

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL GROWTH PLANS: A CASE STUDY

ANGELA EADIE-GYORI

B.Ed., University of Alberta, 1987

A Project
Submitted to the Faculty of Education
of the University of Lethbridge
in Partial Fulfilment of the
Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION

LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA

August, 1999

Dedication

To my parents -Earl and Mary Eadie
To my husband -Lorne Gyori

Abstract

With educational practices changing to keep pace with a rapidly changing society, the great need for professional growth and development amongst teachers is apparent. However, time is a precious commodity in schools and in the teaching profession and, consequently, it is critically important that effective professional development practices be identified and incorporated into the on-going activities within schools, while ineffective practices be avoided.

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' views on the effectiveness of annual professional development plans in promoting professional growth. The study explores whether or not teachers believe that their growth plans led to enhanced or changed classroom practices, teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of grade level team professional development goals, aspects of the process of developing and completing a professional development plan that were helpful and aspects which should be changed, specific things administrators can do that would be helpful to teachers in their pursuit of professional growth, aspects of a school culture that are conducive to success with professional development plans, teachers' concerns regarding the requirement in provincial policy that all teachers develop annual professional development plans, and teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of professional growth plans as compared to other professional development approaches used previously.

The study was conducted as a case study utilizing an interview approach. The subjects were ten teachers from a rural central Alberta school. All ten of the teachers in the study

responded that they believed developing a professional growth plan had helped them to grow professionally. Seven out of the ten teachers interviewed indicated that their growth plan had contributed to enhanced or changed classroom practices. A variety of specific suggestions were offered by the subjects regarding ways to improve the individual growth plan approach to professional growth and ways administrators could be of assistance to teachers. Eight out of ten teachers indicated that growth plans were more effective in promoting growth than other approaches they have been involved with in the past. An individualized approach to professional development utilizing professional growth plans holds great promise in promoting teacher growth and improved practices.

Acknowledgements

Dr. David Townsend for his encouragement, guidance, inspiration, and time.

The staff of Steffie Woima Elementary School for their willingness to participate in the study and for their support.

My husband, Lorne Gyori, for his love, support, and encouragement.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Dedication.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	vi
I. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY.....	1
Background.....	1
Purpose and Rationale of Study..	5
II. LITERATURE REVIEW.....	7
Introduction.....	7
Traditional Approaches to Professional Development.....	7
Role of the Teacher.....	9
One-Shot Workshops.....	10
Group Growth.....	13
Teacher Evaluations.....	15
Redefining Professional Development.....	16
Learning Organizations.....	18
Community of Learners.....	19
Self-Renewing Schools.....	21
Role of School Cultures.....	24
Relationships.....	25
Collegiality and Collaboration.....	27

Leadership.....	32
Adult Learners.....	35
Individualized Professional Development.....	37
Promising Practices.....	44
Reflection.....	45
Professional Dialogue.....	47
Portfolios.....	47
Writing.....	48
Teacher as Researcher.....	49
Teacher as Leader.....	50
Collegial Partnerships.....	51
Beginning Teachers.....	52
III. METHODOLOGY.....	53
Introduction.....	53
The Community.....	53
The School.....	54
The Subjects.....	54
The Professional Growth Plan Process.....	55
Format of Growth Plan.....	57
Data Collection.....	57
Conducting the Interviews.....	58
Interview Observations.....	59
Generalizability.....	59

IV. RESULTS.....	61
Observations of the Process.....	61
Interview Findings.....	63
Question #1.....	63
Question # 2.....	65
Question #3A.....	66
Question #3B.....	68
Question #4.....	69
Question #5.....	73
Question #6.....	74
Question #7.....	77
Question #8.....	81
Question #9.....	84
V. INTERPRETATION OF DATA.....	90
Discussion of the Observations.....	90
Discussion of Data.....	91
Question #1.....	91
Question # 2.....	93
Question #3.....	94
Question #4.....	99
Question #5.....	103
Question #6.....	104
Question #7.....	106
Question #8.....	109

Question #9.....	111
Conclusion.....	113
References.....	118
Appendices.....	122
A. Interview Questions.....	122
B. Consent Form.....	124

CHAPTER ONE BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

Background

With educational practices changing to keep pace with a rapidly changing society, new curriculums and teaching approaches being introduced, and an increased emphasis on integrating technology into the classroom, the great need for professional growth and development amongst teachers is apparent. In addition, time is a precious commodity in schools and in the teaching profession. Thus, it is critically important that effective professional development practices be identified and incorporated into the on-going activities within schools, while ineffective practices be avoided. How best to help teachers in their professional development is indeed a compelling question.

As an administrator in an elementary school, ensuring that the staff have opportunities for meaningful professional development has been one of my goals. Over the years, we have taken a variety of approaches to professional development within our school, but it seems that much of what we have done has not met the needs of teachers. Initially, part of our staff meeting time was devoted to professional development activities and inservices. As administrators, we provided professional development sessions based on perceived need and teacher suggestion. We conducted some sessions ourselves and arranged for some guest speakers. However, conversations with teachers and our annual staff survey indicated that attaching professional development activities to staff meetings was not a great idea as staff members were tired at the end of the day and it was an add-on to an already full staff meeting agenda.

The following year, we had breakfast meetings to discuss professional readings and topics of interest. As the year went by, fewer staff members attended the meetings. Through discussions with staff members, I discovered that other demands such as

telephone calls, supervision, material preparation, and parents wishing to see them made it difficult for teachers to attend morning meetings.

During the two subsequent years, a staff committee handled professional development activities. The committee surveyed the staff to obtain input into types of inservices and activities staff members would like to see offered. Scheduling, and sufficient numbers to warrant offering inservices, were challenges for the committee. During this time, as administrators, we discussed with the staff our own learning and shared professional articles that we felt would be of interest to the staff. Although a couple of inservice presentations were provided to the staff, the annual staff surveys again indicated that meaningful opportunities for professional development remained an area of need.

Considering the variety of approaches taken to professional development in our school, providing opportunities for meaningful professional development has been a very perplexing puzzle. A lot of time was spent pondering this issue. As a result of taking Dr. Townsend's course "Teacher Development," I decided to survey teachers, in a more systematic manner, to gain a more thorough understanding of teacher's views, preferences, and ideas relating to professional development.

At the beginning of the school year, I conducted a survey asking teachers about their thoughts on professional development. The years of teaching experience of the staff range from four to thirty years. Teachers were asked what they believe has contributed the most to their professional growth and enhanced their teaching practices. Although the teachers responses reflected their different learning styles, stages of their careers, and individual needs, there were some professional development activities that were identified quite consistently as being helpful. Eight out of ten teachers identified working, talking, and planning with colleagues as the activity that had contributed the most to their own professional growth. Seven teachers mentioned attending conferences and workshops as

being helpful. However, their responses about workshops were qualified with statements such as the following:

- The conference needs to be of an individual's choosing.
- The workshop or conference has to be in the area of professional growth that I am currently focusing on.
- As a professional, I need to choose conferences that will be of benefit to me and will meet my needs.

Interestingly, the professional development activity identified by seven out of ten teachers as being the least helpful of all was our school district's division-wide professional development day. Some of the teachers' comments included:

- It is too fragmented.
- Most of the time, there are no sessions on what I am currently working on in my professional development.
- There is no follow-up to the sessions and ideas.

General comments made by the teachers included the following:

- Let us be professionals and pursue professional growth in our own areas of need.
- Individuals should pursue professional growth based on individual self-evaluation of their own teaching.
- We really need to have more opportunities to work with our colleagues and to learn from each other.

The informal interviews I conducted with our teachers led to some new insights for me. Firstly, it became very clear that the teachers believe that working with colleagues is extremely valuable in terms of professional growth and enhanced classroom practices. Secondly, I began to understand the reasons why previous attempts at "meaningful

professional development” such as inservices and bringing in guest speakers were not very successful. To clarify, the needs and areas of interest vary widely amongst the staff. An approach of “here it is whether you need it or not” does not meet the individual needs of teachers. Although there were some common threads in terms of activities that teachers felt were beneficial, the preferred professional development activities varied according to learning styles. Some teachers preferred to visit a colleague to observe a specific technique or approach, while others preferred to read about new ideas, listen to a guest speaker, or do “hands-on” experimenting with a new idea in their classroom.

As I listened to our teachers talk about professional development, I realized that they all had clear ideas about what they wanted to pursue in terms of their professional growth. Although teachers had not yet “formally” developed individual growth plans for the year, most had done some self-evaluation and determined the direction of their professional development for the up-coming year. Consequently, inservices or workshops in areas unrelated to their individual ‘area of focus’ would, to some extent, be an add-on to an already full plate.

In summary, as I listened to the teachers, it became apparent to me that emphasis should be placed on the following:

- a. empowering teachers to identify their own needs, set their goals, and choose their own professional development activities.
- b. encouraging and supporting individual teachers or teams of teachers in their pursuit of ‘meaningful’ professional growth.
- c. capitalizing on opportunities to work with colleagues in grade level teams.

Although each teacher had developed professional growth plans on a yearly basis for a number of years, school-wide professional development activities had been emphasized. This year, as a staff, we decided to place greater emphasis on pursuing and completing

activities teachers identified in their professional growth plans. Staff members had the option of developing individual and/or team professional development plans. Although we had a few inservices for the entire staff regarding new programs and curriculum, the main emphasis has been on pursuing individual professional growth, rather than on school-wide activities.

With the new approach to professional development in our school, I wondered about its effectiveness in terms of teacher growth. Would teachers find this approach more meaningful? Would it change classroom practice? Would it meet the needs of teachers? How does this approach fit with the findings of research on professional growth? As a result of my questioning, I decided to pursue this as a final project.

Purpose and Rationale of Project

The purpose of this study was to examine teachers' views on the effectiveness of annual professional development plans in terms of professional growth in this past year. In my research, I explored whether or not teachers believe that their growth plans led to enhanced or changed classroom practices. In the past, much of the inservicing received by teachers did not lead to changes in classroom practices. I am sure that most of us can recall attending a session on a given topic, feeling really excited about its potential use in the classroom, and then returning to the isolation of the classroom, only to discover roadblocks and 'too little' background information and theory to make the new idea or program work.

There are other aspects or sub-questions that I examined in my research. Firstly, in my initial brief survey of the teachers' views regarding professional development, a common thread that emerged was that many of the teachers believed that working with colleagues contributed the most to their professional growth. The teachers in the school being

studied had the option of developing grade level team goals as part of their professional growth plan. All of the grade level teams did create professional development goals and planned activities. It was interesting to explore the teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of grade level team professional development goals.

Secondly, I asked teachers about what aspects of the process of developing and completing a professional development plan were helpful and what aspects should be changed. Thirdly, I questioned teachers regarding specific things administrators can do that would be helpful to teachers in their pursuit of professional growth. A fourth sub-question of inquiry was teachers' views on aspects of a school culture that are conducive to success with professional development plans. Another area that I explored was concerns teachers had, if any, regarding the requirement in provincial policy that all teachers develop annual professional development plans. Lastly, I asked the interviewees to compare the effectiveness of professional growth plans to other professional development approaches used previously. As the teachers' 'stories' unfolded, I was able to gain greater insight into the effectiveness of professional growth plans, and identify and clarify ways to enhance their use in schools.

I believe that this study is quite timely as Alberta Education's new "Quality Teaching" policy will require that all teachers in the province develop professional growth plans. With mandated professional growth plans soon to be a reality, I thought that it would be valuable to explore how teachers in one particular school think and feel about growth plans and their effectiveness in promoting professional development. It has been my hope that in doing this research project, I would be able to identify ways of enhancing the effectiveness of professional growth plans. In learning more about the use of professional growth plans, I hope to make them as beneficial as possible for teachers in their pursuit of professional growth.

CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Professional growth and development of teachers is crucial to student learning and efforts to improve schools. As Barth (1990) states: “Probably nothing within a school has more impact on students in terms of skills development, self-confidence, or classroom behavior than the personal and professional growth of their teachers” (p. 49). Further, Barth contends that when teachers stop growing, so do their students. Similarly, Sagor (1995) states: “In schools where teachers are active learners, excitement and curiosity contribute to a rich learning environment for children” (p. 24). Effective professional development practices which help teachers grow and be life-long learners are critically important.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the literature on professional development practices. There is a vast amount of it. While it is not my intention to examine all of the literature, it is my intent to address the following questions: Why have traditional approaches to professional development been limited in their success in promoting teacher growth and enhancing or changing classroom practices? What does the literature suggest are successful staff development practices? What are some school-based ‘promising practices’ that can guide the work of administrators and staffs in promoting professional growth and improved schools?

Traditional Approaches to Professional Development

Although the importance of professional development for teachers has been acknowledged for many years, it seems that many of the efforts in this direction have been misguided and not as successful as hoped (Barth, 1990; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991;

Hirsh & Ponder, 1991; Joyce, Wolf, & Calhoun, 1993; Marczely, 1996). Marczely states that current staff development practices are inadequate to effect meaningful change and despite the good intentions of teachers, very little is changing in classrooms.

One model of professional development that seems to have been quite prevalent in the past can be described as a deficit model. With this model, certain skills are deemed as essential for teachers by the administration of the district. As many teachers are thought to not have the necessary 'skills', inservice sessions or workshops, scheduled after school, are often mandated to remedy the perceived 'weaknesses' (Barth, 1990).

According to Barth (1990) "most school districts operate from a deficiency model of adult growth" (p. 50). "Such top-down approaches to staff development embody a passive view of the teacher who is empty, deficient, lacking in skills, needing to be filled up and fixed up with new techniques and strategies" (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 17.) These authors point out that approaches of this kind seriously underestimate what teachers already know, think, and do in their classrooms. Similarly, Marczely (1996) contends that professional development has tended to assume that teachers are at a minimum level of competence and that teachers are all at the same level of competence.

This deficit model for professional development seems to be based on the view of teaching as being a technical endeavour with a set of skills and specific behaviors to be acquired. "The metaphor of teaching as technical expertise traditionally has influenced educational policy in North America" (Alberta Education, 1993, p. 3). Its influence is apparent in traditional professional development practices.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) suggest that some of the problems with traditional approaches to professional development are rooted in this view of teaching as just a collection of technical skills and learned behaviors. In contrast, Fullan and Hargreaves see teaching as being deeply moral, relating to the nature of teachers' decisions, judgment, and

professional actions in situations of unavoidable uncertainty found in the classroom experience. They state: “It is the application of accumulated skill, wisdom, and expertise in the specific and variable circumstances of the classroom which defines much of teachers’ professionalism-the teacher’s capacity to make informed discretionary judgments in the rapidly shifting environment of the classroom” (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 19).

Role of the Teacher

The role of the teacher, in practices based on the deficiency model, is very passive. “Outside experts have often viewed teaching as technical, learning as packaged, and teachers as passive recipients of the findings of ‘objective research’” (Lieberman, 1995, p. 592). Barth (1990), in discussing this passive role of teachers, states that staff development has taken the form of “workshops done to someone by someone else, as in the verb, “to inservice teachers” (p. 50). Similarly, Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) state: “Many staff development initiatives take the form of something that is done to teachers rather than with them, still less by them” (p. 17). They go on to describe many staff development strategies as being fragmented, non-involving, and oblivious to the real needs and concerns of teachers.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) contend that teachers’ purposes play an important role in professional development. “Ignoring or riding roughshod over teachers’ purposes can produce resistance and resentment” (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 20). With traditional practices, more often than not, teachers’ sense of purpose has been ignored as some administrators have tended to believe that they were in a better position to identify what teachers needed in order to address perceived deficits. Fullan and Hargreaves indicate that for many teachers, their sense of purpose has been poorly developed, neglected or is

vague. Rather than having their purposes ignored, they suggest that many teachers need opportunities to develop a clearer, stronger sense of purpose in teaching. It is their view that professional development needs to build on the ideas, expertise, and knowledge teachers already possess. Hirsh and Ponder (1991) indicate that ‘very good’ educators who express negative thoughts and comments about professional development are often not opposed to growth, but rather the form of it. They suggest that these educators “do object to spending their time in staff development programs that fail to address important and specific work needs they have identified” (p. 45).

One-Shot Workshops

Traditionally, one-shot workshops have been the form of much professional development. However, the literature suggests that this one-shot inservice form of staff development is not very successful and very little changes as a result (Barth, 1990; Hirsh & Ponder, 1991; Goldenberg & Gallimore, 1991; Joyce, et.al., 1993; Lieberman, 1995; Obermeyer & Robinson, 1991; Showers & Joyce, 1996; Sykes, 1996). “Most research on instructional improvement has indicated that inservice programs consisting of a single session are largely ineffective” (Sparks, 1983, p. 66). Hirsh and Ponder state: “A one-shot or series of infrequent expert presentations will not result in transfer of knowledge into practice in the classroom” (p. 45). Showers and Joyce (1996) contend that “evaluations of staff development that focused on teaching strategies and curriculum revealed that as few as 10 percent of the participants implemented what they had learned” (p. 12). They also point out that the rates of transfer were low even for those who had volunteered for the training. As Hirsh and Ponder suggest: “It is no longer acceptable to spend resources on staff development and say to a presenter, ‘If one person gets one new idea, the day will be worth it’” (p. 47).

A major problem identified with traditional one-shot approaches to professional development is that attention has not been given to the follow-up or implementation of the ideas or approaches (Hirsh & Ponder, 1991; Joyce, et al., 1993). Hirsh and Ponder (1991) state: “Until we give appropriate attention to follow-up, staff development will continue to lack impact” (p. 47). Strategies offered by Hirsh and Ponder to provide necessary follow-up include peer coaching, collegial support teams, mentoring, study groups, video or audio taping oneself and/or others. Similarly, Joyce et al.(1993) state: “Thus far in our own inquiry into practice, we know that the design of the workplace must include provisions for immediate and sustained classroom practice, companionship and peer coaching, and the study of implementation” (p. 35). They also recommend the use of leadership teams and study groups within schools. In addition, they state that implementation needs to be carefully monitored and follow-up training adjusted as necessary. According to Joyce et al., research shows that with properly designed workshops and follow-up, virtually all teachers can learn and successfully implement complex changes.

Joyce et al. (1993) point out another reason why the ‘one-shot workshop’ which has traditionally comprised much of professional development is not very effective. They have found that general theory and the knowledge of expected effects are underemphasized in many workshops and yet, an innovation will almost certainly be short-lived without a deep understanding on the part of participants.

So why haven’t workshops and the workplace been redesigned to create conditions that enable teachers to learn more effectively? Joyce et al. (1993) suggest that one reason many schools and school districts have not bothered to develop more effective implementation designs is that many individuals in the past have blamed the failures of implementation on the lack of teacher motivation. Perhaps another reason workshops and

the workplace have not been redesigned is that individuals simply have not been aware of how ineffectual one-shot workshops are in changing classroom practices.

Associated with the one-shot workshop approach to professional growth is the issue of insufficient time being devoted to sweeping initiatives and major curriculum changes. Joyce et al. suggest that a curriculum change in a major area probably requires ten to fifteen days of training. However, teachers are often expected to implement sweeping changes with one or maybe two days of training. The result, according to Joyce et al., is frustration and a very low level of implementation.

Another problem with the one-shot workshop approach to professional development is the seemingly endless barrage of fragmented, new initiatives teachers face. Joyce et al. (1993) state: "Teachers have been virtually shell-shocked by barrages of 'semi-changes' that sap energy while making few substantial differences" (p. 4). They indicate that the challenge we face is to build comprehensive approaches to innovation that move away from the fragmented, single-initiative approaches, even ones that are well-designed. They point out that there has been a long history of mandated initiatives which have had a poorly planned implementation and teachers have been unsupported. As a result, many teachers currently reject any initiatives from their appointed leaders. "A multitude of lightly supported initiatives gives teachers and principals a feeling of being inundated by an impossible array of demands "from above" and everyone is frustrated by the lack of implementation" (Joyce, et al., 1993, p. 30). They contend that we need to build in an evolutionary manner on the best features of our current practices. Similarly, Raebeck (1994) points out that there is no need for constant change or change for the sake of change. Rather, emphasis should be placed on the Japanese notion of 'kaizen' or constant improvement. Glickman (1992) suggests that most schools move from innovation to innovation and define success as the implementation of the latest innovation. He states:

“To be blunt, this is nonsense. What difference does any innovation make if a school cannot determine effects on kids?” (Glickman, 1992, p. 26).

