good practices, and produces 'flow'rs and herbes,' that is, both intrinsically and instrumentally valuable products. . . . The administrator/gardener continually struggles against a kind of social entropy, exemplified by teacher isolation, stagnation in learning-impoverished 'stuck' schools (Rosenholtz, 1989, p. 81), and by schools

> as independent fiefdoms in districts lacking a productive ethos. If they are not being tended, the schools/gardens grow wild, with important values and products getting choked out by weeds, that is, competing elements. . . . The garden provides an environment suitable for a variety of living things; microclimates and special treatments, abound. But the skilful gardener is equally successful with flowers and more mundane crops. Liberty is not a license; pruning and guiding of growth do occur. (p. 197)

In reflecting on district administration and change, and Rosenholtz' (1989) and Coleman and LaRocque's (1990) findings, Fullan (1991) provides cautions and guidelines for superintendents. First, he notes that "the overarching caution and guideline is the recognition of how very fundamental the task of reform is. We are talking about changes in the culture and programmatic regularities of schools" (p. 209). He concurs with Coleman and LaRocque's (1990) six focuses in developing positive district ethos and provides some additional advice. For example, he recommends that superintendents:

> (a) develop the management capabilities of principals to lead; (b) directly and indirectly (e.g. through principals) provide resources, training, and clear expectation that schools . . . are the main centers of change; (c) monitor the improvement process; and (d) work on becoming an expert in the change process. (p . 213)

Fullan states that "the paramount task of the district administrator is not to get this or that innovation put into practice, but to build the capacity of the district and the schools to handle any and all innovations (which is not to say to implement them all)" (p. 215).

An important distinction to consider in examining

principals' perceptions about the demonstration strategy in this study, is one that Fullan (1992) makes regarding the sustaining power of change. He states that in some instances "too much store is placed in the leader as solution compared to the leader as enabler of solutions. Such reliance leads at best to short-term gains, at worst to superficial solutions and dependency" (p. 33). An examination of principal involvement with the demonstration concept in 1991-92 will reveal the strategy's sustaining power now that the initiating associate superintendent has departed.

Also providing criteria for planning and evaluating leadership initiatives, Bennis and Nanus (1985) list four key strategies for leading. Their strategies are based on insights they gained in interviewing ninety leaders. The first strategy is "attention through vision" (p. 27) -- the creating of focus. They state that "all ninety people interviewed had an agenda, an unparalleled concern with outcome" (p. 28). They claim that leaders tend to be results-oriented and "results get attention" (p. 28).

The second strategy is "meaning through change" (p. 33). Bennis and Nanus state that shared meaning and purpose are basic to change. They explain, "An essential factor in leadership is the capacity to influence and organize meaning for the members of the organization" (p. 39). The third strategy they recommend is "trust through positioning" (p. 43). They explain that good ideas are not adopted

automatically and that "trust is the lubrication that makes it all possible for organizations to work. . . . Trust is the glue that maintains organizational integrity" (p. 44).

The fourth strategy is "the deployment of self through self-regard" (p. 55) -- the management of oneself. With this strategy, Bennis and Nanus raise a topic not addressed in other literature that I reviewed. They state that leading is "a deeply personal business" (p. 58) involving assessment of one's own "worth" (p. 58) to the organization or specific position, and having "the ability to recognize strengths and compensate for weaknesses" (p. 59). Bennis and Nanus note also that there must be the "capacity to develop and improve" (p. 59) and to build a staff that "covers and compensates" (p. 60) for perceived weaknesses. In addition, they advise on the importance of leaders "not letting their ego or image get in the way" (p. 57).

Finally, any discussion of current literature on leadership would be incomplete without mentioning Sergiovanni's "value-added leadership" on "getting extraordinary performance in schools" (1990, p. 1). Sergiovanni begins by introducing a motto: "gambare! -- to persevere, to do one's best, to be persistent, to stick to one's purposes, to never give up until the job is done and done well" (p. 1). His claim is that value-added leadership is needed to "restore the value of gambare" to "the schools and life itself" (p. 10). He states, "Leadership is a very

powerful force that can deeply influence the drive and commitment of teachers and students much more than the use of authority and management controls" (p. 10).

Accordingly, Sergiovanni replaces a number of "value dimensions" with "value-added dimensions" (p. 15). For example, he recommends leadership over management, extraordinary performance investment over participation, providing symbols and enhancing meaning over manipulating situations, purposing over planning, enabling teachers and the school over giving directions, building an accountability system over building a monitoring system, and collegiality over congeniality, leadership by outrage over calculated leadership. In summary, what Sergiovanni purports is leadership with "a sense of passion and risk, communicating to others that if something is worth believing in, then it's worth showing passion over" (p. 24).

Concluding Remarks: The Link Between the Literature on Leadership and the Demonstration Strategy

A review of the literature on leadership occurred throughout the planning, development, and implementation of the demonstration strategy, as well as for years before. Nevertheless, this current review is helpful, particularly in being up-to-date and reflecting on the three years. The various cautions, guidelines, and characteristics obtained from the writers serve as "checklists" for examining the

processes and outcomes of the demonstration strategy. Insight on processes for change in bringing about school improvement is the intent of the next section.

School Improvement

The query in this section is in identifying the change processes supported by research as conducive to school improvement, particularly when initiated at the district level. In fact, the entire literature review and study addresses this query. However, the particular interest of this section is in examining processes for involving principals and teachers in innovation. True and sustained change in making a positive difference to student performance and staff career satisfaction is the goal.

We have learned already that the literature supports the development of positive district ethos. With that purpose in mind, as well as the major purpose of getting school improvement, the following two topics are explored: eliciting commitment and achieving teamwork. For the purposes of this section the first topic is considered to be the prerequisite to the second. The literature tends to show the act of getting commitment as being to some extent at the early stage of the change process, whereas teamwork is what is achieved once many staff members have made commitment and are working together on shared purposes and for shared benefit. On the

other hand, as teamwork is achieved and lived, commitment tends to deepen. The distinctions being made below are not discrete.

Eliciting Commitment

The question reviewed here is: How does a superintendent manage the district to get staff interest, and moreover, commitment to the point of being self-motivated in becoming involved in a new initiative, to learn, risk, and endure? Perhaps the most frequently and strongly presented point in eliciting commitment is that leaders must make clear a vision of, and purpose for, district improvement. Schlectly (1990) states:

> One of the most important acts of leadership is conceptualizing, articulating, and communicating the purpose of the organization that is being led, for the purpose defines the way the organization is envisioned. Moreover, the purpose defines the kinds of goals the organization will pursue. (p. 3)

Another highly recommended point is need for professional development, particularly in creating shared values and developing a learning culture. The idea is to generate a staff propensity for learning and improvement. Barth (1990) recommends the development of "community" (p. 9) so members feel that they belong and can identify with the organization's "norms and practices -- ethos" (Coleman & LaRocque, 1990, p. 3). Particularly significant to eliciting commitment, in Barth's opinion, is the development of a "community of learners" and a "community of leaders." Barth states, "When

teachers are enlisted and empowered as school leaders, everyone can win. Other teachers' concerns are frequently better understood by one of their fellows than by someone who performs a different job" (p. 128). In addition, Barth says:

> By sharing leadership, teachers will feel more ownership of and commitment to decisions. And by providing teachers with leadership opportunities, one accords them recognition. Therefore, they will work harder and better and longer. In short, research suggests that the greater the participation in decision-making, the greater the productivity, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment. (p. 130)

More basic than a request for teachers having leadership opportunities are McNeil's (1988) and Rosenholtz's (1989) pleas for increased professionalism for teachers and schools. Rosenholtz states, "Strategies to improve schools should maximize teachers' control of the instruction, making them feel less uncertain and more worthwhile" (p.203). Like many other writers, Rosenholtz recommends that this increased autonomy be coupled with accountability.

Coleman and LaRocque (1990) address the importance of accountability in gaining commitment. They advocate performance monitoring whereby goals are clear and the focus is professional growth. In addition, they recommend that schools be required to collect and report performance data and to discuss the data with the superintendent (or immediate supervisor of the principal). Collaborative interpretation and goal-setting are also helpful in generating improvement, according to Coleman and LaRocque's research.

Two other points made by Coleman and LaRocque (1990) are

vital to a discussion on commitment. One is that they indicate that "a strong, interactive, collaborative district presence in the schools" (p. 71) -- a sense of "district-ness" (p. 170), with emphasis on instructional and curricular matters, increases positive ethos in schools and in the district. Second, they indicate that "while it is important that schools be held accountable for their performance, it is also important for them to not feel alone in shouldering this responsibility" (p. 72). Coleman and LaRocque observed poor performance in schools in which anxiety and fear were prevalent. They state, "Fearful people hold to what they know, even when it is not very satisfactory" (p. 90). Commitment occurs when individuals dare to risk, understand the rationale for change, and can visualize benefits in their participation.

Achieving Teamwork

The question here is: How does a superintendent manage the district to sustain staff member interest and commitment, and endure the on-going challenges of change once staff members are involved? The literature suggests that once commitment is elicited and built upon, teamwork as a norm becomes possible. Many writers identify collegial relationships between and within levels of an organization as basic to effective teamwork. Sergiovanni's (1990) distinction between congeniality and collegiality makes it clear that

teamwork is more than pleasantness and involves shared beliefs and working together. He states that although "congeniality is pleasant and often desirable, it is not independently linked to better performance and quality schooling" (p. 23). He explains that "collegiality has to do with the extent to which teachers and principals share common work values, engage in specific conversation about their work, and help each other engage in the work of the school" (p. 24).

Similarly, Coleman and LaRocque (1990) found that a good school "operates collegially: that is, there are shared values between all staff members, including the principal, which allows teachers to operate autonomously in an atmosphere of mutual respect, and also to help one another continuously to improve practice" (p. 20). Coleman and LaRocque (1990) also describe collegiality between district administrators and schools. They discuss collaboration and autonomy, and explain that: "Increased district administrator presence in the schools was associated simultaneously with the development of shared purposes and with the development of school autonomy" (p. 89).

Teamwork -- collegiality, collaboration, and autonomy -- is achieved when leaders model, encourage, reward, and provide opportunities for shared purposes, claim the writers. In summary, the literature shows that teamwork is achieved when there is opportunity for increased responsibility, autonomy, and accountability; continued development of shared

norms and purposes; team support and problem-solving; and regular interaction with administrators (especially senior administrators) as they show interest and involvement in program matters.

One of my observations, which is not mentioned in the literature, is that the experience itself is the strongest motivation for maintaining teamwork. For example, when the team works and there is "synergy," then "the value that comes when the whole adds up to more than the sum of the parts" (Kanter, 1989, p. 58) can be realized.

Concluding Remarks: The Link Between Commitment and Teamwork and the Demonstration Strategy

Any initiative involving a leader and followers necessitates the development of commitment to get the concept started. Then for the concept to achieve change it must benefit by the input of everyone and become the interest and responsibility of each member. The extent to which commitment, teamwork, and change occurred, as perceived by the principals, is worthy of examination in regard to the demonstration strategy.

Summary of the Literature Review

A review of the literature has provided a multi-dimensional context in which to examine the principals'

perceptions of the impact of the demonstration strategy. What has been identified are a number of factors for achieving: (a) accountability, (b) a new assessment paradigm, (c) effective district level leadership, and ultimately, (d) school improvement. Accordingly, the key concepts of the study, as suggested by the title Demonstrating Student Growth: A Leadership Strategy for Impacting School Improvement and Accountability, can be examined in relation to current thinking when reporting on the findings (Chapter 4) and interpreting the findings (Chapter 5). First though is a description of the study's methodology in Chapter 3.

Teacher Clara Dyck and student Amanda have been demonstrating Amanda's growth in writing.

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter presents the research process used in examining demonstration of student growth as a leadership strategy. The chapter explains what the data consist of and how the data were collected, analyzed, and reported. The research process is explained in five parts: background to the research, research design, data collection, data analysis, and concluding remarks.

Background to the Research

There is a full description of background to the study in Chapter 1. However, as summary for the purposes of this chapter, it is useful to note that the leadership strategy, demonstrating student growth, was developed and implemented over a three year period. It continues to be used in this fourth year. The leadership strategy arose as the principals of Area 2 of Edmonton Public Schools and I, the associate superintendent, endeavored to fulfil our leadership roles and responsibilities. The decision to examine formally the impact of the strategy was made in May, 1991, the end of the third year.

Research Design

As a participant in the demonstration strategy, I have perceptions of what transpired at the schools. However, my information is limited. My only firsthand information, albeit significant, is that which was gleaned from the demonstration sessions. For an effective examination of the strategy, I need to be knowledgeable of "the behind the scenes developments." Accordingly, the primary process in the study consists of interviews with principals to gain their perceptions as key participants. The research design consists of the: nature of the study, data sources, selection of participants, and ethical considerations. Each is explained below.

Nature of the Study

The study is primarily descriptive in reporting the perceptions of principals. There is also an element of interpretation as my opinions as a participant observer are applied in the process of understanding the principals' perceptions. An interpretivist approach was used; that is, the design of the data was not preconceived. The design was allowed to emerge as the inquiry progressed. The data design is shared and explained in a subsequent section on data analysis.

Data Sources

There are two sources of data: the principals, and myself as participant observer and researcher. The principals are the primary source since the purpose of the study is to understand their perceptions of the strategy's impact on the schools.

Selection of the Participants

There were four separate selections of participants. Each selection is outlined below:

First, I selected seven of the twenty-eight Area 2 principals, one of whom was to participate in the practice session of the interview process. Since the trial interview occurred according to plan and yielded an abundance of good information, I added it to the data, strengthening the findings with an additional source.

I applied a four-step process in selecting the seven interview respondents:

- development of selection criteria.

- division of the principals' names into three clusters according to the levels of schooling (elementary, junior high, and senior high).

- drawing of names from each cluster to obtain one high

school principal, two junior high, and four elementary. The numbers of principals per level are approximately representative of the numbers of each of the three levels of schools in the Area.

- review of each name drawn to ensure conformity with the selection criteria. All the names drawn were kept.

Regarding the selection criteria, other than wanting representation from the three levels, I did not want an involved selection process. I wanted to ensure that any personal bias, conscious or otherwise, would not interfere with the selection. Therefore, I was most comfortable with a random selection. There were two additional selection factors that I did consider. One was that the majority of principals included have three years of experience with the strategy. The random selection gave me five candidates with three years experience and two with two years, which I accepted. Another factor that I considered was whether or not, based on knowledge that I gained from previous opportunities of working together, the principal would be inclined to "level" with me. I wanted to be sure that I had people who "would tell it as they saw it." Again, all the names held.

The second incident of selection involved choosing an additional Area 2 principal to be a peer reviewer -- my critic. This time I made a purposive selection, a principal

whom I respect for his performance in the district over the years, as well as his knowledge of the teaching-learning process, and people-observation skills. I wanted to gain his perspective on the accuracy of tone and content. I wanted to know if he, as a participant in the strategy for the three years, viewed the findings and my interpretation of them to be consistent with his perceptions.

Third, and sometime later in the study, I decided to interview one additional principal in order to receive an update on events that had transpired at the Area-level during 1991-92. I wanted this information to supplement that provided by the seven principals whom I had interviewed in the third and fourth months of the year. I chose to interview the eighth principal in April after the majority of the year's happenings had occurred. I selected a member of the Area principal advisory committee to obtain an informed Area-level perspective. The individual selected was a committee member who was readily accessible and willing to participate. In fact, each of the committee members would have been suitable.

The fourth selection was of three additional peer reviewers who have generously contributed their time to critiques of my writing and providing encouragement. The three are a teacher, a consultant in curriculum and instruction, and a fellow graduate student. I am fortunate that all the study's participants have been eager and helpful.

Ethical Considerations

Upon contacting principals by telephone to seek their participation, I explained the purpose and nature of the study, the significance of their perceptions to the research, and the nature of involvement desired of them. I endeavored to make it clear that they were under no obligation to participate and if they chose to decline, their decision would not be questioned. I offered to deliver a copy of the thesis proposal for them to review before making a commitment. I also advised them of their right to opt out at any time. All of the principals expressed an interest in the study and readily agreed to participate.

Measures have been taken to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Code names have been assigned to each participant and caution has been taken in the thesis document to protect against revealing individual identities. There is one participant whose work is unique and important to the findings, and whose identity could be recognized by other principals in the Area. I have tried to mask his identity and have discussed the potential problem with him. He has assured me that he is not concerned and that he is satisfied with the presentation of findings. The other respondents have indicated also that they are satisfied with the interpretations and quotes as presented in the document.

One final and important note of an ethical nature pertains to the avoidance of harm to participants. The fact

that the researcher was formerly the associate superintendent responsible for the performance evaluations of the principals may be considered a potential concern for two related reasons. One reason is the well-being of principals in the event that they gave me contentious information. The second reason is reduced validity of the data if principals give guarded responses rather than their actual perceptions. The first concern is addressed in the next paragraph and the second is addressed in a subsequent section on data trustworthiness.

Regarding the principals' well-being, the concern is noteworthy. However, it is not a significant concern given the following circumstances:

- I will not be the associate superintendent for Area 2 when I return to Edmonton Public Schools.

- The principals understand the significance of the study and the importance of an accurate portrayal of principal perceptions. They recognize my sincerity in examining the strategy and they are interested in the findings.

- The topic is not particularly controversial or sensitive. It is the examination of a strategy, which is not an unusual happening in an education setting.

Data Collection

Three main topics are explained in regard to the collection of data: research instruments, data collection processes, and data credibility.

