

**STAFF DEVELOPMENT
THROUGH COLLABORATION**

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TO THE READERS:

This is the story of my experience with a school-based professional development project. These are my perceptions only and this story should be judged accordingly. Also, in an attempt to preserve the confidentiality of the participants, the names of all group members have been changed.



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PROLOGUE



PROLOGUE

This project examines collaboration as a means for the professional development and renewal of teachers. I will consider both my experience with collaboration and the experience of the staff at a Southern Alberta elementary school as we attempted to create a long-term professional development plan through collaboration.

In his 1989 article, "The Faculty in Midcareer: Implications for School Improvement," Robert Evans presents this information regarding the need for revitalization in the present teaching force.

"Looming behind every aspect of the debate about schools is a profound demographic change among teachers: almost en masse they have become a veteran, middle-aged, immobile group. The teaching force is now composed mainly of people in middle to late career who have been teaching in their current school for most of their professional lives. Their average age is approaching 50. Seventy-five percent have been teaching for at least 10 years; 50 percent, for 15 years or more. Fifty percent have taught in only one or two schools (Feistritzer 1986)....Disenchantment is rampant among them; it is increasingly rare to meet teachers who radiate enthusiasm or principals who praise their competence. Teachers complain about low levels of salary, support, and recognition; about deteriorating conditions in the school as a workplace; and about growing demands made on them, both instructional and noninstructional....The need for staff revitalization is inescapable."

My career certainly fits into many of these categories. I was in my tenth year of teaching. I had only taught in two schools. The deteriorating conditions in the school as

a workplace and the growing demands placed upon me had created a situation where I was desperately in need of revitalization. At that time my strongest feelings towards my job were dissatisfaction and boredom. I realized that I had reached a crossroads of my career where I felt that I was left with two options; I could continue as always at school and try to find satisfaction and stimulating experiences in my out-of-school life, or I could concentrate on my career. I decided to concentrate on my career. Since I was very interested in Language Arts, I decided that I would pursue a change of direction by training for a Resource Room position. I enrolled in a Student Initiated Diploma Program with the University of Lethbridge. Entering the Diploma Program was revitalizing because I was able to work with a small support-group of concerned, dedicated teachers.

At this point I had not collaborated with any teachers beyond the development of one unit plan. The decision to concentrate on my career by taking university courses was a deliberate action, but another door, leading to collaboration, was opening without my conscious knowledge. At the time I was teaching from a Basal Reader and, as I said, I was finding it rather boring. Sheila, my Grade Four counterpart, was using a literature-based approach to teaching Language Arts and Social Studies in an integrated

setting. I really admired her teaching style but I didn't feel that I had the training to teach a literature-based program. I was hoping to gain this training in the Diploma Program.

In September of 1989, Medicine Hat School District #76 offered a Writing Process course to the district teachers. Sheila and I both decided to take the course. This was not a deliberate decision to work together, but that is what happened. As we worked through the various components of the course, we shared our experiences and findings. For our final project we decided to create a Native American unit together. This proved to be so enjoyable and so successful that upon completion of the course we continued to work together. We work collaboratively on many aspects of our programs. This year Sheila is teaching a Grade 4/5 split so we don't always have the same curriculum needs, however we have continued to work together.

I find it extremely difficult to put the benefits of collaborative teaching into words. Although I cannot say that I always feel secure with the literature-based methods that I am now employing, even in the beginning I felt that Sheila was there to support my efforts through generating ideas together, listening to my concerns, offering advice and sharing experiences. The loneliness of the classroom has been removed. I have a colleague who shares the same interests and types of problems. We have developed a relationship which goes beyond complaining about problems to

developing solutions to problems. Through collaboration and university classes I have revitalized my career. I now find my teaching to be an exciting challenge. Sheila and I have gone on to create more units, we have presented a Writing Process workshop to the upper elementary teachers of the district and we have worked with Sarah, our librarian, to sponsor a month-long Environmental Fair.

Looking back, it is very interesting to read Robert Evan's article and see the categories that he has developed on his "Continuum of Midcareer Types."

Figure 1: CONTINUUM OF MIDCAREER TYPES

KEY MEMBER - CONTRIBUTOR - STABLE AND STAGNANT - DEADWOOD

Adapted From: Schein 1978 and Krupp 1988



Evans gives the following definitions:

KEY MEMBER: people who seem endlessly engaged and self-renewing, who sustain both their enthusiasm and their performance at exceptional levels.

CONTRIBUTOR: solid participants, no longer on the cutting edge, who do reliable work and who are often good mentors to newcomers.

STABLE AND STAGNANT: those whose growth has slowed markedly, who are largely going through the motions, and

DEADWOOD: those whose growth has stopped altogether and who have effectively retired on the job.

I credit my university classes with stopping me from slipping into the STAGNANT AND STABLE category and I feel that my collaboration with Sheila has increased my job satisfaction and helped to create an enthusiasm for my job, but this enthusiasm must be nourished each day. The university courses have offered me a knowledge base and a support system with the other Masters students, but collaboration with a colleague has offered me a knowledge base and a support system which functions within my working environment. Through collaboration my level of enthusiasm is constantly regenerated. The two forms of professional development complement each other in a very positive manner and I feel that, together, they have helped to solve the

mid-life crisis that was affecting my career. The future, for me, holds the possibility of a transfer to another school while Sheila is seriously considering a move to Edmonton. Whatever happens, I will ensure that collaboration remains significant part of my career and I will attempt to assist other teachers to become revitalized through the process of collaboration.

While this story so far relates to my individual journey, an opportunity to introduce the process of collaboration to my colleagues occurred in June of 1990. I arranged for Dr. Richard Butt and Dr. David Townsend to present a proposal to the school staff. The proposal presented by Dr. Butt and Dr. Townsend addressed the problems of mid-career teachers and the need for revitalization by focusing on teacher collaboration in the development of a long-term professional development plan. The staff voted overwhelmingly to participate in the project.

The project began by using autobiography as a vehicle for approaching the problems of mid-career and long-term professional development. A two day workshop, entitled "Finding and Understanding Your Teaching Roots" was held August 23/24, 1990, and six teachers from the staff attended. Through examining the events and phases of their careers, their working reality, their pedagogy, and their past and future, the group arrived at these areas of concern common to all group members:

1. socialization skills - developing the ability of students to effectively work in both small and large group situations,
2. the need for increased student motivation,
3. the need for student ownership for the responsibility of learning,
4. the need for improved student behavior, and
5. the need for collaboration among teachers, especially in the area of planning.

The group decided that the best way to address these issues would be under the umbrella of cooperative learning. A long-term professional development plan was now drawn up. The project consisted of the following components:

Description: Research and Implement the Planning,
Teaching and Learning Elements of
Co-operative Learning

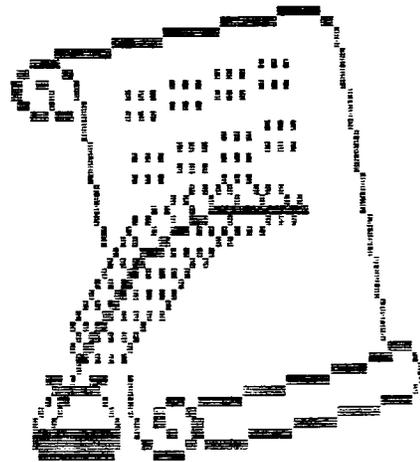
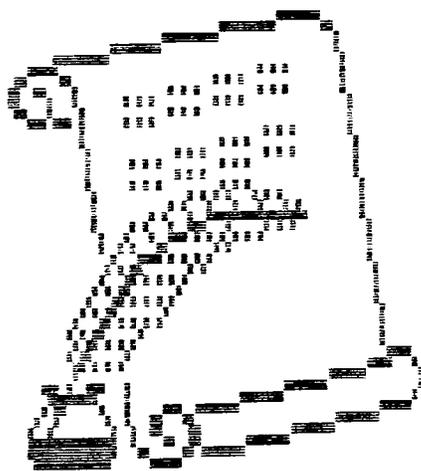
Expected Outcomes:

1. increased student motivation,
2. student ownership and acceptance of responsibility for learning,
3. improved classroom behavior, and
4. assistance with teacher-planning.

Through the project the group addressed the problems associated with teachers in mid-career by revitalizing their teaching through collaboration.

LITERATURE

REVIEW



STAFF DEVELOPMENT THROUGH LONG TERM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

Teachers often express the feeling that there is no continuity in professional development, that there is simply a smorgasbord of workshops. (Flanders, 1980) As a result of participating in a class on autobiography, I am committed to the ideal of teachers taking control of their careers through the implementation of long-term professional development projects. However, effective staff development depends on several factors. First, there should be teacher-ownership of professional development. There should be participant control over the "what" and "how" of the learning. Adult learners are motivated to risk learning new behaviors when they believe they have control over the learning situation and are free from the threat of failure. (Tindill & Coplin, 1989) Autobiography can assist teachers in discovering what aspects of education are important to their style of learning and teaching. Also, there must be some form of collaboration. A well documented belief of successful staff development is that the change process takes a long time. (Tindill & Coplin, 1989) Teachers need to opportunity to discuss the successes, failures, specific problems, etc. with a colleague. They also need the support and encouragement of that colleague when they get discouraged. Change takes time and there must be an opportunity for ongoing discussion of problems and concerns. A third factor to consider is that direct and concrete

experiences where the learner applies what is being learned are essential to successful staff development. (Fonzi, 1982) Teachers working in collaboration can function within their working realities where they can gain direct and concrete experiences and then analyze the results of these experiences.

In this literature review I will consider the topic of how to implement a long term professional development project. I will research autobiography as a vehicle for initiating the project and I will research teacher collaboration as a means of facilitating the project. I will then consider several models of long term professional development plans and identify common factors within the plans in an attempt to consider which factors are required to successfully initiate a long term professional development project. For the purpose of this paper, long term professional development project will be defined as, "an extended, planned program of learning opportunities afforded staff members of school districts for the purposes of improving classroom performance and teacher knowledge." (Hopfengardner & Leahy, 1988)

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

I would like to begin my literature review by considering the teacher and his or her story. Michael Novak, in "Ascent of the Mountain, Flight of the Dove," defines story as a narrative that links sequences; a structure for time which links actions over time. Novak

sees a life's story as being composed of a series of standpoints; standpoints consisting of the subjective context in which a theory is held. A story is never stagnant, there is an intentionality, a drive from standpoint to standpoint. According to Novak, two rhythms exist; **differentiation**, when we arrive at a new standpoint and break into a new darkness, a time of discomfort, and **integration**, when we push beyond the darkness and begin to explore our new standpoint, a time of challenge. Considering this information, the challenge to a long-term professional development project is the fact that different people will always be in different rhythms and the professional development projects that are developed must be able to meet the needs of all these rhythms.

Novak sites two methods through which our standpoints change, **the ascent of the mountain**, when a new standpoint is reached through shrewdness, discernment, patience and determination, and **the flight of the dove**, when a new standpoint is reached through grace, gift, serendipity or obscure instincts. Here the challenge to professional development projects is the provision of experiences which would allow group members to change standpoints through both methods.

I think the greatest challenge that Michael Novak presents to professional development groups is the idea of "critical story" which asks the following questions, "Have I discovered, and am I inventing, the story most appropriate

to my possibilities? Am I being true to myself?" (Novak 1978) According to Novak there are inner-directed people who are stubborn and self-directing, and outer-directed people who let their story be shaped by the audience. In order to have true teacher participation and control of a long-term project, teachers must become inner-directed people who can discover the story most appropriate to their personalities.