In order to avoid the pitfalls of energy draining semi-changes and ineffectual one-shot workshops, Joyce et al. (1993) state that initiatives need to be coordinated at the individual teacher, school and district level. “People can feel frustration as ideas interfere with one another or are given less attention than they need” (Joyce, et al., 1993, p. 30). They also suggest that fewer initiatives be undertaken. According to Joyce et al., a good rule of thumb is that an organization can generally manage one major initiative each year or two, the faculty about one each year, and the individual teacher about one additional initiative each year. Joyce et al. stress the importance of the initiatives being very carefully planned and coordinated.

Group Growth

In the past, most professional development has taken the form of ‘group growth’ or large group inservice sessions. Barth (1990) states that it is not surprising that this large group instruction mode for adults has met with the same mixed success as attempts at teaching an entire classroom of students in a uniform way, as teachers probably learn in as varied ways as the students in a classroom. For the most part, large group instruction will not meet the needs of all teachers. Obermeyer and Robinson (1991) state: “Whole-staff and whole-district inservice is likely to miss the mark for a good portion of any staff” (p. 1). Because teachers differ in the ways they learn, ways of helping different teachers grow should be correspondingly different. For many years, good teachers have recognized that their students have different learning styles and accommodate these differences by incorporating a variety of activities into lessons. In contrast, traditional professional development practices have largely ignored the different learning styles of teachers. Barth

advises that we should be contemplating the implications of different adult learning styles for staff development.

In addition to considering the implications of teachers' learning styles, the different and individual needs of teachers should be examined in creating effective professional development opportunities. Much of traditional professional development has ignored differences between teachers in terms of years of experience, areas of expertise, interests, gender, and stage of career (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Marczely, 1996). "Teachers differ, not only in the professional goals they set for themselves, but also in their learning modes, stages of development, philosophies, and abilities" (Marczely, 1996, p. 8). Clearly, teachers are not all the same. "Their needs differ and so, too, should their professional growth opportunities and challenges" (Marczely, 1996, p. 3). Obermeyer and Robinson (1991) state: "Just as with the students they serve, the adults in schools have a diversity of needs, interests, and learning styles" (p. 1). Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) suggest that the total teacher should be taken into account, rather than 'narrowly inservicing' all teachers in a particular skill. They state:

Age, stage of career, life experiences, and gender factors make up the total person. They affect people's interest in and reaction to innovation and their motivation to seek improvement. When we introduce new teaching methods, we often ignore these differences and treat teachers as if they were a homogeneous lot. In the process, we often devalue large segments of the teaching population. (pp. 27 & 28)

They go on to state: "Because much staff development is fragmentary in nature, rushed in its implementation, and top-down in its imposition, it addresses only a fragment of the teacher" (p. 17). Joyce et al. (1993) share this concern about the fragmented nature of professional development. They describe the very fragmented nature of many workshops

as being somewhat like a puzzle with skills taught in isolation from the context of the classroom and school and other curricular subject areas.

Teacher Evaluations

Formal evaluations of teachers have been assumed to be an important method of promoting professional growth (Alberta Education, 1993; Barth, 1990; McGreal, 1996). However, this assumption has come under increasing scrutiny in the past few years as administrators, teachers, central office personnel, researchers, and policy makers have questioned whether or not formal written evaluations are effective in promoting growth. Duffy (1997) states that appraising individual performance is not the path to school improvement. Barth (1990) found that formal evaluations had only limited influence on staff development, had little impact on teacher's growth, and often became a meaningless ritual. Even worse, in Barth's opinion, is that formal evaluations become "a recurring occasion to heighten anxiety and distance between teacher and principal, and competition between teacher and teacher" (p. 56). Glatthorn (1996) states that some experts in the field have found that the effectiveness of teacher evaluations on professional development has been almost totally negative. Similarly, Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) have expressed concern about the effects of anxiety created by many punitive appraisal schemes. They state: "Ironically, the anxiety they generate can also hold back the excellence of the many as they become reluctant to take risks for fear of punishment" (p. 10).

The importance of collegial relationships in promoting teacher growth and creating school cultures which are conducive to teacher learning has been recognized and documented (Barth, 1990; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Sagor, 1995). In the document, "Toward Teacher Growth", it is pointed out that teacher evaluations can be problematic in terms of collegial relations between teachers and administrators. It is stated that the

success of many activities of school administrators depends on good collegial relations and yet, evaluations have the potential to create conflict which can jeopardize collegiality (Alberta Education, 1993, p. 7). Barth (1990) indicates that teacher evaluations have been observed to “contribute to isolated, adversarial, and competitive relationships” (p. 32). He concludes that “it is more accurate to say that formal teacher evaluation fulfills many purposes, few of them related to professional learning” (p. 56).

To summarize, many traditional practices have met with limited success in promoting teacher growth and enhancing classroom practices. Joyce et al. (1993) state that the staff development and curriculum implementation programs of the past are now recognized as being relatively ineffectual and that there is no reason to continue them. Barth said it well with his statement: “So, by and large, the district staff development activities we employ insult the capable and leave the incompetent untouched” (p. 50).

Nevertheless, the question remains, ‘If traditional approaches have not worked particularly well, what types of activities or approaches should we be taking to promote professional growth and enhance classroom practices?’ Although new promising practices are being used successfully to promote professional growth, Joyce et al. (1993) point out that “no simple formula will emerge for implementing healthy staff development systems” (p. 14). Further they state: “As we have developed more effective implementation procedures and studied their results, we have increasingly found that productive staff development is still an innovation in itself” (p. 15).

Redefining Professional Development

It is suggested in the literature that administrators and teachers alike need to re-examine and broaden their current definition of staff development so that it goes beyond ‘inservice’ training (Barth, 1990; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Hirsh & Ponder, 1991;

Lambert, 1988). “Because direct teaching currently dominates much of what the public and school districts consider to be staff development, it is important that teachers, administrators, and policy makers become aware of new and broader conceptions of professional development” (Lieberman, 1995, p. 593). Lieberman states: “The conventional view of staff development as a transferable package of knowledge to be distributed to teachers in bite-sized pieces needs radical rethinking” (p. 592). “In the past, staff development has been equated with workshops” (Hirsh & Ponder, 1991, p.45).

They state:

Practices like the following also can result in changes in knowledge, attitude, and skills:

- Teachers as researchers
- Collegial support teams
- Professional reading
- Faculty/grade level/department meetings
- Graduate school
- Conferences
- Curriculum development
- Teacher observations
- Student teacher supervision
- Mentoring
- Professional/personal writing
- Coaching. (p. 45)

In their view, a training workshop should only be one strategy in promoting professional growth (Hirsh & Ponder, 1991). Similarly, Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) point out that there are many legitimate routes to teacher development. Joyce et al. (1993) indicate that

in order to have self-renewing organizations, everyone needs to become knowledgeable about options for staff development.

In redefining professional development, the literature suggests that professional learning should be seen as a continuous and on-going phenomenon rather than viewed as a scheduled 'event'. Hirsh and Ponder (1991) contend that teacher development occurs on a daily basis rather than just when inservices are scheduled. Goldenberg and Gallimore (1991) state that staff development needs to be grounded in the mundane but very real details of teachers' daily work and daily lives. Similarly, Senge (in conversation with O'Neil, 1995) suggests that teacher learning should not be just about attending off-site conferences, but rather it should always be an "on-the-job phenomenon". He states: "Learning always occurs in a context where you are taking action" (p. 20). Lieberman (1995) makes an interesting observation: "In the traditional view of staff development, workshops and conferences conducted outside the school count, but authentic opportunities to learn from and with colleagues inside the school do not" (p. 591). If professional development needs to be occurring on a daily basis in the context of daily work in the classroom, then we need to be creating learning organizations or learning cultures for the adults in our schools. As Joyce et al. (1993) point out: "The creation of continuous growth and school renewal requires changes in how we live, think, and interact with each other" (p. 42).

Learning Organizations

During the last few years, much has been written about the importance of developing learning communities in schools or creating learning organizations (Barth, 1990; Glickman, 1992; Joyce et al., 1993; Senge,1990; Sergiovanni, 1992). Senge (in conversation with O'Neil, 1995) states that an organization's ability to learn may make

the difference between its thriving or perishing in the years ahead. Senge defines a learning organization in the following manner: “A learning organization is an organization in which people at all levels are, collectively, continually enhancing their capacity to create things they really want to create” (p. 20). Senge (1990) calls learning organizations places where people are continually learning how to learn together. In discussing schools specifically, Senge indicates that recognition needs to be given to the fact that learning is an on-going, daily, and an on-the-job phenomenon, that we need to find ways for teachers to work together as a team, and that we need to create an environment where teachers can continually reflect on what their actions.

Senge stresses the importance of a shared vision in creating a learning organization. Developing a shared vision, according to Senge, is not an event, but rather, it is an on-going process. The first step is to help teachers discover or uncover their own sense of personal purpose or vision. With hectic lives and busy schedules, teachers need opportunities to clarify and articulate their own vision or purpose as it is an important first step. The second step according to Senge is to share and communicate the individual visions so that the visions can start to interact in the process of developing shared meaning and a shared vision. Senge states that the process is never ending as individuals continue to reflect on and articulate their vision. Glickman (1992) supports Senge’s view on the importance of a having a vision. He states: “In order for a school to be educationally successful, it must be a community of professionals working together toward a vision of teaching and learning that transcends individual classroom, grade levels, and departments (Glickman, 1992, p. 24).

Community of Learners

Similar to Senge’s ‘learning organizations’, Barth (1990) advocates that a school

become a 'community of learners'. Barth (1990) notes that the approach to school reform taken by some individuals appears to be creating a list of desired characteristics of effective teachers, effective principals and effective schools. He states: "The assumption of many outside of schools seems to be that if they can create lists of desirable school characteristics, if they can only be clear enough about directives and regulations, then these things will happen in schools" (p. 38). However, he points out that while this view of educational change is simple, compelling, and straightforward, it does not work well. In contrast, Barth (1990) believes that schools need to become a 'community of learners' or "a place where all participants--teachers, principals, parents, and students engage in learning and teaching" (p. 43). Barth states: "In a community of learners, adults and children learn simultaneously and in the same place to think critically and analytically and to solve problems that are important to them" (p. 43).

In discussing the profound type of learning that can occur within a community of learners, Barth (1990) identified conditions which appear to foster this learning: "acknowledging one's inadequacies, posing one's own problems, risk taking, humour, collaboration with other learners, compassion, the importance of modeling, and the presence of a moral purpose" (p. 44).

In a community of learners, according to Barth (1990), the crucial role of the principal is 'head learner', rather than that of 'instructional leader pretending to know all'. As head learner, the principal would be "engaging in the most important enterprise of the schoolhouse--experiencing, displaying, modeling, and celebrating what it is hoped and expected that teachers and pupils will do" (p. 46). Barth states that teachers in a community of learners are not inserviced, but rather, they engage in continuous inquiry about teaching. "They are researchers, students of teaching, who observe others teach, have others observe them, talk about teaching, and help other teachers. In short they are

professionals” (p. 46).

Barth (1990) suggests that some of the school reform efforts have had a vision of school as a place where only students learn and adults teach. He states: “Because schools and those who work in them are accountable for pupils’ achievement and because no amount of pupil achievement is sufficient to place every student in the top half of the class, pupil learning usually preempts adult learning. Yet only a school that is hospitable to adult learning can be a good place for students to learn” (p. 46). Levin (in conversation with Brandt, 1992) supports Barth’s contention and states: “If you can’t make a school a great professional place for its staff, it’s never going to be a great place for kids” (p. 21).

Self-Renewing Organizations and Schools

In recent years, there has been increased discussion about ‘self-renewing’ organizations and schools. According to Joyce et al. (1993): “In the self-renewing organization, educators in all positions in the system create a better learning environment for themselves and students by studying education and how to improve it” (p. 3). As they see it, the individual teacher, the school, and the central office all need to be part of a holistic learning community. The friction and confusion between levels in an organization are viewed as unhealthy and, they contend, there is a need to integrate the spheres of the organization. The initiatives undertaken in self-renewing organizations generate an enriching spiral of learning for all. At the core of the self-renewing school is what Joyce et al. call the academy. An academy is described as a learning center for everyone or a community of colleagues gathered to study and advance knowledge. Some of the ‘colleagues’ may be children, who are considered to be collaborators in learning.

According to Joyce et al. (1993): “Collective inquiry concerning the effects of our actions on students--learning with and from each other and gaining in knowledge, technical

skills, and interpersonal relations--sustains school renewal” (p. 5). Action research plays a central role in a self-renewing school or organization with everyone engaging in action research on a continuous basis. Joyce et al. state:

A central premise is that all the spheres--individual teachers, schools, and districts- engage in a series of action research inquiries, generating and studying the effects of initiatives for school improvement. When we pursue these inquiries, changes occur across spheres; and support systems are developed that can sustain renewal throughout the system. (p. 39)

“If the organization recreates itself into a healthy learning community where working together, studying together, and growing together has been planned into the system as a way of life, working in schools becomes synonymous with lifelong learning” (Joyce, et. al., 1993, p. 22).

Sagor (1995) points out that certain cultural norms appear to be strongly entrenched in all self-renewing schools. One cultural norm identified by Sagor is high professional standards as evidenced by the staff continuously examining all practices. The second norm is collegiality. According to Sagor, teachers/learners are not isolated in self-renewing schools. The third cultural norm is questioning and experimenting or as Sagor puts it “the search for a better mousetrap is constant” (p. 24). Sagor contends that when an organization wants to engage in continuous improvement “it does so not by forcing a consensus on a single direction for the entire organization, but by empowering individual work groups to seek out better ways. This practice of using natural collaborations to form short-term limited partnerships is the essence of professional behavior in a community of learners” (p. 27).

To avoid the pitfalls of contrived collegiality, Sagor (1995) suggests that self-renewing schools follow three principles. The first is that the staff develop a set of core values or a

shared vision. The second principle is that teachers share a view that true professionals engage in disciplined inquiry by testing their theories, sharing their results and learning from each other, even though they engage in different practices based on different theoretical assumptions. The third guiding principle identified by Sagor is that there is a focus on the client and “the bottom line is always the difference that practice makes for kids” (p. 24).

According to Sagor (1995), instead of relying on majority-rule decision making, self-renewing schools use data-based, deliberative decision making. “Part of professional life in a self-renewing school is informed choice among options and disciplined study of the effects of these choices on the lives of our students” (Joyce, et al., 1993, p. 21). The school staff examines the evidence before they adopt any initiative. As Joyce, Wolf and Calhoun (1993) state: “By engaging in collegial action research, the members clarify areas needing attention; select initiatives on the basis of the best available evidence; and by tracing implementation, determine effects on students” (p. 22).

Summary

Although the terminology of the perspectives discussed above varies somewhat, there are some common threads. In all of the models, professional development or teacher inquiry is seen as occurring on a daily basis within the context of the classroom. It is a part of daily life and an on-going phenomenon. Professional development is seen as continuous inquiry, examination, and reflection on practice. All of the individuals in the school or organization engage in continuous learning and often work together to advance knowledge. Emphasis is placed on working together rather than working in isolation, which has been the norm in the past. Recognition is given to the important role that colleagues play in the professional growth of teachers. The last common thread to emerge in the three different perspectives is the importance given to vision or personal sense of

purpose. The clarification of one's vision or purpose and the creation of a common purpose is seen as essential in learning communities.

Role of School Culture

The previous section, on learning communities, learning organizations, and self-renewing schools, highlights the important role that school cultures play in promoting the professional growth of teachers. "Most experts believe that the culture of the organization is a powerful determiner of how teachers teach" (Glatthorn, 1996, p. 16). "Extensive research evidence shows that organizational climate and culture strongly influence both initial and continued use of an innovation" (Joyce, 1990 as cited in Gusky and Sparks, 1991, p. 74). A negative school culture appears to have a negative impact on the growth and development of teachers. Barth (1990) states: "I do not believe that teachers or principals really teach or learn well in a climate of competition, isolation, or siege" (p. 33). "No one learns very well, or retains very much, or works very long in a state of high anxiety. Anxiety is toxic to the development of community and to learning" (p. 54). In contrast, a school culture that values risk-taking and learning can have a positive impact on teacher development. "Risk-taking fosters learning, adaptability, and improvement" (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 74). Sparks (1983) states that staff development efforts are more likely to be successful where a norm of collegiality and experimentation exists. Similarly, Edwards (1995) suggests "Growth and development are best achieved in an environment marked by mutual respect and trust" (p. 72). As educators work toward the desirable vision of schools as learning organizations, I believe that it is important to examine specific aspects of school culture which can help to guide the journey. In this section, the aspects of school culture that will be explored are the relationships between adults, collegiality and collaboration, and leadership.

Relationships

Barth (1990) discusses the significant role that relationships amongst the adults in schools play in improving schools and enhancing teaching and learning. Barth suggests that the professional growth of teachers is closely related to the relationships between principal and teacher and between teacher and teacher. Barth (1990) states: “The success of a school, I believe, depends above all on the quality of interactions between teacher and teacher, and teacher and administrator” (p. 15).

Barth (1990) characterizes the adult relationships in many schools as being similar to ‘parallel play’ of early childhood. “Although in close proximity for long periods of time and having much to offer one another, each works and plays pretty much in isolation” (p. 15). According to Barth, the price of such parallel play is teacher isolation and missed opportunities to receive the help of others and to be able to jointly create something better than either person could accomplish in isolation. Barth suggests that a taboo exists that prevents teachers from observing each other engaged in the act of teaching. He notes that teachers often purposefully circumvent the teaching space of other teachers.

Unfortunately, the result is that professional isolation is common in many schools.

The literature points out the detrimental effects of such isolation. Barth (1990) states: “Professional isolation stifles professional growth” (p. 18). Joyce et al. (1993) contend that the norms of isolation and extreme autonomy, that are characteristic of schooling, are increasingly being understood as unhealthy. Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) suggest that evidence “links the widespread presence of isolation and privatism to safer, less risk-taking methods of teaching and to poorer standards of student achievement” (p. 6).

Further, they state that privatism institutionalizes conservatism and results in teachers learning little from their colleagues. Unfortunately, the problem of teacher isolation is not a simple one. As Fullan and Hargreaves state: “The problem of isolation is a deep-seated

one. Architecture often supports it. The timetable reinforces it. Overload sustains it. History legitimates it” (p. 6).

Competitive relationships between adults are another type of relationship found in many schools. Barth (1990) talks at some length about the detrimental effects of competitive relationships in schools.

I find that most school people carry around with them extraordinary insights about their important work--garnered from years of rich experience--about discipline, parent involvement, budgeting, child development, leadership, and curriculum. These hard-won insights are certainly of as much value to other practitioners as elegant research studies and national reports. But adults in schools display an extraordinary reluctance to make these insights available to others who are competitors for scarce resources and recognition--that is, almost everyone else. (Barth, 1990, p. 17)

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) support Barth's view and suggest that some teachers are unwilling to share their ideas and successes because of concerns about others taking credit for ideas. It would appear that great wisdom, expertise, and knowledge of the craft is unfortunately not shared in some school cultures because of the prevalence of competitive relationships.

The literature suggests other reasons why teachers are hesitant to share their expertise and knowledge with others. One such reason is that teachers do not want to be considered pretentious or to be 'blowing their own horns' (Barth, 1990; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). Barth claims that “ a taboo prevails in many schools against one practitioner sharing craft knowledge with another” (p. 17). Fullan and Hargreaves also suggest that teachers often fear that asking for help implies incompetence and, consequently, some teachers are

reluctant to seek out the expertise of others.