Research Instruments

The primary research instrument was the interview guide (Chapter 1, p. 22), a set of semi-structured interview questions to pursue the research queries. The questions were derived from an analysis of what I needed to know about the impact of the strategy. A first general question asking what the impact had been was intended to draw out thoughts that were pertinent to the principals. In each case I let the principals talk for as long as he/she chose in answering the question, and guided only with the occasional prompt, "Please tell me more about that." I wanted to gain their thinking uninfluenced by any leading that may occur when asked specific questions. The question worked well with the responses used extensively in the data analysis.

The next category of questions in the interview guide pertain to the principals' understanding of the strategy and their involvement with it in 1991-92. Their responses to these questions are important in assessing the extent to which they understand demonstration as a concept and as a leadership strategy, as well as assessing the degree to which I might

rely on their opinions.

The major portion of the interview consisted of questions about the impact of the strategy on specific matters, such as the students, teachers, the principal, and the program. The final set of questions are evaluative, pursuing the principals' opinions about the worth of the strategy, possible future use, and improvements.

When interviewing the eighth principal, I used a modified version of the same instrument. Questions were selected and modified to glean what happened at the Area-level in the fourth year.

The second instrument for data collection is a system of files, developed in August, 1991, for organizing data that I collected over the three years of attending demonstration sessions. The system consists of written material and artifacts. Included is a schedule of the demonstration sessions that I attended; an agenda outline and list of participants for each session; my reflections on the demonstrations, also prepared in August, 1991; and files of scribbled notes, photographs, student profiles and work samples, and other artifacts that were saved at the time of the sessions. The files, once organized, were stored until completion of the analysis of the principals' perceptions, and then retrieved for review prior to writing the interpretations, conclusions, implications, and reflections.

Data Collection Processes

The first data collection process was to record my reflections of what happened in the schools and Area over the three years. Part of the process included the organization and review of the notes and artifacts that I had collected incidently. Another part was the writing of session descriptions and recording recalled judgements of the extent of effectiveness of the sessions. The process worked well for recalling and clarifying ideas.

The second and major data collection process was the set of interviews that were held at times and places suitable to the principals. The interviews were approximately one and one quarter hour each, and occurred in November and December, 1991. Each session was taped and then transcribed verbatim. The interview with the eighth principal was approximately one hour and occurred in April, 1992. Establishment of rapport was not an issue in the process since the principals and I already had working relationships. All the principals readily volunteered their perspectives and the allotted time passed quickly. On each occasion, I departed with a feeling of having acquired good information and with an abundance of thoughts for reflection.

A third process was that of collecting the reactions of the respondents once they read Chapter 4, the findings. I sent a cover letter (Appendix A) attached to the chapter inviting them to jot requests for change and other comments in

the margins and then to return the copy to me, or if preferred to telephone me. I indicated that if I had not heard from them by a particular date that I would contact them to discuss their level of satisfaction with my interpretation, the quotes and the matter of their anonymity. All of the principals indicated satisfaction and few changes were needed.

Data Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness of the data was assured through member checks, peer reviews, advisor scrutiny, and maintaining a journal of events, reminders, and observations. Specific contributing factors to the trustworthiness of the data are:

- the population sample, which in the first instance consists of seven of the twenty-eight principals, that is, one quarter of the total population. With the inclusion of two additional principals, one as another interviewee and the other as a peer reviewer, the sample increases to one third of the population. Also to be considered is the professional competence and credibility of the principals that adds to the trustworthiness of the data. Finally, the random selection of the principals guards against researcher effect.

- the provision for confirmation of the findings. There were member checks, plus the use of an additional principal to be a peer reviewer. The peer reviews by a teacher,

consultant, fellow graduate student, and an undergraduate student (my daughter) provided additional insight and confirmation.

- a desire to portray accurately the principals' voices: first to represent them well, second to maintain their trust and confidence, and third to increase the value of the study for all the Area 2 principals and other readers.

- the significance of the study to my work. For the study to be of value to me in learning from the three year experience and in influencing my future effectiveness as an associate superintendent, I, too, must have confidence in the data. One cannot fool oneself!

- the strategy's existence as the natural course of the principals and I doing our jobs. At the time of developing and implementing the strategy, we were unaware that later we would have an approach to leadership significant enough to be identified as an entity and studied formally. Since the study consists of an analysis of reflections, the research did not influence the strategy. The study aims to do no more that report and interpret the principals' perceptions of what happened.

Data Analysis

The content analysis occurred as an inductive process. The transcripts were read repeatedly, each time with a different focus in mind. The first reading was accompanied by the tape recordings in an effort to detect voice expression and tone. With the continual application of intuition, and numerous interactions with the data, the findings emerged. The sequence of the analyses process is outlined below:

- The first reading, with the tapes, was to obtain an initial general impression.

- The second reading consisted of highlighting and note jotting, this time in pursuit of key points and themes.

- The third reading was done to prepare a matrix of responses to each of the research questions. The first step in this process involved coding of responses according to the question(s) that they addressed. (Some of the strongest answers were found in responses to alternate questions.) The next task involved entering abbreviated comments onto a matrix sheet and adding a check mark each time the idea re-appeared in the data. This matrix compilation was time-consuming but with it I gained an indication of the frequency and possibly strength of responses. From a study of the matrix, I

identified themes, some of which were the same as the research questions, others of which spanned several questions, and a couple that were unanticipated topics, e.g., concept internalization and effectiveness of particular processes.

- Then I began cutting and pasting as a means for categorizing responses per theme. I soon became dissatisfied with this process since it took responses out of a sometimes vital context, not recognized at the time of creating the excerpt.

- The next process I tried is one that I maintained until completion of the analysis phase. This process resulted in many more instances of reading the transcripts and brought good insight into the data. The process involved using fresh copies of transcripts for coding responses in accordance with each theme by highlighting with a variety of colors. Generally, I found that one copy of transcript accommodated three themes.

- I then started to write. In fact, I started four times before I was satisfied with the organization of the chapter. Throughout the writing process I gained additional insights. For example, the matter of concept internalization did not occur to me until I started writing, and once it did I realized how clearly the principals were expressing its significance.

- The fourth draft was not the last. I remained unsettled about the chapter and after I shared it with my advisor, I learned why. When she noted that I needed more narrative and a more selective use of the quotes, I knew she was right. Writing the fifth version was a pleasure. I realized that in the fourth draft I had been so cautious about reporting the principals' voices and not mine, that I had failed to help the reader make sense of the quotes -- to see what I could see after my many interactions with the data.

- I note that, of course, the analysis is never done -- the thinking continues and for years to come I will reflect and undoubtedly gain additional insight.

Concluding Remarks

The methodology was effective in yielding insight into the impact of the demonstration strategy, as perceived by the principals. These insights are the topic of the next two chapters. Chapter 4 reports that which the principals' perceived as the strategy's impact and Chapter 5 provides an interpretation of their perceptions.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY --

IMPACT OF THE DEMONSTRATION STRATEGY ON SCHOOLS

This chapter reports the findings of interviews with eight elementary, junior high, and senior high school principals in Area 2 (consisting of twenty-seven schools in 1988-89 and twenty-eight since 1989-90), in the Edmonton Public Schools. The next chapter provides an interpretation of the findings.

The principals' perceptions of the impact of the demonstration strategy are presented in nine sections, as outlined below. All the sections include the perceptions of the seven principals who were interviewed in November and December, 1991. Section 8 provides the observations of an additional principal who was interviewed in April, 1992. This principal, as a member of the 1991-92 Area 2 advisory planning committee, provided an update on that which transpired at the Area level in this school term.

The titles of the nine sections arose as suitable descriptors for the kinds of information shared by the principals. The following is a brief summary of each section:

1. Concept Internalization -- The principals reported that a first stage of development involved understanding new concepts, and then internalizing them to the point

of effective application. This section outlines some of the concepts and provides examples of schools' reactions to them.

2. Program Improvement -- This section, a major portion of the findings, shares principals' perceptions about the nature, types, and extent of program improvement at their schools; that is, improvement that occurred either in conjunction with, or as a result of, the demonstration strategy. The changes reported pertain to the various dimensions of the teaching-learning process, including: curriculum, assessment, learning environment, monitoring and evaluation, reporting, and student results.

3. Professional Development -- This section, which is closely related to the previous two, provides principals' perceptions of the impact of the demonstration strategy on their professional development, as well as that of their teachers and the associate superintendent.

4. Program Supervision -- This section reports principals' perceptions about the strategy's impact on the effectiveness of their and the associate superintendent's supervision of program. Also shared are thoughts they expressed regarding teacher and student monitoring of program.

5. Accountability -- Reported in this section are the principals' perceptions of the impact of the strategy on their effectiveness in satisfying stakeholders' expectations of schools.

6. Leadership -- This section provides the principals' perceptions of the impact of the demonstration strategy on their and the associate superintendent's effectiveness in providing leadership.

7. Effectiveness of Processes -- This section provides a review of the principals' perceptions of the effectiveness of the processes used by them and me in leading the strategy through development and implementation.

8. Challenges of the Strategy -- This section reports the principals' opinions of the most challenging tasks that they faced, as well as those that their teachers faced.

9. Involvement with the Strategy in 1991-92 -- The schools' involvement with the strategy this year is reported as perceived by the seven principals who were interviewed in November and December, 1991, and the additional principal who was interviewed in April, 1992.

The purpose of this section is to note the developments that have occurred in Area 2 since I left on professional leave.

The principals' perceptions are vital in understanding the impact of demonstration as a leadership strategy. Principals were key participants. They assisted in the strategy's development and had direct responsibility for implementation. They were responsible for informing teachers of key concepts and inviting interest and participation, that is, facilitating teachers in recognizing the potential benefits for students and themselves. They had responsibility for leading the way in assessing their schools' needs and generating improvement. Further, they were responsible for hosting demonstration sessions -- preparing participants; planning processes; participating in or supervising the sessions; and monitoring and evaluating processes and follow-up.

Indeed, the task before the principals was a challenge, requiring creativity, courage, knowledge, and skill. The following reports of the principals' perceptions show how they responded to the challenge and what, in their opinion, happened as a result of the demonstration strategy. The descriptions provided are a compilation of the principals' perceptions. Quotations are used extensively to enrich the portrayal of the principals' voices.

Concept Internalization

The principals indicated that one of the first challenges for themselves and then later for their teachers was understanding the three primary concepts that I introduced early in the process. The first concept is that of focusing on growth -- the difference between earlier and later student performance, after teaching and learning has occurred. The second concept is that of knowing students in relation to the curriculum -- determining the levels and quality of student performance relative to specific curriculum expectations. The third concept is demonstration of student growth, that is, providing evidence to show that progress is being made. (The term, demonstrating growth, refers to student progress in relation to the curriculum, including intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development.)

As shared by one of the principals, the challenge of understanding these three concepts began first at the principal professional development sessions hosted by me, and then later at the schools as principals communicated the ideas to their staffs. In response to the first interview question, "What happened at your school as a result of the demonstration strategy?," one principal replied, "The first thing was an awareness of how important growth is." Similarly, another principal said, "Awareness of how we can demonstrate student

learning -- what is it we are looking for?" This principal recalled her own pondering, "How do I know if these kids are learning? How do I know if they know that they're learning?"

All the principals indicated that much staff discussion occurred in the early stages, and continues as more teachers become involved. One principal explained that the teachers ask themselves questions such as: "What does it [demonstrating growth] mean? How do we know where kids are at [in relation to curriculum]? Does a mark demonstrate growth?" Another principal, also referring to discussion with teachers said, "we would clarify issues that were unclear and sort of establish a comfort zone." A third principal said:

> It wasn't the easiest task. It certainly perpetuated a lot of dialogue, a lot of thinking, a lot of self-analysis. They [the teachers] just needed to sit down and gather all the things that they were doing. Here's some work done in September, now let's talk about comparison.

The principals indicated that the concepts caused them and their staffs to develop new perspectives. One principal said, "It certainly started us looking at the whole issue of how do we know students in relation to curriculum." Another principal said, "We had never done anything like this before -- most people hadn't talked about work in relation to graded curriculum. So we had groundwork we had not done before." One principal expressed that ordinarily growth was not being "verbalized" and that the focus on growth was "a way to help them see." The ideas of looking at "student learning over

time" and "looking more objectively at curriculum areas like social and emotional growth" were viewed as new perspectives. One principal described teachers' reactions as follows:

> If you ask me for growth, you are not asking me for point-in-time information. You are asking me for growth over time. You are asking me for something new. All that I've ever been asked for before is like a report card mark which is a point-in-time mark and that doesn't demonstrate anything about where the child was before.

The principals indicated that initial attempts at demonstrating growth were often descriptions of process. One principal stated that most teachers started out "talking about processes," that is, what the students were doing, rather than, "where they [the students] were before you got them and where they are at now." Similarly, another principal observed that in talking to students, "they could tell you what they were doing," but they were challenged to tell you "what it is that they are learning." The principal added that she had observed the same tendency with teachers: "You ask teachers what their objectives are and many of them will tell you what activities they are doing." A third principal said:

> Most people, when they started, wanted to talk about what the kid could do. "Let's take my best kids and I'll show you all the things that they can do." That doesn't show growth -- that shows where they are at. It's [evidence of] learning that [we need] -- where they were at before you got them and where they are at now.

According to the principals internalization of the concepts evolved as teachers applied their new understandings and as they observed changes. One principal said, "It's the

abstractness and bringing that to a concrete level." Another principal recalled an example of the staff's application of the concepts to dealing with their desire for better report cards. She described their struggle as "change in how people thought about student growth, and how they were going to talk about it, not only amongst themselves but amongst their students and parents." She explained that they needed "to be better at it [talking about growth]" and that

> we shouldn't be talking in vague terms, like "good effort," but in fact, should be talking about the real picture of the child. If he's in grade five, is he really functioning at the grade five level? Or, should we be more honest and say, "No, he isn't. He's functioning at the grade four level or grade seven level."

The importance of concept internalization was explained by another principal in reference to "having to start over each year in developing [staff] understanding" because key teachers moved to other positions in the district. The principal added further that a conversation with one of her former teachers, now in a school in which demonstrations are not being done, indicates that "it [focus on growth and demonstration] stayed with her and will continue to be a part of the way she views students and their learning."

All the principals gave examples of program improvements that were made as the concepts pertaining to growth and demonstration became internalized. Current practices were tested against the new perspectives and changes resulted, some of which are reported below.

Program Improvement

The principals indicated that the initiative for demonstrating growth became "a great opportunity" for making improvements to program. The term program, as used by the principals, refers to all aspects of teaching and learning as represented by the Teaching-Learning Wheel described in Chapter 1 (Figure 1, p. 4).

Several principals referred to "the wheel" as they provided examples of changes that occurred at their schools. For example, one principal indicated that efforts to demonstrate growth brought new meaning to the term student-centred and the representation of the student in the centre of the wheel. He and one other principal articulated that "the student was the hub" of what was happening. Another principal said, "You can't do the communicating [demonstration] spoke [of the wheel] without looking at the assessment spoke -- how we are assessing kids and what, in fact, we are teaching kids [curriculum spoke]. Examples of the principals' observations regarding change to program are reported below within the dimensions of program delineated by the spokes of the Teaching-Learning Wheel: curriculum, assessment, learning environment, monitoring and evaluation, and demonstration (reporting). One additional topic is discussed, student results.

Curriculum

This spoke of the wheel refers to the curriculum as mandated by Alberta Education and in the form of outcomes, expectations, and indicators as further developed by Edmonton Public Schools. The principals reported that there were two key developments in the management of curriculum by teachers:

Increased Knowledge About the Curriculum

The principals perceived that without being requested to become more familiar with the curriculum, especially in its new form of outcomes, expectations, and indicators, the teachers did so. In order to make judgements about growth, teachers found it necessary to have clear knowledge of the curriculum. One principal saw the opportunity to make sure "that everybody had [a copy of] the outcomes and expectations." The principal indicated that the teachers planned "a professional development day to make sure we had at least an awareness and cursory view [of the curriculum]," and then after the day, the teachers said, "I know the curriculum better. Now I haven't just looked at it. I will use it with parents in specific ways."

Another principal indicated that the way his teachers started using the curriculum was in the process of goal-setting. He said:

> So the teachers took to goal-setting. I think it's a way of knowing how they could evaluate the kids from where they are at and towards meeting that goal. Or, if they have met the goals, they can report that those goals have been achieved, and then new goals can be set.

This same principal explained that another benefit had been that the increased need to know curriculum caused teachers to do more talking about it and to share ideas. He added that in addition, "As a teacher and principal, you had a purpose for talking about the curriculum."

Increased Results-Focus

Since demonstration is showing growth, schools became more focused on results. One principal said, "We had to look at the curriculum more closely. It means understanding what it is that we are teaching." Another principal indicated that even though teachers had always "tried to follow the program of studies," a focus on growth in relation to goals made "them better at teaching the curriculum -- it tightened it up a bit." Similarly, another principal said, "It clarified in teachers' minds what it is they are doing." Still another said, "It provided a focus for people. It challenged all of us to look at what it is we're teaching -- what we expect kids to learn."

The principals indicated that better planning resulted. One principal said, "It was inevitable. There must be a plan." Another said that teachers "got busy and prepared curriculum goals for their kids." The data show that sometimes teachers were setting group goals and at other times, they were setting goals for individual students.

Another outcome indicated in the data is that the

provincial requirement for IEPs (individual education plans) became more meaningful for teachers as they became more results-focused. Teachers who had been using IEPS recognized the advantage of their experience and began helping other teachers set goals and develop plans.

