

**COLLABORATING FOR
THE CHALLENGE OF THE FUTURE:**

**STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR
SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH
SPECIAL NEEDS**

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For Lloyd Cavers, mentor
and friend, with gratitude
and for my children, Julia
and Kenneth, who never lost faith in me.

Abstract

The education of students with special needs requires the knowledge of professionals from many disciplines. Traditionally, School Boards have hired Psychologists, Speech Language Pathologists, Social Workers and sometimes Occupational and Physiotherapists. While these professionals have worked for the same organization, they have operated in isolation resulting in fragmented services to children and their families. The study traces the efforts of the Student Services Department of one School District to become a unified interdisciplinary team with a vision for the future which would give them the ability to foster collaboration with the school personnel and with other agencies. After an initial review of the literature in leadership, team processing, strategic planning and interdisciplinary collaboration, five specific tasks were identified as desirable outcomes (a) the Student Services Department would work as a team; (b) Student Services Personnel would collaborate with each other in solving problems related to children; (c) Student Services personnel would identify ways to collaborate with each other and support school staff; (d) Student Services personnel would employ the team problem solving method at Case Conferences with school staff and parents; and (e) Student Services personnel would collaborate with other agencies. In order to build the team concept, Student Services staff undertook Strategic Planning which was a unifying force in allowing the vision, mission and objectives to be determined by consensus. A Needs Assessment was conducted with school staff to determine how the team at Student Services could best collaborate with them in providing services to students with special needs. Information was also gleaned from an audit of the Instructional Support Department of which Student Services is a branch. The Team facilitates Case Conferences in a collaborative processing model as opposed to the expert model. Although there are beginnings of interagency collaboration, many barriers still have to be overcome. The results are promising in the area of interdisciplinary collaboration within the same organization. Further research is necessary into making interagency collaboration successful.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Background

Fort McMurray School District #2833 in Northeastern Alberta has a student population of 4,600 students from ECS to Grade 12. The District consists of ten elementary/junior high schools and two high schools all located within the city of Fort McMurray. All schools now operate on School-Based Management although some services, such as Special Education are administered centrally. Central Office embraces a hierarchical model of leadership while most schools are team oriented.

The Student Services Department, an arm of Instructional Support, is responsible for the administration of services to students with special needs. Under the direction of a Supervisor, the Department employs Special Education Consultants, a Family School Liaison Worker, a Speech-Language Pathologist, Speech Assistants and Secretaries. Traditionally, professionals have worked independently of one another.

About ten percent of the student population has been identified as having special needs, and services are provided through numerous programs for the dependent, trainable and educable handicapped, the learning disabled and those with mild learning problems. Many students with the aforementioned disabilities are taught in regular classes in their neighbourhood schools. Generally, the statements of philosophy and policy are congruent with those of Alberta Education.

While programs and services for students with more severe needs are administered from Central Office, the education of those with mild needs is the responsibility of the schools. District Programs are located in various schools, but the school administration does not always view them as part of their school. The perception has also been that students with more severe needs who are mainstreamed are the responsibility of Central Office and no one in the school assumes ownership.

Eligibility criteria for programs are expressed in terms of intellectual ability rather than in terms of the functional needs of the student. Working from a medical model delays programming for students and operating from a deficit rather than a student centered

programming implementation model is detrimental in that students often experience much failure before intervention. Traditionally, the only information that has been used in placement decisions has been psycho-educational.

The Problem

Although personnel from various disciplines work in the same Department there has been little sharing of expertise. Each professional worked in isolation and services to children were fragmented and lacked co-ordination. Schools were not always aware of what services were available or, if they had the knowledge, how to access them. Decisions were made about students without any consultation among the various disciplines. School personnel viewed those who worked in Central Office as the 'experts' who would give the answers on how to educate students with some type of special need.

Recognizing the need for collaboration and a team oriented approach to problem solving, Student Services personnel developed a Strategic Plan, a Needs Assessment to determine the ways to

collaborate with school staffs and gleaned some information from the Instructional Support Audit. The expected results of this were that sharing would support, co-ordinate and improve services to students, teachers and parents.

Rationale

Student Services personnel's focus on collaboration among the various disciplines reflects the recognition of the broadening mandate for services to children. Professionals can no longer work independently of one another. In the interests of serving the needs of the whole child discipline boundaries must be crossed and barriers broken down. School is but one element of society and cannot alone be responsible for the child. Professionals must come together as a team to share their expertise and to formulate the best plan of action.