Certainly, not all relationships between the adults in schools are negative ones. In many schools, teachers and administrators recognize the value of working with colleagues and developing collaborative relationships. According to Barth (1990), a key to improving schools lies in improving the interactions amongst teachers and between teachers and principals.

Collegiality and Collaboration

There is much support in the literature for encouraging collaborative relationships and enhancing collegiality amongst teachers, as well as finding ways for teachers to work together effectively (Barth, 1990; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Glickman, 1992; Joyce, Wolf, & Calhoun, 1993; McGreal, 1996; O'Neil, 1995; Sagor, 1995; Senge, 1990; Smith, 1987). According to Fullan and Hargreaves (1991), "One of the most effective forms of teacher development is where teachers learn from each other" (p. 104). Therefore, they recommend that "A good proportion of staff development resources be allocated not to workshops and inservices, but to opportunities for teachers to learn from, observe, and network with each other" (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, pp. 103 & 104). Similarly, Glickman (1992) states: "Staff development money and time should be used to plan and learn together those pedagogical methods, procedures, and skills needed to accomplish the school's goals" (p. 27). Fullan and Hargreaves also point out that there is plenty of evidence that shows that collegiality and collaboration among teachers is a necessary part of sustained improvement. Further, Joyce et al. (1993) stated that more successful schools and schools with more successful initiatives have greater degrees of cohesion and more collaborative structures.

Little (1990) as cited by Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) identifies four types of collegial

relationships between teachers. They are 1) scanning and storytelling, 2) helping and assisting, 3) sharing, and 4) joint work. The first three forms identified are considered to be relatively weak forms of collegiality. Joint work, which includes activities such as team teaching, planning, observation, action research, sustained peer coaching, and mentoring is considered to be the strongest form of collegial relationships. “To bite the bullet of fundamental, deep and lasting change, improvement efforts should move beyond cooperative decision-making and planning, sharing experience and resources, and supportive interpersonal relationships into joint work, mutual observation, and focused selective inquiry” (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 57). In their research, Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) have found that collegial school cultures are very powerful forces for change but, unfortunately, few schools are collegial.

Barth (1990) makes an important distinction between collegiality and congeniality. In his view, congeniality, which is a necessary component of effective organizations, is about individuals enjoying each other’s company and getting along. In contrast, Barth states that collegiality is about the presence of four specific behaviors identified by Judith Warren Little in 1981:

1. “Adults in schools talk about practice. These conversations about teaching and learning are frequent, continuous, concrete, and precise.”
2. “Adults in schools observe each other engaged in the practice of teaching and administration. These observations become the practice to reflect on and talk about.”
3. “Adults engage together in work on curriculum by planning, designing, researching, and evaluating curriculum.”
4. “Adults in schools teach each other what they know about teaching, learning, and leading. Craft knowledge is revealed, articulated, and shared” (p. 31).

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) identify the characteristics of collaborative school cultures as follows:

1. "In collaborative cultures, failure and uncertainty are not protected and defended, but shared and discussed with a view to gaining help and support" (p. 48).
2. "Collaborative cultures acknowledge and give voice to the teacher's purpose" (p. 49).
3. "Collaborative cultures also respect, celebrate, and make allowances for the teacher as a person" (p. 49).
4. "Collaborative cultures create and sustain more satisfying and productive work environments. By empowering teachers and reducing the uncertainties of the job that must otherwise be faced in isolation, collaborative cultures also raise student achievement" (p. 49).
5. "Within these schools, the individual and the group are inherently and simultaneously valued" (p. 49).
6. "In the fully functioning collaborative school, many (indeed all) teachers are leaders" (p. 51).

Barth (1990) identifies the outcomes associated with collegiality in schools. The outcomes include 1) better decisions 2) better implementation of decisions made 3) higher levels of morale and trust among the adults 4) adult learning is energized and more likely to be sustained 5) some evidence suggests that student motivation and achievement also rise. Barth contends that collegiality and improved relationships among adults in schools needs to be at the top of the national agenda of school improvement as positive collegial relationships amongst adults is the precondition which allows, energizes, and sustains all attempts at improving schools. "Unless adults talk with one

another, observe one another, and help one another, very little will change” (Barth, 1990, p. 32). “The collaborative school provides a climate and a structure that encourage teachers to work together and with the principal and other administrators toward school improvement and professional growth” (Smith, 1987, p. 6).

While collegiality is a very desirable goal, Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) caution against ‘contrived collegiality’ which can take valuable time away from activities with students. They state that in an attempt to have a ‘collegial school’, collegiality is sometimes imposed as an inflexible system which can be more of a constraint than an opportunity. In their opinion, contrived collegiality can reduce innovation and imaginative solutions to individual problems or situations, as going against the pressure of the group whether traditional or innovative can be very difficult. They also point out that groups are more vulnerable to faddism than individuals. “The unthinking self-suppression of one’s own intuition and experiential knowledge is one of the major reasons why bandwagons and ill-conceived innovations flourish (and then inevitably fade, giving change a bad name)” (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 7).

Sagor (1995) shares Fullan and Hargreaves’ concerns about the unwelcome and unanticipated consequences of contrived collegiality. Sagor states: “In our experience, the greatest costs of contrived collegiality are the compromise of passion and the creation of a false impression that consensus exists on essential instruction matters” (p. 24).

Mandating school-wide approaches or initiatives can siphon creative energy from individual staff members’ consuming professional interests to focus on the one initiative as determined by consensus of all staff (Sagor, 1995). In contrast, in the self-renewing schools studied by Sagor, each person is free to focus on professional issues of individual or team interest and concern. It is Sagor’s view that contrived congeniality can be avoided by fostering natural collaboration around issues of mutual concern.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) identify some potential problems associated with collegiality that are worthy of consideration. The first is the potential for balkanization of the staff which can result in poor communication and groups in a school going their separate ways. The second potential problem is what they describe as ‘comfortable collaboration’ in which collegiality stops at congeniality and leaves the norms of privacy intact. In contrast to contrived collegiality, true collegiality, according to Fullan and Hargreaves, needs to evolve over time and be viewed as a valued way of working. They state: “Building collaborative cultures involves a long developmental journey. There are no easy shortcuts” (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 59).

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) also caution that professional interaction is a crucial stimulus for improvement, but not ‘the solution’. They believe that working alone is valuable and should not be disregarded altogether. They state: “As one engages in interactive professionalism, it is essential that development and change are grounded in some inner reflection and processing” (p. 8). In their view, solitude, personal development, and creativity are also critical for improvement. Fullan and Hargreaves advocate for a blending of individual and group work. They state: “We must experiment and discover better ways of working together that mobilize the power of the group while at the same time enhances individual development. We must use collegiality not to level people down, but to bring together strength and creativity” (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 9). According to Fullan and Hargreaves, we should seek to eliminate individualism and privatism, but not eradicate individuality because it is the key to personal renewal, which is the foundation for collective renewal.

In summary, enhancing collegial relationships and building collaborative cultures holds much promise for teacher professional growth and school improvement. However, as Fullan and Hargreaves claim “The value of teacher development and teacher collaboration

must ultimately be judged by whether these changes make teachers better for their students in ways that teachers themselves can see” (p. 83).

Leadership

In discussing what gives rise to the problematic and debilitating relationships of parallel play, competition, and isolation found in many schools, Barth (1990) claims that these problems are rooted in the relationships between teachers and the principal. He states: “I have found no characteristic of a good school more pervasive than a healthy teacher-principal relationship--and no characteristic of a troubled school more common than a troubled, embattled administrator-teacher relationship” (Barth, 1990, p. 19). Further, he claims that the relationship between teacher and principal models what all relationships will be in the school. “If the teacher-principal relationship can be characterized as helpful, supportive, trusting, revealing of craft knowledge, so too will others” (p. 19). Similarly, Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) point out the importance of ‘reciprocal helping relationships’ between school leaders and teachers in building collaborative cultures. In their view, leaders need to not only provide help to others, but they also need to acknowledge and communicate their own needs as help-receivers in order to build effective cooperative collegial relationships.

The role of the principal in developing a school culture which is conducive to teacher learning is critically important (Barth, 1990; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Joyce et al., 1993; Senge in conversation with O’Neil, 1995). Sergiovanni (1992) suggests that the kind of leadership principals provide influences the collegial norm structure of schools. Senge (in conversation with O’Neil, 1995) states: “The principals I know who have had the greatest impact tend to see their job as creating an environment where teachers can continually learn” (p. 21). According to Fullan and Hargreaves, the development of

collaborative schools has depended extensively on the actions of the principals. In describing the kind of leadership which is conducive to the development of collaborative cultures, they state: "It is not the charismatic, innovative high flyer that moves whole school cultures forward. Rather it is a more subtle kind of leadership which makes activity meaningful for others" (p. 51). Principals can build on the elements of recognition, trust, and support, which Fullan and Hargreaves believe are essential to creating an effective teaching community. Joyce et al. (1993) support the position that strong leadership is essential and they identify what they consider to be the two important dimensions of leadership: an ability to generate a collaborative community and being an effective problem solver. Lambert (1988) states that the role of leaders must be that of facilitators who assist professionals in:

- inquiring into and reflecting on practice,
- bringing to the surface and sharing knowledge of the craft,
- identifying and creating options,
- leading and working collaboratively,
- learning about the state-of-the-art in the profession, and
- designing school and district systems that open opportunities and encourage participation. (p. 668)

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) offer some insights for administrators in building collaborative schools. Firstly, they state: "The principal is a role model of collaboration inside and outside the school" (p. 91). Secondly, Fullan and Hargreaves encourage administrators to recognize the diverse forms that collaborative work can take and not mandate or pressure teachers into accepting one form. Thirdly, they emphasize the importance of maintaining a balance between collaboration and individuality as both have a place.

Little (1981), as cited by Barth (1990), identifies four specific behaviors of principals that were related to the prevalence of collegiality in a school. The four behaviors are 1) making expectations of cooperation among teachers explicit, 2) modeling collegiality by working collaboratively with teachers and other principals, 3) rewarding collegiality by providing release time, recognition, resources, and space, and 4) protecting teachers who risk engaging in collegial behavior. In addition, Barth (1990) suggests that empowering teachers or involving them in important school decisions helps to develop collegial relationships. “To the extent that teachers and principals together can make important school decisions, they become colleagues. They become grown-ups. They become professionals” (p. 36).

In building learning communities, Barth (1990) suggests that it is extremely important for the principal to be a learner or become what he calls the ‘head learner’. However, he states that there are some obstacles to principals becoming head learners. Some of the obstacles principals face include 1) the perception of the principal being ‘flawed’ if he/she pursues professional development, 2) time constraints, and 3) the demanding nature of the position. Nevertheless, Barth contends that one of the most powerful reasons for principals to overcome the obstacles to their own learning and to be learners as well as leaders is the extraordinary influence of modeling the desired behavior. Barth states, “ ‘Do as I do’ is a powerful formula in transforming schools from places with older, learned people and younger learning people into a community of learners where everyone is both a teacher and a learner” (p. 82).

Because of the nature of their position, principals can significantly influence the professional growth of their teachers. Barth (1990) states: “Because principals can influence many of the elements central to a teacher’s professional life--time, coverage, space, materials, money, personnel--they have an extraordinary opportunity to work

with teachers to shape a school environment in which teachers become students of their own and others' teaching" (p. 59). Further, Barth suggests, that for principals "staff development means being ready to supply assistance or encouragement in a hundred different ways" (p. 57). Principals are in a position to make a difference and to enhance the learning opportunities for teachers.

In summary, effective leadership is key to change, teachers' growth, and enhanced learning for students. Principals play a vital role in creating cultures which are conducive to professional growth. The types of relationships principals establish can significantly influence collegiality amongst teachers and their willingness to work collaboratively rather than in isolation. By becoming the 'head learner' and supporting teachers in their learning, principals can positively impact teachers' professional development.

Adult Learners

In the previous sections, the role of school cultures, relationships, and leadership in the professional development of teachers was explored. However, it is my opinion that in seeking to gain an understanding of effective professional development practices, some attention needs to be given to what we know about how adults learn best.

Teachers, in their pursuit of professional development, are adult learners. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the vast amount of literature on the subject of the adult learner, a basic knowledge is helpful in terms of understanding effective professional development practices. In discussing what helps adults learn and grow, McGreal (1996) states: "We know that adults respond primarily to positive reinforcement, that they want to be involved, that they prefer to operate in a collegial and collaborative environment" (p. 30). Knowles (1980) states that adults have a deep psychological need to be self-directing, they have a reservoir of experience that becomes

an increasingly rich resource for learning, they need to be able to apply their learning to real life tasks and situations, and they become ready to learn when they experience a need to solve a problem or cope with a real-life task. Knowles offers some implications for practice based on the knowledge of how adults learn which include the following:

1. Adults need to be involved in the process of planning their own learning. (p. 48)
2. Adults need to have choice. (p. 46)
3. Because adults are more deeply motivated to learn those things they see the need to learn, greater emphasis needs to be placed on involving adult learners in the self-diagnosis of needs for learning. (p. 47)
4. Rather than being judged by another adult, adult learners need to engage in self-evaluation and gather evidence about the progress they are making toward their educational goals. (p. 49)
5. Because adults have a richer reservoir of experience, greater emphasis needs to be placed on participatory experiential techniques (simulation exercises, field projects, case method, group discussion, action projects) that tap the experience of the adult learner rather than on transmittal techniques such as lectures and assigned readings. (p. 50)
6. Adults need opportunities to apply their learning. (p. 50)

These assumptions and implications for practice provide the philosophical foundation for models for individualized or personalized professional growth (Marczely, 1996). With the recent changes in Alberta Education policy which now requires that every teacher create a professional growth plan on an annual basis, it is timely to explore individualized approaches to professional development.

Individualized Professional Development

Marczely (1996) states: “In our search to provide for the professional development of teachers, we have ignored two of the fundamental traits of a true professional: individuality and self-determination” (p. vii). She claims that as a result, current professional development practices are inadequate to effect change. She states: “Perhaps, however, the underlying cause for the professional paralysis we now encounter is our inability to give teachers meaningful personal options and acknowledge that as professionals they must be allowed to select from a variety of professional development programs and approaches if real and lasting growth and change are to be achieved” (Marczely, 1996, p. viii). Marzely contends that meaningful change always begins with the individual. Similarly, Lieberman (1995) states: “What everyone appears to want for students- a wide array of learning opportunities that engage students in experiencing, creating, and solving real problems, using their own experiences, and working with others -is for some reason denied to teachers when they are learners” (p. 591).

Marczely states: “At present, the goal of professional development is usually pursued through a single recipe intended to satisfy all participants and all needs with one approach” (p. vii). Marzely claims that too much of what we presently do is collective inservice, not personalized professional development. She goes on to say that for the most part, professional development practice has ignored the need to get beyond blind prescriptive training in large-group settings and to personalize the professional development experience. McGreal in conversation with Brandt (1996) states: “We can’t pride ourselves on individualizing instruction for students and then treat all adults exactly alike” (p. 33). Just as no single approach works best at all times for all students, no single approach works for all teachers all of the time. Schools need to recognize the same need to individualize for students exists for teachers’ professional growth (Marczely, 1996).

“Individualized staff development celebrates and honors a diversity of interests, knowledge, and skill” (Obermeyer & Robinson, 1991, p. 6).

One way to individualize professional development for teachers is with a self-directed model utilizing professional growth plans. With this model, the learners have the primary responsibility for planning, carrying out, and evaluating their own learning experiences (Caffarella, 1993). Glatthorn (1996) describes the growth plan approach to professional development or ‘self-directed’ model in the following manner:

In self-directed models of teacher development, the teacher typically identifies a significant goal related to his or her professional development. That goal may be derived from one or more of several sources: the school improvement plan; the advanced skills of teaching; or new knowledge about the subject or students the teacher is responsible for. The teacher then identifies the means by which he or she will achieve that goal, the resources needed, and the way in which accomplishment will be assessed. (p. 25)

Marczely suggests that a successful professional development program should be characterized by diversity of ideas, individuals and approaches. “Options must be made available, with the only prescription being that the teacher take the time to establish personal, professional goals and choose options that will help to attain them” (Marczely, 1996, p. 8). Caffarella points out that being self-directed in one’s learning is the way that most adults go about acquiring new skills, ideas, and attitudes. However, she contends that this type of learning often goes unrecognized as legitimate professional development.

Caffarella (1993) identifies six steps in creating an effective learning plan:

1. Develop the learning objectives.
2. Identify learning strategies and resources.
3. Specify the evidence of accomplishments.

4. Describe the evaluative criteria and designate who will evaluate the evidence.
5. Develop a time-line.
6. Work with a peer consultation team and facilitator.

According to Marzely (1996), in successful staff development, teachers are active participants rather than passive reactors. Obermeyer and Robinson (1991) support this position and state:

Every major report on school reform in recent years has concluded that, for schools to be effective, students must be actively involved in the learning process. The adults in schools are learners, too. They must participate in selecting goals and determining learning strategies. (p. 1)

“The key is that the learner takes the primary lead for fostering his or her own growth and development” (Cafferella, 1993, p. 30).

According to Lambert (1988): “Human development is a function of engagement with others in a professional culture that offers choice, authority, and responsibility” (p. 666). With an individualized professional development model, teachers are given control over their own professional development as they create their own professional growth plans.

In creating professional growth plans, teachers are expected to reflect on their practice and to determine their own learning goals. McGreal (in conversation with Brandt, 1996) supports the use of professional growth plans or individual goal setting. In his view, it is absolutely essential for people to set their own goals. Additionally, Raines (1983) contends: “Goal setting forces teachers (and the principal) to analyze their own strengths and weaknesses” (p. 112). Senge (in conversation with O’Neil, 1995) states: “Really deep learning is a process that inevitably is driven by the learner, not by someone else. And it always involves moving back and forth between a domain of thinking and a domain of action” (p. 20). Similarly, Barth (1990) found that initiatives emanating from a teacher

have powerful potential for professional growth. In his view, it is the source of the problem for adults that determines the energy and motivation that will be spent in resolving the problem. Like Barth, Knowles (1980) believes that adults are more motivated to learn when they see a need to learn or need to solve a problem to cope with real life situations.

Individual growth plans provide teachers with choice. Teachers can choose from a wide variety of options and approaches which allows them to pursue professional development that is personally meaningful and based on the needs, interests, and stage of career of the individual. Marzely (1996) suggests that teachers need to be allowed to pursue professional development tailored to their individual needs and to be given viable and challenging options from which to choose. Hirsh and Ponder (1991) support this view and state: “Successful staff development acknowledges that adults need choice” (p. 45). They indicate that successful school improvement occurs when teachers are seen as professionals and when they “participate as valued partners in the staff development process” (p. 45). In creating their own professional development plans, teachers are involved in the process of planning their own learning and are self-directing which, according to Knowles (1980), is a deep psychological need of the adult learner. “Individualized staff development trusts teachers to be self-directed learners” (Obermeyer & Robinson, 1991, p. 5).

In choosing the learning activities to be pursued in order to accomplish their goals, teachers have the opportunity to choose activities which fit with their personal learning styles, and to tie their learning to their daily work schedules. Marzely (1993) states: “It allows learners to capitalize on their own learning styles, choose their own ways of learning, and better fit the learning activities into their daily schedules” (p. 31).