The question that arises is, "How can teachers become inner-directed?" There are the realities of the classroom to face. Tony Flanders, in his article, "Teacher Realities, Needs, and Professional Development" (Butt, Olson & Daignault, 1983), presents the following realities of teaching:

1. relentless time pressure - the conflict between children's varying natural rates of learning and the relentless administrative schedule creates creates a "treadmill to oblivion" (Fred Allen) that is further aggravated by the many extra hours that teachers must put in some days to prepare for the next days lessons,
2. cellular isolation - teachers spend most of their day in a form of solitary confinement,
3. an information and administrative blitz - teachers receive a deluge of printed material,

4. a network of unrealistic expectations - teachers seem to feel that society at large has unrealistic expectations of what teachers can accomplish in teaching, educating, training, socializing, emotionally supporting and caring for children,
5. the demanding mental effort of teaching - the intense, continual effort of dealing with large groups of demanding children can burn a teacher out,
6. extra duties and responsibilities - coaching teams, supervising events, dealing with the emotional problems of students - all of these duties and responsibilities add to the teacher's daily workload,
7. no preparation time - preparation for daily classroom assignments and special events must be done and done well - yet no time is provided for this preparation,
8. a general environment of negativism - teachers reported that they felt a strong sense of general disapproval towards them as teachers,
9. social factors - classrooms are increasingly populated by children from divergent social and cultural backgrounds,

10. the classroom teacher is at the bottom of the education status system - teachers reported that they feel they do not have the professional ability to make decisions for themselves, and
11. fear for their jobs - many teachers expressed concern over job-security.

How can teachers be expected to deal with the realities of their everyday working lives and still find the time and energy to become inner-directed professionals involved in long term professional development plans? Inner-directed teachers are able to both discover and invent the story most appropriate to their possibilities. They are true to themselves. But in order to be true to themselves they must first know themselves. Flanders suggests that teachers need to work out, over a long period of study and reflection, a coherent view of themselves as teachers. They need a clarity of purpose. Once they have this clarity of purpose, teachers need to make a personal decision to proceed with teaching as they feel it should be.

Autobiography can assist teachers in coming to know themselves. Butt and Raymond in the article, "Studying The Nature and Development of Teachers' Knowledge Using Collaborative Autobiography" (Butt & Raymond, 1987), state knowledge that results from personal experiences, and from our reflection on them, is "personal knowledge--the fruit of significant learning through experience." Teachers, as adult learners and classroom practitioners, gain personal

knowledge throughout life. Experiences prior to teaching have also shaped teachers. Teachers bring beliefs, values, dispositions, feelings, guiding images and principles to their classrooms. In order to assist teachers to understand themselves and their classroom practices, Butt and Raymond suggest an approach to collaborative autobiography which involves a group of experienced teachers working together through four phases of activity and writing. These phases include a depiction of the context of current working reality, a description of current pedagogy and curriculum-in-use, reflections on past personal and professional thoughts and actions, and a projection into preferred futures through a critical appraisal of the previous three phases. (Butt, Raymond, 1987) Through this study and reflection of their past and present, teachers can achieve a clarity of purpose that will help them to become inner-directed personalities.



COLLABORATION

Teachers generally agree that the best possible "professional development" is one-on-one with an experienced, sympathetic colleague "to help you with your style, in your classroom, with your kids." (Flanders, 1980) Also, sharing experiences with other teachers is regarded as an excellent and valid experience. Teachers need to discover that other teachers have the same difficulties, feelings and concerns. Teacher collaboration can meet both of these needs.

Ingrid Chrisco, in her article entitled, "Peer Assistance Works", suggests that collaboration benefits teachers in three ways. Ms. Chrisco employs the preconference, the observation, and the postconference model of peer assistance. The first benefit that she states is that collaboration initiates and encourages dialogue between professionals about teaching and education. Teachers become helping professionals to each other, just as they are helping professionals to their students. The second benefit that she mentions is that when a teacher talks about a lesson in the preconference the teacher is effectively rehearsing the lesson. This procedure clarifies the lesson. The more teachers examine what they are teaching and why they are teaching it, the better they will perform. (Chrisco, 1989) The third benefit of collaboration is awareness. Teachers' professional instincts are usually accurate, yet many teachers teach without being consciously

aware of the strategies and techniques they employ. Any assessment of the lesson is usually in the form of a monologue. When teachers assess a lesson together they no longer feel alone and often they arrive at a better understanding of the strategies and techniques employed in the lesson. Collaboration can help relieve some of the stresses of teachers' working realities and allow the teachers to better understand their teaching needs and styles.

Examples of Long Term Professional Development Projects

A Collegial Support Program For Experienced Teachers

Jerrold D. Hopfengardner and Peggy E. Leahy described a program developed to offer professional development opportunities to experienced teachers in the state of Ohio. The program was initiated by a district's board of education and superintendent. They made arrangements for university consultants to develop a collegial support program. The program was designed to be self-perpetuating: teachers trained in the initial year would help train additional participants in subsequent years. The collegial support model included:

- voluntary participation,
- a focus on formative, not summative, evaluation,
- a program conducted by the university consultants and teachers themselves - principals and district administrators were not involved,

- program content jointly selected by the university consultants and teachers from the research on effective teaching,
- opportunities for teachers to systematically analyze their instructional behaviors and to receive collegial support, and
- provision of a safe environment in which new teaching behaviors could be tested.

There were two phases of training. The first was a 3-day August workshop which included the following topics:

- discussion of the collegial support network,
- research on effective teaching and effective schools,
- the purposes and procedures for clinical supervision,
- activities which enable teachers to identify their own personal and professional characteristics,
- activities which help teachers become aware of student needs, and
- activities which focus on teacher/student interactions during instruction.

The second phase of the workshop consisted of monthly 2-hour seminar sessions throughout the school year. The following topics were presented by the university consultants at this time:

- analysis of time-on-task,
- use of wait time in questioning techniques,
- effects of non-verbal behavior,

- instructional modification for organizational skills,
- questioning skills,
- learning styles,
- self-monitoring data collection processes, and
- involving others in the collegial support network.

Formative program evaluation by teacher facilitators indicated evidence of positive changes in instruction, enhanced collegial support and a commitment to serve as resource people for their peers during the next year. It would seem that the program was perceived to be a success by the teacher facilitators. I was most interested in these components of the program:

1. teacher input into the focus of the professional development activities,
2. collegial support,
3. university support, and
4. school district support.

I felt that the teacher input appeared to be restricted by the fact that the choice of topics for the training sessions was made by the university consultants. One of the conclusions made in the study was that there was too much content in the August workshop. When the content is cut back teachers should be given a choice of which topics they wish to learn about. Teacher ownership of a project is, to me, a crucial factor for success.

It seemed to me that ample opportunities for collegial support were supplied. Substitute time and paraprofessional time was employed to further allow for collegial support time.

The university support, in the form of the original development of the plan, the groundwork necessary to introduce the plan and the workshops was very evident.

School district support was also very evident, especially in the conception of the program.

I think that teacher input, collegial support, university support and school district support are necessary to the successful implementation of a long-term professional development plan.

The Caldwell and Marshall "School Improvement" Approach

The "School Improvement" approach is a generic type of approach. It attempts to meet both individual and institutional needs to a high degree. It contains the following components:

- school staff participates in the identification of institutional goals, and
- individuals then identify their own needs within the context of the institutional goals.

The "School Improvement" approach requires collaborative leadership between the school and central services. It also requires a variety of data collection to determine needs. It does result in staff development activities which are diverse and comprehensive. The staff

development activities include formal and informal activities, long-term and short-term activities, voluntary small interest group activities and whole group activities. Caldwell and Marshall advocate compensation of school-based people for participation in the program. They also advocate the employment of a full-time program co-ordinator at the school level.

I was impressed by the following components of the program:

1. a high level of teacher input into the focus of professional development activities,
2. collegial support, and
3. school district support.

It seemed to me that the staff, through the identification of the school needs and their personal needs, were basically in full control of their professional development. I felt that this aspect of the program allowed teachers to function as professionals. The opportunities for collegial support would be based upon the types of professional development activities attempted. I should think that the opportunities for collegial support would be limitless. School district support would be highly visible in the stipend or release time recommended by Caldwell and Marshall, and also in the presence of the full-time program co-ordinator. I was very impressed with this approach for two reasons: I liked the high degree of teacher-ownership and the flexibility of the program.

The RPTIM Model

The RPTIM model consists of the following categories:

Readiness

Planning

Training

Implementation

Maintenance.

The goal of this model is to meet the needs of the organization and the individual. This is the specific method used to accomplish this goal:

Readiness: Broad, general goals of inservice are set.

A four to five-year plan is made. Teachers are involved in decision-making and solution generating. This phase is intended to develop open communication, trust and a broad base of support.

Planning: Goals are now refined into objectives; sequential specific activities and actions are decided upon; major workshops are planned and a long-range plan is plotted.

Training: All in-service sessions include orientation opportunities for choice, experiential learning, small group activities, situational leadership support, and a commitment to implementation and evaluation.

Implementation: This stage requires a supportive environment for making the transition from in-service activities to daily use. Peer feedback, clinical supervision and opportunities to share may all be implemented. During this time teachers share written plans with the principal. This allows the principal to monitor and support each individual.

Maintenance: Continued use of the new strategy is supported and monitored through teacher self-observation, peer observation and continuous review.

The following components were of interest to me:

1. teacher input into the focus of the professional development activities,
2. collegial support, and
3. administrative support.

I felt that there was a high degree of teacher input. There were many opportunities for collegial support. Generally, I felt that the plan was restrictive. I particularly found the idea of preparing written plans to be handed in to the principal so that he could help monitor each individual's progress to be restrictive. Administrative support is necessary, but I'm not sure that this would always be perceived as support.

Joyce and Showers Model

The Joyce and Showers model consists of four primary components:

Theory: This consists of a presentation of the theoretical basis or rationale for the teaching strategy.

Demonstration: The teaching strategy is demonstrated, several times, by teachers relatively expert in the area.

Practice and Feedback: In relatively protected conditions, participants practice the strategy.

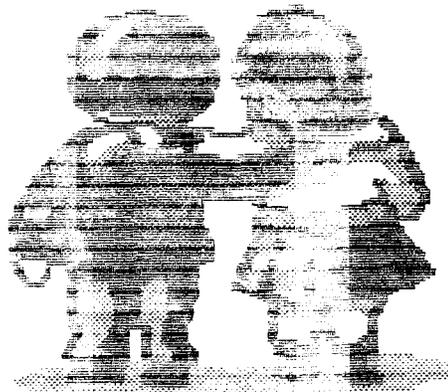
Coaching: This is a critical component for ensuring effectiveness. Coaching helps to incorporate the new strategy into the teachers' repertoires. Coaching entails companionship, technical feedback, mastery of the strategy and adaptation of the strategy to the needs of students.

The phrase "executive control" is introduced in the Joyce and Showers model. Executive control is the ultimate goal of any inservice activity. It entails understanding the rationale and purpose of the strategy and knowing how to adapt the strategy to different students, apply it to various subject matter, modify and create appropriate accompanying materials, and blend it with other approaches to make a smooth, powerful whole. (LaRose, 1988)

I felt that this model had two major strengths:

1. collegial support, and
2. a realistic approach to the learning of a new teaching strategy.

There is a vehicle for collegial support in the use of coaching. Companionship is an important aspect of coaching. There are opportunities for mutual reflection, informal thinking through of mutual problems, sharing frustrations and successes, providing ideas and helping to figure out optimal uses. The focus of professional development is very narrow as the model concentrates on one thing, developing teaching strategies. The model does, however, provide an excellent base for learning new strategies. I like the idea that there are step-by-step instructions to follow. I think this is very important to a teacher who is just beginning to take control of their professional development.



CONCLUSION

It appears that there are common components to professional development plans. The four components that I identified as crucial to the success of a long term professional development project are:

1. teacher ownership of the project,
2. teacher collaboration during the project,
3. university support for the project, and
4. demonstrated school district support of the project.

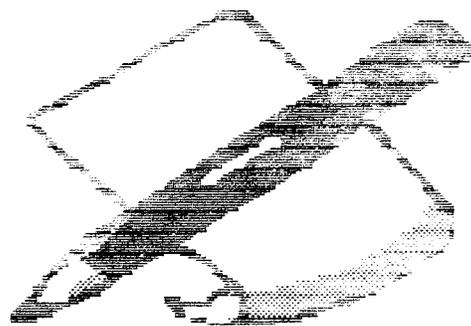
The first component is the need for teacher ownership. Three of the four models of professional development listed above include teacher ownership of the project in some fashion. Hopfengardner and Leahy mention teacher input into the focus of the professional development activities. Caldwell and Marshall implement a component in which the school staff participates in the identification of institutional goals and their individual goals within the institutional goals. The RPTIM model incorporates two sections which deal with teacher ownership; Readiness which deals with broad, general goals and Planning which refines the goals into specific objectives. I feel that teacher ownership is the most important component for a successful professional development activity.