Government Departments which serve children and families are making an effort to collaborate and co-ordinate their services. There is a growing body of research which states the benefits of collaboration among the disciplines, but little practical advice on

how to accomplish it successfully. There is a need for ongoing action research into breaking the barriers among the various disciplines. From a practical point of view beginning to work this way with people who are known and respected for their professional expertise will have positive implications for the education of children, the support of teachers in the schools and eventually the collaboration with professionals from other agencies.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to collaborate with the home, school and community in the provision of educational opportunities that address the unique needs of each child.

Five specific tasks were defined:

1. Student Services Department would work as a team.
2. Student Services personnel would collaborate with each other in solving problems related to children.
3. Student Services personnel would identify ways to collaborate with and support school staff.

4. Student Services personnel would employ the team problem solving method at Case Conferences with school staff and parents.
5. Student Services personnel would promote collaboration with other agencies.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study the following definitions of key terms are provided.

Student with Special Needs - a student whose program deviates from the regular curriculum.

Individual Program Plan - an educational plan written specifically for a particular student whose program deviates from the norm.

District Programs - special education programs located in one school which accepts students from anywhere in the District.

Collaboration - working together as a team toward a common goal.

Strategic Planning - a dynamic planning process that frees the organization to achieve excellence.

Needs Assessment - survey to determine services desired by those in the field.

Research Design

The action research process was field based and was structured around four major components.; an initial review of the literature in areas of leadership, team process, strategic planning and interdisciplinary collaboration; building a team, a twenty hour planning process to develop the strategic plan and action plans; a needs assessment with District Staff to determine how Student Services could support and collaborate, and information from the Instructional Services Audit. Throughout the study the research process followed was active and continues to form the basis for further study and review.

Delimitations

The following are the delimitations of the study:

1. The study focussed on interdisciplinary collaboration within one department and with teachers in one school district.
2. The focus throughout the study has been to determine how schools can best access the expertise available.

3. The study, although ongoing, was scheduled for completion in 18 months.

Limitations

The following were the limitations of the study:

1. The initial group of professionals from different disciplines was small.
2. The group worked in one organization.
3. Staff worked a variety of part-time hours.
4. There were staff changes during the study.
5. The study was limited by time constraints.
6. Recent dramatic shifts in the philosophy of the delivery of education at the Government level will influence future direction.

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

Within the last two decades the education of children with special needs has undergone a radical change. Less than twenty years ago they were not part of the education system and their needs were met by parents and the medical community. While the passing of PL 94-142 in 1975 in the United states ensured education for all children and that placement decisions must be made by a team of experts from various disciplines, it did nothing to prevent the delivery of services from being structured within discrete categorical boundaries related to professional disciplines and bureaucratic needs.

In 1978 the case of *Carrière vs County of Lamont* changed the history of education for children with special needs in Alberta. The Supreme Court decision forced school boards to recognize every child within their boundaries as a student. Suddenly those who had been totally segregated in Special Schools or who had not been educated were accepted into school. At first they were totally segregated, then came partial integration and, for many children

today, total inclusion. Some school districts still have various programming options available but there are few totally segregated programs remaining. Educators found that traditional pedagogy and increased academic standards were not successful with the students with disabilities and to address their needs they had to call on the expertise of professionals from other disciplines. Most students had needs that were social, psychological and medical and many school boards began employing personnel from these disciplines.

Unfortunately, the fact that they had the same employer often did little to break down the barriers or to co-ordinate services. Case plans were often devised in isolation by the various professionals resulting in inefficient and ineffective services. Upper levels of Government are now recognizing that in tough economic times the various disciplines must co-operate and collaborate to ensure the best services for the least financial investment. Changing organizational flow charts and agency management structure, however, is far less important than human relationships in creating strategies to solve mutual concerns. Key components to successful interdisciplinary collaboration are leadership team processing and

strategic planning, all of which have been discussed extensively in the literature from the standpoint of the single discipline. While there is a growing body of research advocating interdisciplinary collaboration in programming and placement of students with special needs relatively few writers have discussed ways of effective achievement of the goal.

The Leadership Question

In recent years the elusive topic of leadership has been given increasing attention. It has been defined in many ways and researchers have sought to distinguish between management and leadership, to determine ways of measuring leader effectiveness and what it really is that leaders do.