In discussing the use of individual goal setting for teacher growth, Raines (1983) suggests that this approach can help teachers and principals adopt a team approach to teacher improvement. McGreal (in conversation with Brandt, 1996) contends that once the teacher's goals are established, the goals should become goals of the teacher and the administrator and that they should work on them together. Raines points out that the challenge to principals is to adopt an administrative style which will allow teachers to reach their goals. He states "Specifically, the principal must talk with teachers, help teachers, listen to teachers, and encourage teachers. In short, the principal must provide a climate for growth that is positive and non-threatening, and that allows everyone to succeed" (p. 112). McGreal views the role of the administrator, with an individual goal setting approach to professional learning, as that of facilitator, coach, and provider of resources. Similarly, Glatthorn (1996) states, "The supervisor acts as a facilitator, clarifying goals and methods, providing resources, and sharing in the assessment process" (p. 25). Caffarella (1993) offers staff developers the following specific suggestions in working with staff members:

- Provide information that would help learners formulate their goals.
- Help identify potential strategies and resources.
- Assist learners to develop appropriate evaluative criteria and identify people who could provide insightful feedback.
- Provide resources and matching people who could assist the learner.
- Match staff who are willing to be facilitators.
- Provide opportunities for peer consultation teams to meet. (p. 34)

The literature on adult learners suggests that rather than be judged by another adult, learners should engage in self-evaluation and gather their own evidence about progress toward educational goals. With individual professional growth plans, self-evaluation is an

important component. Teachers are expected to monitor their own progress toward accomplishing their goals. McGreal (in conversation with Brandt, 1996) suggests that teachers and administrators should sit down together when the plan has been completed to write up what has been accomplished, reflections, and future directions. He contends that there should be no summative write-up, no ratings, and no evaluative commentary by administrators.

Clarke (as cited in Glatthorn, 1996) offers seven guidelines for teachers in using a self-directed model for professional development:

- Write a credo of teaching
- Start with the strengths
- Make a five year plan
- Use the classroom as the locus of growth
- Ask for support
- Pursue quality ventures
- Blow your own trumpet. (p. 25)

To summarize, the individualized model of professional growth which allows teachers to determine their own goals and to pursue their learning through a variety of options, approaches, and strategies, incorporates many components of what the literature suggests are important for the adult learner. In contrast, traditional approaches to professional development such as the one-shot workshop or collective inservice are not supported by the literature on the adult learner.

While traditional approaches to staff development lead to some degree of uniformity, Barth (1990) suggests that in responding to teacher initiatives there is greater diversity. He states that "it led to wide diversity of teachers, teaching styles, methods, and

programs--and considerable interdependent behavior” (p. 58). He went on to point out that such diversity was very positive as it led teachers to examine their own practices and approaches more closely.

McGreal (in conversation with Brandt, 1996) encourages the development of professional development goals for teams of teachers. He sees the professional development teams as being the same teams that are already established in schools, such as grade level teams or department teams. This idea of teams of teachers pursuing professional development together promoted by McGreal is similar to Sagor’s (1995) notion of limited time partnerships for the purpose of professional learning. Sagor advocates the fostering of natural collaborative teams around issues of mutual concern. In working together in pursuit of professional growth, teachers have the opportunity to enhance their collaborative relationships and to engage in joint work and sharing of craft. Barth (1990) states: “Teachers working in any kind of team are provided with a built-in support system, someone to observe and by whom to be observed, an adult with whom to talk about teaching, learning, and students” (p. 34).

What is the optimal size of groups for these professional development teams? In reviewing the literature, I found that most individuals do not specify an optimal number. However, Barth (1990) states that it is his belief that the optimal number of adults working together is two. He indicates that the resources and energy of one teacher working in isolation can quickly be depleted, but large teams can be problematic. It is his opinion that with large teams, too much time and energy is spent in meetings and trying to arrive at consensus.

Although the literature supports individualized approaches to professional learning, the importance of coordinated and integrated efforts in area of school improvement and change has also been emphasized (Brandt, 1996; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Joyce et al.,

1993; Senge in conversation with O'Neil, 1995). Senge states, "Significant changes in the content and process of education require coordinated efforts throughout a school" (p. 21). McGreal (in conversation with Brandt, 1996) argues that if professional development goals and teams are to have the impact desired then the goals need to mesh with the school and district goals. During the past few years, teachers in Alberta have become familiar with 'Three Year Plans'. Schools and school jurisdictions are now required to develop three year plans which mesh with Alberta Education's Three Year Plan. Teachers' involvement in the creation of their school's three year plan presents an opportunity for teachers to become aware of and familiar with the direction and initiatives of their district as well as Alberta Education. Rather than adding more to an already full plate, teachers can choose to align their individual and/or team goals with the goals of their school and district. Caffarella (1993) contends that growth plans enable teachers to respond to district and/or school goals and learn how to meet those goals in their own way.

Promising Practices

Individual professional development plans allow teachers to pursue their learning through a variety of approaches and avenues which best fit with an individual teacher's preferred learning styles, interests, and needs. In the next section, I will explore some of the approaches or routes to learning which I consider to be promising practices. The intent is to provide a brief overview of the approaches as it is beyond the scope of this paper to do a thorough examination of each. It should be noted that there is considerable overlap between the different practices. Although the practices are discussed separately, it is recognized that they are not mutually exclusive.

Reflection

According to Glatthorn (1996), “Reflection is a process of thinking systematically and insightfully about professional issues” (p. 27). Barth (1990) states: “The crux of teachers’ professional growth, I feel, is the development of a capacity to observe and analyze the consequences for students of different teaching behaviors, materials, and to learn to make continuous modifications of teaching on the basis of cues students convey” (p. 49). In considering teachers’ ability and willingness to examine their practice, he suggests that teachers generally fall into three categories or groups .

1. “Teachers who are unable and unwilling to critically examine their teaching practice and unable to have other adults--teachers, principals, parents,-- examine what and how they are teaching” (p. 53).
2. “Teachers who are quite able and willing to continually scrutinize and reflect on what they do and make use of their insights to effect periodic changes” (p. 53).
3. “A small number of teachers who are able and willing to critically scrutinize their practice and are quite able and willing, even desirous, of making their practice accessible to other adults” (p. 54).

“If teachers differ in their ability to examine practice and have others examine it, then perhaps our attempts to help them grow professionally should be correspondingly different” (Barth, 1990, p. 54). If the crux of professional development is the ability to reflect on one’s own teaching as Barth contends, then teachers need encouragement, time, and opportunities to develop their skills in being able to observe and analyze their teaching. As Marczely (1996) states: “Teachers must have time, support, and understanding to deal with their professional goals, yet many educational managers run schools with an assembly line mentality that ignores the need for professional reflection”

(p. 5).

Donald Schon's (1987) concept of the 'reflective practitioner' is about developing skilled and thoughtful judgment in professional actions. According to Fullan and Hargreaves (1991), his work has helped to move the mindsets of educators and professional developers beyond a narrow focus on training toward wider processes of thoughtful education which link reflection directly to practice (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). Fullan and Hargreaves support Schon's position on the importance of reflective practice and encourage teachers' reflection in, on and about action to make thinking about action in the classroom more explicit. However, they point out that in some situations 'reflective practice' has become a new buzz-word with little changing in terms of teacher reflection. They state that there are weak forms and strong forms of reflection and advocate for deeper reflection that leads to new insights and improvements in practice.

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) suggest that for the most part, teachers reflect in and on their practice with limited data. Often, teachers' only source of information is their own personal impressions gathered from students in the hustle and bustle of classroom life. Fullan and Hargreaves encourage teachers to gather feedback from students in a more thorough and systematic way as it can be a 'powerful spur' to teacher development. However, they go on to state that even good feedback from students is not usually enough to provoke stronger and deeper kinds of reflection. They point out that deeper reflection often requires other eyes or the perspectives of colleagues. They state:

While reflection in and on action will often require moments of solitude, other colleagues will also need to be involved if reflection is to be deepened and extended into those areas of discomfort and dissonance that precipitate change by exposing gaps between what we think we do and what we really do. (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991, p. 68)

Fullan and Hargreaves identify seven techniques or possibilities for developing strong reflective practice. They are 1) evoking positive personal images, 2) professional reading, 3) professional dialogue, 4) teacher support groups, 5) teacher research, 6) autobiographies and life histories, and 7) taking courses. Teacher self-reflection is not an isolated technique but, rather, it is an important aspect of many other approaches to professional growth.

Professional Dialogue

Glatthorn (1987) describes professional dialogue in the following manner:

Professional dialogue occurs when small groups of teachers meet regularly for the guided discussion of their own teaching as it relates to current developments in education. The objective is to facilitate reflection about practice, helping teachers become more thoughtful decision makers. (p. 31)

Professional dialogue provides an opportunity for teachers to become actively involved in their learning, to think about practices, and to help articulate their knowledge. Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) contend that the wisdom of teachers is often considerably undervalued compared to the wisdom of administrators and researchers. They see a need for critical dialogue amongst the different groups as the wisdom of all three groups has considerable value for each of them. Further, they suggest that teachers need to have opportunities to examine their purposes and practices in comparison with those of others and of research and, thus, advocate for opportunities for professional dialogue.

Portfolios

Developing a professional portfolio provides teachers with an opportunity to examine and reflect on practice as well as clarify and articulate their personal vision or sense of

purpose. Wolf (1996) states, "Portfolios have much to offer the teaching profession. When teachers carefully examine their own practices, those practices are likely to improve" (p. 37). Wolf views portfolios as a method of preserving the best of what teachers do. "Portfolios allow teachers to retain examples of good teaching so they can examine them, talk about them, adapt them, and adopt them" (Wolf, 1996, p. 37). Rather than being a scrapbook style collection of artifacts, effective portfolios are selective, as only carefully chosen materials are included, and they are reflective, in that they foster the habit of thinking about teaching (Glatthorn, 1996; Wolf, 1996). Although portfolios can be time consuming to assemble, they present teachers with the opportunity to document and reflect on their practice and to grow professionally.

Writing

Barth (1990) promotes professional writing as a powerful tool for professional growth. He states: "Probably no professional development activity has as much potential for promoting reflection, clarification, articulation, discussion -and risk-as writing" (p. 86). "A reflective capacity is a condition for personal and professional growth. Thus, by helping to order the disordered, writing supplies a powerful catalyst for professional change and personal growth" (p. 98). Glatthorn (1996) claims that in ways not fully understood, the process of writing helps the writer in discovering meaning. "Writing helps to objectify practice and to distance practitioners from it and offers a personal nourishment that can energize school people through the many bleak moments of school life" (Barth, 1990, p. 98). Professional writing not only helps individuals to reflect on their practice and grow professionally, but it also creates an opportunity and an avenue for the sharing of craft knowledge.

However, as Barth notes, there are many obstacles to teachers and administrators

writing to share their craft knowledge with others. Some of them include time constraints, complexity of the subject, fear of writing, concerns about generalizability, and legal constraints. Nevertheless, the clarification of practice, personal recognition, personal satisfaction, and resulting changes in the classroom and/or school make the challenge to overcome the obstacles worthwhile.

Teacher as Researcher

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) indicate that teacher research, especially action research, can be a very effective way of linking improvement and inquiry to classroom practice. Similarly, Hirsh and Ponder (1991) state that a teacher-as-researcher model is effective in promoting professional growth. “Teacher-as-researcher models provide proven ways for teachers to conduct systematic inquiry into classroom problems” (Hirsh & Ponder, 1991, p. 46). Teacher researchers define the problems, and develop a systematic approach toward solving them. Teacher-as-researcher models are based on the assumption that teachers are capable of independent learning. Hirsh and Ponder state, “A person’s greatest opportunity for growth is systematic inquiry into one’s own learning. Classrooms are the real world” (p. 46). They anticipate that in the future there will be greater collaboration between university professors and teachers in conducting research on practice.

Lambert (1988) states: “Staff development as we have known it has denied the importance of craft and knowledge generated through inquiry and has limited choice by presenting research as indisputable evidence of “correct” practice” (p. 666). She points out that teachers taking an active and inquiring stance must stem from their belief that they can be “chief architects of their knowledge, the primary knowledge generators of the profession” (p. 667). Unfortunately, many teachers seem to believe that ‘true’ knowledge is generated ‘out there’ and, consequently, undervalue knowledge gained through their

own inquiry into practice. Lambert points out: “We have taught teachers that valid knowledge about teaching lies outside the school and “comes in” through staff development” (p. 666). Similarly, Lieberman (1995) states: “Teachers have been told often enough (or it has been taken for granted) that other people’s understanding of teaching and learning is more important than their own and that their knowledge--gained from the dailiness of work with students-is of far less value” (p. 592). Nevertheless, action research or teacher-as-researcher models hold great promise for promoting professional growth of teachers and generating professional knowledge. The challenge remains for policy makers and educators to redefine professional development in a manner which places importance and value on knowledge generated through inquiry into classroom practice.

Teacher as Leader

In examining the professional growth of teachers and long-term school improvement from a broad perspective, it has been noted in the literature that teachers need to have more opportunities for leadership roles within schools (Barth, 1990; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Marczyk, 1996). The narrowness in the definition of the teacher’s role with limited opportunities for leadership has been seen as a limiting factor in teachers’ learning and growth. The types of leadership opportunities that have been advocated for teachers include experiences with policy development, administrative tasks, induction programs, mentor roles, coaching projects, collaborative group work, committee work, and school improvement projects (Barth, 1990; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991). These leadership opportunities for experienced teachers are not meant to be burdensome but, rather, to offer new avenues for teacher growth and development. However, Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) caution against superficial, contrived and bureaucratic leadership roles. Similarly,

Barth (1990) advocates for opportunities for teachers to take on leadership roles in areas or aspects of school life which are particularly meaningful for the individual teacher.

In comparing the professional development of teachers to that of other professions, Marczely states: “They have progressed by encouraging personalized research, diversified training, and risk taking within their ranks. These professions offer their constituents a wide range of professional development alternatives from which to choose in structuring their careers” (p. 1). Marczely claims that in contrast to other professions, in the field of education, risk taking, experimentation and movement within the professional ranks has never been encouraged and, in fact, is often discouraged.

Collegial Partnerships

Although the role of collegial relationships in promoting professional growth has been discussed at length in this paper, I think that it is important to mention that collegial partnerships for professional learning represent a promising practice worthy of consideration. With collegial partnerships, two or more teachers work together to better understand teaching and learning (Edwards, 1995). “Activities may include classroom observations, reviews of the literature, and open discussion of various facets of their profession” (Edwards, 1995, p. 73). Showers and Joyce (1996) point out: “Teachers learn from one another while planning instruction, developing support materials, watching one another work with students, and thinking together about the impact of their behavior on their students’ learning” (p. 15). Lieberman (1986) states: “Regardless of the context, team deliberation has been shown to produce knowledge and self-learning for teachers, provide powerful professional development and encourage greater collegial interaction” (p. 28). Collegial partnerships have the potential to significantly enhance professional learning of teachers.

Beginning Teachers

Beginning teachers have unique needs in the area of professional development and require special attention (Edwards, 1995; Hirsh & Ponder, 1991; McGreal in conversation with Brandt, 1995). McGreal suggests that beginning teachers need to develop a basic set of effective teaching skills and, thus, an approach that is different from that used with experienced teachers is necessary. He states that while experienced teachers can benefit greatly from developing a professional improvement plan approach, beginning teachers would benefit from mentoring, coaching, and direct instruction in basic teaching skills. Edwards (1995) suggests that if beginning teachers do complete professional growth plans, they will require extra assistance and coaching.

CHAPTER THREE METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This study on the effectiveness of teacher professional growth plans was conducted as an observational case study research. “The case study involves an investigator who makes a detailed examination of single subjects or group or phenomenon” (Borg & Gall, 1983, p. 488). As such, this study is an indepth and detailed study of one group of teachers in one particular school. The views of ten teachers, regarding the effectiveness and the process of completing professional growth plans, were explored through participant observation and the use of informal interviews.

I chose this method of research for a number of reasons. Firstly, I wanted to gain a thorough understanding of the teachers’ perspectives in the school in which I am assistant principal. Ensuring that teachers’ have meaningful opportunities for professional growth within the school has been a compelling challenge for me for a number of years. I felt that case study research would provide me with information and a deeper understanding, which could help me be of assistance to teachers in their pursuit of professional growth. As the school in this study has ten teachers at different stages in their careers and with a wide variety of interests, I felt that a range of perspectives could be represented. Lastly, I chose to focus on one particular school because teacher professional growth plans are relatively new and schools are at various stages in the implementation process.

The Community

The school involved in this study is located in a rural resort community in central Alberta. Because of the town’s close proximity to a larger center, it is in many ways a bedroom community. The community has recently experienced very rapid growth,

resulting in a steady increase in the student population. During the spring and summer months, the population of this community increases three to four times its winter population. The town is quite a transient community with cabins available at cheaper rents during the winter months. There is quite a wide spread in the socioeconomic status of the residents. At one end, there are cheap rental accommodations and two large trailer parks and at the other end of the spectrum are lakefront homes ranging in value from \$300,000 to \$500,000.

The School

The school is a relatively new and very nicely maintained facility. The grade configurations of the school have changed on a regular basis as the community has expanded. During the 1996-97 school year, the school became, for the first time, a kindergarten to grade two school. Previously, this school had been a kindergarten to grade four school, while the other elementary school in the community was kindergarten to grade six. With changing enrolment, it was decided that all of the students in kindergarten to grade two should be located in one school rather than two. This resulted in significant staff movement between the two schools with five new staff members joining the staff of the school involved in this research. In many ways, this year was a joining together of the staffs of two separate schools. None of the members of grade level teams had worked together before as a team. Previously, each school had grade level teams, but the teams from the two different schools had not worked together regularly.

The Subjects

The subjects involved in this research study are kindergarten to grade two teachers with teaching experience ranging from four to thirty years. Although five of the staff

members were new to the school, all of those involved in the study had previous experience with professional development plans. I chose to interview ten teachers because I felt that it would provide a broader base of data from which to learn and develop insights. All of the teachers interviewed were full-time regular classroom teachers. One teacher in the school was not involved in the study as she had missed part of the school year due to medical reasons. Nine of the interviewees were female and one was male. The staff members of the school readily agreed to participate in the study and to be interviewed. They were extremely cooperative and insightful.

The Professional Growth Plan Process

Members of the staff in the school being studied were asked to develop professional growth plans, as they have been required to do for a number of years. For five of the staff members, the process and format of the professional development plans was new. Before I begin to describe the process used in this particular school, I think it is important to note that the three year school improvement plan was completed by the staff prior to the development of individual or team professional development plans. Teachers were encouraged to consider the school goals as they created their own professional development plans. There were a number of reasons for the request to consider the school goals. Firstly, it was hoped that the goals teachers developed would fit with the general direction of the school goals. Secondly, teachers are very busy people and they need to be realistic about the number of goals they are pursuing. Nevertheless, it was clearly communicated to teachers that they were not required to choose a school goal as one of their own goals and that the plan was to be of their own choosing.

To assist staff members in the development of their professional growth plans, The following steps were identified:

1. Teachers reflected on their practices and engaged in self-evaluation in order to determine areas of need and to identify areas in which to pursue professional growth. Learning objectives or goals were then developed. Teachers were encouraged to limit the number of goals in their plan.
2. Strategies or steps to accomplish each goal were identified.
3. Resources including people, places, and materials were specified.
4. A time-line for accomplishing the steps and goals was established.
5. Teachers shared their growth plans with an administrator at a regular ‘growth meeting’ in late October or early November. The administrators offered suggestions and ideas regarding strategies and available resources. The teachers suggested ways that the administrators could help them accomplish the plan. The administrators did not veto any goals or growth plans. The administrators attempted to create a non-judgemental and respectful atmosphere to encourage openness in dialogue.
6. A follow-up growth meeting was scheduled for February. The teacher and administrator reviewed the professional growth plan and discussed progress, challenges or roadblocks, and ways the administrator could be of assistance in accomplishing the goals.
7. During the June growth meeting, the growth plan was jointly reviewed by the teacher and the administrator. Discussions focused on aspects of the plan that were completed and went well, what difficulties were encountered and why, unexpected directions of professional growth during the past year, and possible new directions for the following year.

It should be noted that goals were not ‘written in stone’ and they could be changed if the teacher felt that he or she had discovered a more important goal requiring immediate attention. For example, if a teacher had a new student arrive who was behaviorally

disordered, the teacher could modify the plan and pursue professional growth in the area of behavior management. As discussed previously, teachers were also given the option of developing team professional development goals.