The second component is the need for collegial support. Companionship to help overcome the loneliness of the classroom is becoming a priority for teachers, especially considering the increasing pressures associated with teaching. Also, significant improvement in educational practice takes considerable time. (Tindall, Coplin, 1989) Teachers need to have a support system operating within their working reality to sustain them over this extended period of time. Collaboration is just such a system. University support, if it can be arranged, is also very helpful. The university can supply not only the emotional and technical support to teachers in the field, but the university can play a major role by initiating the project and assuming an initial leadership role. Practicing teachers are too busy surviving in their everyday work world to find the time and energy to develop a long term professional development project. The university's assistance in this role would be extremely beneficial.

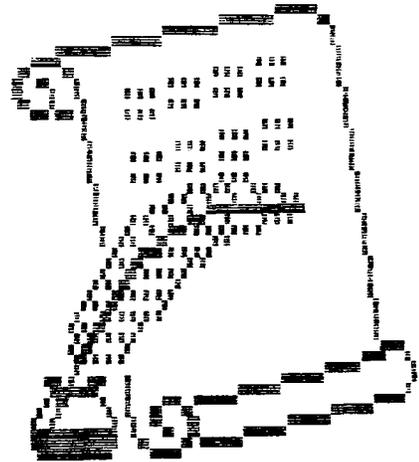
The final common component is school district support. Teachers need to feel that their professional development is important to the school district and districts which are willing to invest time and money in the professional development of their teachers are repaid tenfold.

I will conclude the literature review with a factor which I consider to be of paramount importance to long term professional development. An important point in any staff development program is that organizational changes must be

accompanied by role changes. The primary contention is that in-service is a process, not an event; a process of role changes which involve new will, new knowledge, new behaviors, and new attitudes. (Verma, 1984) Time must play a role in any process. Teachers need time to adapt to the new roles that they are attempting. Time becomes the significant factor. As teachers plan for professional development they should be planning for one to two year blocks of time. Long term professional development should mean long term commitment to the project which is developed.



THE SCHOOL PROJECT



THE SCHOOL PROJECT

In June of 1990, the members of the school's staff committed themselves to a long-term professional development plan. The plan was sponsored by the University of Lethbridge and Medicine Hat School District #76. There were several components to the plan:

1. a two-day August workshop focusing on teacher stories and professional development agendas,
2. teacher input into the focus of the professional development activities in the form of a school-based project,
3. collegial support provided through a variety of meetings (weekly meetings were suggested)
4. University support provided through monthly meeting with university personnel, and
5. school district support provided through substitute time for monthly meetings, program development and classroom visitation.

The components of this plan, according to the recent literature, indicated a favorable chance for the development of successful, long-term professional development projects. In my literature review, the four components of successful professional development projects that I identified were:

1. teacher ownership of the project,
2. teacher collaboration during the project,

3. university support for the project, and
4. demonstrated school district support of the project.

In the project, teacher ownership of the project was facilitated through a two-day workshop focusing on autobiography. Teachers discussed what they identified as important factors in teaching and developed their projects around these factors. Teacher collaboration was implemented through the formation of each group. As the teachers participated in the various activities of the workshop, a foundation of trust was developed. The group became a form of support group where teachers felt secure discussing the problems and experiments they dealt with in their classrooms. University support for the project was supplied by Dr. Richard Butt and Dr. David Townsend. These gentlemen initiated the project and supported the teachers through their first year by meeting with the teachers on a regular basis to discuss any concerns and to support the teachers in their endeavors. Finally, School District #76 demonstrated support for the project by supplying money for substitute teachers and sponsoring social events to celebrate the success of the various groups.

A Detailed Description of The Project

The project was initiated by an Assistant Superintendent of Medicine Hat School District #76. He distributed a proposal to each school outlining a long term professional development project. The principal of our

school brought this proposal to the attention of the staff. As I had just completed Dr. Butt's course on autobiography and found it to be very helpful to me as a practicing teacher, I recommended to the staff that we invite Dr. Butt and

Dr. Townsend to make a presentation on the proposal to the staff. The proposal that was made by Dr. Butt and Dr. Townsend included that following aspects:

1. a workshop would be held on August 23-24, 1990,
2. the workshop would focus on teacher autobiography,
3. teachers participating in the workshop would work with other teachers from their school to develop a long term professional development project that encompassed factors which that group of teachers had identified as important,
4. Dr. Butt and Dr. Townsend would meet with the groups periodically to discuss concerns and support the groups in any way possible, and
5. Medicine Hat School District #76 would supply funds to allow teachers to meet with Dr. Butt and Dr. Townsend during school time.

The staff at voted overwhelmingly to participate in this project.

The two-day workshop was held on August 23-24, 1990 at the Medicine Hat College. Dr. Butt had distributed an "Autobiographical Booklet" in June which each teacher was asked to complete and bring to the workshop. The booklet assisted each teacher in the development of a personal and professional development time line which encompassed these areas:

1. Events: date, a description of events, persons, etc. which influenced you
2. Phases: a period of time, name description, characteristics of phase, causes of changes, influence on you and your teaching
3. Context: This is the working reality you experience.
4. Pedagogy: This is how you think and act in your current working contexts.
5. Past: How did you get to think and act this way?
6. Future: If that's the way you think and act in your working contexts, and that's how you got to be that way -- so what? Can you critically assess what you think and project how you wish yourself to be as a professional?

Six teachers from our school attended the workshop. During the two-day workshop the teachers focused on the booklet by discussing the above aspects of their teaching lives. Through these discussions they began to focus on what aspects of their teaching were important to each teacher and which of these aspects of teaching were identified as important by the group. Within our group, two common areas of concern emerged from these discussions. The first area dealt with student behavior. Three aspects were considered:

1. there is a need for increased student motivation,
2. there is a need for increased student ownership and acceptance of responsibility for learning, and
3. there is a need for improved classroom behavior.

The second area dealt with the teachers' working reality. It was felt that there was a need for increased teacher collaboration, especially in the area of unit planning. The group came to the decision that they would address these concerns through a professional development project focusing on cooperative learning. It was felt that cooperative learning addressed the concerns about student behavior through the development of socialization skills and attitudes towards responsibility. The teachers agreed to work on unit planning together and it was felt that collaboration was incorporated into the group simply through the existence of the group.

The first year of the group was very busy. On August 30, 1990, a small workshop outlining some of the aspects of cooperative learning was presented to several of the group members. At that time we were joined by several staff members who were unable to attend the August workshop. The group was now stabilized and it consisted of nine teachers. The greatest number of participants come from the primary grades, Gladys and Cheryl from Grade One, Karen and Julie from Grade Two, Betty and Donna from Grade Three, myself, Kathy, from Grade Four, Sarah from the library and Doug, the vice-principal. There were six original members who attended a workshop and three members joined the group in September.

Our second meeting was held on September 24, 1990. At this meeting Sarah presented a brief outline of a cooperative learning workshop that she had attended. Additional staff members attended this meeting, but they did not choose to join the group. The next meeting was held on October 2, 1991. At this meeting it was decided that minutes should be kept for each meeting. I was designated as the teacher responsible for keeping the minutes of the meetings. Below are the minutes of the meetings. These minutes provide a detailed overview of how the group functioned throughout its first year.

MINUTES FOR THE MEETING OF THE COOPERATIVE TEACHING PROJECT

DATE: Tuesday, October 2, 1990

PRESENT:

Richard Butt	Donna
Gladys	Betty
Cheryl	Sarah
Julie	Kathy
Doug	Karen

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

A. Purpose of the Project

After a short discussion to clarify the purpose of our cooperative project the following items were agreed upon.

- a. The project will facilitate the development of staff skills in the development of short-term and long-term professional development.
- b. The project will increase students group skills, problem-solving skills and achievement.
- c. The project will facilitate the change in teaching style necessitated by literature-based instruction.
- d. The project will improve classroom behavior.
- e. The project will assist with the efficiency of teacher planning.

B. Goals of the Project

- a. Student motivation will be increased. Students will display increased ownership for the responsibility of learning.
- b. Teacher and student efficiency in terms of classroom time, planning time and use of facilities will be increased.
- c. Students will display improved social skills and classroom behavior will improve.

C. Image of the Future

a. Group work and cooperative learning will become a stable strategy. Students will recognize and respond to the expectations of the teacher. Cooperative learning will be worked into the teacher's unit plans.

b. There will be a balanced presentation of formats. Each individual teacher will decide what is balanced in their classroom. An example might be:

Whole Group Discussion	10%
Teacher Talk	25%
Cooperative Learning	25%
Learning Centers	25%
Individual Work	15%.

D. Image of The Cooperative Learning Project

The concern was raised that the Cooperative Learning Project was being viewed as "elitist." After discussion it was decided that a staff meeting would be held after school to dispel this view and the invite any staff members to join the project.

MINUTES FOR THE COOPERATIVE TEACHING PROJECT

DATE: Thursday, October 18, 1990

PRESENT:

Gladys	Donna
Cheryl	Betty
Julie	Kathy
Sarah	Doug
Karen	

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

A. Proposed Format

a. The proposed format was accepted by the group. Teachers will choose the skills list areas that interest them and form small groups based on mutual interests. The small groups will hold short, frequent meetings to discuss, analyze and refine strategies. There will be one large group meeting held on the last Monday of each month. At each large group meeting one or two small groups will report on their successes and failures.

b. A log book containing any cooperative teaching activities developed and the minutes of the meetings will be placed in the staff room. Kathy will be in charge of typing the entries and minutes of meetings for the log book. Any member wishing to submit an activity for the book will contact Kathy.

B. Skills List

a. Since the skills list and the necessary readings were distributed to the group the previous week the members had already formed their groups. The individual choices are listed on the enclosure.

C. Group Evaluation Form

a. Sheila, a teacher who is not a group member, shared the enclosed group evaluation sheet that she had developed for use in her classroom. A copy was distributed to each member.

MINUTES FOR THE COOPERATIVE TEACHING PROJECT

DATE: Monday, November 29, 1990

PRESENT:

Gladys	Donna
Cheryl	Betty
Julie	Kathy
Sarah	Doug
Karen	

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

A. Sharing of Cooperative Learning Ideas

a. The log book has been placed in the staff room. Kathy has submitted an entry on how to prepare your class for Classroom Meetings. Karen submitted an entry dealing with story structure.

b. Cheryl and Sarah shared an activity which dealt with report writing in a Grade One situation. The activity could be easily adapted to higher grade levels.

B. Topic of Discussion for the December Meeting

a. Dr. Butt and Dr. Townsend will be joining our group for a December 2, 1990 breakfast meeting. The meeting was opened for suggestions as to what topics might be discussed at this time.

b. A general discussion of unit planning ensued. It was suggested that the grade levels work together to share and field test units. The topic will be dicussed at further length as the December meeting.

c. The topic of the school Science Fair was raised. At the previous staff meeting it was decided that instead of a traditional Science Fair the school would focus on a school-wide Science Fair. It was suggested that this project might lend itself to the development of cooperative learning units.

MINUTES FOR THE COOPERATIVE TEACHING PROJECT

DATE: Tuesday, December 4, 1990

PRESENT:

Dr. Richard Butt	Dr. David Townsend
Donna	Cheryl
Betty	Gladys
Kathy	Julie
Karen	Doug
Gareth (Assistant Superintendent)	

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

A. Environmental Fair

a. The group discussed the upcoming Environment Fair and the possibility of developing unit plans for the fair which centered around cooperative learning activities. It was decided that each grade would work towards the development of a just such a unit.

b. The group brainstormed for suitable topics and created the enclosed list of possible topics.