Covey (1989) believes that leadership and management are different and that, of the two, leadership must come first. Management is concerned with accomplishing certain things and leadership is concerned with asking what it is that is to be accomplished. Bennis (1985) and Drucker (1992) both state that management is doing things right and leadership is doing the right

things. In a turbulent, fast changing world survival is not related to how much effort is expended or how expertly the situation is managed but it does rely on effective proactive leadership with a vision for the future. Management is concerned with things and maintaining the status quo while leadership is concerned with raising the quality of life for all stakeholders. A leader must balance the need for adherence to the status quo and the organization of things with the need for change and development of the potential of people.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, researchers considered leaders to be superior beings endowed with special traits (Hamilton, 1988). In other words, leaders were born, not made, and their existence was rare. It was not until the 1940s that further research into leadership characteristics was completed. In 1948, Stogdill reviewed 124 traits which were considered to be necessary components of a leader's character. He concluded that, although certain of these traits may be of value to leaders, leadership is more of a functional role determined by the situation and the composition of the group. When faced with different situations,

leaders will employ different strategies and the degree to which those behaviours have been learned will determine the leader's effectiveness (see Stogdill, 1974; Yukl, 1989). The debate over whether traits or situations have more ability to determine effective leadership continues today, but the present research focuses more on the demonstration of job related skills, the ability to work with people, the ability to create and communicate the vision, communication with and gaining the support of multiple constituencies, persistence in the face of opposition and the creation of organizational culture (Bennis, 1982; Katz, 1974; Covey, 1989; Sergiovanni, 1990). These authors believe that the real test of leadership is going beyond transactional leadership which gets things done to transformational leadership which changes the people involved and their relationships with others.

Research into different styles of leadership has yielded different names for the same concept. Terms such as authoritarian, bureaucratic, traditional and transactional have been used by various researchers to describe the autocratic leader who makes decisions independently of anyone else and whose communication style is one

Table 1

Characteristics of Effective Leaders

Self confident	Visionary
Organized	Encourage Others
Persuasive	Dependable
Collegial	Flexible
Participatory	Responsible
Achievement Oriented	Future Oriented
Persistent	Empowers Others
Good Communication Skills	Inspires Trust
Creates Culture	

way, from the top down. At the other end of the spectrum laissez-faire and chaotic leaders have been identified. In the middle, and somewhat more balanced, are the emergent, collaborative, collegial or transformational leaders whose style of building teams and 'growing people' represent a better fit for the present uncertain times (Covey, 1989; 1990; Sergiovanni & Moore, 1989). The consensus appears to be that authoritarian leadership has run its

course since it is based on "a limited view of human potential, an inadequate view of how the world works and an outdated conception of the field of management theory and practice" (Sergiovanni & Moore, 1989, p. 215).

Leadership is a relationship between the leader and the people they aspire to lead. Failure to understand this has seen many leaders become authoritarian with the need to exercise control over the subordinates. Collaborative leaders thrive on change, exercise control by means of a worthy and inspired vision of what might be arrived at jointly with their people, and understand and empower people by expanding their authority rather than standardizing them by shrinking their authority (Peters cited in Kouzes & Posner, 1989, p. xiii).

School systems have traditionally operated as large bureaucracies with many hierarchies and an authoritarian type of leadership (Coleman & LaRocque, 1990; Reep & Grier, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1990; Sergiovanni & Moore, 1989). Despite impressions to the contrary, Canadian school systems have been well managed and therein lies the problem. The tremendous potential of the people

within the organization has been untapped because those in charge have been more concerned with maintaining the existing structures and policies. The hierarchical structure in education must give way to a flatter structure where collaborative leaders are facilitators of people. Covey (1990) likens an effective leader to a farmer and the cultivation of the seeds to the cultivation of people. Leaders are set apart by integrity and the natural laws of security, wisdom, inner power and guidance which not only pervade professional lives but also personal lives. Kouzes and Posner (1989) summarize effective leadership by saying that leaders at their personal best challenge the status quo, inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, model the way, and encourage the heart. Effective leaders do not seek power, but to empower; do not mandate but communicate openly through dialogue and discussion; do not command but delegate; and do not invoke fear, but inspire trust (Hesselbein, 1992; Neal, 1992; Parnes, 1985; Rist, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1990; Watson and Fristrom, 1990).