Format of the Growth Plan

The growth plan form consists of two pages. The first page is designed to encourage self-reflection and self-evaluation as it focuses on beliefs, philosophy of education, previous professional development activities, and possible areas for individual growth. Teachers are not required to share this page but, rather, it is designed to encourage reflection. The second page of the growth plan is a basic form with the required components of the plan identified. The form is very simple with boxes limiting the amount of writing. Teachers were free to use the available form or complete a format of their choosing. (A copy of the form can be found in the appendix.)

Data Collection

The study was conducted at the end of the school year during the last two weeks of June after completion of step seven in the growth plan process. During the first part of June, teachers were busy evaluating their students and working on report cards so it was not a really good time for interviews. I was concerned about conducting the interviews during the summer as the thoughts of many teachers are not on school. In addition, many teachers were not available during the summer as they were away on holidays. I had considered doing the interviews during late August and September, but, at that time, teachers are busy preparing for the new school year. Although June is a very busy time, teachers had just completed their annual growth plans and they were still fresh in their minds, so June it was. The interviews were arranged with each teacher at a time that was

convenient for him or her. I encouraged the teachers to consider their work loads as we scheduled the time. Most teachers wished to be interviewed during the last week of school after they had completed their report cards and required paper work. Two teachers were interviewed at home after the school year had ended.

The interviews were conducted at a variety of times. Interviews were held in the morning prior to school commencing, during lunch hour, and after school. Some of the teachers offered to give up their preparation time for the interview. Most of the interviews were 40 to 50 minutes in length. The interviews were conducted in offices in the school or in a quiet location in the home.

Conducting the Interview

At the beginning of each interview, I summarized and reviewed with the interviewees the purpose of the study. I reassured them that identifying information would not be used and their responses would be anonymously reported. I attempted to make each interviewee feel at ease, was informal in my approach, and asked that the interviewees be as frank as possible in their responses to the questions.

While the questions were written out, the discussion was not limited to my set of questions. As the interviews were conducted in an informal manner, the interviewees had opportunities to lead some of the discussion in directions of their choosing. I found that it was necessary to rephrase some of the questions and the informality of the interview allowed this to happen naturally. The one question in particular that I needed to rephrase a couple of times was the question regarding school culture. The interviews in many respects resembled conversations as I actively listened, clarified my understanding of what was stated, and asked questions to clarify a point or probe further. A copy of the interview questions is included in the appendix.

Two methods were used in recording the interview responses. I made anecdotal notes of the responses and, with permission, I made audio-tapes of the interviews. I assured the interviewees that the tapes were for my own use, in the event that I missed an important point or wanted to review responses.

I concluded the interviews by asking if there was anything they wished to add regarding professional development that I perhaps did not ask about during the interview. I suggested that if they wanted to add anything to what they had already stated about professional development, they were most welcome to do so. I really appreciated the time, the different perspectives, and support of the teachers as I conducted the research. I ended the interview with a heartfelt thank-you!

Interview Observations

As I conducted the interviews, I made the following observations. Firstly, although all of the teachers readily agreed to do the interviews, I noticed some differences in the comfort levels of individuals. Some individuals appeared to be very comfortable with the interview and were more than willing to share their ideas and opinions in great detail. In contrast, a couple interviewees seemed more reluctant, hesitant, and did not expand on points that they had made. However, I found that if I restated their point, they would often provide more information. As the interviews progressed, I noticed that these individuals became more comfortable and relaxed. It is my opinion based on my observations of responses and body language that most individuals were comfortable enough with our relationship to be able to be frank in their responses.

Generalizability

This study has been conducted as a case study and, accordingly, the generalizability to

other settings or situations is limited. The size of the sample group is small, with ten teachers being interviewed. Another factor to consider is that as the assistant principal in the school where the study was conducted, I am a participant observer. Thus, I am not an unbiased observer and my observations reflect one person's point of view.

CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS

In the first section of this chapter, I will share the observations I made during the school year, briefly discuss the types of goals and activities chosen by teachers, and share some observations made following the final set of growth meetings. The second section of this chapter will be devoted to the findings of the interviews I conducted. The findings of each of the nine questions will be discussed separately. The tabulated results will be shared and common themes in responses will be identified. Interpretation and discussion of the data will not be discussed as part of this chapter but, rather, will be explored in chapter five.

Observations of The Process

As teachers began to work on their professional growth plans in early October, I noticed that there were frequent conversations between teachers as to what they were contemplating as goals for the year. Teachers appeared to openly discuss their plans and share ideas. I noticed that teachers often made reference to their particular group of students and the specific contexts of their classroom in discussing possible goals.

Although developing team professional development goals was optional, all of the grade level teams created team goals. Each of the grade level teams took a slightly different approach to their goals. One grade level team focused on peer visits, building some continuity between the different classrooms, and joint planning of units. Another grade level team chose to jointly explore a common concern, improving reading comprehension, by reading books and articles on the topic. Still another grade level team worked together to create some units for a new curriculum, to develop some assessment tools to ensure some consistency in student evaluation between the classrooms, and to increase their

knowledge base on conducting research projects with students.

In addition to team goals, all ten teachers chose to develop individual growth plans. The individual goals chosen varied widely amongst the teachers. For example, one teacher's goal was to enhance her science program. Another teacher wanted to learn more about integrating 'severely' handicapped children into the regular classroom as well as to learn more about the specific handicapping condition. A teacher with an English as a Second Language student in her classroom chose to pursue learning in meeting the special needs of ESL students. Another goal chosen by a teacher was to integrate technology into the different subject areas. As a final example, another teacher's goal was to implement Reader's and Writer's workshop in her classroom. Most of the teachers had one or two goals in their individual plan. One teacher had three goals in her plan.

The activities chosen to accomplish their goals also varied amongst the teachers. They included attending conferences, workshops, courses, or inservices, reading books and articles, working with colleagues, experimenting with and reflecting on the effectiveness of new approaches, visiting other classrooms and schools, examining new resources and available computer software, and meeting with a mentor or resource person.

The school's three year plan and specific school goals were completed prior to the development of individual and team professional development goals. While some of the goals chosen were directly related to the school goals, none of the goals chosen by individual teachers or teams was in conflict with the school's or the division's goals.

During the initial growth meetings with teachers, I sensed some apprehension on the part of the staff members who were new to the school and the growth plan process. In some situations, the dialogue was initially quite stilted and limited. However, it appeared that as these teachers became more comfortable, the conversation became more natural and open. It is my perception that the growth meetings were positive and productive.

Throughout the year, teachers generally stayed on track with their growth plans. Although the administrators were supportive and willing to help teachers, the ownership and responsibility for the growth plan remained the teacher's. In addition to the time set aside for grade level meetings at the monthly staff meetings, the grade level teams met regularly at lunch hour or after school. The administrators had no involvement in arranging these meetings and they did not attend grade level meetings. The teams were very much 'self-managing' teams.

Nine out of ten teachers did accomplish the goals that they had set out themselves. One teacher did not accomplish one of her goals mainly because she had too many goals initially. Consequently, she decided to abandon one goal part way through the year and plans to pursue it again next year. Although they did accomplish what they had set out to accomplish this year, several of the teachers discovered that their goal had become more of a long-term goal and, thus, needed to become part of next year's growth plan. My final observation is that most of the teachers already had a sense of direction for next year's growth plan by the end of June.

Interview Findings

Question #1: Do you believe that developing a professional growth plan has helped you to grow professionally during this past year? Why or why not?

Responses:

Nine out of ten teachers believed that their professional growth plan had helped them to grow professionally during the past year. One teacher felt that her growth plan had helped her grow somewhat during the past year. However, this respondent stated that she would have accomplished her goals and grown regardless of whether or not she had formally written out her goals.

In their reasons why they believed the growth plan had helped them grow, there were some common themes in the teachers' perspectives. Five out of ten teachers talked about how developing the professional growth plan had caused them to take some time to do some reflecting, thinking about their teaching practices, and self-evaluation. Another common theme discussed by the teachers was the importance of having a focus in their professional development. Eight out of ten teachers talked about how the growth plan helped them to focus on areas in which they personally needed to learn and grow. As one teacher stated:

Having a growth plan resulted in a more comprehensive approach to professional development. Other years, I did bits and pieces of professional development, but it did not have a clear sense of direction or a focus. When the plan was completed, I felt a sense of accomplishment because I had done a lot of learning and growing in my focus areas.

A third common theme to emerge in the teachers' responses was that having a professional development plan helped to keep their personal learning on track. Six out of ten of the teachers talked about how easily their own professional development got put on the back burner because of the many demands of life in a classroom. They stated that having a written plan and regular growth meetings with administrators caused them to revisit their goals and helped them to remain focused on taking time for their own learning. Many of these teachers seemed to feel that they would not have accomplished their goals if they had not developed a growth plan. Five of the teachers mentioned that having the goals written on paper made them feel more accountable and committed to completing their goals and, thus, it helped them to accomplish their goals and ensure that they continued to grow professionally.

Question # 2: Do you think that your professional growth plan contributed to enhanced

or changed classroom practices?

Responses:

Seven of the ten teachers interviewed thought that their growth plan had contributed to changed or enhanced classroom practices. Four of these interviewees felt that their classroom practices had both changed and been enhanced by their professional development activities. Three of the teachers interviewed stated that while their practices had not been dramatically changed, they believed that their programs had been enhanced. Three out of ten teachers stated that the growth plan had not contributed to enhanced or changed practices this year. One interviewee clarified that while her science program was enhanced, she would have made the changes regardless of whether or not she had a written growth plan. Two out of ten teachers stated that while their professional growth plan did not really change or enhance their practices this year, it would make a significant difference in the following year. They stated that their goals were more long term and implementation of new ideas would occur in the following year. The new learning would be incorporated into the long range plans for the up-coming year.

In discussing the reasons why their growth plan had contributed to enhanced or changed practices, the interviewees gave a variety of responses. However, some common themes emerged. One such theme was that the goals they had chosen related directly to their teaching and their work in the classroom. Consequently, they could apply their learning to what they were doing on a daily basis. A related theme that emerged was that in being able to choose their own goals, they were able to work in areas that were personally meaningful and relevant to them rather than having someone else determine the area in which they needed to be 'developed'.

Question #3A: What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of developing 'grade level

team' professional development goals?

Responses:

Two out of the ten teachers interviewed stated that developing grade level team goals was very effective. They made comments such as "Grade level team goals are just essential." and "Team goals are a really good thing." They indicated that working together on a grade level team had really helped them get to know each other. Also, in determining areas to pursue in professional development, they stated that they became more aware of each others' strengths, teaching styles, and areas of expertise and, thus, they could draw on each other's expertise.

Eight out of ten of the teachers interviewed indicated that they felt that developing 'grade level team' professional development goals was somewhat effective. As the teachers talked about the grade level team goals, some clear themes emerged. The first theme is that there were some difficulties relating to the size of the grade level teams. With teams of four or five teachers, it was challenging to arrive at a consensus as to what the professional development goals should be as the teachers often had different needs, areas of interests, or goals. As one teacher stated, "Being a grade level team does not mean that you have the same interests or needs." As a result, the team goals may not have addressed the needs of some individuals on the team. A factor that was mentioned as affecting a team's ability to arrive at goals that were meaningful for all involved is the amount of teaching experience a teacher has in a particular grade level. To clarify, two teachers talked about how those just starting with a grade level need to focus on overall program development, while a teacher who has been in the grade level for some time is more interested in working on fine-tuning particular aspects of the program. Some of the teachers indicated that with a grade level team of four or five people it was sometimes difficult to arrange meetings times.

Another common thread that I kept hearing was that the success of team growth plans depended largely on the personalities involved in the team. One teacher stated, “The effectiveness of team growth plans depends on the team. If the team is cohesive then it works well, but if some people have different goals and are moving in different directions, it makes team cohesiveness difficult.” Although the interviewees pointed out that things had generally worked well this year, there was some concern expressed about the fact that not all teachers are team players. With a different team, perhaps things may not work so well.

Even though most of the teachers indicated that they had some concerns with the grade level team professional development plan, all ten of the teachers interviewed talked about the importance of working and talking on a regular basis with their colleagues. It was clear that the teachers felt that grade level team meetings needed to continue and that there was value in getting together as a group. Some of the comments included:

- We need to get together to support each other and enhance and enrich what we are doing in our classrooms.
- Grade level meetings definitely have a place.
- Even if we don't have team goals, I think that we should still have grade level meetings because it gives us a chance to sit and talk together.

It was suggested that the grade level team meetings would be especially beneficial when new programs or curriculums were being introduced. Teachers indicated that it is important to talk about what was working well, difficulties encountered, and to share ideas and resources. Some teachers suggested that grade level team meetings were very important and necessary to ensure some continuity and consistency between programs. In summary, even though teachers had some reservations about developing team growth plans, they did want to continue to meet as a grade level team.

Another common theme that emerged in the teachers' responses to this question regarding the effectiveness of team professional development goals was that teams based on interests and needs, rather than grade levels, should be used for pursuing professional development. Five out of ten of the teachers suggested that smaller groups of two or three individuals interested in a particular area would be much more effective than grade level teams. It was suggested that teachers interested in a particular area could form a study group. The group would read and discuss appropriate reading materials, apply what was learned in their classrooms, and work together to implement changes to the existing program. To conclude, even though teachers had some concerns about grade level growth plans, they recognized the value of working with colleagues and were looking for ways to make the team approach to growth plans more effective.

Question #3B: Do you think that having a grade level team growth plan has resulted in increased dialogue and collaboration between colleagues?

Responses:

Six out of ten teachers stated that having team goals had increased the collaboration and dialogue between colleagues. Three of these teachers indicated that having team goals increased collaboration and dialogue because the goals provided a reason for all of the team members to get together on a regular basis. Two of the six teachers felt very strongly that the team goals had made a real difference in the amount of collaboration that was happening at their grade level. Their responses were as follows:

-We were not doing too much talking or working together before we sat down to plan our goals. We did a lot more talking and collaborating as we planned and implemented our goals and did the follow-up. We spent a lot of time talking about the things that worked and didn't seem to work.

-Yes, yes, yes! In setting team goals, we got to know each other's teaching style and strengths. We have very different styles so we talked a lot about how we did things in our own classrooms. Next year when we implement the new math program, it will be great because there will be more than one person doing the planning, finding resources, and implementing the program.

Three out of ten teachers did not think that having team goals increased the collaboration and dialogue between colleagues on their grade level team. All three of these respondents were on the same grade level team. Their comments included the following:

-Our grade level team does a lot of sharing and we talk to each other informally often. So, the collaboration and dialogue would have happened anyway.

-No I don't think it did because we already work together regularly and so I don't think it made a difference.

-The collaboration and dialogue would have happened regardless of whether or not we had team goals. Our team is just like that.

Two of the teachers who were new to the school made the observation that having team goals really helped the new grade level teams get to know each other. One teacher stated, "Having grade level goals gave us something in common which helped us build the relationships of the grade level team. It really helped to 'build a bridge' between the staffs of the two schools."

Question #4: What aspects of the whole process of developing and completing a growth plan did you find helpful? What was not particularly helpful? What aspects of the process would you like to see changed?

Responses:

Aspects of the Process Identified as Helpful

The participants in this study provided a wide variety of responses to this part of the question. Nevertheless, some common themes did emerge in teacher responses. Eight out of ten of the teachers stated that meeting with an administrator regularly about their growth plan was helpful. Four of the teachers indicated that meeting regularly with an administrator helped to keep them on track and to make sure that the goals were accomplished. Similarly, three teachers felt that meeting with administrators helped them to revisit or review their goals throughout the year. Also, two teachers stated that these meetings made them feel more accountable for their goals. Below are some of the other reasons given by the teachers as to why these meetings were helpful:

- Talking with an administrator adds another perspective.
- I appreciated the encouragement and support I received during the meetings.
- The administrators offered ideas and suggestions about resource people, books, articles, and teaching materials. I found this to be really helpful.
- It was nice having someone to discuss your plan with.
- Growth meetings give you uninterrupted one-on-one time with the administrators. It gives you a chance just to sit together and talk.
- I never felt intimidated by the growth meetings with the administration. There was an atmosphere of acceptance.
- With my professional growth plan, I felt accountable, but not judged.
- Discussing the goals at the end of the year provided closure. It helped me to look back and see what I had accomplished and learned this year.

Four other common themes emerged in the responses given by the teachers. However, these themes were not identified as consistently as the one previously discussed. One such common theme related to the format of the professional development plan sheet.

Five teachers indicated that the form was helpful because it was clear, concise, and not too extensive. Two of these individuals mentioned that the form did not create busy work or waste valuable time. Three teachers suggested that putting goals on paper helped them narrow their focus to a couple of goals and made them more accountable to accomplish the goals they had established. A third aspect of the growth plan process that was identified as being helpful by three teachers was the thinking, reflection, and self-evaluation required in order to develop their professional development goals for the year. Lastly, two teachers expressed their personal feelings or made comments on aspects of the school culture that they thought were important or helpful. Their statements are provided below:

- I found the sense of trust to be helpful. Everyone here shows a willingness to grow and learn. It is not risky to say I need to grow in this particular area.
- I felt that it was safe to take risks. There is a sense of trust on this staff. I felt less like an island.

Listed below are the other aspects of the growth plan process that were identified by teachers as being helpful:

- I found it helpful not to just set goals, but also planning the 'how to's'.
- Limiting the number of goals to just a few so that you can be more thorough with each goal.
- Working and talking with colleagues.
- Letting other people know what my goals were was helpful.
- I liked having dates and deadlines.
- It was an on-going process.

Aspects of the Process Identified as Not Helpful

Eight out of ten teachers were unable to identify aspects of the process that were not

helpful. All of these teachers indicated that either they could not think of things that were not particularly helpful or they thought the process was fine. One teacher did not find the format of the growth plan sheet helpful and, as a result, wanted to create her own format for next year. Another teacher felt that having too many goals was not helpful as it ended up being too much to accomplish.

Aspects of the Process Teachers Would Like Changed

There were no common themes in the responses of teachers to this part of the question. However, six suggestions were made by the interviewees. Listed below are the ideas they suggested:

1. Have meetings with the administrators on a more regular basis.
2. Schedule growth meetings for longer periods of time. They were too short and sometimes the meetings were rushed.
3. Find a way to broadcast teachers' goals because other teachers might have materials and ideas that would be helpful.
4. Maybe have the final growth meetings and completion dates in May instead of June.
5. Rather than team or individual goals, I would like to get together with a partner with similar goals. Another person can add a lot to your learning. It is sort of like planning a unit-everyone adds to it. Perhaps we could put our areas of interest on e-mail next year so that we could find out if anyone else is interested in the same thing.
6. I would like to have my growth plan on computer so that I could change and update it easily.

Question #5: What would make the use of growth plans more effective?

Responses:

Seven out of ten of the teachers had ideas and suggestions for making the use of growth plans more effective. There were some commonalities in the suggestions made by the teachers. Firstly, three of the teachers suggested that partnering or working with another teacher who had the same goal(s) would be helpful. It was also suggested that teachers partnering for professional development should have joint growth meetings with administrators because it would be beneficial for all to sit down together and talk. Secondly, three teachers stated that growth plans could be more effective if there were more opportunities to share their plans and goals with their colleagues. For example, one teacher stated: "Becoming more aware of other people's goals would be helpful so that we can draw on each other's strengths and rely more on each other." One teacher recommended that teachers share their individual growth plans at grade level meetings so that everyone could be more aware of individual's goals. The third commonality in teachers responses was that two interviewees indicated that growth plans could be more effective if teachers were more aware of up-coming conferences. One person suggested that as information about conferences came into the school, a photocopy be put into the mailboxes of teachers who are working on that specific topic or area.

Although the specifics of other suggestions made by individual teachers as to how to make growth plans more effective varied, most of the ideas offered focused on building more connections with colleagues. Provided below are the specific suggestions made by the interviewees:

- Team teaching would make the use of growth plans more effective. You could work very closely together and help each other.