Assessment

This spoke of the wheel addresses those activities performed by teachers for the purpose of knowing students' learning needs and interests. Included in this spoke are activities like observation and analysis of day-to-day performance, portfolio assessment, and testing. In addition to the assessment strategies themselves, this spoke includes the matter of record-keeping. The principals emphasized three related challenges in preparation for demonstrating growth: knowing students in relation to the curriculum, knowing how to show growth, and collecting new forms of data.
Each is described below:

Knowing Students in Relation to the Curriculum

The idea of knowing students in relation to the curriculum is not new. What is new, according to the principals, is the request for articulation, that is, for describing and showing growth -- for demonstrating it. The principals said that being able to articulate growth necessitates teachers having clearer knowledge about learning

than they have needed previously. They indicated that teachers were "somewhat intimidated" by the challenge, but at the same time they realized "this is their work" and that they should have the information. According to the principals, the teachers promptly set out to become more informed. First, as discussed in the previous section on concept internalization, teachers needed to know how to show growth.

Knowing How to Show Growth

The principals indicated that discussions took place among staff members, and at some schools with parents, too, to find ways of showing growth. The data show that earlier understandings related to assessment were examined, clarified, and sometimes replaced with new practices.

Several principals mentioned discussions about the meaning of marks, such as letter grades and percentages. One principal said that the staff "talked about how would you demonstrate growth and does a mark demonstrate growth, and what does that [mark] mean? And what are the implications of all of those marks?" This principal explained that parents were shown that marks are not the solid evidence that parents sometimes think they are. Another point he made is that the teachers found it necessary to make distinctions about "growth over time" and "a point-in-time mark." As well as striving for increased understanding of the place of marks in demonstration, principals gave examples of discussions with

teachers and parents about the meaning and possible role of "evidence," "standards," "indicators," and "performance criteria."

The data show that schools found the analysis of day-to-day performance and, in particular, work samples to be the most useful in identifying and showing growth. One principal shared a conversation that she had with teachers in which they decided to use samples as evidence. The principal said that they concluded that, "Teachers must be very careful about selecting samples as indicators of students' work. That's what validates the process." The principal shared the essence of their realizations:

> If you are an excellent speaker, I will believe what you say -- if you are knowledgeable in what you say. If you have the indicators there and can say, "Let me show you why this is true." That makes all the difference in the world.

Similarly, another principal explained that her teachers found work samples to be good indicators, and added that "there is no question, you have to know what you are talking about, and that it should be clear to someone who isn't an educator." Another principal stated that once there was more understanding of how to show growth, then "the initial realization by teachers was that they didn't have the data to show growth and so they ran to find ways to collect it."

Collecting Evidence of Growth

The principals shared that initially teachers looked at

the usual forms of assessment, such as tests, but they were not satisfied with the amount and kind of information it gave them. "Then they started to collect writing samples. Now people were more comfortable," said one principal. Another principal reported that teachers also started keeping anecdotal records and he described a "day book" kept by a couple teachers at his school.

An idea that appears from the data to be a new strategy in many classrooms is that of having students keep daily anecdotal records. All the schools showed some indication of using "learning logs" or "journals." In some cases, students were also performing weekly and monthly reviews of their learning logs. One example of a learning log (Figure 2) is the Learning Book (pseudonym) created by a grade five teacher for each of his students. The principal said:

> There's a division one book and the division two. We have the whole school using it. It's been modified in terms of being a planning document [goal-setting, too]. The division one book is a more open-ended kind of thing.

Another development regarding the collection of evidence on growth was that schools began to study attitude, social, emotional, and physical curriculum expectations to find better ways of showing progress in these areas. The favored sytem, according to the data, is that of identifying indicators. For example, how would social growth look if it occurred? One principal explained that his teachers used actual physical growth as a way to help students understand the concept of growth. He explained:

Oh, the child does it [hand prints] themselves. And then they can see that you can demonstrate growth just in the hand print. There is a year end tally so you can see what the height and weight was at the beginning of the year and now.

Day_____ Date_____

Today I learned - -_____

Today I liked - -_____

Tomorrow I would like to - -_____

FOR THE WEEK

This week I learned - -_____

This week I liked - -_____

Next week I would like to - -_____

Figure 2. Sample Page from a Learning Log.

Some of the principals reminded me of demonstration sessions I had observed in which the primary focus had been student

attitude, behavior, and social and emotional growth. Teacher anecdotal records were an important source of data for these sessions as were student testimonies of their own observations.

The example of development in assessment and record-keeping most emphasized by the principals was the use of portfolios. One principal said, "It was the beginning of portfolios. And it was the beginning of sharing portfolios." Certainly, at some schools teachers were already using student work files. However, the idea of portfolios as described by current literature provides more sophisticated systems for collecting and analyzing data, and emphasizes the use of portfolios as a learning strategy with students. Prior to the demonstration initiative there was limited teacher interest in student files, claimed some of the principals. Since much research on portfolio systems is so new, the opinions of a couple principals that developments being made in the Area were "at the forefront," were not entirely misguided.

There is ample evidence in the data of teacher and principal discussion about the decisions schools made in developing portfolio systems; for example, about keeping work samples, organizing and analyzing the samples, and involving students in the process. One principal explained that she and the teachers struggled because, "What you put in your portfolio must indicate what you believe." She added that

they asked themselves, "Do you put just anything in? Who puts it in? Is it your best work over time? What is left at the end of the year?"

A couple of principals mentioned school-wide data collection systems whereby a portfolio expands from year to year and is forwarded with the student to the next level of schooling. Toward this end, at one school "teachers collected writing samples and handed them in [to the school office]." The principal explained:

> You could really see the difference -- all the characteristics of good writing and growth. I [the principal] found that [record] a very, very powerful tool in talking to parents in June. "Look, here's September, here's March, here's June." You can just see the growth. You don't have to read about it, you can just see it in their writing.

In summary, according to the principals, "Teachers could see the different methods of collection and different methods of keeping a record, and so felt much more comfortable with it [demonstration]." The next development described by principals was the positive impact that better information about growth had on the teaching process.

Learning Environment

This spoke of the wheel is the dimension of program concerned with provision of climate and activities that are conducive to student learning and development. Decisions regarding learning environment are based on teacher knowledge

of the curriculum and the student. For the learning environment to be continually rich, adjustments to program must be made as needed and the teacher must have a broad repertoire of resources and strategies.

There is evidence in the data to show that the principals believe that advancements were made regarding the provision of quality learning environments. The principals perceived "spin-offs" (one principal's descriptor) from the demonstration initiative. These spin-offs had an impact on the decisions made by teachers in providing effective program for students. For example, one principal said, "The fact that the teacher is more aware translates into the kinds of decisions that are reflected in their [the students] day-to-day tasks." This principal perceived that teacher understandings gained through the process of preparing for a demonstration of one student's learning results in insights which influence how the teacher views and works with other students. The principal said, "That [insight] would set the base for looking at other students."

The impact on program most emphasized by the principals is the increased involvement of students. Illustration of improvement to the teaching-learning process, including student involvement in goal-setting, learning strategies, and motivation and commitment are provided below.

Goal-setting

The principals perceived that goal-setting arose as a new strategy in many classrooms. In some cases, as shared earlier, teacher planning reflected more goal-setting. However, even more significant, according to the principals, was the involvement of students in goal-setting. One principal explained that what happens too often in classrooms is "the old osmosis approach where we [teachers] go in, give the information, and expect to get it back, and have not thought very much about sharing objectives and the purpose." Another principal said: "We're going toward children becoming much more a part of it [goal-setting]. We want to share the objective, making sure that kids get it -- not just us." One principal shared that teachers at her school post the program of studies on the classroom wall and refer to it while working with students. The outcome has been that students, too, use the information, as exemplified by the principal: "A kid went up to the program of studies on the wall and he said, 'You know, I can do this grade four stuff (and he was in grade three), because I can do place value to the ten thousands place.'" Another principal, referring to the use of the Learning Book, said: "It's a good planning document for kids and they get into the habit [of setting goals]."

The principals stated that sometimes students were involved in setting goals. The most frequently mentioned

examples were the goal-setting students do in learning logs and the goal-setting that takes place at the end of a demonstration session, sometimes with the parent included in the process, too. The principals indicated that as well as being involved in setting goals, students were participating in planning processes for achieving their goals. One principal said. "It involves kids more in how they are going to attain their goals in the subject-matter."

Learning Strategies

The data hint at the relationship between language and learning when a couple of principals refer to the value of students "verbalizing" and "articulating" their growth. One principal said: "The kids talk about their work, their skills and strategies -- you [the observer] can see things happening [learning]."

The use of portfolios as a new learning strategy was highly applauded by the principals. They indicated that students were learning as they were involved in data collection and monitoring. One principal expressed concern that not long ago a student said: "For the first time in my life I had to sit down and think about my portfolio." The principal added that:

> It's a real indictment of an educational system when you [a student] can go through it for twelve years before you have to think about what it is you've been able to do -- to look at your growth. And I think because we have been so hung up on measuring against other people, we

ourselves.

Learning logs were also mentioned by principals as a strategy for learning. One principal stated that learning logs are used at her school everyday and some teachers said, "Gee, this is extra work." She said other teachers responded, "It's part of the curriculum. It's integrated. It's language arts. It's not an add on. It's more meaningful." The principal concurred with the latter perspective and gave an example of insight gained through learning logs: "A teacher used the word 'rhetorical' question the other day. They [the students] asked what is that and they discussed it. [Later] a kid [writing] in the learning log said, 'We learned the term rhetorical question and this is what it means.'"

The principals also indicated that instructional strategies had changed in some cases. For example, one principal explained that teachers were no longer using workbooks for every subject-area. Discussions about getting growth to occur and the need for projects and writing samples had led to realizations of the limitations of a program committed to workbooks.

Another principal explained that an increased focus on growth was improving the continuity of program. Teachers were developing increased sensitivity to the learning of individual students. He said that "individualizing program" took on a new significance. Another principal said, "More work was done

in terms of knowing kids in relation to the curriculum -- where they are at precisely -- [and] meeting the needs of all the students." This principal also reported increased teacher effort toward teaching concepts at a level appropriate to the student. She said, "It wasn't imposing the curriculum on the child." Similarly, another principal stated that "teachers realize that the growth thing is important and [they] get away from the situation that we have to have everybody at the same level at the same time. You sort of have to individualize."

Motivation and Commitment

Another factor described by the principals as a positive impact on learning environment relates to the idea of building on the strengths of students. One principal stated that a focus on growth has resulted in more students being recognized: "Not just the problems but it's opened up the aspect of good." All of the principals indicated that they observed positive student reaction. One principal said, "Those kids walked out feeling good about it [demonstration session] and they also probably became better students because of it." Another principal said:

> It's so wonderful for them to see exactly what they've accomplished for themselves -- to look back -- this is what I was did in November, and this is what I am doing in January. I think that it is a really positive thing for these students.

A principal stated that an outcome of demonstration was increased motivation and commitment on the part of students,

teachers, and parents when conferences focused on growth and goal-setting. He explained that the idea is "to have the three people committed to growth and know exactly how they are going to achieve it. Most of the them [the conferences] involve the child choosing a goal and the parent choosing a goal." A second principal also noted one of the benefits of demonstration sessions to be "getting commitment from the student." Also noted was that students started monitoring their goals, a topic discussed in the next section.

Monitoring and Evaluation

One aspect of this spoke of the wheel pertains to monitoring -- the on-going attentiveness of a teacher [or student] to the quality of program. It is the process of continually checking to see if learning is occurring as a student interacts with the curriculum and resources. A watchful eye by the teacher is important for gaining the insight needed in making timely program adjustments, thereby ensuring continuity of learning.

The evaluation dimension refers to the more formal judgements made about the level and quality of a student's performance, as well as about the effectiveness of particular strategies and resources. Regarding judgements on student performance, evaluation is basic to the marks, comments, and grade level estimates that a teacher records and then later shares with parents and the student. Regarding effectiveness

of program, evaluation of the worth of particular resources or strategies is basic to the decisions that teachers make in setting up improved learning environments.

The data indicate that principals' observed increased attentiveness to the monitoring and evaluation of student performance at their schools. For example:

- One principal explained that with an increased results-focus more effective monitoring is occurring. She said, "It's [demonstration] a vehicle so that student growth is first and foremost why it is we are at schools, and how it is we are going to get better at what we do."

- Another principal explained that prior to the demonstration initiative he had introduced his staff to the "three circles of curriculum alignment." Later with demonstration in mind, they concentrated "a fair bit of time on the evaluation circle, which was not getting a fair shake."

- A third principal mentioned teacher efforts to monitor growth in relation to the curriculum. She cited a conversation between two teachers about a unit test they had developed: "These questions are high level questions and they're aligned to the curriculum."

- Another principal recalled a question that he used in

coaching teachers: "Can you see that the child has actually grown or learned?" He added that teachers began asking themselves, "Is this -- what I am doing -- really right for kids?"

Regarding evaluation, the same developments and processes described earlier under the topic, assessment, apply to the process of evaluation. To make judgements about performance teachers must know students in relation to the curriculum. Estimates of grade level and quality of performance are made to give parents an indication of a student's progress. Once growth has been identified and recorded, the next challenge is effective communication, the topic of the following section.

Demonstration

This spoke of the wheel pertains to communication about student growth. Traditionally, this spoke would have been called reporting, that is, the issuing of report cards and holding parent-teacher interviews. As well as communication about student growth with students and parents, this spoke addresses the matter of communication with other stakeholders, specifically supervisors, colleagues, and the general public.

An important context to recall in reviewing the principals' comments on reporting is the timeline shared in Chapter 1; that is, communication with parents was scheduled as the primary focus for the fourth year of implementation. The fourth year is the current year, and communication with

parents is being addressed. Noteworthy though, is that some schools began applying demonstration and growth concepts in communicating with parents as early as the first year. Further, communication with the public was intended to be the focus in the fifth year; however, one of the seven schools began in the second year of implementation. These instances of application of the demonstration concept ahead of schedule are the result of principal and teacher initiative.

There were three developments noted by principals regarding the impact that the demonstration strategy had on report card and parent-teacher interview practices: a broader conceptualization of the reporting function, an increased variety of methods of communicating with stakeholders, and an increased number of stakeholders being reached. A fourth topic volunteered by principals is their future aspirations regarding demonstration sessions. The four topics are addressed below:

Broader Conceptualization of the Reporting Function

This first impact on reporting has been addressed in the section, concept internalization; that is, principals and teachers developed a broader concept of reporting in which they began to visualize demonstration of growth. The data show that staffs recognized the rights of parents for complete and accurate information on how their children perform in relation to the graded curriculum. As shared earlier, one

principal said:

> We shouldn't be talking in vague terms, like "good effort". . . but in fact should be talking about the real picture of the child. If he's in year five, is he really functioning at the grade five level, or should we be more honest and say well, in fact, "No, he isn't. He's functioning at the grade four level [of curriculum] or at the grade seven level."

Also, the principals stated that there were discussions with parents about the meaning of growth, and other concepts such as indicators, samples, and marks. In addition, there were discussions about the use of demonstrations and portfolios, and the involvement of students in demonstrations. One principal shared that at first parents were concerned that they might not get "number data -- 'Well, what's his percentage? Where is he? What's the grade level?'" The principal said that after the parents had experienced a demonstration, "many of them came back and said, 'Well, we don't have to worry about this. The hard data is right in the folder [portfolio].'"

Another development mentioned by principals is school recognition of the need to report on all curriculum expectations. They stated that new forms of data collection began. One principal said that in the first year teachers concentrated on "the academic stuff," then in the second year they concentrated on showing "social and emotional growth." Also, teachers realized that evidence of student performance is needed to substantiate teacher judgements. One principal said: "Teachers must be very careful about selecting samples.

That's what validates the process. If you have the indicators there, then you can say, 'Let me show you why this is true.'"

The principals claim that the aim was no longer one of simply fulfilling an obligation to parents but rather of involving parents in strengthening the learning process through increased accountability on the part of all participants. As one principal said, the point was "to have the three people [student, teacher, parent] committed to this growth and know exactly how they are going to achieve it." New and varied methods for communicating evolved as a result of the demonstration initiative, the topic of the next section.

Variety of Methods

The data show that school approaches to reporting were changing: report cards were taking on new forms to be more aligned with the curriculum and to serve as a brief record upon which to elaborate in a conference. The customary fifteen minute parent-teacher interview was being replaced with conference discussions. The conferences were becoming demonstrations of growth in relation to the curriculum, including portfolio reviews and goal-setting.

The data show that six of the seven schools had already made changes to their reporting systems, and the seventh principal spoke of future intentions. One principal shared that the focus on growth and demonstration has resulted in

their report cards being continually revised as they gained new insights:

> We've redone our progress reports again, and in fact they have been changed the first year, the second year, and third year. Now we already know how we want to change them for this fourth year. So we have made our progress report a living document. It is not something built in stone that we never look at again.

Another development highly praised by the principals was the involvement of students in conferences. At most of the schools, according to the principals, students are assisting the teacher in demonstrating their growth to parents. The principals said that the students are showing new competence in that they can articulate their growth. Three of the principals indicated that conferences were occurring in which the students were doing the leading and teachers were assisting, that is, student-led conferences.

An idea discussed by several of the principals was a particular model for student-led conferences developed by one teacher in the Area. This teacher had shared the model at an Area professional development session. In the model approximately five students at a time individually show their parents around the classroom explaining learning centers and activities, and helping parents understand day-to-day routines. Then a student-parent conference takes place in which the student walks the parents through a portfolio of dated work samples and points out examples of growth. Meanwhile, the teacher circulates to answer questions, monitor the effectiveness of each demonstration, and provide

additional information as needed. The data indicate that several of the principals are interested in developing this model at their schools.

As shown in Chapter 1 in the section titled, Examples of Demonstration Sessions, the demonstrations took many forms depending on the purpose of the session and the nature of the audience. Variety of audience is the next topic.

Variety of Audience

The principals' comments indicate their recognition of the legitimacy of stakeholder interest in school performance. The data show that schools are either communicating with more stakeholders, or envision doing so in the future. Although the principals did not make statements of direct comparison about changes in beliefs and systems of communicating, their descriptions show that they perceive that:

- Formerly, reporting student progress was a formal process, happening periodically to fulfil an obligation to parents for information about their children. The principals indicated that traditionally, limited information was being shared.