MINUTES FOR THE COOPERATIVE TEACHING PROJECT

DATE: January 14, 1991

PRESENT:

Donna	Betty
Kathy	Karen
Gladys	Cheryl
Julie	Doug
Sarah	

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

A. Environmental Fair

a. Teachers were asked to decide upon their topic for the Environmental Fair for the January 28, 1991 meeting. It was found that the teachers had already decided upon their topic areas. These choices are listed below:

Grade One	Environmentally Friendly Home-Made Products
Grade Two	Renewable and Non-Renewable Resources - SEEDS Kit
Grade Three	Energy Conservation - GLUT Kit
Grade Four	Endangered Animals
Grade Five	Undecided
Grade Six	Our Fragile World - Project Cards (each child will develop a small project)

Each teacher was asked to be prepared to request the amount of space they will require for their presentations on January 28. This should give the committee time to prepare the format of the Fair.

It was decided that the expectations for the Fair would not be the development of a unit, but rather the development of an activity or a set of activities. Cooperative learning will be incorporated into these activities.

It was noted that a variety of suggestions for presentations was listed on the "Environmental Theme" sheet brainstormed at the last meeting.

Three questions were developed which will be taken to the staff:

1. When will we schedule the Fair?
2. What format will we follow? (Will a lunch hour and afternoon format be feasible?)
3. Do we want to run competitions as part of the Fair?

MINUTES OF THE COOPERATIVE TEACHING PROJECT

DATE: January 28, 1991

PRESENT:

Donna	Betty
Kathy	Karen
Gladys	Cheryl
Julie	Doug
Sarah	

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

A. Environmental Fair

a. The meeting was called to share the various projects being developed for the Environmental Fair. The meeting on Friday with Richard Butt was to be used as a planning session. It was found that Donna and Betty had already planned their projects so they would not require a planning session. It was felt that it would be best to cancel this meeting and use the 7:00am Friday meeting as a sharing meeting since two members did not require a planning meeting.

MINUTES OF THE COOPERATIVE TEACHING PROJECT

DATE: February 1, 1991

PRESENT:

Donna	Betty
Kathy	Karen
Gladys	Cheryl
Julie	Doug
Sarah	Dr. Richard Butt
Dr. David Townsend	

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

A. Environmental Fair - Proposed Projects

- a. Grade Three - Energy
 - this unit will be taught as part of the Science curriculum
 - five activities will be planned, students will rotate through the various activities
 - displays generated will include an interesting facts bulletin board and survey results
 - space allocation - computer room
- b. Grade Two - Renewable/Non-Renewable Resources
 - this unit will be taught as part of the Science curriculum
 - Linda Davies and Dan Stoker have been contacted regarding the SEEDS program
 - space allocation - displays will be set up in the home rooms
- c. Grade One - Environmentally Friendly Home-Made Products
 - this unit will be taught as part of Social Studies - Families - Pioneers
 - space allocation - library
- d. Grade Six - Our Fragile World
 - this unit will be taught as an integrated Science and Language Arts unit
 - Our Fragile World newspaper and activity cards will be implemented
 - Doug and Grade will videotape commercials
 - an environmental musical will be presented sometime in the spring
 - the theme song from the musical will be used to promote the Environmental Fair
 - space allocation - hallway and classroom

- e. Grade Four - Endangered Animals
 - Project Wild will be used as a resource
 - Karen offered the use of some books on endangered animals
 - Fish & Wildlife Department will be contacted
 - space allocation - gym

B. DISCUSSION ON THE FUTURE OF THE PROJECT

a. Sarah felt that the group had experienced a growth in terms of feeling comfortable with the members. She felt that the group gave us a structure.

b. Dr. Townsend asked the question, "How can the district support the group?"

c. Kathy saw the large group dividing into smaller groups next year. She saw this as a more functional format.

d. Doug felt that the group should continue in the large group format working with the area of cooperative learning.

e. Sarah felt that the question of discipline problems should be addressed by the group next year. She felt that cooperative planning would increase the consistency of disciplinary actions.

f. Dr. Townsend suggested that the group could tap into the fabulous wealth of knowledge of other teachers by modelling teaching. Some group members mentioned the difficulty of teachers teaching in front of other teachers.

MINUTES OF THE COOPERATIVE TEACHING PROJECT

DATE: Monday, February 25, 1991

This scheduled meeting was cancelled as the majority of the group members felt that they would like to pilot their cooperative learning ideas before they presented them to the group. The Environmental Fair Parent Night will be held on Tuesday, March 26, 1991. The group will meet after the Easter Holidays to share their cooperative learning ideas.

MINUTES FOR THE COOPERATIVE TEACHING PROJECT

DATE: Tuesday, April 9, 1991

PRESENT:

Dr. Richard Butt	Donna
Gladys	Betty
Cheryl	Sarah
Julie	Kathy
Karen	Doug
Dr. David Townsend	
Garth (Assistant Superintendent)	

ITEMS DISCUSSED:

A. Sharing of Cooperative Learning Ideas

Teachers shared the cooperative learning strategies that were developed for the environmental fair.

- a. Doug and Sarah - Environmental commercials were videotaped utilizing various settings in the Medicine Hat area.
- b. Betty and Donna - Puppet plays focusing on energy conservation were generated.
- c. Julie - Energy conservation was a topic handled in group discussions. The groups used the roles of encourager, timer, and recorder.
- d. Kathy - A book focusing on endangered animals was generated.

B. The Future of the Group

- a. Doug expresses the opinion that the group should continue to focus on cooperative learning.
- b. Kathy expressed the opinion that the large group should be broken into smaller, interest-based groups.
- c. There was general consensus that there should be a "general invitation" to join the group extended at the beginning of September.
- d. Dr. Townsend and Dr. Butt addressed the issues of continuity, clarity and cohesion.

C. Date of the Next Meeting

- a. It was decided that the next meeting will be held on the last Monday of September, 1991.

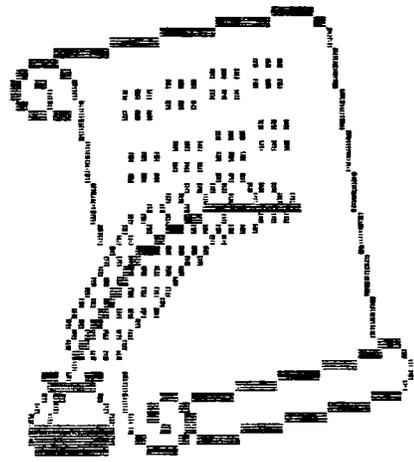
Initiating A Critical Assessment of The Project

Discussion regarding the future of the group did occur, but no consensus was reached. Upon reviewing the first year of the Webster Niblock Project, several questions are raised.

1. What function did the autobiographical workshop play in the project?
2. What events helped or hindered the project?
3. Was more work accomplished in a large group setting or a small group setting?
4. How could the project be improved next year?

In an attempt to gather data to answer these questions, through the use of a journal I will trace the beginning and the developmental phases of the Webster Niblock group. The project seemed to divide naturally into four phases, the Beginning Phase, the Conflict Phase, the Depressed Phase and the Regeneration Phase. The format of each phase will include a description of an event or meeting, a journal entry recorded at that time and an analysis of the journal entry describing how I felt when I wrote the journal and what I think now. Hopefully by speculating on the causes of positive phases and negative phases and by trying to make sense of the events that occur throughout the development of the project I will be able to answer some of the above questions.

JOURNAL



THE BEGINNING PHASE

The roots of the project actually began when I attended the Master's course, Teachers' Life Histories. I was impressed by the way that the class developed a working rapport and a sense of trust and support. Our staff at school was going through a period of conflict and I could not help wishing that we could work through this same process together. In May the opportunity arose when Dr. Richard Butt and Dr. David Townsend offered to work with teachers on a collaborative project through the 1990-1991 school year. I spoke with our principal, Grant, and obtained permission for David and Richard to speak to the staff about the project. After a presentation was made at the staff meeting the staff, with the exception of one teacher, decided that they would like to participate in the project. David and Richard would be presenting a two-day workshop in August and then monitoring and supporting the groups through the school year. The teachers' time-commitment was quite extensive. Teachers were asked to complete a booklet entitled, "Finding and Understanding Your Teaching Roots" (Appendix 1) and bring this booklet to the workshop. At the workshop the focus of the project would be decided upon. Teachers would then take this focus back to their schools where they would decide how they would achieve their goals. Teachers would work towards these goals within their classrooms, within small groups of teachers and within large group meetings.

The Workshop

The workshop was scheduled for August 23-24, 1990. The staff heavily supported the project so initially I was very disappointed when only six teachers out of a staff of fourteen attended the workshop. One teacher had indicated to me in June that the timing was very bad for him but that he would attend if he could, but other than that I was under the impression that all teachers would be there. The really disappointing fact was that we did not have an administrator in our group. Our vice-principal, Doug, was writing his Master's exams and our principal, Grant, was at a convention. As I have previously mentioned, we were experiencing a lot of conflict and dissatisfaction with staff relationships at this time and it would have been extremely beneficial for an administrator to have been involved in the discussions. When lecturing at the workshop David emphasized the fact that it was useful to have an administrator involved in the project because administrative support could be crucial to the success or failure of the project. The group discussed this problem and decided to ask Doug to join our group, even though he was unable to attend the workshop.

EVENT - WORKSHOP MEETING (August 23-24, 1990)

The workshop began with a general introduction to the workshop. The following excerpt from Dr. Butt's "Finding and Understanding Your Teaching Roots" best illustrates the objectives of the workshop.

"Who you are as a person is an integral part of who you are as a teacher. We need to know who we are as persons and teachers in order to take charge of our own professional development - to know what we want to do next.

Doing this individually is important. Of equal importance, however, is to share (as much as we can) who we are as teachers and how we came to be that way with our colleagues. In this way we evolve a better understanding of "where we are coming from". As well, we can identify common concerns, problems, and information vital to building team morale. We can also identify and prioritize particular staff development projects that we might wish to focus on. This provides a way of taking charge of our own professional development that is related to the reality of our working lives. By creating our own agenda for professional development we can gain more control over our own professional lives.

In this particular exercise, we want you to work through these materials (the booklet mentioned earlier) prior to our workshop so that you may share your life history with your colleagues in your functional groups. We are asking you to do this so that each group:

- a. builds up a climate of trust and a good working relationship through understanding each other as persons and teachers.
- b. understands the nature of each teacher's classroom working context, issues and concerns.
- c. understands each teacher's teaching style and how it got to be that way through personal and professional life history.
- d. understands the personal, professional agenda of each teacher and can negotiate a common group agenda.
- e. can identify a particular staff development project that is of common interest.

The following life history exercise is divided into five parts:

1. A Life History Time Line.
2. Questions about the nature of your working reality?
3. Teaching
4. Questions about how you got to be that way?
(personal and professional roots of your teaching style)
5. A professional development agenda for the future."

EVENT - DISCUSSION ON WORKING REALITY (August 23, 1990)

Attention was now focused on the working reality of the teachers. The following directions were given to the staff groups:

1. divide into working pairs,
2. take five to ten minutes to discuss your working realities, what is great and what is awful,
3. try to come to a consensus about common strengths (positive issues) and common problems (negative issues),
4. try to generate ideas which will improve your working reality by addressing the issues.

JOURNAL ENTRY

The staff decided that they would prefer to work as a group of six rather than dividing into pairs. The following issues and ideas were generated:

WORKING REALITY

POSITIVE ISSUES

1. sharing - there is a high degree of staff interaction, teachers are comfortable taking risks and talking with other staff members
2. working with children
3. the school's resources are excellent
4. the parents at the school are generally very supportive

NEGATIVE ISSUES

1. the staff needs to be more broad-minded, we need to value other teachers more and support them in their individual styles of teaching
2. students with behavior problems take up a large portion of the teacher's time
3. pressure due to the quantity of work is increasing
4. teachers need some form of support

IDEAS

1. the staff needs to be more broad minded - we felt that with this issue the staff as a group needed to realize that we are not supporting all of our teachers - we need to discuss this issue with the whole staff in an honest and open way
2. the increasing quantity of work expected from teachers - we considered the sharing of tasks so that teachers are not duplicating tasks - we felt that this would be especially appropriate at the grade levels where teachers could work together in the development of units, sharing the work load
3. students with behavior problems take up a large portion of the teacher's time - we were not able to generate any ideas which we felt were satisfactory solutions to this issue - we did agree that teachers should try to react to these problems in a consistent manner

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

I was amazed at the uniformity of the perception of our working realities. The positive and negative issues were generated in a very short time frame with almost total agreement within the group. Considering the dissension which marks our staff meetings it was amazing that a group of six teachers were able to agree upon eight issues so quickly. This uniformity of perceptions quickly began the building of the climate of trust and good working relationships which the workshop strived to achieve. The discussion on ideas which could address these issues did not result in any earth-shattering solutions but it did give the group cohesiveness due to the fact that it made everybody realize that we are all facing common problems.