- Visiting other teacher's classrooms. I don't mean peer coaching, but just another classroom as equals.
- Making sure that we have time set aside to talk with our colleagues.
- Find a mentor or peer outside of the school to meet with occasionally to get a different perspective.
- Move more away from being islands towards being a team.
- Further develop our support systems in the school.
- Maybe checking the progress we are making more regularly. Perhaps we should meet with a partner once a month or maybe keep a diary or log that we share with someone.
- Maybe put the format on computer and make some space to write and update the plan as you go.

I think that it is important to note that one teacher's growth plan involved a mentoring type relationship with another teacher. This teacher's suggestions for improving the effectiveness of growth plans included a) having the mentor teacher involved in growth meetings with the administration and b) meeting on a very regular basis with the mentor teacher.

Question #6: What concerns, if any, do you have about the requirements in the proposed provincial policy that all teachers develop professional development plans on an annual basis?

Responses:

All ten of the teachers interviewed were supportive of the proposed provincial policy in which each teacher in the province will be required to create a professional development plan on an annual basis. However, six of the teachers did express some

concerns about the actual details of how the policy would be implemented and the mandated requirements of the individual growth plans. Five of these six teachers expressed concern about the potential for professional growth plans to become a time consuming 'add-on' with some of the value and effectiveness of individual plans being lost. A common concern mentioned by three teachers was the format and paper work involved. Some of their comments are included below:

- What we do at our school is very effective, but I do have some concerns about what could be mandated or required as part of the plan that would be 'add on' work of little value. Things like extensive and lengthy written growth plans and required video tapes of sample lessons would take time away from our own learning, planning, and teaching.

- Growth plans are a great idea if they are in place of something rather than an add-on. They should be in place of or part of the school professional development plan and not just more added to existing activities. The format should be short, clear, and concise. If it is too in depth and pages and pages, then it is just more paper work and it would lose some of its effectiveness. It could become "another job needing to be done", rather than something of value to the teacher.

- My concern is that it would become busy work and about filling out time consuming forms. Teachers need to be trusted and respected as professionals. We need to be trusted to recognize areas in which we need to grow and to pursue our own professional development. Long forms won't make people grow.

- Professional growth can be encouraged, but it can't be mandated. I wouldn't like to see it become just something that had to be done with a required number of goals and inflexible. It needs to meet the needs of teachers.

A second common concern to emerge in the comments of the interviewees is how the

growth plans might be used. Three teachers were concerned that professional development plans could become just another form of evaluation. Their comments included the following:

-My only concern is how the growth plans are used. If they are for growth purposes, then great. But if it is used for evaluation then it loses its value. Teachers would just 'give them what they want' and it would no longer be about areas teachers really felt they needed to grow in.

-Growth plans should be there for the individual's own awareness, growth, and accountability. Evaluations should not be based on professional development plans. They are two separate things.

-Growth plans should be for growth and not evaluation purposes.

Another concern about how growth plans are used was mentioned during the interviews. One teacher expressed concern about the potential for growth plans to become part of some sort of merit pay system. Her concern was that such a system would destroy the strength of our teams and collaborative relationships.

Four out of ten teachers interviewed did not have concerns about the requirement that all teachers in the province create professional development plan on an annual basis. Some of their comments are provided below:

-No, I don't have any concerns. I hope this policy is passed. It would be of benefit to our profession.

-I don't have any concerns because I think it is really important to keep growing. Teachers always need to be growing and learning even if they have been teaching for twenty to thirty years. I think teachers would much prefer this over central office or the administrators coming in and doing a formal evaluation that does not really help you to grow professionally. It is much more valuable to have administrators do informal walk

throughs than to only examine one box of time.

-Professional development plans are a good thing for everyone. Otherwise, professional development gets put on the back burner. Growth plans force you to think about areas to improve and there are always areas needing examination and improvement.

In summary, while the teachers interviewed were supportive of the proposed new provincial policy, some of them did have concerns about the implementation of the policy at the district and school levels.

Question # 7: What do you think are the critical elements of a school culture that help to maximize the value of professional growth plans as a tool for growth?

Responses:

Although the responses to this question were quite diverse, there were some very clear common themes in the views of the interviewees. Eight out of ten teachers indicated that trust and respect were critical elements of a school culture in order for professional development plans to be effective in promoting growth. Teachers indicated that there needs to be trust and respect between administrators and teachers as well as between teachers. It was suggested that trust and respect were important in creating an environment where teachers felt safe enough to be honest and to share their weaknesses with fellow teachers and administrators. Administrators need to trust and respect teachers as professionals and teachers need to be able to trust and respect the administrators. As one teacher stated: “Trust and respect is really important. If there is no trust and no respect, then real growth won’t happen. Weaknesses will be glossed over. It would not be effective if you don’t trust the people you work with. You wouldn’t be honest because you can’t communicate what your weaknesses are because of the fear that it might be held against you and used against you at a later time.” Another teacher pointed out, “Trust in

each other is really important. In some places, you would never admit that you were stumped or needed help.” Another individual stated: “Administrators must respect teachers’ professionalism”.

Similarly, teachers indicated that trust and respect between teachers is also very important. Some of the comments made in this regard included the following:

- You need to be able to rely on those you work with to help you grow and learn.
- The school culture needs to be such that it is safe to be honest about our areas of need so that we can draw on each other.
- All of the relationships in the school must be based on trust and respect.

The second common theme to emerge in the teachers’ responses related to the importance of collegiality and collaboration in promoting professional growth. Eight out of ten teachers talked about how it is critical that the culture is one in which teachers worked together as a team, share materials, ideas and expertise, and are supportive of each other. Comments made by the interviewees include the following:

- A sharing culture is necessary so that teachers can go and ask others for help.
- Having guidance and support available from other teachers and administrators is really important in growing professionally.
- People need to feel comfortable asking each other and the administration for help.
- We need to dialogue about our work frequently. We need to help each other be the best we can be.
- The staff needs to be supportive of each other.
- The school culture should value team work and colleagues need to work together.
- Everyone needs to be part of the team.

A third common theme to emerge in the interviews was the critical role of the administrators in determining the effectiveness of professional development plans as a tool for growth. All ten of the teachers interviewed made comments about administrators when asked about the critical elements of the school culture. The specific comments made by teachers varied, but there were some commonalities. Six of the teachers talked about the need for administrators to be open and accepting of teachers' ideas, goals, and differences in terms of learning styles, teaching styles, interests, and needs. A sampling of their comments is provided below:

- It is critical that the administration in a school is open and accepting.
- Teachers need to be free to choose areas of interest. The teacher has to have ownership in the plan for it to succeed. While administrators could make suggestions as appropriate, the plan has to remain the teacher's plan.
- There needs to be acceptance of different teaching styles and approaches so people can grow in different directions.
- Administrators need to be open to the needs of the individual and their particular classroom situation.
- There has to be acceptance of professionalism of teachers by administrators. There needs to be the belief that the growth will be appropriate. The basic assumption has to be that teachers will grow and learn.

In addition, two teachers made reference to the need for administrators to be non-judgemental and non-evaluative in working with teachers on their professional growth plans.

Another common theme in the comments of six teachers about school cultures and administrators related to the need for administrators to be supportive. The type of support requested of administrators varied between the interviewees. Two of the

comments made referred to teachers' needs for emotional support and encouragement. Three comments related to the need for administrators to provide support in terms of help and guidance to ensure success with the plans. The other two comments were about administrators ensuring that financial resources were available so that teachers could attend conferences and workshops. As one teacher put it, "Professional development needs to be valued and a priority so that money is allocated for it. If the dollars are not readily available, it is really difficult to complete your growth plan." Lastly, one teacher mentioned that availability of the administrators to talk about problems or concerns encountered was important.

Similar to the above-mentioned need for support, two teachers mentioned that administrators needed to be positive, focus on the strengths of teachers, and take the time to provide teachers with positive feedback.

Although the following comments about administrators did not emerge as common themes, I think that they are indicative of the feelings of many of the teachers in this sample:

- There needs to be equality of relationships. The administrators need to be equals, colleagues and friends.
- Administrators need to be growing and learning too in order to truly have a community of learners.

Below are additional comments made by the interviewees regarding critical elements of school culture:

- Risk-taking needs to be valued.
- It is important to have a school culture of openness to new things and a willingness to change and grow.
- It needs to be a positive environment.

-I think that having the same basic goals is critical.

Question #8: What specific things do you think administrators could do that would be helpful to you in your pursuit of professional growth?

Responses:

The interviewees offered 20 different specific suggestions as to how administrators could help teachers in their pursuit of professional growth. There were six common themes in the suggestions made by the teachers. Firstly, five teachers indicated that administrators could help by ensuring that there was time for individual growth meetings on a regular basis. The actual number of meetings thought to be appropriate varied amongst the teachers, but the minimum number generally indicated by the teachers was three to four meetings each year. As one teacher stated: "Having time for uninterrupted dialogue is really important."

Secondly, five of the interviewees suggested that it would be helpful if administrators helped connect teachers with available opportunities for learning in their areas of focus. Bringing to teachers' attention and providing information regarding up-coming courses, inservices, and workshops was thought to be helpful as teachers are sometimes not aware of what is being offered. Although the professional development materials are posted in the staff room, teachers indicated that they often forget to check the board and, at times, are too busy to go through all of the postings.

A third common theme was that administrators could help by assisting teachers to acquire and locate required resources, both physical and human. Five teachers suggested that it would be helpful if administrators provided related reading materials, books, articles, and other resources. One teacher suggested that it would be helpful for the administrators to establish a professional library within the school, while another teacher

thought administrators could provide ideas and suggestions as to where resources could be located. Two teachers indicated that it would be helpful for administrators to connect teachers with resource people. One teacher stated: “Administrators could pair you with someone who has a strength in a particular area. We don’t always know the different strengths individuals have.”

The fourth common theme to emerge in the teachers’ responses related to the allocation of money in the school budget. Four teachers felt that one of the ways administrators could help was by ensuring that enough money was allocated to professional development. The teachers indicated that it was really important to know that money was available for them to attend workshops and conferences or to visit other teachers or schools.

The fifth common theme related to the importance of feedback and support. Four teachers felt it would be helpful for administrators to informally visit classrooms or do walk throughs. Some of these teachers indicated that short, brief notes or taking a few minutes to talk was beneficial. One teacher stated: “I really like administrators ‘checking in’ and not ‘checking up’. It is really appreciated when administrators ask how things are going and offer to help in any way.” Two teachers talked about the important role of encouragement and support on the part of administrators in helping teachers grow professionally.

The last common theme in the responses of teachers was that three teachers stated administrators could help by maintaining a high level of trust so that individual growth plans and growth meetings are not a threatening thing for teachers. All three of the teachers mentioned keeping things relaxed, non-evaluative, and non-judgemental. As one teacher put it, “What we need is encouragement rather than judgment.”

Provided below are the other suggestions made as to specific things administrators

could do that would be helpful in the pursuit of professional growth:

- Administrators could look at some ways inservicing could be done during school time rather than always on our own time.
- Administrators could help by covering classes so that a teacher could go and observe a specific approach or do a peer visit.
- Administrators could help 'normalize' peer visits. In the past, only teachers who were having difficulties and problems went to observe other teachers. There is a negative stigma attached to peer visits. Administrators could help by normalizing peer visits.
- It might be helpful if administrators shared their own growth plan with teachers during the growth meetings.
- A system could be set up for sharing the different areas people are focusing on in their growth plans. It should be voluntary and not mandatory that everyone share what their plan is for the year.
- Encouraging a team approach in a school would be helpful.
- They (administrators) could help a teacher decide on an area of growth if they need the help.
- The biggest thing administrators could do is to be accepting.
- If someone is floundering and having difficulties with their growth plan, administrators could provide additional support and help.
- New teachers need a different approach to growth plans than experienced teachers. Beginning teachers would need much more help from the administration. Administrators could help beginning teachers connect with a mentor teacher.
- Just asking 'How can I help you?' is great.

Question #9: Please compare the effectiveness of professional growth plans to other professional development activities in which you have been involved in the past.

Responses:

Eight out of ten teachers indicated that growth plans were more effective in promoting growth than other approaches to professional development in which they have been involved in the past. Two teachers suggested that while growth plans were effective, they found that other types of professional development such as having guest speakers were also beneficial. The individual experiences and the perspectives of the teachers interviewed varied greatly and, as a result, there is great diversity in their responses to this question. However, there are some commonalities in the responses. In discussing why professional growth plans were more effective than other approaches to professional development, teachers offered the following ideas:

- three teachers appreciated that growth plans were flexible in that teachers could engage in activities they found beneficial such as peer visits, discussions with colleagues, and doing professional reading
- two teachers indicated that it was a much more comprehensive approach than other approaches which resulted in bits and pieces of learning.
- two teachers felt that the growth plan had given them a focus.
- three teachers stated that the learning could be applied to their teaching and usable in the classroom
- three teachers noted that growth plans allowed teachers to seek learning based on needs, interests, and their particular classroom situation.

In the responses of teachers, there were some common themes regarding other approaches to professional learning that were not as effective. One common theme in the

responses of six teachers was that the division-wide professional development day was not really helpful in promoting growth. Two teachers stated that formal evaluations were not effective in promoting professional growth amongst experienced teachers. Two teachers indicated that having speakers come in was not as effective as growth plans. Lastly, two teachers did not find division grade level meetings to be beneficial.

Because of the great diversity of ideas and thoughts expressed in response to this question, the views and opinions of each teacher will be presented separately.

Teacher #1

What I have found to be the most ineffective in promoting growth is formal written evaluations. They are such a pressure thing and they create lots of anxiety for teachers. It is easy to perform for one block of time when the evaluator is present, but it is not realistic. Having professional growth plans is much more effective. You are treated like an adult. The relationship between the administrator and teacher is one of equals working together. It is much safer and more relaxed. With growth plans, judgment is suspended. It is really good for teachers to visit other classrooms and schools. Growth plans allow you to do this sort of thing. The connection between the division's, school's, and the individual's goals is important. We need to keep remembering how important our job is. We need to continue being honest, working on areas of need and drawing on each other's strengths.

Teacher #2

This was a learning year for me. I was exposed to a whole new philosophy and ideas about open areas, looping, and multi-aging. I did a lot of extra reading. The discussions really helped and they were very positive. It all helped me grow. Any guest speakers that we have come to the school need to be directly related to one of our grade level or school goals. I find that Teachers' Convention is not focused enough to contribute substantially

to my professional growth. And to be honest, the division-wide professional development day is generally a waste of time. The day could be used more effectively.

Teacher #3

Having team and individual goals is much better than having a speaker come in. Peer observation was very good and very helpful. We spent fifteen minutes once a month in each other's classroom and I learned a lot from it. Having grade level meetings once each month was really helpful. I also found the encouragement and feedback I received to be really helpful. I liked the retreat we did a while back. Any speakers we have should be really specific. Speakers should be on school goals.

Teacher #4

I find growth plans more effective than other things we have done. Each person seeks out what they need. You come away with something usable. The learning is brought down to classroom level and can add to what is happening in the classroom. I feel lots of frustration with the division-wide professional development day. They are trying to meet the needs of too many people and end up with too many things. There is no focus and the sessions are too general.

Teacher #5

I think that we need to have a balance. We should have growth plans, but we need to have other activities as well. All of the different activities have their own place. When we have an inservice, it needs to be a real speaker and not someone reporting back what they have learned at an inservice. At another school I was at, we had an effective teaching course. We did peer visits and it really helped me become aware of my questioning patterns. I found that to be really helpful.

Teacher #6

It (having a growth plan) is a much more comprehensive approach. It is not bits and pieces of learning that are unrelated. Sometimes I used to attend a conference just to attend, but I did not have any particular topics in mind. With a growth plan, I found myself choosing workshops and sessions that are related to my goals. Because I could use the stuff right away in my classroom, I found the learning to be more meaningful. With a growth plan, you come away with a larger component of learning and it is good to have the focus. Some years, professional development has been minimal. This year it was much better and it was continual.

Teacher #7

I think that having a professional development plan is much more manageable and it is not an 'add-on'. Professional growth plans are more effective because everyone's needs are so different. The school organization also has an impact. It is more difficult to meet everyone's needs with one speaker in a grade one to six school. It is a way more effective to plan for yourself. You can plan for what you need based on your own needs and the particular situation. Having a focus is much better than bits of learning. For first year teachers, having a growth plan would be too much and would be really hard. We need to look at their needs differently than experienced teachers. They probably would need instruction in basic teaching skills versus going off in an area. We should have two different programs. One program should be for beginning teachers and one for experienced teachers. There should be different expectations and different types of professional development. I have found the division-wide professional development to be generally unrelated to my areas of need. I know it is difficult to target needs considering the needs of kindergarten to grade twelve in such a huge jurisdiction.

Teacher #8

I found having a growth plan to be more effective than other things that I have done. It can be applied to everyday teaching. We worked together to make lesson plans and to plan units. What I learned was applicable and usable and not some airy-fairy stuff. With growth plans, you can research areas of interest. I only grew, in the past, if the speaker we brought in matched with what I was working on. It is much better to have your own goals. I also like having short little sessions on things like learning styles and multiple intelligence. You are not expected to apply it to your classroom right away, but it is more for awareness. It helps you understand yourself and the way you teach better. I found that in other schools, there was no accountability for learning. I felt insecure. I have grown a lot in this school. Everyone is accountable for their own learning with a growth plan. You are held accountable, but you are also given help and given some direction such as resource people or articles to read.

Teacher #9

I find that having an inservice gets you going. Having a professional growth plans helps you focus on areas to work on. I think that both are important. I have found that the division grade level team meetings were much too broad to be helpful. The division-wide professional development day would be far more effective if there was some sort of check list of ideas for sessions so that the sessions could be more personalized.

Teacher #10

I feel that having growth plans is the best. At the division-wide professional development day, I try to find something that fits with what I am working on. When I was a beginning teacher, I found formal evaluations to be very helpful. The conferences were valuable. Now, I don't find formal evaluations all that helpful. The division-wide grade level meetings really were 'bring and brag sessions' and I didn't get much out of them. With the division-wide professional development day, I have found some sessions

of value some times. The best thing about the 'PD' day is that you have the opportunity to informally talk to other teachers from other schools who teach the same grade level. I usually get more out of the break times than I do the sessions themselves.

CHAPTER FIVE INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Discussion of Observations

Before examining the specific data, I would like to briefly discuss some of the observations I made as we went through the process of developing and completing annual professional growth plans. As the teachers began to plan their professional growth for the year, I noticed a significant amount of discussion about particular areas that teachers were planning to pursue in their individual plans. Teachers appeared to be keenly interested in knowing the specific areas or goals of their colleagues. As part of the discussions, I noticed that teachers would offer to share books, resources, or the names of resource people that might help in pursuing the goals. These discussions were informal and happened in classrooms, hallways, and the staff room whenever teachers had a few minutes. I wonder if teachers would benefit from having time set aside to discuss and share goals being considered for the year. An opportunity to discuss plans with others would assist teachers in identifying the expertise and resources available within their own school.

Another observation worthy of some discussion is concerns the type of goals chosen by teachers. Individuals chose goals that were personally meaningful and relevant to their current work in their classrooms. The goals chosen were ones which helped them be more effective in their daily work in the classroom (implementing or enhancing programs or subject areas), cope with specific situations in their classrooms, or help solve particular problems (providing appropriate programming for special needs students). The goals were closely aligned to their day-to-day work. The activities chosen by teachers in order to accomplish their goals varied greatly. Considering the wide variety of activities chosen by teachers, I wonder if the process of selecting from many options and approaches assisted teachers to redefine and broaden their definition of what constitutes professional

development. Teachers did choose to attend workshops and conferences, but they were mostly related to their particular area of focus. Attending a conference or workshop was just one strategy in their pursuit of their goal. One-shot workshops were just one component in on-going learning and not an event which constituted professional development for the year. In discussing with teachers why they had chosen particular activities, I often heard comments such as “I learn better when I talk with my colleagues”, or “I learn best by reading”, or “I have found it more effective to go and watch someone else who is already doing it”. In having choice in their professional development activities, the teachers were able to choose activities which best fit with their particular learning styles.