- Now, according to the principals, communication about student progress is first and foremost with the students on a continual basis and as an integral part of the learning process. Also, communication with parents has become a high

priority in influencing student commitment and motivation, and ensuring that parents are fully aware of the level and quality of their child's performance in relation to the curriculum. Further, communication with members of the public, who as taxpayers and responsible citizens are also stakeholders, and are significant as supporters of public schooling.

Two principals stated that there is a need for more communication with the public. One school is already including members of the community, for example, "real estate agents, the local padre, or whoever does not have children in the school" in approximately eight sessions a year of demonstrations of student growth. The principal indicated that the response of all guests at such sessions has been positive with students and teachers receiving recognition and praise, sometimes in the form of thank you and congratulatory letters. The image of the school also benefits, claims the principal: "I think we get good publicity from this. [Also], trustees [who have been guests] have made comments like, 'They know me [the principal] and the school.'"

Future Aspirations

Although future intentions about the demonstration concept were not pursued as part of the study, a few principals volunteered noteworthy points:

~ One principal spoke with enthusiasm about a future in which "we might not end up with parent-teacher interviews but with student-parent interviews [at the high school level]."

~ Several principals indicated that they visualize a time at which all teachers are focusing on growth and demonstration. One principal explained that early on he decided that "doing [demonstrations with] one teacher a year" to meet the associate superintendent's expectation was not sufficient. This principal and his staff readily moved into student-led demonstrations for parents and also, demonstrations for a combined audience of parents, educators external to the school, and members of the public.

~ One principal shared his vision of "user friendly" demonstrations. He explained:

> When we did one for you, it was formal and the teachers were thinking, "Boy, the associate is coming!" My ideal is that you could drop in anytime, or a parent [could] We would go and get the portfolio and sit down. The demonstration would be very easy and very well done.

Student Results

The data show that the principals perceived the demonstration strategy to have had a positive impact on student programs. Of course, the true test of the worthiness of the strategy would be evidence that student performance had improved. As declared in chapter one in limitations of the

study, there has been no attempt in this study to ascertain objective data on student results. Although such insight would be desirable, the task of controlling the numerous variables that influence student performance was seen as beyond the scope of this study.

Nevertheless, the principals' observations of student performance have been examined. Their observations are shared in the points below:

- All of the principals reported that the demonstration strategy had a positive impact on student attitude and self-esteem. In response to the research question about impact on students, one principal said:

> There's lots of good things. First of all, it can get commitment. They feel good about themselves and self-esteem goes up when they start showing somebody what they have done. There's two people [the parent and teacher] who are really paying attention to them. We do the Battle Self-Esteem Inventory and it's [the results have] been up since we started doing the demonstrations. It's not scientific to say that there's a correlation, but teacher and administration observation would indicate to me that there is a direct correlation between child-centred demonstrations and student learning and a child's self-esteem.

Another principal said:

> I think in terms of self-esteem for a lot of those kids, it's a real positive thing for them. All of their growth is laid out. They're very positive that they were selected [to do a demonstration for the principal or associate superintendent]. They go out of here [the principal's office] beaming.

- One principal gave an example of attitude and behavior

improvement: "That [the demonstration concept] has opened a lot of positive doors. Some of the kids that would get into forty-seven fights [an exaggeration], now get into less and are doing other things." Another principal recalled student comments, "Well, I used to be this kind of kid. Now I have changed and I'm more mature." The principal added that he didn't know if the following comments were the words used by a student, but that basically, what the student had said was, "I'm learning, I'm growing, I'm feeling good."

- Regarding improved student performance in relation to the knowledge expectations of the curriculum, the data does not show explicitly that principals' perceived improvements. Such can be assumed only on the basis of claims of improved student attitude, self-esteem, commitment, and results awareness (due to goal-setting).

- There is some evidence of principal perception of improved student performance in relation to the skill expectations of curriculum. For example, all of the principals reported that students learned to identify, verbalize, record, and show their own growth.

- The principals also gave examples of positive reaction and feedback from parents and the feedback that shows that parents perceived improved student performance. One principal stated

that when parents experience a demonstration session they are often

> amazed that their children are articulate enough to go through and explain what they have done, what they have learned and why it is important, and compare it with what they are doing now . . . and the parents -- some of them are just blown away: "I didn't know my kid could speak that well and articulate what he has done over time. He doesn't seem to be able to keep his room clean and that's what I have been worried about!"

Another principal reminded me that parents had left one demonstration at which I had been present, so touched that they had "tears in their eyes." The principal added, "That's pretty impressive stuff!" The parents had expressed pride in their children and relief that the future looked optimistic. Since the majority of the demonstration had been performed by the students, the evidence of progress was particularly convincing to parents.

One principal reported that parents have responded positively in all of the demonstration sessions. He observed that they felt "proud of their kids" and were convinced that "their kids were learning." The principal recalled one incident when a teenage, older brother had accompanied the mother. Following the demonstration, the brother voluntarily provided a recap of his brother's growth based on the evidence that had been shared. He noted that indeed his brother had grown.

Another principal indicated that for "the ones [parents] who experienced it -- I don't think there has been anything more wonderful -- that good feeling that parents get when they

hear their kids talk about their work." The principal reminded me of a session I attended in which the mother said, "This is one of the best days of my life!"

Concluding Remarks

Throughout the interview process principals volunteered comments on their judgements of the demonstration strategy in impacting program improvement. These comments are shared in the following points:

- While talking about the benefits of demonstration one principal said:

> It's an affirmation of growth for everyone involved, including myself, and I feel good that my teachers are doing a good job, that the kids are learning, and the parents love it. That's it in nutshell -- it's a super thing to do.

- A second principal said, "The third year was great . . . every teacher is doing two [demonstrations]. It's part of the culture here."

- A third principal said, "And so, this was a great opportunity. It was all positive. If it wasn't we wouldn't be continuing it at our school today."

- A fourth principal explained that the activities at his school, "which were directly related to your thrust [growth and demonstration], have resulted in better communicating,

better reporting, and better ways of evaluating the students of the school."

- A fifth principal said:

> I think it tends to make programs more child-centred. All the teachers involved in it agree that once they had done one [demonstration], they were eager to do another one. And so it was really positive. You never lose when you remind teachers that they are doing a good job, and what better way to remind them that they are doing a good job than to sit them down to look at the good job they are doing.

- A sixth principal said:

> I believe it had a very positive impact. I think that it has to be a really positive thing for these students. I think it doesn't matter what child or at what level, growth is growth -- it's a wonderful way to honor children.

- A seventh principal said, "We've made some tremendous strides. People started to realize, there are quite a few things going on here and there is some excellent teaching, and there are all kinds of learning, and kids can demonstrate."

Although all of the principals indicated that improvements had been made to the quality of program, two of them also indicated some reservation. The first one perceived that although change had occurred, it was minor compared to what would occur in the long term. The principal explained:

> Change takes a long time in education and so I think that eventually it [focus on growth and demonstration] will have major impact in terms of organization at the high

school level, the communicating that we do with parents, and on expectations for students.

The second principal perceived that there had not been enough impact on students, that is, on those students who were not involved in demonstrations yet. Although such an observation was not voiced by the other principals, the data indicate that the principals favor the involvement of all students and teachers. Further, the data indicate that the principals recognize that there is much more to be accomplished. The principals were unanimous in their perceptions that the demonstration strategy has impacted positively on the quality of program, summed up by one principal as, "the greatest benefit being for the child who through a demonstration session can actually see for themselves the amount that they have learned."

Professional Development

For there to have been improvements in program, as perceived by the principals, it follows that professional development must have occurred. There is evidence in the data that principals believe that the teachers, the principals, and the associate superintendent became better at their work. The changes highlighted in concept internalization and program improvement are indicators of improved professional performance. In addition, the following are specific statements relating to the professional development of

teachers, principals, and the associate superintendent, as shared by the principals.

Teachers

The findings shared on concept internalization and program improvement are evidence that teachers became more knowledgeable and skilful. The principals said that they became more knowledgeable about curriculum, assessment, and reporting and more skilful in planning, teaching, monitoring, evaluating, and demonstrating. The principals also stated that teacher attitudes improved, as did career satisfaction. For example, in response to a probing question on how teachers felt after demonstration sessions, one of the principals said:

> Wonderful! They were on cloud nine: "I am knowledgeable. I do an excellent job and I can tell somebody else about it. I can be articulate, and this has helped me to be articulate." I know that even with reticent teachers, that even they are better at what they do, and feel better.

Similarly, another principal observed benefits for "the teacher who realizes, 'Look what I have done for this child. Look how far they have come.'" Another principal stated the same idea when he said:

> This thing really made teachers feel good about what they are doing -- all the teachers. We had teachers sit and look at the good job they are doing, and that makes them feel good about themselves. It's a building thing -- they make kids feel better and so on. There's a real need in the system. You just have to look at the survey -- administrative morale is a lot higher that teachers.

Also indicating teacher development are the descriptions by principals of their efforts to get change. For example,

one principal said,

> I [the principal] did some things very quickly and as a result pulled some people along more quickly than they would have liked to. But in this case, the end justifies the mean because everyone sees the value of it.

Another principal said,

> They had never done anything like that [demonstration] before. I think that what it did, is it had them do some groundwork that they wouldn't have done otherwise. They made sure that they knew that they were going to be successful, and I made sure that they were going to, too. So we did some practice sessions, and we had coaching and guiding and all that kind of stuff. So we set up a safety net and that made a difference. Now they're ready to go, and they have become coaches and leaders to others.

Some of the principals indicated that they perceived that the amount of teacher professional development had been substantial. For example, one principal said: "The knowledge, skills, and attitudes of teachers have done 'eureka' kind of leaps." Another principal said,

> When you talk to somebody, you want them to come away with one thing. If you come away with one thing, I would like you to remember that I feel strongly that it's a good thing for teachers.

Also indicated by the principals was that some teachers viewed the demonstration request as an opportunity. One principal said, "She [a teacher] had been waiting for an opportunity [to show off her good work]. Finally, somebody asked. She rose to the occasion and hasn't stopped since!" Another principal said, "It's had this [positive] impact on staff in the sense that people have really gotten into it. People were sort of ready for it."

Throughout the data, there are examples of the kinds of

professional development opportunities provided to teachers: discussion, planning, practice, and reflection sessions; workshop activities, as in studying curriculum expectations; professional development days, as in developing knowledge and skill in using portfolios; principal coaching and one-on-one conferences; intervisitations to other schools and classrooms, sharing sessions at the school and among schools; and setting and monitoring professional development goals as part of the performance evaluation process. The principals indicated that the regularly scheduled professional development functions became focused on matters related to growth and demonstration. Perhaps the most significant professional development activity for teachers, as indicated by the principals, was the inclusion of key teachers in the principal retreats, which used to be exclusively for principals.

Finally, it should be noted that teachers did not always feel comfortable with the demonstration strategy as shown by the data. Their initial apprehensions are reported in the section on concept internalization. The data show that expectations for a focus on growth and provision of demonstration sessions were new requests, and principals and teachers found it necessary to develop new knowledge and skills.

Principals

The principals claimed that they, too, had developed

professionally. They gave examples of their becoming more knowledgeable about curriculum and instruction matters and indicated that they found themselves challenged. One principal said that the initiative had "bowled her over." She explained that, "It was very challenging in terms of how do I know that these kids are learning. So I think it was very powerful." Other principals indicated that they became focused on the important things; for example, one said, "It made me more focused, more clear. I believe in revisiting the curriculum." And, another principal said, "It made me more aware that there's better ways to communicate learning."

There is indication in the data that some principals made attitude adjustments, in recognizing the significance of the demonstration initiative and in taking ownership for it. One principal's comments represent ideas that were intimated by others:

> The first year, I suppose, was a sense of panic, partly because I was wondering what is expected. And I guess, the clarity, you know, in terms of what does this person [associate superintendent] want -- that was number one. Number two was, is this another make work project from downtown, and if it is, then we'll buy into it a little bit cause I know in six months it will change into something different! Well, this particular one didn't and I think that's the reason it was effective. It lasted for a period of time, which gave you [schools] an opportunity to get more than just a little into it.

The principals indicated that they became more knowledgeable about what was happening in their schools, that is, program supervision, the topic of a subsequent section. For example, one principal said: "It's a tool for me to know

that they [teachers] know where the kid is at in relation to the curriculum and where the kid is going."

Also, the principals indicated that their improved knowledge assisted them in being better leaders. Leadership is a major topic also developed in a subsequent section.

Associate Superintendent

The principals' reports indicate that they perceived that I, too, improved professionally. Their main point seems to be that I performed better my responsibility for program supervision, that is, knowing schools. Their claim is that I got more and better information through demonstrations. This in turn, according to a couple principals, assisted me in knowing what leadership to give schools. For example, one principal said, "It would give you a sense of where schools are at, and it would give you a sense of the kinds of things that would really round out some of the schools." My development, as perceived by the principals, is more fully explained in the following sections, beginning with the next section on program supervision.

Program Supervision

In response to the interview question on demonstration as an administrative strategy, the principals indicated that monitoring by the associate superintendent and principals

improved as a result of the demonstration initiative. The data show that they also perceived that teachers and students became more involved in program supervision as they focused on growth and prepared for demonstrations. The following summarizes the principals' perceptions about program supervision at the associate superintendent, principal, teacher, and student levels.

Associate Superintendent Level

The principals reported that my involvement in demonstration sessions gave me more and better information about schools. They indicated that principals are interested in the associate superintendent having sufficient, accurate information before forming impressions or making judgements about their schools. Comments by a couple of principals indicate that they are sensitive to associate superintendents relying "too heavily on test results." As one principal said:

> It gave you tremendous insight into the school. You could see how I reacted to the teacher, the parents, and the kids. You could see all the interactions that were going on there, and those things are not things you can falsify for two minutes and then change when the boss leaves. Regardless, you get the flavor [of the school's performance]. One more thing, I don't think you can look at one year's [test] results and make decisions [about school performance]. I think you have to look at growth [the school's] over a period of time.

Another principal said:

> Now when your associate comes out, are you concerned that you do a good job -- absolutely! Do you want your school to shine? Sure you do. So you have some concern that you will be doing those kinds of things that the associate sees as valuable -- but it's worth any of those risks

[because the associate superintendent will know the school].

Two of the principals indicated that my being well-informed was also vital to making quality decisions about the nature and type of leadership to provide the principals. For example, one principal said:

> My associate [superintendent] knew her schools intimately. I think that the staff-associate liaison was a link you created that you couldn't have otherwise. And you had intimate knowledge of what was happening in a school, that I can't see any other vehicle being able to produce as well as demonstration sessions. I think that you would be able to rank your schools as far as who was able to work with that concept exceptionally and who needed a lot of encouragement, coaching and assistance. And in that way, I think, that probably it was a very efficient use of time because you would know who would need more resources than someone else, and also, you were able to link people in networking groups.

A few principals stated that an associate superintendent gains valuable information through demonstrations to supplement results from the district's attitude survey. One of them said, "What you learn on the survey isn't human in terms of the feeling you get [firsthand]." Another said:

> I think it gave you a better idea in terms of the staff. You got a feel for this person and of the quality and caliber of working in this particular school. It gives you a little bit better idea for the whole feel of the school in terms of student learning. You get a better idea than any of the survey data because the survey data is based on opinion. What you are actually seeing is more truthful.

The principals also noted that they preferred the demonstration model since they found it to be a pleasant way for the associate superintendent to get information. For example, one of them said: "If it's a visit, it's a visit,

but this was a far [better way] -- it was a very effective way, and I didn't feel like I was being monitored. Another principal said:

> It was a very nice, non-threatening way of finding out a little bit about the teacher, about the school. I think you learned about the child. It gave you information about programming. It gave you information about the strategies that teachers were using. I think it gives you an idea of some of the curriculum that's going on and the kinds of things that schools find important. And I know we talked a lot about not just the academic development but more then that. Hopefully, that reflected the kind of concern we had at our school.

The principals also seemed pleased to have had the opportunity to share the good things that they perceived were happening at their schools. One principal said:

> I think you would have realized that there are some exciting -- great things going on in this school. I think you would have realized that there are more similarities between an elementary school and a senior high school than differences and that we all have something to contribute -- that the focus on K to 12 is a lot better that K-6, 7-9, and 10-12.

Similarly, another principal said:

> I think you learned a lot. I think you saw many different varieties of techniques and strategies used [in demonstrations]. I think you probably found out that there's a lot of good teachers in all the schools, more than what you might have known before because you got to see them at closer range.

And finally, one principal's comments reflect the tone of all seven principals regarding their perception of how I felt about the demonstrations that I observed: "I think it means that you really enjoy your job. I really do!

Principal Level

The principals stated clearly that they viewed the demonstration concept as a good method for principal-level program supervision. They perceived that they became increasingly knowledgable about classroom level activity and especially, student performance. One principal said:

> I use it as a method of monitoring what's going on in class -- what's going on in the school. It gives me a better feel for the actual teaching of the curriculum. It's better than straight classroom observation. If you see a demonstration it's [growth] over time, and so the demonstration is a good way to indicate whether or not the program is meeting the expectations or if the curriculum is actually being taught.

There is evidence in the data that the principals linked the supervision of program to their responsibilities for evaluation of teacher performance and perceived that they were now better informed about teacher performance. One principal said:

> It has formed a major part of the evaluation that I use for teachers in terms of their evaluation each year. I don't have to guess. You also start to see the areas of need [that] you didn't before. Like, when you went in, you would arrange with the teachers and they would pick their best subject, and you would view their best lesson. In a demonstration of learning, you see the teacher demonstrating learning in a variety of ways.