Team Process

Group problem solving and decision making has long been a part of the organizational culture of business and the human services. Most studies that have been done have concluded that group decision making is superior to that done by individuals working in isolation (see Davis & Toseland, 1987; Toseland, Rivas & Chapman, 1984). In the last decade business and industry have increasingly advocated collaborative team decision making. It seems logical and reasonable that bringing more expertise to bear on a problem will result in superior decision making. Teams have been found to be more effective and have been responsible for the success and excellence of many organizations (see Bettenhausen, 1991; Covey, 1990; Koehler, 1989; Senge, 1990).

While the team concept is a compelling leadership tool, effective teams are more than just a group of assembled people. Striving together and focussed on the vision which creates a common identity and adds the spark that lifts the organization above the mediocre, each member is a powerhouse of potential. People come together with diverse experiences, skills, personalities, social

backgrounds and education. The differences represent a two edged sword. The advantages are that they create tremendous opportunity to devise innovative solutions to problems while the disadvantages are that if the group is poorly led, and is not focussed on the vision, it is impossible to achieve results (Mallory, 1991; Sweeney, 1992; Senge, 1990).

To be successful in working as a team, members need to learn several important skills such as problem solving, decision making, conflict resolution, consensus making, giving and receiving feedback, active listening, practising confidentiality and building trust. Team members bring with them psychological needs that must be met in the team process. These are the need to contribute, the need to feel competent, the need to achieve results and to have their efforts rewarded (Mallory, 1991). Within the team context people assume the various roles of contributors, communicators, collaborators and challengers which are necessary for success (Parker, 1991).

The process of developing a group of individuals into an aligned team with the capacity to achieve the common goal is called team

learning which Senge (1990) says is an important component of learning organizations. Members of teams strive for personal mastery and team learning builds on that and shared vision. For organizations to be successful they must constantly learn to be innovative by what Senge calls the "component technologies" — systems thinking, personal mastery, shared vision and team learning — which are never truly mastered because they are continually changing. Teams need to think insightfully about complex situations to allow the collective intelligence to be greater than the sum of the parts. There is a need for a co-ordinated action with members complementing the efforts of one another. Most people are involved in more than one team, therefore the practices of good team learning are disseminated to other teams. Senge cautions that team learning is often poorly understood and what passes as team learning is more like 'group-think' where people compromise their ideas to reach consensus. Trust and the ability to use the necessary team skills are vital in this critical step of building learning organizations.

The future success of organizations lies in systems thinking. Teams must be able to see the 'big picture' and understand the

interrelationships of the component parts of the system and appreciate their relevance. This helps them to anticipate the unanticipated, to focus on structure rather than blame and to understand how they create their own future (Senge, 1990). Leaders must facilitate the teams and create a climate in which risk taking is rewarded and innovation is accepted.

Teams when unified by the common vision, and working with a facilitating leader in a climate of trust, will have the ability to support and encourage one another and will be able to reach out as a powerful force to support others and to foster growth in the organization.

Strategic Planning

In the 1960s the term strategic planning was often used by researchers, consultants and corporate managers to describe long range, longer term and comprehensive planning (Koteen, 1989). The plans were devised at the top level of management and mandated for the subordinates who, if they wanted to remain with the organization, were forced to comply although they were alienated

from the process.

Strategic planning has emerged as the modern form of planning around an uncertain future and involves representatives of all the stakeholders of the organization. All members feel ownership and believe that they can make a difference. The strategic plan is not a step-by-step blueprint for the future, but an attitude built into the organization which allows for ongoing activity in response to changes in the environment. Business and industry have begun to realize that it is not possible to make decisions about the future based on today's operating practices. Strategic planning allows them to keep up to date with the rapid changes by analysing key trends and issues to determine their preferred future (Brandt, 1991; Koteen, 1989).

Sir Winston Churchill observed that the process of all human and natural events can be expressed as a formula:

PAST X PRESENT = FUTURE

This is the historian's view; the past conflicts or interacts with the present to produce the future.

Futurists look at the formula a different way:

PAST X FUTURE = PRESENT

The past interacts with the future to create the present which becomes the eternal quest for that future (Cook, 1990).

Strategic planning is goal oriented. It is a continuous planning process that strives constantly for improvement. It is difficult to perform, demanding intellectual effort and discipline (Koteen, 1989). Its rewards are a stabilizing of the organization allowing it to grow and change to meet the challenges of the future. Strategic planning allows for systems thinking which is more necessary today than ever because of the complexities of the environment. This complexity renders people helpless, but systems thinking allows people to see the interconnected structures underlying the issues and gives an understanding of how to change (Koteen, 1989; Senge, 1990).