All of the teachers in this study accomplished all of their goals set out in their professional development plan with the exception of one teacher who did not accomplish one goal. Initially, I was somewhat surprised by this finding. However, this finding would support Knowles’ (1980) contention that adults are more motivated to learn when they see a need to learn or a need to solve a problem to cope with real life situations.

Discussion of Data

In this next section, the responses provided by the teachers for each question will be examined and discussed.

Question #1

The teachers involved in this study were very insightful in their responses to my questions. All ten of the teachers in the study stated that they believed developing a professional growth plan had helped them to grow professionally, although one teacher indicated that it had helped her only somewhat. This is in stark contrast to the mixed

results we had found during our annual staff survey when we, as administrators, had planned and organized professional development opportunities for the staff. For years, the staff had indicated on the survey that meaningful professional development opportunities were of concern. This finding supports Barth's (1990) contention that initiatives emanating from teachers have powerful potential for professional growth.

The reasons given by the teachers as to why developing a professional growth plan had helped them to grow professionally were very interesting. Five of the teachers indicated that one of the reasons they had grown was that in determining their goals, they had done self-evaluation and reflecting on their teaching practices. As discussed in the literature review, being able to reflect on one's practice is critically important to professional growth. Barth (1990) claims that reflecting on and examining practice is the crux of professional growth. Developing a professional growth plan had presented a reason for these teachers to step back and reflect on their practice.

Eight out of ten teachers indicated that developing a professional development plan had provided them with a sense of direction or focus. Often, teachers have felt inundated by a barrage of new ideas and approaches and without a plan, too many new initiatives can be attempted at one time. If too many initiatives are attempted at one time, no initiative receives the time and attention it deserves, with the result being frustration and a sense of being overwhelmed. The teachers in the study indicated that having a growth plan helped them to be more selective and to take a more comprehensive approach to learning in the area(s) chosen.

Six out of ten of the teachers stated that having a written plan and regular meetings with an administrator (three times each year) had helped them to stay on track with their professional learning. Classrooms are very busy places and teaching is very demanding and, consequently, it is easy to put professional learning on the back burner.

Traditionally, schools have been seen as a place where students learn and teachers teach. Student learning has often been viewed as far more important than the learning of teachers. Perhaps the importance given to professional development, by creating written plans and having scheduled 'growth meetings', helped teachers to view their own learning as a legitimate and important component of their job.

Five out of ten teachers mentioned that having a written plan made them feel more accountable and committed to their goals. Although one teacher stated that she would have grown professionally whether or not she had a formal written plan for professional development, five of the teachers felt that having the plan written down had helped them grow professionally. As with many things, putting it down on paper does somehow tend to make one feel more accountable and committed.

Question #2

Seven out of the ten teachers interviewed indicated that their growth plan had contributed to enhanced or changed classroom practices. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to determine if practices actually were changed or enhanced, I think this finding is very positive and quite important. In the opinion of these teachers, the professional development activities in which they had been involved had translated into changed or enhanced practice. This is in sharp contrast to the limited success of single recipe and one-shot workshops in making a difference to classroom practices. The common theme to emerge regarding why they thought their growth plan had resulted in changed or enhanced practices was that in being able to choose their own goals, they were able to pursue learning which was directly related to their daily work in the classroom and was personally meaningful and relevant. It would seem that Senge's (in conversation with John O'Neil, 1995) statement is accurate: "Really deep learning is a process that

inevitably is driven by the learner, not by someone else. And it always involves moving back and forth between a domain of thinking and a domain of action” (p. 20). This finding supports Marczely’s (1996) contention that meaningful change always begins with the individual.

Two of the teachers interviewed did not believe that their growth plan had contributed to changed or enhanced practices during the past year, but stated that it would make a significant difference the following year. Again, in the opinion of these two teachers, their professional growth plan would translate into changed or enhanced practice. For one teacher, the professional growth plan approach to professional development did not seem to make much difference in terms of her professional learning.

Question #3

The findings regarding the effectiveness of developing grade level team professional development goals were very interesting. Only two teachers indicated that developing team goals was very effective. The remaining eight teachers found having team goals only somewhat effective. Initially, I was surprised by these results as I had anticipated that working with colleagues in the area of professional development would be viewed very favourably. However, upon examining the findings more thoroughly, it became apparent to me that these findings are consistent with what would be expected based on the literature on collegiality.

The two teachers who indicated that developing team goals was ‘very effective’ worked together as a team. This grade level team had only two teachers while the other grade level teams consisted of four to five teachers. Barth (1990) addressed the question of the optimal number for professional development teams. He indicated that two was the ideal size for teams as large groups can be problematic in that too much time and energy is

spent in meetings and trying to arrive at a consensus. The teachers who were part of the larger teams of four to five teachers did indeed indicate that arranging meeting times and arriving at consensus in terms of goals and activities to pursue were problematic. Even with a group of four to five teachers, the interests, needs, years of experience, and individual purposes varied widely. Some of the teachers in the study indicated that grade level team goals may not address the needs of everyone on a team.

Although developing grade level team professional development goals was optional, it would seem that we had inadvertently created a situation of ‘contrived collegiality’. Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) caution against the danger of contrived collegiality which can consume valuable time and take time away from meaningful activities with students. In an attempt to increase collegiality amongst teachers, we had created a system of contrived collegiality which was more of a constraint than an opportunity. The end result was that the needs of all teachers were not met and the grade level professional development teams were only somewhat effective in promoting growth.

Sagor (1995) suggests that contrived collegiality can be avoided by fostering natural collaboration around issues of mutual concern. Interestingly, five of the ten teachers interviewed suggested that professional development teams should be based on interests and needs, rather than grade levels. Creating professional development teams based on interests and needs certainly would be a more natural grouping as the individuals would share a mutual concern. Five out of ten teachers interviewed also suggested that the teams should be smaller with only two or three individuals in each group. Smaller groups would provide teachers with the much needed support and opportunities for dialogue and joint work while, at the same time, helping to eliminate the difficulties or constraints of arranging meeting times, arriving at consensus, and consuming precious time.

The two teachers who indicated that team goals were ‘very effective’ in promoting

professional growth had created a plan that involved what Little (as cited in Barth, 1990) considered to be higher levels of collegiality as they engaged in 'joint work'. This team did unit planning together, observed each other teach, met regularly to talk about their practice, taught each other about their very different teaching styles, and did some peer coaching. With this team, the norms of isolation were not left intact. In contrast, the other grade levels' team goals focused on helping, supporting, and sharing of ideas and resources. Although many different factors came into play in this situation, it is interesting that the teachers who had engaged in joint work were the ones who had found the professional development teams to be the most effective. Fullan and Hargreaves' (1991) statement provides some food for thought in this context: "To bite the bullet of fundamental, deep and lasting change, improvement efforts should move beyond cooperative decision-making and planning, sharing experience and resources, and supportive interpersonal relationships into joint work, mutual observation, and focused selective inquiry" (p. 57).

Even though the teachers interviewed in this study indicated that generally the teams had worked well this year, there was some concern expressed about not all teachers being team players and the effectiveness of teams depending on the personalities involved. These comments indicated to me an awareness of and a concern about the competitive and 'parallel play' relationships which Barth (1990) claimed are unfortunately the norm in many schools. The comments suggest an awareness of the detrimental effects of these types of relationships on collegiality. As some of the teachers pointed out, not all personalities and individuals will work well together. Thus, if a team system is inflexibly mandated, then there is the potential for great difficulty. Teams potentially can be problematic and a constraint, rather than an opportunity for collegiality and collaborative work.

These findings regarding the effectiveness of grade level professional development teams in promoting professional growth served as a reminder that collaborative cultures and collaborative relationships don't just happen in a short amount of time, that they take time to develop and grow, and there is much more to it than adopting a new approach. Building towards a collaborative culture is truly a journey. Considering that the grade level teams had never worked together before, I think that the teams did exceptionally well. As previously mentioned, this was the first year of the reorganization of schools in our community. This was a year of blending the primary staff of two schools into one staff.

Even though most teachers had expressed concerns with grade level teams for professional development, all ten of the interviewees indicated that it was really important to continue to have grade level meetings as they found sharing ideas and resources, working together, and the dialogue to be beneficial. Teachers also indicated that grade level meetings were important as they helped to ensure some continuity or consistency between programs. It would appear that all ten of the teachers interviewed valued the collegial relationships that had been developed, as they indicated their desire to have the grade level meetings continue next year.

The second part of the question regarding the effectiveness of grade level team professional development goals asked teachers whether or not having team goals had resulted in increased dialogue and collaboration between colleagues. Six of the teachers stated that having the goals had increased dialogue and collaboration. Three teachers did not think it had, and one teacher was uncertain. The findings indicate some mixed results in terms of the effectiveness of grade level team professional growth plans in increasing dialogue and collaboration.

An interesting aspect of these findings is that the members of the different grade level teams tended to answer this question in the same way. The two teachers who had felt

strongly that the grade level professional development goals had made a real difference were a team. Of the remaining four who answered yes to the question, three were part of the same team. All three of the teachers who answered 'no' were also part of the same team. It would seem that whether or not collaboration and dialogue increased depended on the particular team. For two of the teams, having the professional development goals helped get the team together on a regular basis. The team members on the third team indicated that they already worked together regularly and often talked informally and, as a result, having the joint goals did not seem to make a difference in the amount of dialogue and collaboration that happened at that particular grade level. In considering the findings of this question and the responses to the previous question, a new question emerges. Was the increase in dialogue and collaboration, as experienced by six of the teachers, simply the result of the grade level team meeting together on a regular basis or was it the 'joint goals' that made the difference? Although there is no way to know for certain, six of the teachers did feel that dialogue and collaboration had increased.

Two of the teachers who were new to the school made the observation that having the grade level team goals was positive in that it helped the team members get to know each other, provided a common focus, and helped to build a bridge between the two groups of teachers who had previously been in two different schools. Although I had not anticipated this finding, it is a valuable insight. Even though the findings indicate that the overall effectiveness of developing team professional development goals in promoting professional growth was mixed, the team goals may have served a different but important purpose in this situation. It would be interesting to explore whether or not other teachers supported the observations made by these two teachers.

Question #4

The next question examined aspects of ‘the process’ of developing and completing professional growth plans that were helpful, aspects that were not particularly helpful, and what they would like to see changed. The first common thread to emerge in the responses in terms of aspects of the process that were helpful was that eight out of ten teachers indicated meeting with an administrator (three times during the year) was helpful. The reason provided by seven of the teachers is that these meetings helped them to keep themselves on track, to revisit their goals, and to make sure the goals were accomplished. This finding indicates that for most of the teachers, the meetings helped them keep their professional learning in the forefront. It suggests that scheduled meetings with the administration helped teachers accomplish the goals they had set for themselves. Even though teachers appeared to feel ownership of their own goals, the regular meetings with an administrator seemed to build an accountability component into the process.

The teachers interviewed offered some other reasons as to why the growth meetings were helpful. Some of the teachers appeared to appreciate having the opportunity to talk about their goals, plans, and progress with someone else. The opportunity for dialogue in a non-threatening, accepting atmosphere seems to be an important component of growth meetings. The interviewees also indicated that receiving ideas and suggestions regarding resource people and materials was helpful. Because administrators have the opportunity to visit classrooms and become familiar with the different teaching approaches, styles and specific programs, they are in a position to help teachers identify resources and expertise available within their own school.

Another common theme to emerge in the comments of teachers relates to the role of administrators in growth meetings. One teacher mentioned appreciating the encouragement and support she received during the meetings. Another teacher stated that

she never felt intimidated by the meetings with an administrator and that there was an atmosphere of acceptance. Similarly, another teacher indicated that she had felt accountable, but not judged. As administrators, we tried very hard to create a non-judgmental and accepting atmosphere in the growth meetings. We viewed our role as that of coach, encourager, and resource person rather than 'evaluator' of the plan and progress. A question that arises from these findings is whether or not teachers would find growth meetings helpful in their pursuit of professional growth if the tone of the meetings was judgmental and evaluative, rather than accepting and encouraging.

Although only one teacher commented on the celebration aspect of having growth meetings at the end of the year, I think that it is worthy of some consideration. One teacher stated: "Discussing the goals at the end of the year provided closure. It helped me to look back and see what I had accomplished and learned this year." In our busy world, too seldom do we take a few moments to celebrate successes and reflect on accomplishments. Having growth meetings at the end of the year provides an opportunity to celebrate with each teacher their accomplishments and learning during the past year. In summary, regularly scheduled meetings to discuss teachers' professional learning, their goals, successes, and challenges appears to hold promise in terms of helping to facilitate professional development.

In addition to identifying regular growth meetings with administrators as an aspect of the process that was helpful, teachers in the study identified the growth plan format sheet as being helpful, too. Five teachers out of ten stated that the format of the professional growth plan was helpful in that it was concise, clear, and not too extensive. Two of these teachers stated that the format did not waste valuable time or create busy work. The format limited the number of goals and the boxes limited the amount of writing required. Time is a precious commodity and available time and energy should be devoted to

pursuing learning rather than creating or completing an extensive document. A few additional comments were made by the interviewees regarding the growth plan format. The format we used had four boxes with space to specify the goals, the how to's, resources, and a time line. One teacher indicated that she found it helpful to not just set goals, but also plan the 'how to's'. Another teacher stated that she liked having dates and deadlines as part of the growth plan format. To conclude, the format chosen for professional growth plans is an important component in the individualized approach to professional growth in that it should be thorough enough to help teachers articulate a clear plan for themselves while, at the same time, not becoming a time consuming, burdensome task to complete.

Three teachers stated that putting goals on paper was helpful in that it caused them to feel more accountable to accomplish their goals and to narrow their focus to a couple of goals. As one teacher indicated, limiting the number of goals allowed her to be more thorough with each goal. Because of the barrage of new ideas and approaches they are often faced with, teachers can easily attempt too many initiatives at one time. Often, the result is frustration as none of the initiatives gets the attention and time it deserves. Writing the goals on paper seemed to help some of the teachers narrow their focus, be selective, and devote their time and energy to a couple of goals during the year.

Another common theme to emerge in teacher responses to the question regarding aspects of the process that were helpful was that three teachers again mentioned the thinking, reflection, and self-evaluation required in order to develop their professional growth plans. Although the opportunity for reflection and self-evaluation presented by the individualized approach to professional growth has previously been discussed, I think that it is worthwhile to note that teachers recognized and identified this as a helpful aspect of the process of creating a professional development plan.

The comments of two teachers regarding aspects of the growth plan approach to professional developments related to collegiality. One teacher stated that letting other people know what her goals were was helpful. Another teacher mentioned working and talking with colleagues was helpful. For these individuals, collegiality was a valued component of professional growth.

Eight out of the ten teachers interviewed were unable to identify aspects of the process that were not helpful. It would seem that for the most part, the teachers were happy with the professional growth plan approach to professional development and the process involved. However, one teacher did not find the format sheet helpful and wanted to create her own computerized version for next year. No one single format is going to meet the needs of everyone and it is my opinion that the growth plan created should be a useful tool for the teacher. Putting the growth plan format on computer would be a simple change which may make completing the plan easier for some individuals. Lastly, one teacher mentioned that having too many goals was not helpful as it ended up being too much to accomplish. Although she was the only one to make this comment in response to this question, this teacher made a very valid point. She had originally chosen too many goals and had had to abandon one goal part way through the year as her plan ended up being more than she could accomplish.

Teachers were asked what part of the professional growth plan approach and process they would like changed. There were no common themes to emerge in response to this question. However, two of the six suggestions related to enhancing the involvement of colleagues in individual growth plans. Both individuals suggested that we needed to have some way of letting each other know about areas of interest and/or goals being pursued. One teacher suggested that this would be helpful as others may have resources and ideas which would be beneficial. The other teacher indicated that knowing areas of interest

would help teachers connect with others who had similar goals.

Question #5

The fifth question asked interviewees what would make the use of growth plans more effective. Although the specifics of the suggestions offered by the interviewees varied, an important common theme emerged. Many of the ideas focused on building connections and working with colleagues. Three of the teachers indicated that partnering with another teacher who had the same goals would be helpful. In contrast to avoid the potential for contrived collegiality of grade level teams, working with others with the same goals would foster a more natural collaboration, as Sagor (1995) recommends. Similarly, three of the teachers stated that growth plans would be more effective if they had an opportunity to share their individual plans with others. Two comments made in response to this question focused on building support systems and being a team. Seven out of eight of the individual suggestions also related to increasing connections and collaboration with colleagues. Individual suggestions included team teaching, peer visits, opportunities for professional dialogue, writing and sharing, and mentoring. Most of these suggestions involve engaging in 'joint work' and are what Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) consider to be among the strongest forms of collegial relationships. According to Fullan and Hargreaves, joint work is necessary for deep and fundamental change to occur. From the perspective of the teachers participating in this study, collegial relationships play an important role in professional development. This finding is consistent with the substantial amount of support in the literature regarding the value of working collaboratively with colleagues in pursuit of professional growth. As Fullan and Hargreaves state: "One of the most effective forms of teacher development is where teachers learn from each other" (p. 104). In my opinion, the suggestions offered by these teachers are very insightful.

Joint growth meetings with administrators was recommended by two teachers for individuals working together with colleagues and for teachers involved in mentoring relationships. This is an excellent suggestion as it would provide an opportunity for everyone to sit down together, discuss the professional growth plan, and work collaboratively.

The two additional suggestions made by the interviewees regarding ways to make the use of growth plans more effective are more managerial in nature. Two teachers suggested that growth plans would be more effective if teachers were more aware of up-coming conferences. One idea provided was to photocopy conference information and put it into the mailboxes of teachers who are working on a specific topic. Although conference materials are often displayed in staff rooms, it is easy to miss information on an up-coming conference because of the large number of postings. Creating a master list of areas or topics being pursued by teachers could help identify individuals who might be interested in a particular conference. Conference information often crosses administrators' desks and consequently, administrators might be able to help teachers become more aware of workshops and conferences that would be of benefit. The second managerial-type suggestion was to have the growth plan format on computer and provide space to write and update the plan as the year progresses. This could easily be accomplished as the format is already on computer and could be copied onto disks or e-mailed to teachers.

Question #6

The sixth question in the study asked teachers about any concerns they may have regarding the proposed provincial policy that all teachers develop professional development plans on an annual basis. (It was a proposed policy at the time the interviews were being conducted.) All ten of the teachers interviewed supported the

policy in principle. Four of the ten teachers interviewed did not have any concerns regarding the proposed policy and were very supportive of this approach to professional growth. Their comments focused on the importance of professional learning for all teachers and the benefits of continually improving teaching practices. However, six teachers did express some concerns about how the policy would be implemented in practice. A common concern seemed to be that professional growth plans could become a time consuming add-on resulting in the value being lost for teachers. Concern was expressed that if the format required by policy was lengthy and too in-depth, then valuable time would be consumed in busy work or paper work, rather than on learning. As one teacher stated: “Long forms won’t make people grow”.

There also seemed to be some concern about the policy being implemented in an inflexible manner. Teachers indicated that growth plans should meet the needs of teachers and if components, number of goals, and requirements of the plan were mandated, then it may not meet the professional learning needs of teachers. One interviewee stated that teachers needed to be trusted to recognize areas in which they need to grow and be able to pursue their own professional development. Now that the policy has been approved provincially, it would be interesting to examine how different jurisdictions have implemented the policy.

The second common concern to emerge in teachers’ responses focused on how the growth plans were being used. Three teachers were concerned that if professional growth plans were used as another form of evaluation, then much of the value would be lost for teachers. There was some indication that teachers may not be as open about the areas they really needed to grow in and would simply ‘give them what they want’ if teachers felt that the growth plans were being used to evaluate them. The interviewees suggested that growth plans should be for growth purposes only and should be kept separate from

teacher evaluation. The teachers in this study have identified a valid concern. In my view, in order for professional growth plans to be most effective, teachers need to feel safe enough to take risks, identify areas or aspects of their teaching that need improvement, and engage in dialogue about their goals. Teachers need to be able to trust that their growth plan will not be used against them for evaluative purposes. If teachers do not have that sense of trust or do not feel safe enough to take risks, then creating individual growth plans could become a meaningless exercise with little professional growth occurring as a result. Professional growth plans present an opportunity for self-reflection, honest dialogue about teaching practices, and professional learning in areas of individual need. It is my hope that this tremendous opportunity for professional growth does not become a meaningless ritual of little value to teachers.