Similarly, other principals said:

> I've probably learned more about the teachers' work than I do by sitting at the back of the room taking notes. The kids talk about their work, their skills and strategies -- you can see the things that are happening.

> It was interesting to see the different ways each of the teachers are doing it [demonstration]. It's interesting to see the teaching styles. It really tells you about the program and the kinds of goals being set.

> Without any question, I could tell you right now who those teachers are who have a better grasp of the program of studies and outcomes, and expectations. And who are able to better use them.
>
> So the first one-on-one [performance evaluation conference] was the sharing of portfolios with me and the final one was also.
>
> I think it makes me more conscious of teachers work with outcomes, indicators, and expectations -- the curriculum. It's a tool for me to know that they know where the kid is at in relation to the curriculum and where the kid is going -- probably the most important thing.

Teacher Level

Program supervision is usually considered to be an administrative function. The principals' comments indicate that they perceived that teachers became increasingly skilful at monitoring program as they focused on growth and prepared for demonstrations. The teachers, they claimed, were gaining and using better information to meet student interests and needs.

As shared in the section, program improvement, the principals perceived that as a result of the demonstration initiative teachers readily began to collect new types of data. According to the principals, the incidence of anecdotal note-taking increased and methods for identifying growth in the full range of curriculum expectations were pursued. They also said that portfolios as a means for collecting and assessing progress became popular, and continue to be a professional development challenge. Developing pre-set

criteria and analyzing performance in relation to it, dating samples of work, keeping records, and introducing systems for capturing student perspectives, such as daily, weekly, and monthly journals, are examples of what the principals said is happening at their schools.

Student Level

The data show that the principals perceived that students, too, are monitoring. They claim that students are now aware of the meaning of growth, can monitor their performance to identify it, and can even demonstrate it. The data indicate that the principals consider such student awareness and involvement to be innovative, especially at the level of proficiency being shown by some students.

The use of journals and learning logs, and the practices of goal-setting, portfolio preparation, and student-led demonstrations are examples of processes that teachers have developed and implemented for involving students, according to principals. The principals claimed that students who have participated in the strategy:

- are aware of growth
- compare before and after performance
- determine if they have met their goals
- reflect on their performance
- keep record of their perceptions and work samples.

A topic related to program supervision is accountability,

which is one of the reasons for performing program supervision. Principals' perceptions about accountability are shared in the next section.

Accountability

Although the principals were not questioned specifically using the term accountability, they shared a number of examples of development in communication with their stakeholders when asked questions regarding impact of the strategy. The first development has been mentioned already in the study: the increased awareness of the importance of stakeholder satisfaction. One principal summed up his thoughts on the significance of accountability beginning with the parents by sharing his practical perspective:

> You know and I know, if parents are happy with the school system and we have support, then we do better. If they're knocking the school system and things aren't going well, and we don't have their support, then we have a problem.

A second development perceived by the principals is their claim of a higher level of involvement of all participants in demonstration sessions. They indicated that students were significantly more involved. Their examples include goal-setting, planning, monitoring, self-evaluation, and demonstrating growth. One principal compared this new involvement to what she perceived as traditional practice: "Before, we used to talk about kids and not talk with them."

Similarly, another principal referred to the "old osmosis approach, where we [teachers] go in, give the information, expect to get it back and have not thought very much about sharing objectives and purpose [with the students]."

The principals also perceived teachers to be significantly more involved as they developed valuable understandings and skills for better management of the curriculum, assessment, monitoring, evaluation, student growth, and demonstration. Teachers, of course, are also highly involved in getting students more involved.

Parents, too, became better informed about the curriculum and the concept of growth through demonstrations. The principals said that parents were meaningfully involved in reviews of student progress in relation to the curriculum, becoming familiar with portfolios and learning logs, and participating in goal-setting.

There is evidence in the data that the principals recognize members of the general public as stakeholders and strive for practical ways of informing and involving them. Since the topic, involvement of the general public, was scheduled for Area-level attention in the fifth year of the demonstration strategy, developments to date have been the sole initiative of individual principals and their schools. Involvement of senior citizens and others as volunteers and guests for special functions, as well as the delivery of school newsletters to local residences were mentioned by

principals, and recognized by them as the regular means. One principal had developed demonstrations that include community members, indeed, a progressive idea, as indicated by several other principals who have plans for using the same model.

Finally, the principals perceived that the associate superintendent became better informed and more meaningfully involved at the school and classroom level. The data show that the principals and teachers appreciate associate superintendent interest in their work when there is a positive focus. The principals' comments indicate that they perceived that giving me better information resulted in more relevant interactions and better performance by everyone.

Another development regarding accountability and the demonstration strategy is the principals' claim that the strategy is effective in holding individuals accountable for their responsibilities. They indicated that the strategy made them more accountable. For example, in response to a probing interview question regarding my motive for initiating demonstration one principal said: "I think, in making principals accountable . . . if the accountability was there that they [the principals] would put an effort in [for school improvement]. Another principal stated that "involving the teachers was a wonderful way to go" in getting principal accountability. She explained:

> When you do things on your own it's not the same accountability, and I'm being quite honest. You can go to something and say, "Well, yes, if I can work it in tomorrow, the next day or whatever." And before you know

> it, other things get in the way and it doesn't really go as far as you want. So I think, in terms of involving the teachers, it certainly had accountability on the principals cause now you have something that you have worked on [and you must carry through with it to maintain credibility in the eyes of the teacher].

The principals described that the strategy held teachers accountable because teachers were the ones to identify growth and evidence. One principal said, "It's a challenge to look at what it is we're teaching, what it is we expect the kids to learn, and to find out in fact if they have done that." Another principal spoke of "clarifying in teachers' minds" what they're trying to accomplish.

All the principals spoke of demonstration increasing student accountability and gave as example the usefulness of a conference in which the student, teacher, and parent review progress together. One principal stated that there was a likelihood of goals being met since the parent is present and the "student would be held more accountable." Another principal described student responsibility in sharing a story that a student had volunteered to demonstrate her learning by saying, "I'd like to do that. I'd like to talk to the associate [superintendent] and demonstrate what it is that I have learned in Biology 30." The difference, according to the principals, was that students, too, became focused on growth, identifying it and articulating it.

There is one final topic for reporting on principals' perceptions of the impact of the demonstration strategy. The topic is leadership. In a sense, the topic leadership is

basic to all the preceding topics since demonstration as a leadership strategy caused the impact in concept internalization, program improvement, and accountability. Although leadership is integral and basic to all the other topics it is also a separate topic since the principals claim that demonstration helped them and me be better leaders.

Leadership

So far, we have looked at the impact of the strategy on schools and have gained the principals' perceptions about improvements made or being made in concept internalization, program improvement, and accountability. On that basis alone it can be concluded that the demonstration strategy as a leadership initiative has made a positive difference and is worthy of further development and use. However, consideration of the principals' direct comments on the strategy's impact on leadership is useful to the study. The balance of this section outlines what the principals said about leadership.

The principals said that the direction and focus of the demonstration strategy was leadership since it provided vision, purpose, clarity of what's important, and knowledge. They said: "I think it helped focus people"; "It almost forced people to look at where children were and I believe this took them further"; "I think I was generally focused before but I never verbalized it before and this was a way to

help me see the steps that were necessary"; and "It's a way to show that we care that each child is learning. It's a way to show that we care that the teacher looks at the curriculum. It's a way to show that we care that there's growth."

Regarding the provision of knowledge, the data shows that the principals perceived the strategy to be leadership because the demonstration concept had credibility. They said "it made sense" and that "it was practical." It is also evident in the data that another important factor to the principals in accepting Area level leadership is that the leader is credible. For example, one principal said:

> I think partly why you could do it is you have a curriculum background. I think knowing the curriculum is important to be an associate, and with your background you've credibility. Because of that when you talk curriculum and when you talk about the three spokes on the wheel, you have credibility. People listen to you.

Another impact identified by principals as being effective leadership was the development of a culture conducive to principals and teachers feeling a vital part of the action. One component of this culture, according to the principals, is feeling ownership for the initiative. One principal said, "It was done very, very well. You got us to buy in. You were always doing things that made us feel that we were part of it and it was coming from us."

Also important in the culture is allowance for risk-taking. One principal said, "I always felt it was okay to make a mistake. I always felt cared for." Another principal said, "I think you were very accepting of what they [teachers

in demonstration sessions] had to say and you were always very positive in terms of what they had to share."

Another element of leadership culture identified by the principals may best be labelled as hands-on leadership. The principals indicated that it was important to the strategy's impact that I was perceived as part of the team working toward what's good for schools, teachers, and students. The principals said:

> The staff to this day talk about the fact that they knew you -- that they know you as a person makes a big difference. Is it the associate just saying that we better do something, or is it the associate working with us to be better?

> You know there are different ways you [an associate superintendent] can meet with teachers. You can sort of stroll through their classrooms, but you sat down and did a demonstration with them. How many teachers get to personally sit down with the associate and do something? This thing really made teachers feel good about what they are doing.

> The teachers who worked directly with you had high respect for what you were doing -- how kid oriented you are. The teachers really liked that.

> It [the demonstration strategy] certainly adds a certain amount of respect to the whole situation of associate superintendents of schools. It says that you have the time and that you are willing to listen. And schools feel really good cause they have an opportunity to share things that they may be doing that might not be recognized through a visit.

Another element of the culture for leadership, according to principals, is respectful treatment of individuals. This has already been touched on, but in addition, principals noted

that it was important to do a "good introduction and lead in" and to invite participation. One principal recalled my words, "If you would like to do it [a demonstration], that would be wonderful!" Also in regard to fair treatment, one principal indicated that I had been "open and upfront with principals." Still another important element is that of building on strengths and recognizing incremental progress. One principal said, "You always paid tribute to what it was they [teachers] highlighted. And I think they felt great."

Finally, the data indicate that the principals perceived the matter of having high expectations as vital to leadership. They said:

> I never heard anything negative about demonstrating growth. I think that one was really well-accepted. You are probably one of the most demanding associates I ever worked for. By making demands on me and having high expectations and me meeting those -- under your leadership, I discovered I was a good principal.

> I like those kinds of high expectations. I find them challenging. If the associate is willing to come out and listen to us at our school, and give us feedback on the kinds of things that we are doing, isn't this just another indicator of the importance of the work we do at schools? So your coming out, for me, was a challenge to begin with -- a vehicle . . . an opportunity to share. [About] my level of risk-taking -- [I was] feeling comfortable with you [and] your talking to us as principals, and me saying, 'But I know this is going to be positive.' And the way you communicated it to me, and I was able to share with staff. I think that provided the comfort base.

> Your expectations were, if you like, not something that made me apprehensive. It made me more aware that there's better ways to communicate learning. It just focused me more on getting to be sure that the kids were working -- that every kid was growing.

> I think most of your expectations for me, like I think that's why I feel so good about your leadership -- it gets me moving, and it's no different than any other expectation you had for me -- I thought it was really a good thing and that right from the start we all talked about being for children. It's a good thing to get someone moving in that way. I felt we had to do it well because you had high expectations and you're not afraid to sit someone down and say this isn't good enough.

In regard to the principals' perceptions of impact on their effectiveness in providing leadership, the data show that they became more involved in curriculum and instruction matters, and according to them this made a positive difference to program improvement and accountability. The pride they expressed regarding their perceptions of positive developments by teachers and students, indicates that they had involvement and felt ownership and success. One principal's description sums up well that which the principals indicated:

> It's an affirmation of growth for everyone involved, including myself, and I feel good that my teachers are doing a good job, that the kids are learning, and the parents love it. That's it in a nutshell. It's a super thing to do.

According to the principals, leadership occurred; however, not without overcoming challenge, the topic of the next section.

Challenges of the Strategy

In response to the research question regarding what

aspect of the demonstration strategy had been the most challenging for the principal, and also for the teachers, the principals' responses were unanimous. All the principals found their greatest challenge to be that of involving teachers and dealing with teacher apprehension. One principal also expressed that her own concept internalization was a challenge; that is, in being able to visualize clearly what would occur at the teacher and student levels when there is a focus on growth and demonstration. The greatest challenge for the teachers, according to the principals, was understanding what was expected, coping with a new expectation, and fear of not satisfying the associate superintendent's expectations.

The principals described that first there was the challenge of getting the process started. As one principal said:

> We [he and the assistant principal] started to ask people to do demonstrations and at first they didn't know what was expected of them. You could talk to them [provide explanation] but there was still, "Oh, no, the boss is coming!" But it went over well. Now it's no big deal.

Another principal recalled her conversation with teachers before the first demonstration that I attended at the school. Seeking clarification, the teachers asked, "You want me to do what?" and the principal responded:

> I want you to have the kids show Ruth that they have learned something in your class. You know they have. And they said, "Yes, I do know that." Well, then now what we've got to do is demonstrate that in whatever way you want, and we brainstormed some ideas.

One principal said that teachers wanted "dress rehearsals" to reduce their anxiety. Another principal described "practice sessions" so teachers could feel confident that "they were going to be successful." Another principal said the risk felt by teachers was "sitting down with the associate [and] talking to the associate about what you are doing in your classroom -- 'What if she doesn't like the way you are doing it?'" Still another principal described that "They [teachers] weren't exactly sure what the expectation was and when I [the principal] would meet with them I always would bring them back to, 'Can you see that the child has actually grown?'" In addition, according to another principal, the teachers were also fearful of the risk of investigating learning -- what if "the child hasn't grown under your care?"

An additional point of anxiety for the teachers, as perceived by the principals, was the challenge of identifying data to substantiate their judgements. One principal said that "people thought they didn't have [the data]. The initial reaction was, you are asking me for something new. Then they started to collect writing samples and people felt comfortable collecting that data and that's what they use." Another principal described the challenge regarding data collection as:

> the actual, physical fact of remembering to keep a piece of work and putting it away. All too often you'll [the teacher will] look at a piece of work, put a mark on it, and it's done -- times up. It gets thrown out or lost, and if you don't be careful at the end of the year, you have nothing to compare.

The principals' desire for expansion of involvement beyond the keen teachers was also identified as a challenge. "It was to try to get it to develop into something more than just with some people -- a total school focus." Another principal described that right from the beginning he wanted to "impact a greater number of people, rather than just picking one child and one teacher," so he and his staff came up with alternate models and teachers became readily involved. Other principals described systems they used to expand involvement, for example, planning teams, coaching teams, debriefing sessions, in-school sample demonstrations, and use of demonstrations as part of the teacher performance evaluation process.

To this point in the chapter what has been reported are the principals' perceptions of the impact of the demonstration strategy on their schools. The next section examines the principals' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the processes used by them and me in impacting the schools.

Effectiveness of Implementation Processes

A review of the principals' perceptions about the processes used in leading the demonstration strategy through development and implementation provides additional insight into the study. The primary interest in this section is in learning from the positive experience that the principals

perceived the demonstration initiative to have been. There are nine themes suggested by the principals' comments about the nature, types, and effectiveness of processes, and each is discussed below.

Area/District Influence

There is evidence in the data to show that leadership from the area/district had a positive influence on school performance. According to the principals, the school improvements that they observed can be attributed, at least in part, to the initiation and nurturing of the demonstration strategy at the Area-level. As shown in earlier sections, the principals perceived that Area-level leadership gave them incentive, courage, and knowledge, which in turn helped them initiate and carry out improvements at their schools. One principal described the practical significance of the Area initiative as:

> The good news for me was I was able to say to staff that this was our area initiative, focus, perspective. I wasn't just asking them to do these things just because I had a bee in my bonnet, but because our associate felt it was important. Also our district believed that talking about student growth was a valuable activity.

A focus initiated at the area/district level can "reinforce the work of schools" was the claim of one principal. Another principal said, "It [the demonstration strategy] allows you to take your staff, focus them, and make sure you have an initiative together, talk a common language, do a common activity that is going to be for the benefit of

kids." Further, recognizing the value of common purpose on a larger scale, another principal said, "It helped us team build in Area 2."

Why area influence worked, as perceived by the principals, can be understood by acknowledging a number of contributing factors -- the content of the following eight themes.

Focus -- The Right Focus

The importance of focus (direction and purpose) was acknowledged by all of the principals. Some of them emphasized that in addition to there being a focus, the focus had to be "a right focus." Descriptors used by the principals to specify desirable characteristics of a right focus for schools were: "child-centred," "for kids," "for teachers," and basically, for assisting schools in "achieving their purpose." Several principals stated that the demonstration strategy was the right focus since it was on the key matters, the main purpose of schools. One principal marvelled that: "It's so basic. It's so simple because it's what education is all about, but never before have we asked that question [Can you show that students are learning?]."

According to the principals' comments, a right focus helps schools understand more clearly the challenging functions for which they have responsibility, and helps them develop better processes and the knowledge needed for

performing these functions. One principal noted the importance of a focus addressing "abstractness, and bringing that to a concrete level." Another indicator of a strong focus as noted repeatedly by all the principals is that it causes participants to "feel well." They gave numerous examples to show that demonstrations helped students, teachers, parents, and themselves feel accomplished, confident, and optimistic. This latter point seems to be the principals' primary explanation for why the demonstration strategy worked.

Invitational and Incremental

The data support two key implementation mottos that were introduced at the first principal Advance (at which there were also teachers) in 1988. The first of these mottos was that participation in the demonstration strategy be invitational. My premise at the time had been that the strategy must sell itself, that it must not be imposed upon staff, and that it must be developed with teachers. An underlying assumption was that if the concept is worthy then teachers will see benefits for their students and themselves, and will want to participate. Such a motto was not to discourage principals from initiating interest and eliciting participation but to encourage them to do so cautiously, working first with teachers who expressed interest.