Although the Total Quality movement in education is beyond the scope of this study, it has been partially responsible for spawning an interest in strategic planning. Many factors such as the economy, changing demographics, the global village and the explosion of

knowledge have given rise to concerns for the future. In Alberta we need look no further than the present Government's sweeping proposals for education to realize that for survival it is necessary to be proactive and to plan for the future. No longer can it operate in isolation; it must involve all stakeholders in the planning process (Cook, 1990; Cavers, 1993; Kaufman & Herman, 1991; Newberry, 1992).

There are different models for strategic planning but the components are virtually the same (Table 2). The most effective process for developing the plan is highly participatory, future oriented, visionary, responsive, flexible and externally influenced. Since the process is relatively new on the educational scene, it is immediately suspect. There are many strategies to learn, many potential problems to be resolved and barriers to overcome in winning the trust of stakeholders. It is not a cure for all ills but a good plan will set clear directions for change, enhance commitment, build public confidence and support and increase the involvement of the wider community.

Table 2

Essential Elements of Strategic Planning

External Analysis

- social
- political
- demographic
- economic

Internal Analysis

- strengths
- hindrances
- opportunities

Beliefs

- what is reflected in daily operation

Mission Statement

- purpose

Vision

- driving force
- where organization wants to be

Strategies

- objectives
- priorities

Actions Plans

- what
- who
- how
- cost/benefit analysis

Implementation

- decision making
- priorities
- time lines

Review

- evaluation
- future decision making

Enlightened leaders recognize that a comprehensive systematic approach to planning is essential. Successful strategic planning leads to strategic thinking which is more important. Strategic thinking allows for a shift from seeing the organization as a conglomerate of disassociated and competing parts to viewing it as a whole system. It allows for the linking of the traditions of the past with the realities of the present while framing an ideal future (Kanter, 1983; Kaufman & Herman, 1991; Senge, 1990). Strategic planning requires a facilitating type of leadership which allows for team risk taking in planning an ideal future.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration

Since students with special needs have been part of the school system, educators have realized the need to confer with each other and with other professionals in the interests of providing the best educational experience for the students. The current education literature reflects the importance of collaboration in the schools (see Buktenica, 1970; Cook & Friend, 1991; Elliot & Sheridan, 1992; Friend & Cook, 1990; Idol, 1993; Idol & West, 1987; Stainback,

Stainback & Branch, 1989; West & Idol, 1990). Many different terms and definitions for collaboration can be found and although it can be used in a variety of educational pursuits, most writing and research revolves around its use as it relates to the education of students with special needs. Friend & Cook (1991) have defined collaboration as it pertains to schools: "collaboration is a style of direct interaction between at least two co-equal parties voluntarily engaged in shared decisions making as they work toward a common goal", (pp 6-7). The key point of emphasis is that collaboration is a communication style.

True collaboration is a complex issue and for it to occur certain conditions must prevail. First, the group must have a common goal. They must set aside their own agendas and, by consensus, must focus on at least one mutual goal. Secondly, collaboration can only happen if each member of the group is seen to have parity. They may come from diverse backgrounds but each person's input is of equal value. Thirdly, responsibility and accountability are shared. Fourthly, participation is voluntary. Above all collaborators must trust one another. Trust is more easily

established in an organization where people make daily contact and where collaboration can take place in an informal way. It is much more difficult with other professionals with whom contact is rare and who do not share the same organizational values and culture.

Collaboration, even among educators, is fraught with difficulties, but the culture and models of service delivery of other disciplines place further barriers in the way (Campbell, 1987; Giangreco, 1990; Giangreco, Edelman & Dennis, 1991; Johnson, Pugach & Hammitte, 1988; Pfeiffer, 1980). Support services such as speech language pathology, social work, physiotherapy and psychology are important to delivering education to students with special needs. However, all professionals, as team members, continue to be challenged to find effective ways of synthesizing their diverse educational experiences, models of service delivery, organizational culture and goals when working on the Individual Program Plans. Giangreco, Edelman & Dennis (1991) surveyed 585 people from 17 states and various disciplines to determine what barriers among professionals limit the effectiveness of collaboration. They isolated seven professional practices which

appeared to interfere with the collaboration process and related service delivery. All of the practices identified indicated that when support services goals become priorities, the educational needs of the child suffer. Assessment by the various disciplines should be for the purpose of identifying strengths and weaknesses as they pertain to learning outcomes. Often recommendations are for isolated service delivery based on clinical judgement. When the Individual Program Plan is developed, a set of discipline free goals should be the foundation. Educational placement and programming should be based on the child's learning needs with team consideration given to the manner in which related services can support the child's access to educational opportunities.