I think that there were two important aspects to this discussion on working realities. The first outcome was that a common platform of issues was arrived at and this created a sense of belonging and commitment to the group. The second outcome was that, by listening to each other talk, we began to understand how each person perceived their working reality and to understand how they functioned within that reality.

EVENT - DISCUSSION OF PEDAGOGY (August 23, 1990)

Again, the group worked as a whole instead of dividing into pairs. The topic was Pedagogy - This is How You Think and Act In Your Current Working Contexts. The areas of discussion were Units, Teaching, Classroom Management, Your Curriculum and The Core of Your Teaching.

JOURNAL ENTRY

We began by discussing "Special Moments" in teaching. A short discussion of dislikes followed. We seemed to get stuck here so I moved the discussion to the topic, "The Core of Your Teaching", and we concentrated on management styles. We then considered each teacher's favorite teaching style. It was interesting to note that each teacher preferred group work in some form. We went back to classroom management for a short period and then we concentrated on each teacher's individual curriculum considering what they feel are the most important lessons in teaching. Several teachers chose COACHING as an image which describes their teaching.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

This is the first record of myself accepting leadership of the group. As the project developed I took on more and more leadership roles within the group. I have always felt that it was very important that the group utilize a lateral leadership style with each group member taking on some leadership roles but as the project developed some individuals outside of the project group perceived me to be the leader of the group. Within the original group we did

not have this problem. I feel that I was seen as a facilitator. It was felt that since I had taken the Teachers' Lifestyles course I was familiar with the objectives of the workshop and I was used as a resource person by the group. This first leadership role that I took on consisted of keeping the group on topic so that we were able to cover the areas designated. Possibly if we had an administrator in the group this role might have naturally fallen to the administrator. The leadership question is a common theme which ran throughout the development of the project.

This was one of the most interesting parts of the workshop for me. I found the teachers stories about their management and teaching styles very informative. I really felt that I gained a very valuable understanding of my colleagues. In our Working Realities we had discussed the need to be more broad-minded and supportive of other teachers and I really feel that the understanding that I gained has enabled me to be more broad-minded and accepting. I especially notice this acceptance in my dealings with Donna and Cheryl. When Donna was teaching ECS and Cheryl was teaching Grade One they would bring their Cabbage Patch dolls into the staffroom to show each other new outfits that they had made for the dolls. Then they would talk to the dolls. It drove me crazy! After hearing them discuss their management styles and how they relate to the children I am able to accept that this is just one strategy which enables

them to relate to their students. I was also impressed with how much they care for their students and how hard they work to provide new and exciting experiences for their classes. Now that I know them on a different level I find that I am much more accepting of their behaviors and much less judgmental.

EVENT-DISCUSSION ON THE PAST (August 24, 1990)

Again we worked as a large group. By now we had discovered some very comfortable chairs by the student lounge and we were also very comfortable within our group. The areas that we were to discuss in this section were People, Background, Periods and Key Events of the past.

JOURNAL ENTRY

This time moved very slowly for our group. There was initially a high degree of story-telling but we found that we were lost as to how to connect these stories to teaching. We should have paid more attention to the notes like we did in the last exercise. We quit an hour early and had coffee. I thought that just the socializing was worthwhile, but I felt that one teacher was not enjoying the process. She seemed to feel that it was taking too long. That was just my impression.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

By this time I had become concerned that I would be designated the leader of the project and so I deliberately stepped back to allow the other members to take up the role.

Donna was quite active in the discussion but she did not quite take on the leadership role to the point of leading the group through the necessary phases of the discussion. I felt that it was due to lack of leadership that the discussion floundered. Perhaps instead of leaving the leadership role open I should have asked for a volunteer who would be willing to lead the discussion or just brought up the topic of leadership so that the group could discuss how we were going to handle leadership roles.

Another theme which ran throughout the development of our project was the dissension caused by one member of the group. This person was already displaying signs of dissatisfaction with the proceedings of the project, however, she took no leadership responsibilities to try and steer the group in the direction that she thought would be useful.

EVENT - DISCUSSION ON OUR PROJECT (August 24, 1990)

Each group was asked to develop a long-term professional development project which they wish to work with over the next year. This is the project that our group decided upon:

Description: Research and Implement the Planning,
Teaching and Learning Elements of Co-operative
Learning

Expected Outcomes:

1. Increased student motivation

2. student ownership and acceptance of responsibility for learning
3. improved classroom behavior
4. assist with efficiency of teacher planning

JOURNAL ENTRY

I was very pleased with the project we chose. I felt that it was important that the project be concrete so that we could see immediate results. The project also needed potential for growth and in that area I feel that we could use this project as a stepping-stone to address behavioral problems. I'm a little concerned that the project might be too broad but only time will tell. We have set the following time-line to get us started:

August 30, 1990 - 10:30 am - workshop on Cooperative Learning

September, 1990 (second week) - Sarah will call the meeting and present some material she has

September - all teachers will try to do some basic introductory work on role assignments

October - we will meet to discuss September's experiments.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

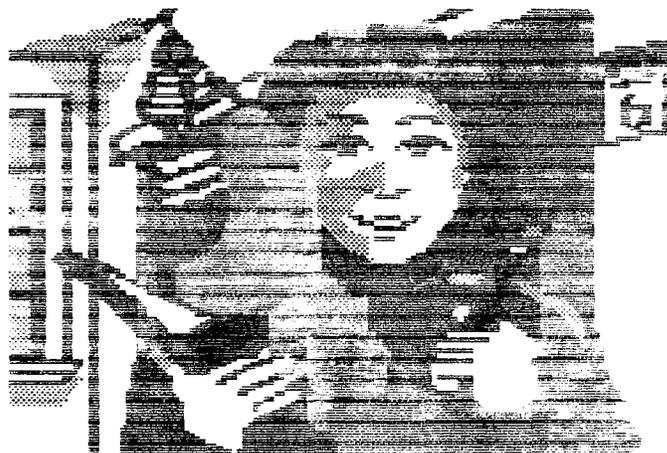
Since we had all emphasized group work in our discussion of teaching styles Cooperative Learning seemed to be a common platform. We were also hoping to gain some assistance with strategies that control behavioral problems. I took on the leadership role in the development of the

time-line. I felt that we needed to have some concrete meeting times. Also, we had all agreed that we should have Carl speak to our group so I arranged that meeting as our first scheduled meeting. I then asked Sarah if she would call the next meeting. She had some information she wished to share so the group agreed upon this as the topic of the next meeting. What we did not do is agree upon a weekly meeting time. It was felt that we would meet in small groups of two to three teachers as the need arose and then meet as a large group when Richard came for his visit. This loose arrangement did not work because teachers found that without an arranged weekly meeting they did not have the support they required to keep the project alive.

ANALYSIS OF THE BEGINNING PHASE

I felt that this was a very positive phase. The group was relaxed and able to enjoy the opportunities presented by the workshop. In the teaching profession it is very seldom that teachers actually get a chance to talk about their beliefs, their teaching styles and their management styles. This made the experience even more worthwhile. I felt that I learned some valuable information about my colleagues and I hope that they felt the same way about the workshop. The group began their project with a sense of enthusiasm and camaraderie. Altogether, it was a very pleasant, informative session. It must be noted, however, that with

one group member the seeds of one of the conflicts which characterized the next phase of the development were already evident.



THE CONFLICT PHASE

I initially felt that the Conflict Phase was caused by the lack of an administrator within our group. The lack of an administrator wasn't an internal problem, but rather it was an external problem. David pointed out that administrators need to be kept abreast of events when they have a large group of teachers functioning independently and that it would be to each groups advantage to include an administrator. It is far better to have the administrators understand and support your project than wonder what is going on. The conflict was caused by the fact that no administrators were able to attend the workshop. In the June meeting the expectation was clearly stated that teachers must attend the workshop to be part of the group. We were now in the position of inviting Doug to join our group even though he had been unable to attend the workshop. If Doug could join, why couldn't other staff members join? Some of the group members felt that they had given two days of their time to develop a working relationship and it was unfair to allow other teachers, who had not taken part in the development of the working relationship, to join the group. The conflict was upon us.

EVENT - COOPERATIVE LEARNING WORKSHOP (August 30, 1990)

A brief workshop was held on Thursday, August 30. Carl, a teacher from another school, presented some material from a conference that he attended in Spokane. Kathy, Sarah,

Cheryl and Karen attended the workshop. Doug, the vice-principal, also attended.

JOURNAL ENTRY

I thought Carl gave an excellent presentation. He gave us some very practical advise on how to prepare our classes for cooperative learning. Most of his ideas were based upon the teachings of Slavin. I have already planned to use some of the activities he discussed the first week of school.

I was pleased with the teacher attendance at the meeting. I think that the group should be flexible, allowing for sharing and commitment to grow naturally rather than forcing the issue. The teachers unable to attend requested handouts.

The group worked well today. Sarah was able to supply some ideas which helped Carl. That was a nice touch.

I Wonder...

We still have the problem of no administrator. Staff relationships are a little rocky right now so I'll need to wait for the dust to settle before approaching Doug about having David and Richard down for a workshop.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

At this point I had still not resolved the issue of my role in the leadership of the group. I had accepted the fact that I must arrange the workshop necessary to incorporate Doug into the group, yet as I remember that time I did not feel that I was the leader of the group. This ambivalence continued throughout the project. The group has

never had a leader, however we did eventually assign some organizational roles.

EVENT - LARGE GROUP MEETING (September 4, 1990)

This meeting was held on Monday, September 24. It was called by Sarah. At our last meeting we agreed that Sarah would call the next meeting and that she would be in charge of preparing a brief outline of a cooperative learning workshop that she attended during the summer. The meeting was an after-school meeting and Sarah brought veggies and dip - nice touch.

JOURNAL ENTRY

I'm depressed! Several teachers asked if they could attend the meeting and the principal and vice-principal were also there. It was a horrible experience! Our cozy little group which interacted so well was not even in the picture. The other teachers won't be a problem because the meeting was so boring that the chances of them returning are slim. Administration will be a huge problem. David feels that it is very important that administration be involved and I can certainly see his point, but the addition of new staff members to our group appears to be destroying the foundation of trust and cooperation that was built at the workshop. It appears that the change in group size from a small group of six to a large group of nine will hinder the quality of the interactions among the group members.

I Wonder...

After listening to Sarah's presentation I wonder how often I will use cooperative learning in its purest context. I misunderstood the term. What we are working towards is much more involved than I thought. I can see its value, but I think the process will be just as valuable as the attainment of the goal.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

The problem of administrator-staff relationships was a major reason that I initiated this project. I was hoping that by sharing our life stories we would be able to understand each other better and form a closer working relationship. Unfortunately, with the administrators missing the workshop this was not achieved. We now have a close-knit group of teachers who share common goals and concerns, but the administrators are only aware of the goals and concerns on a very superficial level. The split has widened rather than narrowed. The solution would be to recur the workshop, but September time-commitments do not allow for this solution.

As well, one group member was vehemently against the addition of new members to our group. She spoke to the group about the unfairness of the new members getting time off for the October 2 meeting. At this meeting she literally never said a word, but her body language was very expressive. She sat through the whole meeting looking extremely discontented and bored.