This idea led to the second motto, an incremental

approach, or as it was sometimes called in the early stages, a broken-front approach. The intent was to start simply, with matters that are manageable and with people who are ready, and then expand and develop over time. Self-talk recalled by one of the principals exemplifies the idea of progressive development. He recalled, "I've got to keep it simple. I've got to keep it user friendly." He also said:

> The first stages of it were really good. I don't remember how you got us to buy into it. I just remember that I bought in big time. Then [in the third year] we needed to make it more sophisticated, and do it better.

Similarly, another principal described his leadership role as "to encourage staff to all be on board at their own level of comfort and to assist, advise, and lower fears."

Open-Ended

The principals' reports indicate that over time they came to appreciate the open-ended nature of the demonstration task. I had not presented principals with particular processes for performing demonstrations but instead I encouraged them to decide what they wanted to demonstrate and how. I had assured them that I would view each of their approaches as an opportunity to celebrate their successes. Several of the principals shared that in the beginning there were times when they wished that I would have told them how to do it. One principal said:

> I know for awhile I was sort of looking for -- just tell me what you want, Ruth. Give me some kind of little formula. And it was a little frustrating not to have it,

> but certainly you could see the value [of an open-ended approach] cause then you're not sort of coming away with everybody doing it the same way. [Later], I thought that [flexibility] was kind of neat cause it allowed you [the principal] to get together with your staff and really talk about it and sort of delve into what is it we are going to do that is going to show that this child has learned. Thought had to go into [it] -- the creativity, and the thinking and analyzing.

There is evidence in the data that principals adopted the concept of open-endedness in their leadership. One principal said:

> They [the teachers] weren't sure of the rules. But neither you nor I wanted to set rules. We wanted to give them autonomy to choose their way. Giving them that freedom meant that we saw different ways to do it. Daniel's [pseudonym] [demonstration] will stick in my memory forever. That had a lasting effect on me.

Teamwork

The benefits of sharing expertise and the success of the demonstration strategy as an Area initiative in team-building were emphasized by all the principals. In particular, they highlighted three subtopics related to teamwork: improved relationships, teachers as leaders, and K-12 groupings.

Improved Relationships

The principals gave examples of the increased involvement of all stakeholders in reviewing curriculum goals and student progress. This reviewing, either in small groups or as partners, was an opportunity for teamwork and, according to the principals, resulted in improved relationships. In reference to the kinds of conversations teachers and students

have as they identify and celebrate growth as a normal course of a day's events, a principal said, "I think that certainly enhances a relationship between a teacher and a student!"

Another principal said, "It enhanced relationships between principals because all those who did demonstrations had a sense of pride, just like the teachers did and the kids did." Another principal said, "Teachers and principals now had a purpose to talk about curriculum." He also explained that after doing demonstrations, "I think they [teachers] feel much more comfortable about this person [the principal] dropping into a classroom, so I think that relationship has strengthened."

The principals described that teacher relationships improved as well, both within a school and among schools. Problem-solving in meeting the demonstration challenge led to discussion and idea-sharing. Area-level sessions at which sample demonstrations were done, brought teachers together and often resulted in follow-up contact like intervisitations, phone calls, and sending each other information.

Perhaps most significant is the increased teaming within schools. The findings show staffs involved in teamwork as they planned, debriefed, and evaluated demonstration sessions. One principal said, "With my five teachers who got on board [first], it tightened, it strengthened their relationship. They supported each other." The principal explained further that they would "sit and talk -- 'Well, how did the

demonstration go?'" Then other staff would see them in the staff room and would become involved. Several principals mentioned the expansion of involvement through staffroom interaction.

Some of the principals spoke of increased parent involvement. They shared examples of discussion among staff and parents about the concept of growth and ways to show it. They also shared examples of parent participation in demonstrations and parent reactions to the new experience. One principal explained that at first parents were anxious about why their child was going to the principal's office, and then with the principal's explanation they became "highly supportive of the principal and associate superintendent's interest in student growth." Another principal indicated initial parent anxiety regarding the inclusion of students in parent-teacher conferences. This principal shared with pride, how amazed parents were when they saw their children performing key roles in demonstrations.

The principals perceived that relationships with the associate superintendent improved, too. One principal commended the "staff-associate liaison" that developed at her school. Another spoke of the development of "friendships," noting especially the associate superintendent's continued communication with a high school student now away in college. Some principals stated that staff viewed my involvement as an indication of interest and caring. For example, one principal

said, "It was beneficial in terms of the reputation the teachers attributed to you, as this is a person who cares about learning -- kids learning."

Teachers as Leaders

It can be concluded from the data that the principals are unanimously committed to having teachers as partners in innovation and as co-leaders. Unlike the traditional practice of principals returning to the school with news of an Area/district request for improvement, this time teachers were present at the initiating function, a two-day Advance. Each principal had brought along a teacher to assist them in assessing school needs, and developing appropriate approaches for introducing the demonstration concept and involving teachers back at the school.

The data show that the principals found key teacher involvement to be even more vital at the school when discussions began with the other teachers. They shared examples of roles that had been performed by key teachers: sample demonstrations for staff to discuss, modelling of new classroom processes related to a focus on growth, and facilitation of positive staffroom talk. The principals claim that as more teachers became involved, more of them became coaches and models -- leaders.

All the principals attributed progress made in demonstration to the leadership of individual teachers, some

of whom had been to Advances, and others who developed enthusiasm at school-level professional development functions. One principal explained that teacher involvement from the beginning of the concept "contributed to a positive feeling," and was important to creating "staff ownership." She added, "I don't think anyone on my staff felt negative towards it or felt it was being imposed."

K-12 Groupings

Although only one of the principals spoke to this topic, the statements made were emphatic. When asked at the end of the interview to add any additional points considered to be important to the study, the principal said:

> I just think that having a focus that extends from K-12 is tremendously important whether that be demonstrating student learning, or any other focus. I think that we have to get people to work together and to really benefit from each other's strengths.

Earlier in the interview when asked about the strategy's impact on me, the same principal said:

> I think you would have realized that there are far more similarities among elementary, and senior high schools than differences, and we all have something to contribute. We all have something to learn from this whole process. I think you would have realized that the whole focus on K-12 is a lot better focus than K-6, 7-9, and 10-12.

Continuity

The principals raised continuity as an important factor in the success of the demonstration strategy. Several of the

principals emphasized that the long-term plan for development and implementation was vital to schools being able to make improvements. For example, one principal said, "The third year was great -- we did it all at that point!" Another principal indicated that he and his staff needed time to let ideas "percolate." He indicated further:

> By keeping it [the initiative for demonstration] pretty well in the same direction for three years, instead of jumping from various ideas, we were working in that way. You knew what was going on and we knew where we had to go.

Similarly, another principal noted that, "It lasted for a period of time, which gave you [the implementors] an opportunity to get more than just a little into it."

Another principal emphasized the importance of having continuity in staffing from year to year in order to make significant school improvements. She described the additional challenge in implementing the demonstration concept school-wide since each year her school lost key teachers to other district positions. The principal expressed, "I felt almost set back -- it was like starting over again. It just didn't go as far as I guess, it could have gone if in fact we could have built on the core that we had started."

A second type of continuity noted by the principals was continuity of learning as one of the benefits of the demonstration strategy. This point is well-explained by one principal's claim that there was:

> more work in terms of continuity of learning -- more work in terms of knowing kids in relation to curriculum --

where they are at precisely [and] meeting the needs of all students -- taking a child from where they are at and bringing them along as far as you can in any given year.

Integratedness

This characteristic was alluded to in the theme, Focus - The Right Focus but deserves independent acknowledgement. One principal indicated appreciation for the integrated nature of the strategy in not being an "add on" -- for fitting into the existing responsibilities and "helping to do them better." The principals expressed satisfaction that the strategy helped develop many dimensions of their work. They noted the interrelatedness of all the spokes on the wheel (all the dimensions of program). One principal said that improvement was "made all around [the wheel]." Another principal noted that at the same time as helping the schools' improve program, the strategy assisted principals in doing a better job of program supervision and leadership. [In fact the latter improvement would have facilitated the former improvement.]

To conclude the chapter, following the reports on principal perceptions of concept internalization, program improvement, and effectiveness of processes, is an outline of the involvement of Area 2 in the demonstration strategy in 1991-92.

Involvement with the Strategy in 1991-92

The data for this section include the perceptions of the seven principals interviewed in November and December, 1991 and the additional principal interviewed in April, 1992. The question pursued is, whether the strategy has persisted since I, the initiator of the concept, left on professional leave. The answer is important as an another indicator of the principals' value of the strategy.

The interviews show that the strategy has continued at the schools and at the Area level. The principals indicated that the key developments in 1991-92 are the use and preparation of portfolios and involvement of more teachers. Demonstrations are occurring and are being used for four purposes at the school-level, as reported by the principals. One use is for communicating with parents. Although some schools began using a focus on growth and elements of demonstration in reporting to parents as early as the first year of the strategy, the topic was scheduled for more intensive study in 1991-92 and has occurred as intended. Several of the principals spoke of changes that their schools have made or are making to reporting practices. For example, one principal said, "Every parent-teacher conference this year involved a demonstration with a student." Another principal explained that the report cards were being revised again this year, changing as the other dimensions of program change.

Another principal shared that the plan for Education Week is for "unassisted child demonstrations of learning. All over the school, children will be going through their portfolios with their parents and doing it in a more sophisticated way than just, 'This is what I did.'"

A second use reported by two principals was in providing opportunities for non-parent community members to be knowledgeable of the success of schools in preparing students for society. One of the principals reported that his school was continuing to host the group demonstrations that they had started in the second year. For example, he explained, the plan for 1991-92 is to host 6-8 demonstrations for audiences of approximately 12-15 guests, including the parents, "V.I.P.s from the education field" and "V.I.P.s from the community" [who do not have children in the school]. Another principal explained that her school is developing a similar concept for including community members.

A third use is for teacher performance evaluation. This use was identified by six of the eight principals. One principal said, "Everybody is now doing two learning demonstrations for me [the principal] each year. It's part of the culture here." As shared in earlier sections, the principals reported that through demonstrations, they have become more informed about the curriculum and how well their school is performing.

A fourth use has been in the provision of sample

demonstrations as a means for teaching the concept to other principals and teachers, that is, as a professional development activity. Sample demonstrations were held at both the Area and school levels. Regarding the latter, one of the principals described a leadership session that she was soon to host at her school. At this session two teachers would be presenting sample demonstrations for the staff to study and discuss. Also, several principals mentioned that they had shown the Edmonton Public Schools 1990 videotape, Student Growth to their staffs for discussion as well. The videotape consists of clips of demonstrations performed in 1990.

At the Area level, two major functions were hosted by the associate superintendent in 1991-92. The first was a two-day Advance in October, 1991 at which principals and teachers worked together to develop improved communication with parents. The second function, called Celebration, occurred in April, 1992 and brought together approximately 230 teachers from the Area to observe and discuss three sample demonstrations that were performed by other Area 2 teachers. The Celebration function also provided small group discussion sessions in which teachers and principals gathered to share approaches and discuss challenges on a number of topics: portfolios, progress reports, conference processes, demonstrations, goal-setting, learning logs, and communicating student growth between teachers and schools. The associate superintendent has not requested that he be invited to one

demonstration per school this year. However, he does attend eagerly if he is invited.

Summary of the Findings:

Is Demonstrating Student Growth, as a Leadership Strategy, Effective in Impacting School Improvement and Accountability?

The findings suggest that progress was made in school improvement and accountability in the three years. However, at the same time, it is advisable to keep in mind the words of one of the principals, "I'm one of these people who buys into the concept that change takes a long time in education, and so I think that eventually it will have major impacts." Indeed, the strategy, if worthwhile will persist over the years and only then will the lasting and ultimate effects be realized. Nevertheless, in the meantime, the advancements made, as perceived by the principals, must not be underestimated in terms of their significance, especially as the first steps in some fairly major changes.

In summary, the principals perceived that they and the teachers involved in the strategy developed:

- new concepts that are vital to effective schooling, such as growth, demonstration, and assessment in relation to the curriculum.

- more knowledge of the curriculum due to a need to set goals for monitoring student progress.

- more of a results-focus, that is, ensuring that content and processes are appropriate to a student's interests and learning needs, and that learning is occurring.

- more and better assessment practices with renewed respect for teacher judgement using pre-set criteria and portfolio assessment.

- more and better strategies for involving students and parents in the teaching-learning process.

- strategies for demonstrating student growth using broader assessment practices and sound teacher judgement substantiated by convincing data.

The principals perceived that they and the associate superintendent were doing a better job of: (a) program supervision, in knowing what is happening in the school and classrooms, (b) leadership, in taking initiative for school improvement, and (c) demonstrating accountability. Also evident from the data is that principals' perceive that there is much more to be done, and yet they feel accomplished, and confident that they are on the right track.

The data are plentiful and consistent in supporting the premises that leadership was provided, the focus on growth was a right focus, the demonstration concept increased motivation and accountability, development and implementation processes were generally well-received and enabling, and improvements took place. Therefore, as perceived by the principals, demonstrating student growth as it occurred in Area 2 from 1988-92, can be viewed as a leadership strategy that was effective in impacting school improvement and accountability.

Following a demonstration of student growth principal Bob Fletcher, teacher Nancy Wilson, and students Samanatha and Nohad, pose proudly.

Chapter 5

INTERPRETATION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND REFLECTIONS

The intent of a discussion of the findings, the first part of this chapter, is to develop an understanding of the principals' perceptions upon which to draw conclusions and identify implications. The discussion provides explanation, using my perceptions as the researcher and also as the associate superintendent involved in the first three years of the strategy.

The conclusions section proposes that the study identified "breakthrough" (Juran, 1964, p. 2) -- change that had been desired for some time. An underlying premise is that this breakthrough occurred at least in part due to the demonstration strategy. Examples of breakthrough are examined and reference is made to the literature to explain and support the findings. Following the conclusions section are the implications for practitioners and researchers, and finally my personal reflections on the demonstration experience and the study.

Interpretation of the Findings

An interpretation of the principals' perceptions is presented as a discussion of five key findings that summarize the major points of the data. These key findings are

described below:

Demonstrating Student Growth: A Leadership Strategy with a Worthy Purpose

First, the principals' responses to the research questions indicate that they perceive the demonstrating student growth initiative to be a leadership strategy. All of them readily described the strategy, defined its purpose (perceptions were not identical but were similar and basically consistent with mine), and outlined it impact on their schools, Area 2, and the associate superintendent. Second, the data show that the principals found the intents of the strategy to be worthy. Their responses indicate that from the beginning, they identified with the goals being targeted: improved program (for better student results) and accountability. At the time, schools were anticipating increased public demand as reverberations from the A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) continued to set a tone of a lack of confidence in schools. Poor results from literacy surveys being conducted by the media and other external organizations, plus reports from business and post-secondary institutions regarding the lack of competence shown by some graduates, added to the pressures being felt by schools.

As the economy declined and the competition for limited resources intensified, schools became increasingly cognizant

of delivering a "return on investment" (Corporate-Higher Education Forum, 1990, p. 11). The principals were feeling responsibility for taking initiative in gaining increased public support. Accordingly, they were good listeners and eager for school improvement. In consideration of the demonstration strategy, one principal said it "sounded promising" and another said it sounded "right for kids."

Also at the time, many of the principals were dissatisfied with their reporting systems. In some cases their schools had struggled through report card revisions but were less than satisfied with the outcome. In other cases, they recognized the need for revisions and were dreading what they anticipated would be a lonely struggle, without much proven evidence available on what improvements to make.

The principals and key teachers were open to my suggestion that answers to the challenges for improvement and accountability may best be developed by school-level experts -- principals and teachers -- specific to their situations and as an integral part of the teaching-learning process. I suggested further, that if we formed an Area 2 leadership team, we could solve problems together and share expertise and experiences.

Another contributing factor to the principals' willingness to try the demonstration initiative may be, as one of the principals said, that I was perceived as a leader

in curriculum and instruction. He said: "I think knowing the curriculum is important to being an associate, and with your background you have credibility -- because of that . . . people listen to you." There seems to have been some trust among the principals that I may be able to help them with their challenges. Further, the data show that the principals had been able to visualize benefits to students and teachers, and due to their strong commitment to the well-being of students and teachers, also evident in the data, they were willing to risk and initiate change.

It should be noted that not all the principals were equally enthusiastic or comfortable; for example, some of them needed clarification and guidance while others wanted freedom to create. To my knowledge, none of the principals showed resistance. This was also the observation of a least one of the principals who said, "Nothing negative was ever said about it [the demonstration strategy]." I anticipate that most of the principals experienced anxiety at times, similar to that which they described as having existed for teachers: "What's expected by the associate superintendent?" and "Can I do it?" Further, I was new as their associate superintendent and for the less risk-taking type of individuals, there must have been question about how much to trust or have confidence in me.

Nevertheless, the principals were ready for fresh thinking, new perspectives, new approaches, and a greater connection among the dimensions of program as described

using the spokes of the teaching-learning wheel (Figure 1, p. 4). In summary, the data show that the principals saw the demonstration concept as a leadership strategy with a worthy purpose -- worthy enough that they were willing to get involved with its development and implementation.

The Concept of Growth: A Vital Factor in the Strategy's Success.

All the principals praised the concept of focusing on growth. Although some of them credited the demonstration strategy for initiating the idea in the district, in fact, the concept was already being used by the Curriculum and Assessment departments. No doubt though, since the purpose of demonstration is to show growth, the strategy greatly enhanced understanding and use of the concept.