Working with professionals from other disciplines who are employed by the same agency is the ideal situation when planning the education of students with special needs. However, although Alberta Education in its three year business plan for education lists as its third priority the co-ordination of services to children with special needs, other measures taken by the Government will ensure that the professionals from other disciplines are not

employed by school boards (Alberta Education, 1994). Interagency collaboration will become a necessity and if interdisciplinary collaboration is difficult, interagency collaboration will be doubly so. However, it does make sense in the delivery of services to children and their families and offers a challenge.

Little has been written about how to make interagency collaboration successful. It seems that before much success is assured, there needs to be an understanding of such issues as control, leadership, group decision making, self evaluation about the efficacy of the organization, understanding of how other agencies work and a willingness to overcome the difference in regulations and procedures (Payzant, 1992). Schools may well be left to promote collaboration since they must deal with all children and have the ability to recognize that the problems presented by students with special needs are community problems brought about by social, physical and economic needs. The benefits will be improved accessibility of service, reduced fragmentation and duplication, increased staff effectiveness, increased organization efficiency and improved public image (Alberta Education, 1991).

Educators have long recognized that strategies which focus only on the students' educational needs are ineffective unless community wide strategies are fostered to help them escape pervasive environmental risks (Bruner, 1991; Johnson & McLaughlin, 1982). Bruner (1991) has summarized the key points of interagency collaboration to meet the multiple needs of children and their families. He says that collaboration is not a quick fix for many of the problems society faces; it is a means to an end and not an end in itself; it is extremely time consuming and process oriented; it neither guarantees the development of a client-centered service system nor a trust relationship; it occurs among people and not institutions; it requires flexibility in decision making and it is too important to be trivialized.

Improved communications among individuals will allow the building of collaborative bridges between disciplines and agencies providing optimum services to children across educational, social, psychological and economic needs. Leadership, team processing and strategic planning will be crucial to the success.

Chapter Three

ACHIEVING STRATEGIC DIRECTION

Beginning in the Spring of 1993 the staff of the Student Services Department of Fort McMurray Public Schools, who are charged with administering programs and providing support to students with special needs, undertook a study the purpose of which was to collaborate with the home, school and community in the provision of educational opportunities that address the unique needs of each student.

Five specific tasks were defined as desirable outcomes:

1. Student Services Department would work as a team.
2. Student Services personnel would collaborate with each other in solving problems related to children.
3. Student Services personnel would identify ways to collaborate with and to support staff.
4. Student Services personnel would employ the team problem solving method at Case Conferences with school staff and parents.
5. Student Services personnel would promote collaboration with other agencies.

Strategic Planning

The Staff of Student Services consists of two Special Education Consultants who provide psychoeducational evaluation to students, one Speech-Language Pathologist who conducts assessments and provides programming assistance for students with speech/language difficulties, two Speech-Language Assistants who gives direct therapy under the guidance of the Speech Language Pathologist, one Family School Liaison Worker who intervenes with parents when direct contact between schools and parents has been unsuccessful, two Secretaries who provide support to the various professionals and a Supervisor who is responsible for implementing and administrating all aspects of programs for all students with special needs in the District. Each of these people is highly skilled but was working in isolation with minimal sharing of expertise. Over the time they had been together before the study, Student Services Staff had come to value and respect each other as professionals, but were becoming increasingly concerned that working in isolation was neither effective nor professionally enriching. Recognizing the need for collaboration and a team

approach to problem solving, they developed a Strategic Plan which would focus them for the future, lead to a more co-ordinated delivery of services to children, and be congruent with the District Strategic Plan. The Supervisor was the only member who had experience with the Strategic Planning process so each step had to be carefully developed.

With the Supervisor as facilitator, sixteen hours were spent in June, 1993 understanding the process and developing the action plans and another four hours were spent in August setting priorities for the first year of the implementation of the plan. Since a Strategic Plan is future oriented and a viable entity constant updates are maintained.