EVENT - PREPARATION FOR OCTOBER 2 VISITATION (September 28, 1990)

The last few days have been very hectic. There is confusion regarding the Thursday morning meeting with Richard. The new teachers who have joined the group wish to attend the meeting. This would mean nine subs in the school. We only have fourteen teachers. I phoned David and he recommended having the new people attend the meeting.

JOURNAL ENTRY

My Feelings

I disliked having people ask me what to do. I felt that this was a group decision and the feedback I got from the group was divided. The people who did not attend the August workshop felt that they would get further behind. Some of those who did attend the workshop felt that they had given up two days of their summer and that the new members did not deserve a half day sub. Strange! I decided to ask David for advise on how many subs to order.

I Wonder...

I wonder how the group will gel? There are some very strong personalities involved.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

This was a very difficult time for me. I felt that I was expected to make decisions for the group that I was not prepared to make. Many people had strong feelings about the new members joining the group and people came to me for answers that I was unable to give. You cannot, of course,

please everyone. I think that this is the time when I should have clearly taken a leadership role, made some decisions and acted upon these decisions, rather than trying to please everyone. The result of not taking a definite stand on the issue of new members was mass confusion. People did not know what was happening, misunderstandings occurred and conflicts increased.

I learned a very valuable lesson from this conflict. I learned that there are times when you need to consider the options, make a decision and act upon that decision. Lateral leadership is my favored style of administration, but it does not work in every situation. The problem, of course, is in the identification of the appropriate situations in which to apply lateral leadership.

EVENT - PREPARATION FOR OCTOBER 2 VISITATION (October 1, 1990)

I was speaking with Grant this morning and he stated that he was very concerned with the project for three reasons. Firstly, there were some staff members who felt that the group was "elitist". Secondly, he was worried about the number of substitute teachers in the school. Thirdly, he felt he had not been adequately informed regarding the meeting.

I prepared a quick outline of the peer coaching project we chose, retrieved and duplicated a copy of a memo sent to Grant (which explained that there would be substitute teachers in the school) which I had found in my staffroom.

box and went in to see Grant. I showed him the memo, with his name highlighted, and explained that I thought the memo was put in my box by him. I assumed that Central Office had sent communication through him. I then stressed that the project was open to all staff members and invited Grant to join the group. I explained that we were meeting at my house as there was no room available in the school. Finally, we discussed the number of subs in the school. We both felt that future meetings would need to be held before or after school. I visited each teacher who did not initially join the project and extended a personal invitation to them to join the group.

I felt that the issue was settled. We seemed to have reached an understanding. I felt that Grant understood the situation and that I had addressed the areas that were concerning him.

I Wonder...

I wonder how many staff members will join the group?

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

At the time, this was just another incident in the very hectic month of September. When I became aware of Grant's concerns I took the opportunity to speak to him and try and settle the issues.

In my analysis of this situation one thing has become very clear to me. Never, at any time, did I stop and consciously consider my commitment to the leadership of the group. I was still trying to operate under a lateral

leadership model and this model does not function in a situation where a project is just beginning. One member of the group must take on a leadership role and accept that not everyone's ideas can be accommodated. I should have made a firm decision on the question of membership in the group. I also should have taken responsibility for communication, ensuring that all group members and administration was aware of the activities of the group. I assumed that any information from Central Office would be relayed to me through the principal and this was not the case. Lack of communication caused many of the conflicts which I experienced.

EVENT - OCTOBER 2 VISITATION (October 2, 1990)

The group met with Richard this morning to discuss how the project was proceeding.

JOURNAL ENTRY

We focused on cooperative learning. Each teacher discussed what they had been trying in their classroom. We then discussed what format our project would take in the future. At the end of the meeting Richard brought up the question of the new members. Gladys mentioned that some of the staff members had felt unwanted and out-of-place at our last meeting due to the cool reception they had received from one staff member. As a result of some discussion the group decided to hold a meeting after school today to apologize to the staff for any slights and extend an

invitation for the staff to join the project if they so wished.

My Feelings...

I'm not sure that we needed to have this meeting. I spoke with each person individually and they didn't seem upset. I've spoken with Grant and the matter seems to be settled.

I Wonder...

I wonder if the staff meeting will cause more problems than it will solve.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

The meeting seemed to regenerate the group. People were excited and enthusiastic about the project and what we hoped to achieve. We were able to discuss the purpose of the project, the goals of the project and our image of the future. I felt that we were moving in a positive direction rather than going around in circles worrying about group membership.

One member of our group, however, continues to have a problem. She sat throughout the whole meeting without saying a word. She looked discontented and bored.

EVENT - STAFF MEETING (October 2, 1990)

Approximately three to five minutes after the dismissal bell Doug announced the staff meeting. Unfortunately Grant was unable to attend the meeting.

JOURNAL ENTRY

Doug apologized for any hurt feelings and each teacher was given a chance to express their feelings. John stated that he felt unwelcomed by one group member when he came into the meeting and that he didn't need the hassle. Beth also mentioned this as a problem. She indicated that she will be taking maternity leave in April so she didn't feel that she wanted to commit herself to a year-long project. Sheila mentioned a concern about such a large group project and wondered if we shouldn't just go with a school-wide project. She felt that she might be letting the school down by not participating. I assured her that membership was voluntary. We closed the meeting with the statement that the group was not elite and that anyone is welcome to join. My Feelings...

I feel that we cleared the air. The staff seemed more comfortable when they left.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

It was very unfortunate that Grant was unable to attend the meeting. I think his presence was important because he would have been able to gauge the staff reactions to the project for himself. Fortunately Doug was there to represent administration. I had misread the situation in terms of staff discontent. I thought the situation was settled but I was surprised by the comments made by John, Beth and Sheila. I felt that Sheila made an excellent point with regards to the size of the group and its effect on the

workings of the school. When the group makes decisions we will need to be very careful with regards to how these decisions affect other staff members.

One member's reaction to the remarks about her making other staff members feel unwelcome was, I felt, quite constructive. Apparently Karen and John had a frank discussion about his reasons for not attending the workshop and they have developed a working relationship.

At this time I felt that the Conflict Phase was over and that the group was established and ready to function.

ANALYSIS OF THE CONFLICT PHASE

I expected that the group would need to pass through a Conflict Phase, but I didn't realize that the phase would be quite this difficult. Anytime a project begins there are always growing pains. Generally there are small misunderstandings and minor conflicts due to the lack of established routines and communication. In this case, however, I felt that the Conflict Phase was much more difficult due to the addition of new members to the group. I strongly feel that the sharing of stories at the workshop is the glue that hold the project together. Our group now has three members who have not shared their stories nor heard our stories. Considering the dissension that marked staff relationships before we began the project, this could develop into a major problem at any time during the life of the project.

One member's negative attitude remains a puzzle to me. Her primary concern appears to be the fact that teachers who did not give up two days in August to attend the workshop were allowed to order subs so that they could attend project meetings during class time. Her negative attitude was a source of disruption within the group.

I was hoping that as the group passed through the Conflict Phase the members would become closer and form a unified group. I don't feel that this has happened. The original group that attended the workshop is quite close and very comfortable in their working relationship, but the new group is divided. People are uncomfortable at the meetings and some of the teachers do not speak up at all. I don't know how to address this issue. I feel that only time and continued success in the project can form the glue necessary to bind the group. I don't think that people will be willing to take the time to attend the workshop again. That is very unfortunate. I wonder if the staff would be willing to use some of their meeting time with Richard to cover certain aspects of the workshop?

THE DEPRESSED PHASE

I was expecting that the group would go through a Conflict Phase, but the Depressed Phase was a surprise. Although some may see it as an extension of the Conflict Phase, I have included the Depressed Phase as a separate phase because I feel that it went beyond what is normal for a Conflict Phase.

EVENT - MEETING WITH DOUG (October 4, 1990)

Although I was hoping that the Conflict Phase was over and that the group could get on with their project it appears that I was wrong. Doug requested a brief meeting today.

JOURNAL ENTRY

Doug talked to me today. He was concerned that Grant was not at the staff meeting. He felt that somebody should talk to Grant. I stated that I had already talked with him but it might be a good idea if Doug talked to Grant. Doug was also concerned because he thought I was the leader of the project. I explained to him that there was no leader. He thought the other new members might be confused so he asked me to clear up the problem at the next large group meeting. I said that I would act as coordinator. I will give the agendas to Grant, call the meetings and generally handle any correspondence. Doug will report on the meetings to Grant.

My Feelings...

I'm sure everybody understands that there is no leader but I'll go through the process.

I Wonder...

I wonder if the feeling of comfort and compatibility will ever return.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

I had now realized that some member of the group must be responsible for communications so I accepted this position. I see the position as just one of the many leadership roles that exist within the project. I sincerely hope that other members of the group will begin to accept leadership roles.

I must admit that I was very tired of all the misunderstandings and conflicts that were occurring. I was at the stage where I just wanted to get busy with the project and get some work accomplished.

EVENT - SMALL GROUP MEETING (October 11, 1990)

Donna, Julie and I had a quick meeting where I asked for their input on the proposed format of the project before I presented the format to the large group.

JOURNAL ENTRY

I talked with Donna and Julie today about the organization of the project over the next few weeks. I felt that we should divide into small groups and try to keep away from weekly large group meetings. Both teachers agreed with

the format. Julie thanked me for the work I had done with the project. She said that even if the project goes no further she feels that it has helped her to understand her colleagues and she values that understanding.

This evening I wrote up the enclosed proposed format for the development of the cooperative teaching skills that we discussed at the October 2 meeting.

October 12, 1990 - Bonnie, the secretary, typed up the skills list today. I visited each teacher individually to deliver the list. I discussed the list to make sure it was what we agreed upon. Donna offered to bring a snack to the next meeting.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

Things were beginning to happen. The staff was talking about the project and people were beginning to have a positive view of the future. I really think the meeting with Richard was the catalyst that steered the group towards a working relationship. At this point I felt that we had begun to recover from our Conflict Phase and that the group was moving towards a positive, productive phase.

EVENT - STAFF MEETING (October 17, 1990)

Grant had an item on the October staff meeting entitled "Principal's Concerns."

JOURNAL ENTRY

The group was surprised at the staff meeting. There was an item on the agenda entitled "Principal's Concerns." Grant began by stating that he had been concerned with

actions which occurred last month and he still felt the same way so he wanted to make a statement to the staff. He re-iterated his feelings regarding the potentially "elitist" nature of the group, the problem with large numbers of substitutes and his wish to be well-informed regarding the project. These are the concerns that he had shared privately with me earlier. He continued by stating that he felt these problems would need to be addressed for the project to continue successfully. Since we moved on to the next agenda item we had little chance to discuss these issues.

Naturally, I felt somewhat disappointed that our efforts had not yet resolved these issues. After the earlier mix-ups I had spoken to Grant about the memo from Central Office. I took him a copy of our project which I had prepared especially for him and I also took him a copy of the memo. I explained our concern over too many subs and how we had arranged to have meetings before or after school. I felt the issue was settled. Doug also spoke to Grant and he wrote Grant a letter of apology. Doug also thought the matter was settled.

My Feelings...

After due consideration I decided against speaking to Grant. I don't believe a further conversation would serve any useful purpose and it would only continue to keep the problem alive.

I Wonder...

I wonder what the next surprise will be? Karen came to me in tears. She may withdraw from the group.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

Looking back, I am still baffled by this event. It has been a difficult lesson in the power of miscommunication. Although I understand Grant's feelings, I don't understand why we had not been able to resolve them earlier.

EVENT - LARGE GROUP MEETING (October 18, 1990)

We had a scheduled meeting which we continued with.

JOURNAL ENTRY

The meeting was very successful. We divided into small groups and each selected an area to concentrate on. I will work with classroom meetings and fit that project into the skills list. We agreed to meet in large group form on the last Monday of each month. Small groups will meet at least once a week for brief discussions. Since many of the group divided into grade-related groups and these teachers plan units together, these groups will meet more than once a week.

I Wonder...

We have a fairly extensive bibliography developing. When will I find the time to read these books?

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

I was impressed with the way the group recovered from the staff meeting and quietly went about their business.