A challenge emphasized by the principals was that of understanding what it means to identify growth and assess performance in relation to the curriculum. It is my belief that over the years this challenge has been left almost entirely to teachers to understand and perform. It has not been a vital and clear part of teacher preparation and inservice programs, an observation verified by research at the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory in Portland, Oregon. Reporting on that research, Stiggins (1988) states that "teachers are neither trained nor prepared to face the rigorous demands of classroom assessment" (p. 365). Perhaps

this explains why the principals perceived that identifying student growth and assessing performance in relation to curriculum expectations was new to schools.

That principals had difficulty getting teachers to remove the plastic wrappers from the newly developed district interpretations of the provincial curriculum (in the form of outcomes, expectations, and indicators) was not a surprise to me. I knew from previous experience in consulting services that there was often little productivity in simply delivering the packages of curriculum because such massive stacks of paper (as they usually are) are not approachable, especially to busy teachers. Teachers need a meaningful purpose for examining curriculum.

The principals indicated that "teachers now had a purpose to look at the outcomes, expectations, and indicators." (So did the principals and associate superintendent.) They said that in preparation for demonstrations the teachers worked with the curriculum "like never before." With specific students in mind, teachers were setting appropriate expectations, designing suitable learning strategies, and monitoring progress. The activity of comparing samples of performance by individual students was also described as a new perspective, or as one principal said, "a new way of looking at kids." I believe that the ideas of identifying growth and assessing level and quality of performance were not entirely new to the principals and teachers -- what was new was my

expectation for clear evidence of growth in the form of demonstration sessions.

There were four other developments mentioned by principals as having occurred because of a focus on growth:

~ Principals and teachers began looking for ways other than testing for identifying growth. They soon started to expand assessment into areas either not well-assessed previously, or not assessed at all, such as curriculum expectations related to attitude, social and emotional development. They became interested in ideas I had gained from a course by Richard Stiggins, Director, Centre for Classroom Assessment, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon. One of Stiggins'(1987) ideas is that of re-valuing teacher judgement by making it more sound -- using pre-set criteria for observation and student work samples to substantiate judgements.

The Area 2 version of Stiggins' (1987) concept of performance assessment blue-prints was mentioned by one of the principals. (A blue-print is used to guide teachers in developing assessment plans.) Most likely, the concept was not adopted by most of the schools since it needed more development to be approachable and viewed as a ready solution for teacher assessment needs. A related activity that was not mentioned by any of the principals and also needing more development is one recommended by Arter and Spandel (1991).

Their recommendation is that students be involved in the design of performance criteria so they become knowledgeable of indicators of good performance. Arter and Spandel claim that ultimately there is a positive impact upon student learning.

- Staffs and parents developed increased understanding through the many discussions that took place about how to show growth. For example, one breakthrough was in clarifying the meaning of the various forms of marks and grades. One principal indicated that some "old traditions" were addressed and new perspectives developed.

- Another outcome of the focus on growth was improved record-keeping. The principals indicated that teachers quickly began to collect samples of student work so they could make comparisons and determine if learning was occurring. One principal said, "It was the beginning of portfolios." At most schools student work files were already being kept by some teachers; however, indications are that many more teachers became involved. The concept of portfolios assisted even those already using files to improve their systems. Nevertheless, as indicated by the principals there is much more to be accomplished in portfolio development.

- There is one additional contribution of the growth focus

that was identified by the principals -- the benefits of building on success. All of the principals expressed that participants of demonstrations "leave the sessions feeling good" about themselves. A couple of principals noted that when you emphasize individual growth and reduce the focus on comparisons among students, then all students can experience success.

The Concept of Demonstration: A Vital Factor in the Strategy's Success.

After reviewing the extent of impact that the concept of growth had on school improvement, one may wonder if the act of demonstration served any purpose. Should the strategy have been simply one of focusing on growth with no mind to demonstration? The data show that the principals believed that the demonstration activity itself was important. They stated that the request for demonstrations made "people accountable" and in particular they talked about teacher accountability. One principal recognized that one of my motives in initiating the strategy was "in making principals accountable through demonstration." This principal described his perceptions of my thinking: "If the accountability was there that they [the principals] would put an effort in, in the direction you wanted us to head . . . in doing a better job." He went on to explain that I believed that "we had to do a better job in working with our community, like private

schools." This principal was insightful -- the others likely were, too.

My observation is that the request for demonstrations did increase principal accountability. The extent and quality of development and improvement varied from principal to principal and situation to situation. However, all of the principals provided me with effective demonstration sessions and I did become more knowledgeable about each school.

The concept of demonstration as a means to fulfilling accountability obligations to stakeholders was also a motive. Darling-Hammond (1989) expresses well my thinking at the time when she says that gone are the days

> when schoolteachers were so respected in their office that anything within the schoolroom walls was accepted as the rightful and unquestioned prerogative of school officials. A more highly educated populace has greater expectations of schools, and a more knowledge-oriented economy raises both the costs and benefits of school success or failure. Today schools are being held accountable by politicians, the general public, and parents for results they should be expected to produce. (p. 59)

I knew that principals and teachers would have to be articulate in order to present convincing evidence of school success.

There was also a second reason for becoming more articulate about student growth, and this reason centers on my primary motive for initiating the demonstration concept. I believed that articulation would help principals and teachers develop a higher level of understanding about the curriculum and student growth in relation to it. I sensed that what was

needed were authentic opportunities for practicing descriptions of growth. I envisioned that ultimately such clarity would assist teachers in providing more effective programs and student results would improve. It is my observation from the data and the demonstrations that I attended that participants did develop more sophisticated understandings of the curriculum and students' learning in relation to it. Continued efforts will, of course, bring even more improvement.

Wiggins (1989) describes one other purpose for the demonstration concept when he asks, "What is a true test?" (p. 703). He states that "authentic and equitable assessment" are needed, and he proposes "a radical answer in the sense of a return to the roots; we have lost sight of the fact that a true test of intellectual ability requires the performance of exemplary tasks" (p. 703). The demonstration strategy captures this same realization -- that the best way to know about performance is to see performance. Performance can take many forms but, as Wiggins emphasizes,

> authentic assessments replicate the challenges and standards of performance that typically face writers, businesspeople, scientists, community leaders, designers, or historians. These include writing essays and reports, conducting individual and group research, designing proposals and mock-ups, assembling portfolios, and so on. . . . Evaluation is most accurate and equitable when it entails human judgement and dialogue, so that the person tested can ask for clarification of questions and explain his or her answers. . . . It reveals achievement on the essentials, even if they are not easily quantified. In other words, an authentic test not only reveals student achievement to the examiner, but also reveals to the test-taker the actual challenges and

standards of the field. (p. 704)

The demonstration strategy generates benefits of the nature Wiggins describes. These benefits occur at two levels, for: (a) the students when they demonstrate their performance in authentic ways in a session the principal has organized for me, and (b) the principals and teachers since they, too, are demonstrating their performance in authentic ways -- through the students' growth. In both cases, I get valuable information (like Wiggins, I think, the best kind of information) and the performers accomplish further learning through articulation (not mentioned by Wiggins) and by learning what is important -- the "challenges and standards of the field" (Wiggins, 1989, p. 704).

The Positive Impact of the Demonstration Strategy

The principals gave numerous examples of how their schools developed in acquiring a focus on growth and delivering on demonstration. I witnessed firsthand the product of their efforts in the many demonstrations that I had the pleasure of experiencing over the three years. I also learned about their struggles because sometimes they told me about them. In addition, I observed their feelings of accomplishment as they performed in ways that they, too, recognized as progressive. Like the principals, I am convinced that those who participated, benefitted. Also like the principals, I recognize that as yet, there are many more

students, teachers, and stakeholders to be reached.

The continued involvement of the schools this year is encouraging and not a surprise. Indications are that this year's efforts have resulted in more teachers becoming involved. Also, processes like the use of portfolios, demonstrations for parents, writing progress reports, goal-setting, and learning logs, have been further developed. In addition, a new topic is being explored: that of communicating about student growth between schools. This is a common and important issue when students transfer from one school to another or move from one level of schooling to the next.

Another point to note about this year's operation is that the current associate superintendent has not requested that schools perform a demonstration for him. This study did not intend to examine this year's activities except to identify that which happened. However, even though the following questions will remain unanswered, they are worthy of consideration in the process of understanding the findings of this study:

- Will demonstrations continue to occur and develop if the associate superintendent is not requiring them?

- Was my request for demonstrations important to the development stage and of less value to schools in later

stages?

My sense about these matters is that having the schools perform demonstrations for the associate superintendent was vital in motivating staff to take on risks that certainly would have been more easily avoided. This motivation function was useful to schools in the development stages, in helping staffs recognize the significance of demonstration and in having an authentic reason for developing articulation. With years of experience in demonstrating, the external stimuli would become of less significance. However, it would still be important for the associate superintendent to show interest as the current one is.

Although, I can only speculate at this point, I believe that I would have asked principals for a demonstration this year had I remained as their associate superintendent. My motivation would have been three-fold in: (a) showing my continued interest in the concept, (b) continuing to facilitate development, and (c) being knowledgeable and up-to-date about the progress of schools. Indeed at this point, I know of no better means for working with schools than to talk about actual instances of student performance at the school. As was indicated by one principal, "It means that you enjoy your job," and he is right, the demonstrations were a positive experience for me, too.

The impact most strongly emphasized by the principals was that the strategy made people feel good. As an observer at

many sessions, I wholeheartedly agree with their observation. Students and teachers stated that they felt successful. Likewise, the principals and I felt effective -- we had dared to lead and the outcome was positive. I also concur with principal observations about the positive reactions of parents and community members.

The question to be addressed at this point is, if the outcome is so positive then why are all staff members not demanding involvement? The answer, in my opinion, is that the strategy in its initial phases takes considerable effort. The description of what is involved for a teacher to focus on growth and demonstrate it is outlined on page one of this study. The strategy demands a high level of professional performance and does not come with easy-to-follow steps. Most important is that there be a culture conducive to change and to help principals and teachers visualize success with the strategy. Accordingly, effective leadership processes are needed -- the topic of the next section.

Effective Processes in Developing and Implementing the Demonstration Strategy

In responding to the interview questions regarding impact of the strategy, the principals frequently mentioned their perceptions about the effect of particular processes on their and the teachers' development. A strong message in the data is that Area-level influence was perceived by the

principals to have generated teamwork among schools, and among staff members within the schools. The principals said that having a common challenge gave rise to teamwork and they spoke of the importance of building common language and shared understandings. They described the increased credibility that initiatives for change have in schools when there is related district and Area involvement. Also, they stated that the principal is assisted when the associate superintendent shows "what is important." One principal explained that it helped when she could indicate that I was so interested in teachers and students that I was going to participate with them -- come out to the schools and "sit down with them." Several principals indicated that teachers were amazed that they got to know me, as one principal said, "as a real person," and others said, "as someone who really cares about kids." My assessment of these strong comments is that the major difference was the content of our interactions -- they were purposeful and centered on the business of classrooms. The findings of this study are consistent with Coleman and LaRocque's (1990) study of ten school districts in British Columbia. They found that schools had more characteristics of effectiveness when they were in "positive ethos" districts (p. 4); that is, the culture of a district influences the performance of the schools within it. For example, if the district is improvement-oriented, the schools are more likely to be as well.

The "six focuses of administrational and instructional effort" (p. 4) that Coleman and LaRocque (1990) attribute to a positive district ethos summarize well the principals' perceptions of why the demonstration strategy worked. The six focuses are: "paying attention to instructional issues, requiring school accountability, managing change and improvement, eliciting commitment, treating members and clients with consideration, and gaining community support" (p. 4). To follow is a review of the principals' perceptions about process in relation to each of Coleman and LaRocque's six focuses:

Paying attention to instructional issues. As described in Chapter 4 in the findings, the principals believe that a strength of the demonstration strategy is that it provides a leadership focus, and most importantly, a "right focus." The focus is on the primary purpose of schools -- student growth, and according to the principals, this focus helped them achieve the mandate more effectively. The principals also praised the demonstration strategy because it brought district interest and support for the classroom into the schools. They said that my attendance at demonstrations made a difference to teachers.

Requiring school accountability. The principals' perceptions indicate that my request for a demonstration

session once per year for me to know schools increased the motivation and accountability of schools. According to them it showed how important I believed the initiative to be and how committed I was to the concept. They noted that I used my "busy time to come out and sit down with them." The strategy also led to increased awareness of the obligation of schools to provide good service and they became more aware of who their stakeholders are. Principals recognized that not only did they have to give stakeholders reason to be believe that they were getting their money's worth, they had to provide, as Duke and Fenske (1985) say, "more value for the dollar" (p. 12).

Managing change and improvement. The primary purpose of the demonstration strategy was to manage change that is needed, for example, getting teachers to "take the wrappers off the outcomes, expectations, and indicators," to ensure that the curriculum is being taught, and to get better results -- the cry of the times across North America. The public's demands were persistent with a depressed economy and the increased competition of a global market place. New expectations were being put on schools.

Stanley Davis' claim in Future Perfect (1987) is that organizations must change to accommodate external forces and must "learn to manage the beforemath; that is, the consequences of events that have not yet occurred" (p. 4).

From my perception it was questionable that school systems were doing a good job of keeping up, let alone anticipating future needs and being ready for external change yet to occur. It was within this context that the demonstration strategy was conceived. A goal was to create a culture in which principals and teachers would take ownership and initiative for improvement.

Eliciting commitment. A number of principles underlying the approach taken in the demonstration strategy were aimed at eliciting commitment. For example, although I had developed a plan to assist me in visualizing how schools might perform when focusing on growth, as well as what demonstrations could look like, I never fully shared the plan with the principals. My reasons were two-fold and to do with eliciting commitment:

- I wanted staff members to take ownership of the strategy, visualizing, developing, and sharing their perspectives.

- I did not want the strategy to be top-down. I wanted it to benefit by the thinking and experiences of all the participants. Nor did not I want the strategy to be perceived as requirements for change -- change in which staff have little investment, appreciation, or understanding.

There were several mottos that became meaningful for us over the three years and which enhanced commitment and teamwork. They are:

"Our team works!"

Michael A. Strembitsky

"A cooperative endeavor is more powerful than an individual action."

Robert Holmes

"The best that we can be is the best of all of us."

Ruth D. LeBlanc

"None of us is as smart as all of us."

Anonymous

Used periodically, these mottos served as gentle reminders for keeping perspective and staying on course.

Further, the invitational and incremental approaches were also aimed at eliciting commitment. As explained earlier in the study, the idea was to give all staff members information about the growth and demonstration initiatives, and then invite them to participate. The incremental factor was that the principals and I would be satisfied to proceed gradually, working first with those individuals who expressed an interest. At the same time we made available professional development opportunities to develop our own and teachers' understanding and confidence. The principals' perceptions and my observations confirm that generally the invitational and incremental approaches were useful and there are numerous

examples of noteworthy commitment by principals and teachers.

Treating members and clients with consideration. There is much to be said on this topic. First, in regard to the members, the strategy aimed at increasing principal and teacher professionalism. The importance of ownership and development at the school and classroom level to achieve real and lasting change is the point of Roland Barth's book, Improving Schools from Within (1990). Numerous other writers have expounded on the importance of local autonomy for school programs to be relevant, meaningful, and of interest to students and teachers. Examples of these writers are Rosenholtz (1989), Fullan (1991), McNeil (1988), Goodlad (1984), Sizer (1984), and Gardner (1990). These authors have criticised the vast number of impositions that they perceive to have been made on classrooms through the educational reform movement of the late 70s and early 80s. These impositions, according to McNeil (1988), have greatly reduced teacher professionalism and thereby, also negatively impacted the quality of program and school results.

The intent of the demonstration strategy in focusing on student growth is to initiate development at the teacher and student level; this is exactly what is needed for improving program, according to the above-named authors. The data show that teachers and students became increasingly involved in goal-setting, designing processes for achieving growth,

assessing progress, keeping records, monitoring processes, and articulating growth.

The demonstration strategy offered leadership that aimed at a balance of direction and freedom. Direction consisted of defining what's important; showing interest; offering support, encouragement, and recognition; providing professional development opportunities; and monitoring accountability. Freedom consisted of provision of local autonomy -- for key developments to occur in the classroom as an integral part of program.

Ivan Fitzwater's (1984) poem, Only a Teacher?, assisted me at the Advance in the second year, and perhaps the principals later in their schools, to convey recognition of the significance of the teachers' role and the importance that their work be done well. In response to the question of being only a teacher, Fitzwater says from the perspective of a teacher, "The future of the world is in my classroom today, a future with the potential for good or bad. The pliable minds of tomorrow's leaders will be molded either artistically or grotesquely by what I do" (p. 12). By the time the entire poem is shared, teachers tend to be moved by the recognition of their importance. Fitzwater ends the message with, "I must be vigilant every day lest I lose one fragile opportunity to improve tomorrow." The poem is excellent in motivating everyone to contribute wholeheartedly to the teaching profession.

One additional topic to address in regard to member well-being is to acknowledge the abundance of evidence in the data in support of teamwork as a means to improvement. There were several forms of teamwork mentioned by the principals as contributing to the success of the demonstration strategy: Area level, principals and teachers, teachers as leaders, associate superintendent and schools, staff within schools, and staff among schools. Each is discussed below:

- At the Area level (my responsibility), we built a team of all the principals and me to lead the Area. Indeed, the principals and I knew that I had ultimate responsibility, but in order for the Area to be its best we needed the involvement and expertise of the total group. There were approximately five half-day workshops per year at which the principals and I developed new understandings and strategies for leading the demonstration concept into the schools. The use of principal advisory teams, working as representatives of the whole team, was also helpful in developing agendas and processes for the workshops.