The initial planning sessions, which were highly participatory, were outlined as follows:

Day 1: Challenge of Change
 Co-operative Processing/Consensus
 Building

- Day 2: Strategic Planning Overview
 Examining Beliefs and Values
 Creating the Vision
- Day 3: Objectives and Strategies
 Action Planning - Department
- Day 4: Action Planning - Individual
- Day 5: Vision to Action
 Aligning Department and Individual Goals
- Day 6: More Alignment - setting Department priorities

The first day began by looking at some assumptions about change and how people are affected by it. Change is an elusive concept which involves beliefs, values and attitudes. Tolerance for change is linked to personality type and resistance can stem from anxiety, previous negative experience, lack of clarity and uncertainty about the benefits. Since any group, and particularly a multidisciplinary group, possesses multiple realities, conflict and disagreement are part of any collective attempt to change and are

fundamental to its success. People need time to work out their own meanings and this can be a lengthy, frustrating experience. No amount of knowledge will determine what actions will be most effective in the facilitation of change, but there will be no success without a common goal and a co-ordinated plan.

No era in history has spawned such an uncertain future. In education, as everywhere, there are some assumptions about the future that need to be made to aid the understanding as to why change is necessary. For success people must learn to think differently, be continuously learning, work within the present or shrinking resource allocation, be innovative and learn to work collaboratively. A glance at the list suggests that the future is now.

Paradigms are sets of rules and regulations by which people live and make sense of their world. However, they can blind them to different ways of solving problems and can limit opportunities for change. When unexpected information is presented, people are unable to deal with it because they cannot project beyond the present realities into a discomfort zone where new paradigms may form. If a team or organization believes that their paradigm is THE

paradigm, they can suffer from the terminal disease of certainty or paradigm paralysis which will effectively kill the chance of success in the future. It may take an outsider with nothing to lose and little sense of history in the organization to create new paradigms.

Since the group from the Student Services Department was likely to work as a team for a considerable length of time, it was necessary for the members to have a method of reaching consensus about decisions for the future in which all opinions were considered and all people had an equal voice. Considerable time was spent on the first day in understanding and practising the process of reaching consensus by the Co-operative Processing Method. This was to be the key to building the team and was to serve as the basis for decision making during the development and implementation of the Strategic Plan.

The elements of the Co-operative Processing are Response, Clarification, Discussion and Decision. Each person has the opportunity to be the leader and the recorder. The duties of the leader are to ensure that the process gets started, to monitor the process, and to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to speak

in turn one at a time. The recorder records the statements verbatim and numbers each item. The elements of this formal brainstorming in the Response component are that everyone has an equal opportunity to participate, every contribution is accepted, no one can dominate, and that it is an efficient means of both gathering information and soliciting opinions. In the Clarification component items are examined for clear understanding with the explanation given by the person who contributed the statement. At this point there is no discussion, members can only speak in turn or can also choose to pass. The Discussion stage allows for pro and con statements. In turn, each person can speak on behalf of preserving any item on the list with no ensuing debate and no repetition of opinions already stated. In the con stage, each person can, in turn, speak on behalf of eliminating any item without debate or repetition. Point of View allows anyone to express a point of view about one or more items by speaking no longer than a minute. No debate, criticism or interruption is allowed. This can be repeated if necessary. Decisions are made by a two step voting process. In clear out voting where the majority rules, voting takes place with

an open hand vote for yes and a closed fist for no. Everyone must participate on a count of three so that there is no influence from any other. If the majority votes no on an item it is removed from the list. The second stage is a weighted vote where a value is assigned to an item; 5-3-0 or 10-5-1 will spread the votes. The item that gets the highest vote is the group's top priority. If there is a tie vote yes/no again with no option to abstain.

The Student Services team found that this process had many benefits. There was an equal opportunity for contributing ideas, there was forced participation which ensured that discussions were not dominated by the forceful members, everyone was focussed at all times, there was a high degree of efficiency and it allowed the opportunity for the dialogue and discussion necessary for team processing. Using this process in all discussions was a unifying force for the group and led to deeper appreciation of others. As the week progressed, it became increasingly obvious that the more vocal members of the group found this method somewhat difficult to use because they always wanted to voice their opinions but that the quieter members became comfortable with it as it allowed them

equal opportunity without having to force their way into the discussion. All agreed that it is powerful means of decision making and of validating other members of the team. It has a way of equalizing that promotes the team concept of parity and the value of every contribution.