The question of my leadership of the group seemed to be resolved when I took the job of coordinator. I organize meetings, write up minutes, write up the log book in the staffroom and send out communications; the general secretarial duties that need to be done in any group project. In this manner the organizational work gets done but other teachers feel free to express their ideas.

EVENT - SMALL GROUP MEETING (October 19, 1990)

Julie and I had a short meeting. She indicated that she would be joining the classroom meeting group.

JOURNAL ENTRY

I spoke with Julie today. She is concerned about Grant's feelings about the project. She wants to wait a month, see how the project helps her and then speak to Grant and let him know if she thinks the project has helped her. She feels that we should provide feedback to Grant regarding how the project is helping us in our work.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

I appreciated Julie's concern for the group. She has always been a rather shy person and it must have been difficult for her to make this suggestion. Maybe working within the group is giving her confidence? I thanked her for her suggestion and left the matter with her. She will have to decide what she wishes to do next month.

EVENT - ANNOUNCEMENT OF DECEMBER 4 MEETING

Central Office contacted Doug about the December 4 meeting times with Richard.

JOURNAL ENTRY

Doug gave the message to me to distribute to the group. Karen indicated right away that she would not attend as the 7:00am meeting was too early. Donna also expressed concern. I contacted Central Office about the availability of an alternate time. It is just our turn to take the 7:00am meeting.

My Feelings...

In some ways I am glad that Central Office no longer contacts me directly. If I receive the messages from Doug then I hope that administration is aware of the meeting dates of any group activities.

I Wonder...

I wonder what the November large group meeting will be like. Our classroom meeting group has not had a small meeting although I have chatted informally with Julie several times. Perhaps a group of five is too many.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

The group has settled into an organizational routine in terms of calling meetings and distributing information. I see this as a positive step.

EVENT - RECORD OF PROGRESS (November 16, 1990)

JOURNAL ENTRY

There was very little action after the last meeting. I began the binder for the staffroom by preparing the enclosed information on classroom meetings and by typing out one of teacher's ideas. I'll check this format with the teachers at the next meeting.

About two weeks ago Julie and I started discussing our classroom meetings on an informal basis. We have had several discussions and have now decided to meet formally once a week to review the classroom meetings that we had that week.

My Feelings...

Enthusiastic. The group took awhile to work through several stressful changes but I now feel comfortable with my working partner and I see a great deal of scope for classroom meetings. I think the group of five was still too large to work with, especially since Karen had her own style of classroom meetings and Sarah did not have a homeroom.

I Wonder...

I wonder what the results of the November large group meeting will be.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

Although we had developed a routine for organization we were still not organized enough to keep the project rolling. I think some of the problem may have evolved from the staff meeting. Teachers were naturally discouraged. Also.

Christmas concert rehearsals were taking up time. This may have been a slow time but it was also a healing time for the group.

EVENT - LARGE GROUP MEETING (November 29, 1990)

The large group meeting was held at its scheduled time.

JOURNAL ENTRY

The binder format was acceptable to the group. Cheryl and Sarah shared a report-writing cooperative learning idea. We discussed the possibility of having grade levels responsible for presentations once or twice during the year. We also discussed the topics for the December 2 meeting with Richard. We considered the areas of unit planning and the school environmental fair as possible topics.

My Feelings...

The large group meetings are quite dull but they serve the purpose of relaying the necessary information.

I Wonder...

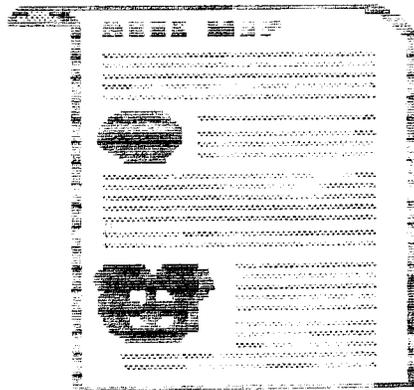
I wonder if there is some way that we can spice up these meetings?

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

The group is starting to function again. We are making progress but I feel that we require a clearer focus. Possibly the school environmental fair will provide this focus.

ANALYSIS OF DEPRESSED PHASE

This was a difficult phase. If the group had all attended the workshop I think we may have handled this phase differently, but since the group was not as close as the original six people were, conflicts arose. The interpersonal communication problems among our group, between the project group and other staff members, and the principal all hampered our efforts but we survived and the project is still alive. At this time, I think the best thing we can do is continue on with our project and make sure that the lines of communication are clear.



THE REGENERATION PHASE

The group has now become established. We are focused on the area of cooperative learning and we have established some routines which will assist in the smooth running of the project.

EVENT - DECEMBER 4 VISITATION BY RICHARD

This was a 7:00am meeting. Julie was the only member of the group who was unable to attend. She had a very good reason; she was going in for orthoscopic surgery that day. Minutes of the meeting are enclosed.

JOURNAL ENTRY

The meeting focused on the school environmental science fair and how the group could develop cooperative learning units to meet this project.

My Feelings...

I felt very positive about this development. The group brainstormed a long list of possible topics from which teachers could choose their units.

I Wonder...

I wonder how the rest of the staff will react to our working in this area. It was a staff decision to move from a traditional science fair to an environmental science fair. I hope that our choice of topics doesn't cause any conflicts.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

I was concerned that our topic of cooperative learning was too broad. I was extremely pleased when we focused in on the environmental science fair as a area in which to develop cooperative learning units. Also, the development of the units covers another area of our project, the development of unit planning skills.

EVENT - STAFF MEETING (December 19, 1990)

The regular staff meeting was held December 19. One of the items for discussion was the environmental science fair.

JOURNAL ENTRY

The staff discussed the environmental science fair today at the regular staff meeting. I explained to the staff that the group would like to use the fair as an area for developing cooperative learning unit plans. Grant asked for volunteers to organize and run the environmental science fair. Shelia offered to spearhead the organization. Sarah and I volunteered to assist her.

My Feelings...

The staff did not appear to have any problem with the group working in the area of the science fair.

I Wonder...

I wonder if the presence of the group is beginning to be accepted in the school. The rest of the staff seem quite comfortable with the project.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

When Grant asked for a volunteer to organize the environmental science fair I waited until someone else volunteered before offering my assistance. I felt that I did not want to be involved in anymore leadership roles, that it was time for someone else to take a turn. It was interesting that Sheila, who is not a member of the project, volunteered.

EVENT - LARGE GROUP MEETING (January 14, 1991)

This was the scheduled large group meeting. It was attended by all group members. The meeting lasted approximately one hour.

JOURNAL ENTRY

This meeting focused on the school environmental fair. Teachers were asked to think about the topics they might wish to work with and have an answer ready for the next meeting. It was interesting to note that almost all of the teachers had already decided on their topics.

My Feelings...

I felt very positive about the fact that the teachers had already decided upon their topics. I felt that it showed that the teachers were enthusiastic about both the fair and the cooperative learning group.

I Wonder...

I wonder if the group will begin to function as a whole now? We have divided into smaller groups for the

development of many of our projects and after the addition of our new members we never redeveloped the sense of belonging to a large group.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

The narrowing of our focus of topic to the environmental fair seems to have regenerated some of the original enthusiasm of the group. The large group is still, in my opinion, somewhat dysfunctional.

EVENT - LARGE GROUP MEETING (January 28, 1991)

This large group meeting was cancelled when it was found that the agenda was unsuitable. We had planned to share our ideas for the environmental fair and use the February 1 meeting with Dr. Butt as a planning session but it was discovered that Donna and Betty had already completed their planning. For this reason we decided to cancel today's meeting and have our sharing session on February 1.

JOURNAL ENTRY

Today's meeting was cancelled due to overwork on the part of Donna and Betty.

My Feelings...

I can't abide holding an unnecessary meeting. I felt that the decision to cancel the meeting rather than have Donna and Betty sit through an unproductive meeting was justified.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

I still feel that we made the right decision in cancelling the meeting. The members of the project are working very hard on the planning of their cooperative learning activities, they are just doing it individually or in small groups, which is probably much more time-efficient than large group development.

EVENT - VISITATION BY RICHARD AND DAVID (Feb. 1, 1991)

Richard and David attended the 7:00 am large group meeting this morning. The group shared their ideas about the topics they had chosen for the environmental fair.

JOURNAL ENTRY

We had a very productive meeting this morning. All of the teachers have successfully integrated their environmental fair topics within the Alberta curriculum. The planning of the activities is progressing quickly and some teachers have already begun to teach units which they have designed. Some teachers will produce units for the fair and some teachers will only create activities. The choice of how in-depth the topics will be is completely up to the teachers.

We also discussed the future of the project and how we as individuals perceive the growth and development of the group.

My Feelings...

There seems to be a split developing within the large group in terms of the future of the group. I personally feel that next year I would like to concentrate on working within small groups on areas of common interest. Doug expressed the opinion that the group should continue to work as a large group on cooperative learning.

I Wonder...

Some of the staff expressed concern over the 7:00 am meetings. They felt that we should be allowed to have subs in so that we don't have to meet so early in the morning.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

Although the group is very enthusiastic about the environmental fair, there are signs of dissatisfaction with the timing of the large group meetings. There is also the question of the future direction of the group. These issues will need to be addressed by the group before the end of this year's school term.

EVENT - LARGE GROUP MEETING (FEBRUARY 25, 1991)

The large group meeting was cancelled. The group felt that the sharing session that was planned was premature. The general feeling was that the group wished to field test their cooperative learning activities and correct an inadequate areas before sharing these activities with the large group.

JOURNAL ENTRY

It is getting very difficult to assemble the large group. The staff is very busy right now preparing for the environmental fair and this may account for the general lack of interest in holding a meeting.

My Feelings...

I am not overly concerned about the group's wishing to cancel the meeting. There seems to be a great deal of enthusiasm over the environmental fair and I think that, at this time, people are simply focusing their energies in another direction.

I Wonder...

I wonder if the group will be able to generate this same enthusiasm after the Easter Vacation? Teachers will be well-rested after the vacation, but they will also be facing report cards and the final few months of school. As always, it is very difficult to find time for all of the activities that a teacher wished to pursue.

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

I suppose the time issue always comes down to a matter of priorities. There are so many demands on a teacher's time that the teacher has to be very clear on what their priorities are and then make sure that they a conscious effort to pursue those priorities. Hopefully staff development through teacher collaboration will become a priority within our staff.

EVENT - LARGE GROUP MEETING (April 9, 1991)

Dr. Butt and Dr. Townsend attended this meeting. It was a lunch meeting with the lunch provided by School District #76.

JOURNAL ENTRY

This meeting focused on the cooperative learning projects developed by the group for the environmental fair and the future plans of the group. The group decided to that this was a natural conclusion to the activities of the group for this year. There was some debate as to how the group should proceed in the future. One teacher preferred the large group format and some teacher expressed the opinion that the small group format is preferable. My Feelings...

I feel that the small group format is the best format. I am finding that the large group format does not lend itself to the needs of collaboration. Collaboration requires that the collaborators be accessible. Calling large group meetings each time a teacher has a concern is simply not feasible.

I Wonder...

I wonder how the group will function next year?

ANALYSIS OF JOURNAL ENTRY

This journal entry marks the official end of the first year of the project. The year ended on a very positive note. Most of the teachers appeared to be pleased with what they were able to accomplish. The big questions for the future will not be will the group continue, but rather, in what format will the group continue?