Question #7

The seventh question asked teachers to identify what they thought the critical elements of a school culture were in order to help maximize the value of professional growth plans as a tool for growth. The first common theme to emerge in the responses was that eight out of the ten teachers indicated that trust and respect were critical elements of school culture. The interviewees indicated that there needed to be trust and respect between teachers and between teachers and the administrators in order for growth to occur. The teachers suggested that without trust and respect, real growth wouldn't happen. The comments indicate that if there is trust and respect, then teachers will feel safe enough to take risks and address perceived areas of weakness. In contrast, if teachers do not feel safe or trust the administrators, then teachers will be less likely to identify and communicate areas of weakness. The comments given in response to this question suggest that from the perspective of these teachers, relationships play a significant role in the

effectiveness of professional growth plans in promoting professional learning. This finding is consistent with Barth's (1990) contention that the professional growth of teachers is closely related to the relationships between the principal and teacher and between teacher and teacher.

The second common theme to emerge related to the importance of collegiality and collaboration in professional development. Eight of the ten teachers interviewed commented that the culture needs to be one in which teachers work together, are supportive of each other, and share ideas, materials, and resources. This finding is not surprising in that it is consistent with the literature on the positive effects of collaborative cultures on professional growth.

The third common theme in teachers' responses regarding important elements of school culture which maximize the effectiveness of professional growth plans as a tool for growth related to the critically important role of the administrators. All ten of the teachers interviewed in this study made reference to the role of administrators when they discussed important aspects of school culture. There were three main commonalities in the responses. The three areas are: 1. administrators need to be open, accepting, and non-judgemental 2. administrators need to be supportive and 3. administrators need to have a positive perspective.

Six interviewees talked about the need for administrators to be open, accepting, and non-judgemental regarding teachers' goals, ideas, and differences in teaching styles and approaches. In order for teachers to grow in different directions and pursue their own goals, administrators need to be open and accepting of differences between teachers. In working and talking with teachers on their growth plans, administrators face a potential risk of inadvertently imposing their own ideas, preferences, and teaching style on others' goals. Teachers need to have ownership of their own professional growth plans and the

plan needs to remain the teacher's plan and not become the administrator's plan for the teacher. As discussed in the review of the literature, initiatives emanating from teachers have a powerful potential for enhancing professional growth. Teachers, as adult learners, have a need to be self-directing, need to have choice, and are more deeply motivated to learn when they see a need to solve problems or cope with real life situations of the classroom. In my opinion, it is important for administrators to be aware of their own biases and teaching style and be open to the diversity of ideas, goals, learning styles, approaches, and teaching styles amongst the teachers.

Six of the teachers indicated that administrators needed to be supportive. The specific types of support cited by the interviewees varied considerably. They included emotional support and encouragement, help and guidance with the plan, ensuring financial resources were available so that teachers could complete their plan (attend conferences and workshops), and being available to talk about concerns and problems encountered. Administrators are in a position to significantly influence the professional development of teachers. Providing support, in a wide variety of ways, to teachers as they pursue their professional learning is an important part of their role.

Thirdly, two teachers mentioned that administrators need to have a positive attitude as they work with teachers. These teachers stated that administrators needed to be positive, focus on the strengths of teachers, and take time to provide teachers with positive feedback. This common theme is somewhat related to the comments made by teachers regarding the importance of administrators being accepting and supportive. Although the positive perspective was only mentioned by two teachers, I think that it serves as a good reminder of its importance. As McGreal (in conversation with Brandt, 1996) points out, adults respond primarily to positive feedback. As an administrator, I think that it is valuable to take time to reflect on all of the positive things teachers are doing and take the

time to let them know their efforts in the area of professional development are appreciated.

In discussing the critical elements of school culture which help maximize the effectiveness of professional growth plans in promoting growth, all ten of the teachers made reference to the role of the administrators. I was initially surprised by the considerable number of references to administration given in the responses to this question. It would seem that from the perspective of the teachers, the key in having a school culture which is conducive to professional growth is the leadership. This finding is consistent with the literature, as discussed in chapter two, which indicates that the principal plays a central and critical role in the type of culture that develops or exists in a school. Whether the relationships are of competition and isolation or collaborative and revealing of craft are largely influenced by the relationships between teachers and the principal (Barth, 1990). In summary, the teachers in this study identified a critically important and necessary component of learning organizations or school cultures which are conducive to teacher growth --effective leadership.

Question #8

Question eight asked teachers to identify specific things administrators could do that would be helpful in their pursuit of professional growth. There were six common themes in the teachers' responses to this question.

1. Ensuring there was time for individual growth meetings on a regular basis.
2. Helping teachers connect with opportunities for learning in their area of focus.
3. Assisting teachers to acquire/locate necessary resources (books, articles, names of teachers with a particular strength etc) .
4. Allocating sufficient money for professional development in the budget.

5. Providing feedback and support.

6. Maintaining a high level of trust.

Although I will not comment on each of the themes as many of them have previously been discussed, I would like to briefly discuss two of the items. Time and money are often scarce commodities in schools. However, we tend to find the financial resources and complete the things that we deem to be important, worthwhile, and valuable. Adequate financial resources to cover substitute teacher costs are necessary if teachers are to pursue their learning and accomplish their goals in their growth plans. Although growth meetings can be very time consuming for administrators, it is time well spent as it is helpful to many teachers in their pursuit of professional growth. If we want teachers to place value on their own professional learning and view it as a critically important part of their professional life, then administrators also need to place importance on the professional development of teachers. By ensuring adequate money in the budget is allocated to professional development and by taking the time for growth meetings, administrators are making the professional growth of teachers a priority and placing value on it.

Helping to identify, acquire, and locate physical and human resources and helping teachers to become more aware of up-coming conferences and workshops were identified as ways administrators could be of assistance to teachers. In the past, administrators sometimes were expected to provide the learning opportunities for teachers. In contrast, the teachers are suggesting that it would be helpful for the administrators to be more 'facilitators of learning' rather than being the 'providers of learning'. These two common themes would suggest that with the professional growth plan approach to professional development, there is a change in the role of administrators.

One comment made by an individual teacher regarding specific ways administrators could be helpful to teachers with professional growth plans is worthy of some note and

consideration. She stated that new teachers need a different approach to professional growth plans than experienced teachers as new teachers would need more help from the administration. New teachers have very different needs than experienced teachers and they do need more assistance, guidance, and direction. McGreal (in conversation with Brandt, 1996), based on his work with professional growth plans, concurs. He suggests that rather than doing the same type of professional growth plan as experienced teachers, the unique needs of beginning teachers should be specifically addressed at a school or system level. This teacher also made the suggestion that administrators could help new teachers connect with a mentor. This is an excellent suggestion as a mentor can be very helpful to new teachers as they strive to acquire a basic set of teaching skills and meet the challenges of the first years of teaching.

Question #9

Question nine asked teachers to compare the effectiveness of professional growth plans to other approaches to professional development. Eight out of ten teachers indicated that growth plans were more effective in promoting growth than other approaches they have been involved with in the past. The remaining two teachers stated that growth plans were an effective approach, but they also found other approaches, such as guest speakers, beneficial as well. All of the teachers were very positive about the professional growth plan approach to professional development.

The diversity of the comments made in response to this question was not surprising. It reflects the diversity of past experiences with professional development the teachers have had. In addition, with an individualized approach to professional growth, diversity is further enhanced as teachers can select activities which meet their needs and learning styles.

I found the teachers' responses to this question to be very insightful. Three of the teachers made reference to their learning being applicable to their work in the classroom. As discussed in chapter two, the literature suggests that professional development needs to be grounded in the mundane, but very real details of daily life in the classroom and should be an on-going phenomenon (Goldenberg and Gallimore, 1991; Senge (in conversation with O'Neil, 1995). Their learning was closely interwoven with their work in the classroom and, as a result, it would seem that it was more meaningful for these individuals.

The comments of three teachers indicate an appreciation for the flexibility the professional growth plan approach provides in terms of being able to select activities from a variety of options. These teachers seem to value being able to engage in activities which they find personally beneficial such as peer observations, visiting other schools, professional reading, and discussions with colleagues. With some traditional approaches to professional development, these activities were not an option as everyone received the same one-shot inservice whether they needed it or not. From my perspective, professional growth plans assist teachers to redefine and broaden their definition of what constitutes professional development.

Three teachers, again, mentioned that professional growth plans were more effective in promoting growth because they allow teachers to seek out learning based on needs, interests, and a particular classroom situation. This theme emerged in the responses to many of the questions. The single-recipe approach to professional development does not meet the needs of a diverse group of individuals in a school or school division. These teachers seemed to value being able to participate in professional development which meets their individual needs and interests.

Six of the teachers indicated that the individualized approach to professional

development was more effective in promoting growth than the division-wide professional development day. This finding is not surprising given the great diversity of teachers' needs and interests from kindergarten to grade twelve in a large school division. Providing sessions that would meet the needs of everyone is almost an insurmountable task. In addition, these one-shot sessions designed to address the professional development needs of teachers often result in fragmented learning which is largely unrelated to the teachers' daily work in their classrooms. Unfortunately, a great deal of time, money, and effort is spent on such professional development days, even though they appear to be not very effective in promoting teacher growth.

Three other types of professional development activities were identified as not being as effective as professional growth plans in promoting learning. Two teachers pointed out that formal evaluations were not effective in promoting growth but, rather, promoted anxiety. This perspective is consistent with literature on formal teacher evaluations and their minimal impact on professional learning (Barth, 1990; McGreal in conversation with Brandt, 1996). Two teachers found division grade level meetings to be not very effective in promoting growth and two teachers stated that having guest speakers was not very effective. One teacher stated that she found having a guest speaker in was valuable if the topic matched her own learning goals.

Conclusion

An individualized approach to professional development utilizing professional growth plans holds great promise for promoting teacher growth and improved practices. It would appear that this approach to professional learning is effective as all ten of the teachers in this study indicated that their professional growth plan had helped them grow professionally.

The individual professional growth plans allow teachers to have ownership of their own professional development as they engage in self-evaluation, determine their own goals, and choose from a wide variety of professional development activities or options. This approach allows teachers to be self-directing in their pursuit of learning which is personally meaningful and relevant to their daily work with students and particular classroom situations. Rather than having a passive role, teachers are active participants in their own professional development.

This individualized approach to professional development provides teachers with choice and acknowledges the differing needs of different teachers. It accommodates for the needs of the 'total' teacher including age, stage of career, life experiences, gender, interests, classroom situation, and specific learning needs. Rather than having to accept a single recipe approach which will not meet the needs of all, teachers can choose goals and professional development activities which can meet their individual needs and match their particular learning styles.

In contrast to traditional approaches to professional development which sought uniformity, the professional growth plan approach to professional development allows for diversity in teaching styles, practices, and approaches within a school. This diversity can challenge teachers to examine and reflect on their own beliefs and practices in view of the approaches chosen by others. Rather than seeking an unnatural consensus within a school regarding classroom practice, the professional growth plan approach honors individuality and diversity.

Professional growth plans present an opportunity for teachers to examine and redefine 'professional development'. For many people, for too long, professional development has equated workshops, a scheduled event, or an 'off-site' learning experience. As teachers create their individual plans and consider a variety of options to accomplish their goals,

development of the school's three year plan can help teachers as they create their individual plans. Because teachers are familiar with the directions and plans at the district and school level, they can choose to align their own goals with the three year plans. In doing so, the number of new initiatives attempted each year can be kept at a manageable number.

The creation of a self-renewing school or a learning community is a desirable vision to work towards. Sagor's (1995) notion of the constant search for a better mouse trap is an important one in a self-renewing school. Rather than constant change for the sake of change, we should be striving for constant improvement. Individual professional growth plans provide a vehicle for teachers to build on and continually improve what they are doing in the classroom.

Collegial school cultures and collegial relationships are very powerful forces for change (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1991). Professional growth plans provide an opportunity to build collegial relationships and foster natural collaboration as teams or groups of teachers can choose to work together on areas of mutual concern or interest. In working with colleagues, teachers can develop strong collegial relationships which can significantly enhance professional growth. Building collaborative school cultures can take a long time. However, the professional growth plan approach to teacher growth can certainly help build collaborative structures and effective collegial relationships.

With the professional growth plan approach to professional learning, the role of the school administrators is critically important. With some traditional approaches to professional development, the role of the administrators has been to diagnose areas of weakness, provide professional development opportunities to remedy the perceived weaknesses, and conduct formal evaluations to help teachers grow professionally. In contrast, with the professional growth plan approach, there is a shift in the role of

administrators. Rather than identifying teachers' weaknesses, administrators need to encourage teachers' self-reflection and self-diagnosis of areas of need. Rather than being the providers of professional learning, administrators need to be facilitators of teachers' learning. Rather than being directive and judgmental, administrators need to be accepting and respectful of teachers' professionalism and their goals and plans for professional growth. With the professional growth plan approach to professional learning, administrators need to be ready to supply assistance and encouragement in a hundred different ways (Barth, 1990). Administrators have the opportunity to build positive, collaborative relationships, trust, and cohesiveness as they support, encourage, and work with teachers.

To conclude, the use of professional growth plans holds great promise for the professional growth of teachers. It is an approach which allows teachers to have ownership in their own professional growth, to be self-directing, and to link their learning to their daily work in the classroom setting. This approach is conducive to moving schools toward becoming self-renewing organizations, to building collaborative school cultures, and to building collegial relationships in which craft knowledge and practice is revealed, shared, and discussed.

References

- Alberta Education. (1993). *Toward teacher growth: A study of the impact of Alberta's teacher evaluation policy*. Edmonton: Author.
- Barth, R. (1990). *Improving schools from within*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Borg, W. & Gall, M. (1983). *Educational Research*. New York: Longman.
- Brandt, R. (1996). On a new direction for teacher evaluation: A conversation with Tom McGreal. *Educational Leadership*, 53 (6), 30-33.
- Brandt, R. (1992). On building learning communities: A conversation with Hank Levin. *Educational Leadership*, 50 (1), 19-24.
- Caffarella, R. S. (1993). Facilitating self-directed learning as a staff development option. *Journal of Staff Development*, 14 (2), 30-34.
- Duffy, F. (1997). Supervising schooling, not teachers. *Educational Leadership*, 54 (8), 78-83.
- Edwards, M. (1995). Growth is the name of the game. *Educational Leadership*, 52 (6), 72-74.
- Fullan, M. & Hargreaves, A. (1991). *What's worth fighting for?* Toronto: Ontario Public Teachers' Federation.
- Glatthorn, A. (1996). *The teacher's portfolio: Fostering and documenting professional development*. Rockport: ProActive Publications.
- Glatthorn, A. (1987). Cooperative professional development: Peer-centered options for teachers. *Educational Leadership*, 45 (3), 31-35.

Glickman, C. (1992). The essence of school renewal: The prose has begun. *Educational Leadership*, 50 (1), 24-27.

Goldenberg, C. & Gallimore, R. (1991). Changing teaching takes more than a one-shot workshop. *Educational Leadership*, 49 (3), 69-72.

Gusky, T. R. & Sparks, D. (1991). What to consider when evaluating staff development. *Educational Leadership*, 49 (3), 73-76.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1996). The quiet revolution: Rethinking teacher development. *Educational Leadership*, 53 (6), 4-10.

Hirsh, S. & Ponder, G. (1991). New plots, new heros in staff development. *Educational Leadership*, 49 (3), 43-47.

Hoerr, T. (1996). Collegiality: a new way to define instructional leadership. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 77 (5), 380-382.

Johnson, D. & Johnson, R. (1987). Research shows the benefits of adult cooperation. *Educational Leadership*, 45 (3), 27-30.

Joyce, B., Wolf, J. & Calhoun, E. (1993). *The self-renewing school*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Knowles, M. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education*. Chicago: Association/Follett.

Lambert, L. (1988). Staff development redesigned. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 69 (9), 665-668.

- Lieberman, A. (1995). Practices that support teacher development. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76 (8), 591-596.
- Lieberman, A. (1986). Collaborative research: working with, not working on. *Educational Leadership*, 43 (5), p. 28-32.
- Obermeyer, G. & Robinson, S. (1991). Individual staff development for school renewal. *The Practitioner*, XVII (4), 1-6.
- O'Neil, J. (1995). On schools as learning organizations: A conversation with Peter Senge. *Educational Leadership*, 52 (7), 20-23.
- Raebeck, B. (1994). The school as a humane business. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 75 (10), 761-765.
- Raines, S. (1983). Goal setting for teacher motivation and improvement. *NASSP Bulletin*, November, 1983, 111-112.
- Sagor, R. (1995). Overcoming the one-solution syndrome. *Educational Leadership*, 52 (7), 24-27.
- Schon, D. (1987). *Educating the reflective practitioner*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Senge, P. (1990). *The fifth discipline*. New York: Doubleday.
- Sergiovanni, T. (1996). *Leadership for the schoolhouse*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Sergiovanni, T. (1992). *Moral leadership*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc.
- Showers, B. & Joyce, B. (1996). The evolution of peer coaching. *Educational Leadership*, 53 (6), 12-16.

- Smith, S. (1987). The collaborative school takes shape. *Educational Leadership*, 45(3), 4-6.
- Sparks, G. (1983). Synthesis of research on staff development for effective teaching. *Educational Leadership*, 41(3), 65-72.
- Sykes, G. (1996). Reform of and as professional development. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 77 (7), 465-467.
- Wilson, S., Peterson, P., Ball, D. & Cohen, D. (1996). Learning by all. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 77 (7), 468-476.
- Wolf, K. (1996). Developing an effective teaching portfolio. *Educational Leadership*, 53 (6), 34-37.

Appendix A

Research Project Interview

Name: _____

Years of Experience: _____

1. Do you believe that developing a professional growth plan has helped you to grow professionally during this past year?

2. Do you think that your professional growth plan contributed to enhanced or changed practices in your classroom?

3. A. What are your thoughts on the effectiveness of developing 'grade level team' professional development goals?

B. Do you think that it has resulted in increased dialogue and collaboration between colleagues?

4. What aspects of the whole process of developing and completing a growth plan did you find helpful? What was not particularly helpful? What aspects of the process would you like to see changed?

5. What would make the use of growth plans more effective?

6. What concerns, if any, do you have about the requirement in the provincial policy that all teachers develop annual professional development plans?

7. What do you think are the critical elements of a school culture that help to maximize the value of professional growth plans as a tool for growth?

8. What specific things do you think administrators could do that would be helpful to you in your pursuit of professional growth?

9. Please compare the effectiveness of professional growth plans to other professional development activities in which you have been involved in the past.

Appendix B

Consent Form

As a graduate student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Lethbridge, I am conducting a study as part of the requirements for my Masters Degree. The focus of the study is effective professional development practices. Specifically, I will be examining teacher's views on the effectiveness of annual professional development plans.

As part of this research, I am asking you to take part in an informal interview. The questions will focus on whether or not professional development plans actually contribute to professional growth, ways to improve the use of professional development plans, specific things administrators could do that would be helpful for teachers, aspects of the school culture that are conducive to effective use of professional development plans, and comparing the effectiveness of annual professional development plans to other approaches to professional development that you may have been involved with in the past.

Interviews will be conducted in person at a time that is most convenient for you. All of the information collected in this research project will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. When the findings of the study are released, they will be reported anonymously. Names, locations, and other identifying information will not be included in the discussion of the results. You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

I appreciate your assistance with this study very much. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me. Work (887-3088) Home (346-1266). Thank you!

Sincerely,

Angela Eadie-Gyori
Graduate Studies
University of Lethbridge

Professional Development Plans

I, _____ agree to participate in this study.

Signature

Date _____