- The inclusion of teachers at the Advance sessions has been described in earlier sections but deserves mention again. The principals found the assistance of a key teacher, acting on behalf of the total teaching staff, to be especially helpful in designing strategies for informing and involving

other teachers. The principals indicated that overall, the demonstrations helped them know teachers and their programs better. I concur -- my observation is everyone learned more about curriculum and instruction because the teachers were present. Although the principals did not mention that the teachers also learned more about the roles of principals and the associate superintendent, it is my observation that they did, and that this insight helped them be better advisors to the principals. Another of my observations is that the teaming of teachers, principals, and the associate superintendent reduced barriers that are characteristic of a "we-they syndrome" (Stratton, 1986, p. 105) in hierarchical organizations.

- The concept of teachers as leaders developed as a result of including teachers at the Advance sessions. When the teachers returned to the schools they began modelling and sharing ideas, and coaching other teachers in gentle and thoughtful ways according to the implementation plans that they and the principals had developed. Soon other teachers became involved and after experiencing success, they too, became leaders.

- The principals identified the involvement of the associate superintendent in attending demonstrations and showing interest in classroom level activity, as important to the

"credibility of associates," and to the enthusiasm and motivation of teachers. One principal mentioned that it was also important to the motivation of principals.

- All the principals spoke of vital staff discussion at their schools as teachers worked as a team to understand concepts and develop strategies for focusing on growth and creating demonstrations. The principals described incidents of coaching, modelling, and sharing that occurred among the teachers and with them.

- The principals shared examples of teamwork that occurred among schools, at Area-level functions, and back at the schools as teachers corresponded by phone, made intervisitations, or sent information back and forth via the district truck service.

Regarding the treatment of clients, the data show that students were given significantly more consideration in the teaching-learning process as teachers included them in the focus on growth and demonstration sessions. There is an additional form of teamwork to be acknowledged -- that of teaming with parents and community members, the topic of the next administrative focus.

Gaining community support. The following points have

been made from the data, in regard to the involvement of parents and community members in demonstration sessions:

- parents gained more information and had more meaningful involvement in demonstration sessions. For example, they reviewed portfolios and assisted in goal-setting.

- parent feedback was highly positive, especially when their child articulated and showed growth.

- community members gained more information. In some cases, they indicated that the session had been their only source of direct information about the school.

- community member feedback was highly positive.

The above discussion of the study's findings is summarized further through the provision of conclusions to the study, the topic of the next section.

Conclusions

This study is about "breakthrough" (Juran, 1964, p.2) -- the accomplishment of improvements that have been desired for some time. There are two types of breakthrough that occurred in Area 2 in connection with the demonstration

strategy. One type of breakthrough consists of the improvements that occurred in the Area in connection with the demonstration strategy. Although these changes are new to the Area, they are already documented in the literature and are supported by empirical evidence; for example, the changes made to program by using portfolios, and the leadership processes such as teamwork and Area/district level influence.

The second kind of breakthrough is new to the literature (as well as to the Area); that is, breakthrough supported only by the findings of this study. The use of demonstration of student growth as a leadership strategy for impacting school improvement and accountability is this second type of breakthrough. As indicated in chapter one, elements of the strategy exist in the literature; for example, the concept of performance presented by Wiggins (1989) and discussed on page 169 of this chapter. However, no empirical evidence was found regarding demonstration as a strategy for an administrator to know schools and impact improvement. In light of both types of breakthrough, there are implications to be considered. These are outlined in the next section.

Implications

Upon completion of the study, a number of implications come to mind for practitioners in considering the demonstration strategy itself or the lessons learned from it

regarding processes for change. A number of implications are also apparent for educational research. Both sets of implications are outlined below:

Practitioners

Regarding implications for practitioners, there are five major points to be made:

- The demonstration strategy is worthy of consideration as an approach to school improvement and accountability.

- In light of the benefits to schools when there is district leadership and support for school improvement and accountability, it is recommended that the strategy be developed and implemented from the level of senior administration.

- The experience with the demonstration strategy in Area 2, Edmonton Public Schools, brought insight regarding processes for initiating change. What was learned can be summarized as four considerations for any school administrator implementing change:

The right influence. The findings confirm that leadership from the district level is important in generating progressive schools.

The right matter. The findings indicate that there is strength in an initiative being closely linked to the major purpose of an organization, e.g. for schools -- student growth. If what is desired is improvement of student results then the major action for improvement must be at the classroom level.

The right motivation. The findings indicate that being able to visualize practical benefits and being held accountable, is motivation for meaningful staff participation. Reinforcement with encouragement, recognition, interest, and support by administration (especially senior administration), are additional positive contributors to teacher and principal motivation.

The right processes. The findings indicate that the processes must be thoughtful, or as Coleman and LaRocque (1990) say, considerate -- "treating members and clients with consideration" (p. 4). Trust must be established, and stakeholders must have the opportunity to take ownership of the initiative. As Coleman and LaRocque (1990) say, there must be a "positive ethos" (p. 4).

Researchers

Regarding implications for researchers, the study points to five areas of need for additional research:

Concept development. Two implications for research have been identified, which if developed would enhance practitioner understanding when focusing on student growth and preparing for demonstrations.

- The first implication relates to the concept of growth. A clearer understanding of the concept and its relevance to the teaching-learning process is needed. Basic questions to be explored for understanding beyond that identified in this study are: What does it mean? How is it important to the teaching-learning process? What involvement should teachers, students, and parents have with it? How can it be identified? How can it be recorded?

- The second implication relates to the concept of demonstration. The concept as a leadership strategy should be further studied and developed, to increase its credibility, or if necessary, refute its usefulness. For example, how does the strategy rate when it is used by other associate superintendents, principals, and teachers in other situations? Also, related process questions need further development, for example: What is the potential of demonstration for enhancing the teaching-learning process and accountability? What strategies are effective for what purposes and with which audience?

Assessment. Two implications for research have been identified, which if developed, would greatly assist practitioners in knowing students and knowing their progress in relation to curriculum expectations.

- The greatest challenge faced by teachers, as perceived by the principals, was that of assessing student performance. Research is needed to assist practitioners in understanding: What is involved in knowing students in relation to the curriculum? How do teachers do it? Do teachers ordinarily do it? What strategies are effective? What measures are needed? How can teachers substantiate their judgements? How can level of performance in relation to the curriculum be known? What are the benefits, limitations, and cautions in assessing performance in relation to the curriculum? How can quality of performance be understood and assessed?

- More understanding of the assessment of social, emotional, and other curriculum expectations that are not easily measured by traditional strategies is needed. Practitioners need assistance in developing measures which give reliable, valid, and practical information.

Accountability. There are two primary questions to be pursued by researchers in assisting practitioners in regard to accountability. The first is, what is the potential of the

demonstration concept in fulfilling accountability obligations to students, supervisors, parents, and the general public? Practitioners need to be better informed of the types and nature of obligation that exist now, as well as that likely to arrive with the twenty-first century. Research is needed to examine the observations and perspectives of each of the stakeholders. What do they really think of the demonstration concept? Also, more understanding of the role of the student as a client and as a participant in demonstrations for other stakeholders, would assist practitioners.

The second question is, what is the potential for positive impact on the teaching-learning process when stakeholders, especially the students themselves, are involved in demonstrations? Will programs improve? Will there be increased satisfaction with schools? Will there be increased support? What new forms of support might evolve?

Impact of district. More knowledge of the district, for example, superintendent role, in impacting that which happens in classrooms, is needed. Educators and the general public can no longer be satisfied with the district role being primarily operational, political, and managerial -- leadership and supervision of the primary function of schools is needed. To this end, practitioners need help with knowing what initiatives and what processes from a district-level will strengthen schools.

Further, in relation to district-level leadership and initiatives to be taken, districts need researcher assistance in managing change. Systems are needed for the continual monitoring of external factors that are likely to have an impact on schools, for example, changes in technology, economy, and environment. Districts need researcher assistance in an on-going formation of vision -- in being forward-thinking and proactive -- in tune with the times or better yet, ahead of the times.

Summary

This study has introduced a new leadership strategy, that of having schools demonstrate student growth. The findings show that principals involved in the study perceived its impact on their schools to be positive in program improvement and accountability. An unanticipated outcome of the study has been the strong messages by principals regarding the effectiveness of the processes used in initiating the strategy.

Although the study has been helpful and implications have been identified for practitioners, more research is needed. Suggestions for further exploration have been outlined. Now, it is time for closure to the study which I have chosen to do by sharing my personal reflections on the experience of initiating and researching the strategy.

Personal Reflections

In regard to my three year experience with the demonstration strategy, it was consistently positive. Throughout the process, I was confident that our efforts were toward worthy goals and that progress was being made. By focusing on the breakthroughs, even the small ones, and being satisfied with incremental progress, I was continually optimistic and energized.

The demonstration sessions became the highlight of my work -- they were interesting, fun, and rewarding. They were also good information, and most of all, as it seemed to me, they were exceedingly good for staff and student development. Through reflection and discussion with principals, I learned from each experience. The sessions were building blocks and with each came a re-examination of the foundation, the purposes and beliefs. From the reflections, I gained insights into what more could be done to improve the teaching-learning process.

I realized that much went on behind the scenes and about this I could only speculate. I desired to be more fully informed. I noted also that initiating the strategy had been a risk; it created a new set of associate superintendent expectations. I wanted to know better what the principals experienced in delivering so well on my request for demonstrations. Further, since change cannot be avoided --

school improvement is dependent on it -- best we learn from the experience we had.

Like principals and teachers, associate superintendents must insist that those in their charge are developing. While exercising leadership, I would ask myself, "Am I doing the right things right?" Since improvement means change and change puts pressure on people, I would also ask, "Have I put on too much pressure? Have I been sensitive to individual differences? Are the principals truly interested and involved? How can I be effective with the size of 'my class' (twenty-eight principals and their schools)?" Indeed, this study has been important to me since there is so much that I desire to understand.

Once I decided that I should no longer delay getting a master's degree, I began to visualize a program of study. When it occurred to me that I could research the demonstration strategy, I found the prospect exciting. I then had to weigh that interest against a desire to complete my five year plan with Area 2. At the time, the principal advisory committee for the 1991-92 school year was already at work and our planning sessions gave me confidence that the schools could go on without me and do the strategy well. Further, I knew that a new associate superintendent would bring fresh thinking to the concept. It also occurred to me that my departure would reveal the strength of the strategy, or lack of, depending on the extent to which principals continued the concept after my

departure. It seemed to me that more would be gained by my researching the strategy in terms of my future work as an associate superintendent, and in terms of recommendations I could bring back to the district.

If the strategy had been dropped by the schools this year, I would have had an interesting and different study. I would have questioned: Was the strategy ineffective, wrongly focused, poorly initiated, too much work, impractical, non-productive, or too much mine and not enough theirs? It would have been vital to my future performance as an associate superintendent to examine my thinking and my style. As must be evident with all this chatter, associate superintendents, too, need feedback and because of the authority role you are in, you rarely get criticism about your work from those who know you best, the ones you lead and supervise. Further, associate superintendents, too, are continual learners, forever striving to be increasingly effective.

The prospect of making a contribution to the field of education -- to the literature -- was also enticing. The demonstration experience had been so useful to me that I suspected that superintendents elsewhere would benefit by knowing about the strategy. I also realized that additional research on related matters would be more likely to occur if the information I had was recorded in the literature.

And now, I ask myself, what has been achieved with the study? Have I obtained the information that one year ago

seemed so important? The answer is simple, probably obvious, and may even seem anticlimactic, but "yes." To me the answer is a significant "yes." I have learned about the impact of the strategy, and through this thesis there is now a written record and the beginnings of an empirical base.

The following is a summary of what I perceive I have gained as insight beyond that which I had at the beginning of the study:

~ I have learned that from the principals' perspective the impact of the demonstration strategy has been positive. This conclusion concurs with my earlier observations, but now I am more confident. I value the principals' perceptions since they had the closest view of the impact of the strategy.

~ I have learned that the benefits I intended for the self-esteem of students, teachers, principals, and parents were realized, at least in part, as perceived by the principals.

~ I have learned that the processes that the principals and I used in leading the initiative were generally well-received. This is useful information that I will consider in future leadership initiatives. My concept of the "art of unselfish leadership" has been reinforced; that is, leadership that helps others be successful, and recognizes and acknowledges their accomplishments, yields progressive results. It is a

matter of giving others the front seat -- the stage -- the reins -- and helping them be leaders, too. Its leading quietly and at the same time saying and doing those things that make a difference -- that tell what is important, set the tone, build trust and confidence, and cause others to see a better future. Perhaps most of all, its being an observer and a listener, whereby the major role is taping on the strengths of others and merely shaping and guiding at times. These ideas are no surprise since they are what is known about good teaching. Teaching is leading. Teaching is letting others be significant in their pursuits.

- I have learned that my style of leadership has been right for some principals. I realize that it is likely that I would hear more in the interviews about being right for some of them than about being hard on them or otherwise. I remain a realist on this topic and sense that I must continue to develop my listening and observing skills. I must continue to strive to understand the styles and perspectives of the individuals with whom I work, and my own. At the same time, I must keep myself well -- I can't be all things to all people, and I must balance my effort between the "movers" and the more "cautious" types.

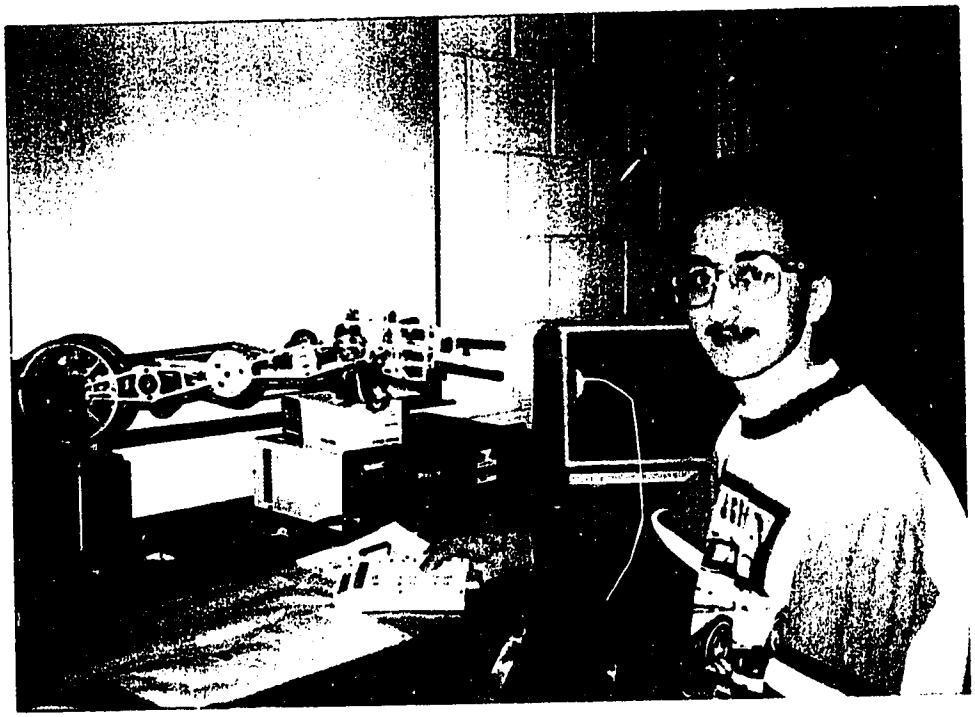
- I have learned that two personal creeds that I have used regularly remain meaningful and relevant to my work. The

first, which I adopted the summer of 1988 while reflecting on approaches to use with the principals, is A Creed for Optimists by Christen D. Larson (date and source could not be traced). Before that summer, the creed had been an insignificant small piece of paper in my quotes file. Now it was helpful in shaping the framework for my role in the demonstration strategy. I wanted to influence others to feel the optimism of Larson's words. I wanted to create the ambience suggested by his thoughts: "Talk health and happiness. . . . Make all your friends feel there is something in them. Look at the sunny side . . . . Be as enthusiastic about others success as you are about your own. . . . Give everyone a smile." It seemed to me that we would need a lighter perspective than sometimes exists when change is underway. Two years later, I formed a second creed also to do with having a lighter perspective.

I created the second creed from an article by Roger Ailes in Success (1990). The essence of my creed comes from Ailes' message which is: "Lighten Up! Stuffed Shirts Have Short Careers," the title of his article. Ailes states that "the most important question you face in your career and in life may be this: Do you bring people up or down?" (p. 14).

I suspect that such subtle matters as keeping spirits up had a part in the success of the demonstration strategy -- in keeping perspective and optimistic, along with keeping focused on what's good for teachers and students. The latter point I

credit to the principals who said it repeatedly during the interviews. I am proud of the principals and teachers who have helped make the strategy a success. I am confident that neither they, nor the colleagues and students they influence, will look back from the higher position from which they now operate.



Student Dan is demonstrating an advanced level of computer skill by showing his proficiency in using a robotic arm.

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Appendix

Correspondence

May 8, 1992

Dear Principals,

Now that I have completed a second draft of the findings of the principals' perceptions, I am even more confident that the study is useful and interesting! You have really helped, as you will see when you read the findings. You will hear your voice throughout the chapter -- thank you!

After interviewing eight principals, there were ample excellent data. I listened to the tapes and read the transcripts repeatedly, until finally ideas started to surface, and then many surfaced!. Having an accurate representation of your perceptions is vital to the trustworthiness of the data; therefore, your reaction and input is invaluable at this point.

The primary purpose of this letter (and chapter 4 attachment) is to give you the opportunity to read "what the principals said" before I do the next edit. I realize that you are busy people and I do not want to ask more of you. However, this is your opportunity to ensure your anonymity and to check that I have reported your contributions accurately.

If you have comments re: ackward wording, grammar and punctuation, questionable content, or concerns regarding anonymity, please jot notes in the margin and return the copy to me. If you would like to discuss your observations, please call me at 458-7174.

Further, as per our recent phone conversation, the other chapters are available at your request (which some of you did on the phone).

Talk to you soon!

As ever,

Ruth