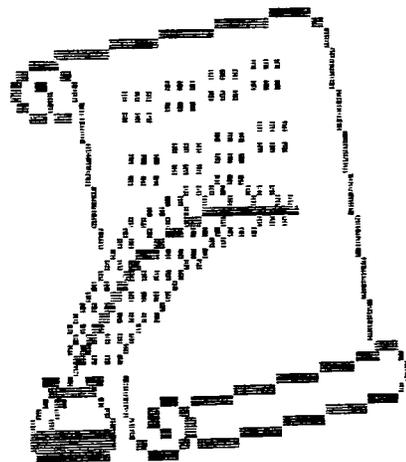
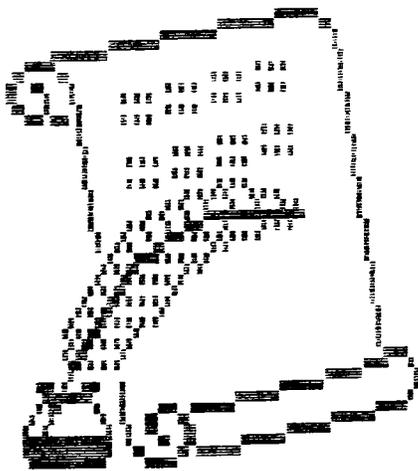
ANALYSIS OF THE REGENERATION PHASE

I feel that the major conflicts are now behind the group. Our emphasis now will be on achieving the goals that we have set for ourselves. I feel that the focusing in on the environmental science fair as the area in which we would develop our unit plans was an important step. We now have established routines and definite plans that will assist our group in the achievement of their goals.



CRITICAL

ASSESSMENT



CRITICAL ASSESSMENT OF THE PROJECT

After reviewing both the current literature on long term professional development and my journal regarding the project, I have decided to focus the critical assessment of the project by considering the answers to these five questions:

1. What were the substantive successes of the project?
2. What function did the autobiographical workshop play in the project?
3. Which events helped or hindered the project?
4. Was the large group setting or the small group setting more effective in terms of collaboration and revitalization?
5. How can the project be improved next year?

What Were The Substantive Successes Of The Project?

Several outcomes of the project might be described as substantive successes. The focus of our long term professional development was to incorporate cooperative learning into our classrooms and we certainly succeeded in this area as every teacher in the group implemented cooperative learning in their classrooms. Cooperative learning was introduced through various very successful strategies. Three teachers experimented with classroom meetings as a strategy to teach the social skills necessary

for cooperative learning. All of the teachers in the group included cooperative learning as a component in their environmental fair activities. The environmental fair itself was a huge success. Students, parents and teachers are anxious to continue with this science fair format next year.

The outcome of the project which I consider to be the most important success was the growth which occurred within the group throughout the year. The group learned to make its own decisions and at the conclusion of the environmental fair the group was developing into a successful, cohesive unit.

What Function Did The Autobiographical Workshop Play In The Project?

The autobiographical workshop seemed to serve two purposes. Firstly, it worked as a "glue" which held the project members together. As we worked through the workshop, sharing stories and building trust, we came to a better understanding of our colleagues. When we returned to the hectic environment of the school we took this understanding and trust with us. We were more accepting and forgiving of the group members. The second function of the workshop was to establish teacher ownership of the project. By sharing our life stories and our teaching priorities, we identified common concerns in our working realities that we wished to address. The project we chose then focused on these concerns.

One problem that arose was the new members of the group did not have the opportunity to voice their stories and shape the direction of the group. They did not have primary ownership of the project as did the members of the group who attended the autobiographical workshop.

Which Events Helped Or Hindered The Project?

Events Which Helped The Project

New members joining the groups was a positive development due to the fact that they assisted in the growth of the group by contributing to discussions and projects.

University support helped the project. Dr. Butt and Dr. Townsend supplied the initiative which began the project. They also supplied the expertise for the autobiographical workshop and the public relations within the school district. Due to their work the project was seen as a positive experience by the school district and the teachers.

School district support helped the project. Medicine Hat School District #76 supplied financial assistance to assist with the workshop and later meetings. Lunches and breakfasts were supplied as needed. Substitute teachers were also available to relieve the stress on teachers. Medicine Hat School District #76 also supplies a great deal of encouragement to the teachers at all of the schools involved with projects. Gareth, a school district assistant superintendent, attended several meetings. Central Office sponsored a wine and cheese party and a bar-b-que to

celebrate the successes of the various projects. The support supplied by the school district demonstrated to the teachers that Medicine Hat School District #76 is a district interested in the long term professional development of their teachers.

Narrowing the focus of the group from cooperative learning to cooperative learning activities designed for the environmental fair was a positive event. Teachers were able to generate more enthusiasm and activities when they had a narrow focus for their efforts. Cooperative learning seemed to be such a general focus that it overwhelmed the teachers.

Events Which Hindered the Project

The new members joining the group developed into a hindrance. The new members did not have the opportunity to share their stories or hear our stories. A sense of trust and understanding was not developed with these new members.

The absence of the administrators during the initial workshop was also a hindrance. As neither administrator was available to attend the workshop, they did not gain the necessary information to understand the intent of the project. They were forced to work with a superficial understanding of the project. Attempts on the part of group members to help the administrators understand the nature of the project were not successful. This led to communication problems with administration and a number of misunderstandings which hindered the project.

One group member's negative attitude was a hindrance. She had difficulty accepting new members into the group and she also gave the impression that she found the group a source of irritation rather than a source of support.

The large size of the group was a hindrance. Six members seemed to function successfully, but when the group reached nine members group interactions became strained.

Was The Large Group Setting Or The Small Group Setting More Effective In Terms Of Collaboration and Revitalization?

The small group setting was more effective in terms of collaboration and revitalization. More work was accomplished in a small group setting. When the large group broke into smaller groups there were several groups that became very active, particularly the Grade Three teachers. Whether this was a result of the project or whether these teachers would have collaborated without the stimulus of the project is difficult to determine. The large group meetings seemed to stifle some of the quieter teachers and there was little revitalization. In fact, the opposite occurred, with teachers reporting leaving the large group meetings feeling upset and disturbed by the meetings. Perhaps there are too many powerful personalities on our staff to allow effective collaboration within a large group setting. I, myself, was much more comfortable in the small group setting.

How Can The Project Be Improved Next Year?

I feel strongly that it is important to keep the recommendations to improve the project few in number and realistic. For this reason I am making only five recommendations:

1. all teachers should participate in the autobiographical workshop, including an administrator,
2. clear communication should be maintained with administration and within the group,
3. a group leader should be appointed for a year's term at the beginning of each year,
4. university and school district support should continue,
5. the large group's role should be minimized and teachers should collaborate in small groups of two or three on projects which interest them.

My first recommendation, that all teachers in the project should participate in the autobiographical workshop is not a particularly realistic as some teachers have already completed the workshop and may not wish to repeat the experience. I feel strongly that the benefits of sharing life stories are crucial to the success of a project and I would advise any group that is considering the initiation of a long term professional project to include an autobiographical component in their project. Also, if possible an administrator should be included in the project.

My second recommendation is that clear communication should be maintained at all time. Efficient communication could have prevented many of the difficulties which hindered our project.

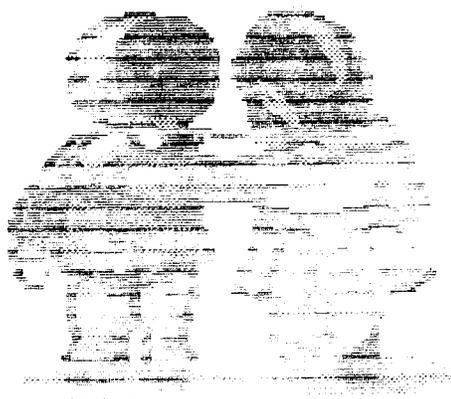
My third recommendation is that a group leader be appointed for a year's term at the beginning of each year. Although I feel that lateral leadership by the group is theoretically best, realistically the group requires a leader to handle the routine of group interaction. In this project the group found they needed a secretary to keep minutes, a chairperson to call the meetings and a facilitator to handle the communications between central office, the university and the inter-group communications. The group leader would accept these responsibilities on a yearly basis. At the end of the year, another leader would be appointed.

My fourth recommendation is that university and school district support should continue. Although a long term professional development plan is very important, it is still very difficult for teachers to take the time out of their hectic schedules commit themselves to a project. I feel that teachers need the support of the university and the school district to assist them with both the challenge of implementing their projects and the ensuing challenge of keeping their projects alive and functional.

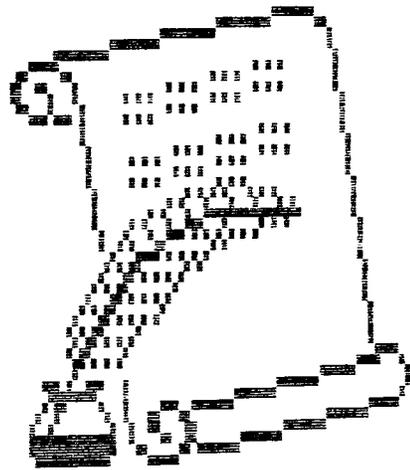
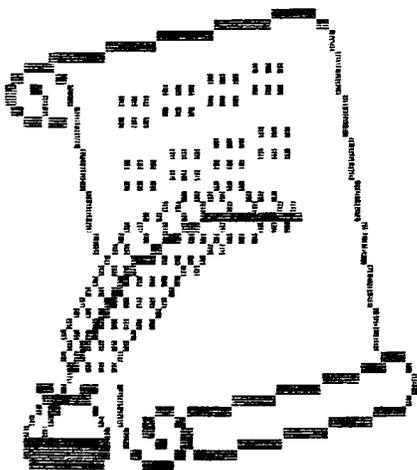
My fifth recommendation is that the group format should be small groups working on independent projects. A common

theme, such as cooperative learning, might be implemented to loosely connect the groups. I do not believe that collaboration is possible in a large group format, and collaboration is a necessary component if the needed revitalization is going to occur. This recommendation will be a point of contention as some members of the group have expressed the opinion that all members of the staff should become part of the group and the function of the group would be to help develop the concept of "the school family."

My view of the project is that membership should be voluntary, teacher ownership over the project is necessary, and small groups are most functional for collaboration and revitalization. It will be interesting to see how the project develops over the next year.



ΕΠΙΛΟΓΕΣ



EPILOGUE

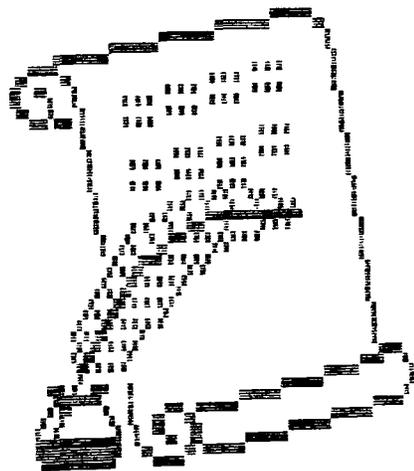
The issue upon which this project has focused is the use of long term professional development projects and teacher collaboration to revitalize the teaching workforce. The need for this revitalization is critical. As Robert Evans states, "the teaching force, almost en masse has become a veteran, middle-aged, immobile group...their average age is approaching fifty...fifty percent have taught in only one or two schools." (Evans, 1989) Feistritzer states, "Disenchantment is rampant among them; it is increasingly rare to meet teachers who radiate enthusiasm...the need for staff revitalization is inescapable." (Evans, 1989)

The teacher's role in the classroom has changed significantly since most practicing teachers received their initial training. The teacher's role is still crucial, but it is unobtrusive. The teacher provides materials and structured learning situations. When the work is underway, she listens to the children's problems and plans and collaborates with them in solving problems, in developing products and in finding different audiences to receive their knowledge and enthusiasm. The teacher must provide a secure but "flexible scaffold" upon which children can construct and reconstruct concepts and skills. (King, 1984) Only long term professional development projects will allow teachers the time they require to add the skills necessary to implement this new role into their teaching repertoire.

Collaboration is the key to teacher revitalization and professional development. Teachers have reported that collaboration with a colleague is a desired and successful method of professional development. Collaboration encompasses two important concepts; teacher ownership of the project and a sustained support system. Teachers are more likely to succeed in using a new curriculum if they plan their own gradual changes. (Butt, 1981) A long term professional development project developed by participating teachers guarantees ownership of the project. The fact that the project is long term allows teachers to gradually change their teaching strategies and procedures. Collaboration also supplies teachers with the support systems that they require as they adjust to these changes.

The lives of many teachers will be affected by the presence or absence of long term professional development projects. The changing role of the teacher demands large-scale adjustment to the traditional mode of teaching and these changes will be facilitated through professional development activities. Teachers must increasingly become agents of their own development. (Hopfengardner, Leahy, 1988)

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