The second day began with a brief overview of the Strategic Planning Process in order to create an understanding that it is a future oriented process but not a step-by-step blueprint. It is a vehicle for allowing for the development of a vision and of delineating the necessary steps to achieve a preferred future. The components are external and internal analysis, the belief system of the organization, vision, mission statement, goals and action plans.

While no formal environmental scan was completed, the group began by defining the nature of the Student Services Department and continued by examining important factors which influenced their service delivery and needed to be taken into account before developing a Strategic Plan. The key external and internal elements driving the need for change were the changing demographics in schools resulting in the necessity to provide support services to

teachers while validating their expertise and the need for the multidisciplinary group at Student Services to work as a team in providing efficient, co-ordinated support services to children and their families.

In order to do this, Student Services personnel first had to develop strong positive beliefs for the team as one of the keys to creating a great organization. Individual beliefs influence what individuals do and the intensity with which they do it while common beliefs are one of the unifying forces of a team which ensure that all are working toward the same end. Department beliefs were developed using the Co-operative Processing Method which engendered lively discussion. The resulting final list included six beliefs which were - working collaboratively, Student Services, home, school and community can make a difference to students; learning is life long; parents are the primary educators; an optimal learning environment addresses the unique needs of each student; trusting, respecting, caring and validating empowers individuals and builds self esteem; and each child can learn (Appendix A).

Vision is what drives the organization and creates a common

identity. It is the creative tension which takes it from where it is to where it wants to be in the future. Discussing the importance of vision to themselves, to children and to a team in buzz groups gave people a deeper understanding of the need for a vision as a unifying force. Time was spent in trying to come to a consensus on team vision, but there was little agreement at this stage in the process. It was not until action plans had been formulated that the Vision became a reality. By the end of the second day the group had experienced both success in creating a belief system and failure to agree on a vision. They were gaining a deeper appreciation for each other and the process and were becoming more comfortable in risking ideas and opinions.

By the third day the team was ready to answer the question, "What is the purpose of the Student Services Department?" and to develop the mission statement. Many scenarios were formulated and analyzed before coming to consensus that the mission of the Student Services Department should be to "support and collaborate with home, school and community in the provision of educational opportunities that address the unique needs of each student"

(Appendix A). With beliefs and mission statement in place, it was now time to develop objectives which were consistent with them. Using Co-operative Processing a number of objectives were identified as important. Each team member took the list and synthesized it individually. The resulting lists were fairly similar and the team processed the information and formulated the final list of six objectives which were felt necessary to support the beliefs and mission statement. These were examining the effectiveness of service to schools, refining the referral process, studying the efficiency of office practice, reviewing the philosophy of Special Education, continuing to develop professionally, and maintaining fiscal responsibility (Appendix A).

For each of the objectives Actions Plans, which were responsive, responsible, realistic and achievable over time, had to be developed. Each objective was written on chart paper and displayed around the room. The team members wrote their ideas under each objective. These were then edited by the facilitator to eliminate duplication and decisions were made by the team on the final list (Appendix A).

The Action Plans took longer to develop than anticipated and continued into the fourth day. Once the Department Plans were formulated, individuals developed their personal professional goals and examined how they could be incorporated into the team plan without compromising its integrity.

The fifth day was a time for discussion on how Action Plans would be implemented. By this time the team was really unified so, although there were different disciplinary perspectives, there was agreement as to how things should be carried out. Everyone felt supported and supportive in a climate that fostered risk taking and the validation of individuals. Close to the end of this particular day the Vision, " Collaboration for the challenge of the future" (Appendix A), sprang to life. It just seemed to grow out of the discussions and everyone felt it was right and encapsulated the future for the Student Services team.

Consolidating the Strategic Plan and expanding the Action Plans to include actions required, persons responsible and timelines was the responsibility of the facilitator (Appendix A). The comprehensive plan was shared with the team in August when it was

reviewed and priorities were set for the school year. The Strategic Plan is a working document and changes will reflect the realities of the present as the team works towards the future.

In August, also, part of the plan was shared with the Speech Language Pathologists from the Health Unit who are responsible for providing services in some of the schools. These professionals are part of the team which supports students, families and teachers and with whom collaboration is necessary. The focus of this particular meeting was to promote the alignment of reporting assessments so that all professionals, regardless of discipline, would have common standards. True to the team spirit, co-operative processing yielded agreement in what type of information would be of value to teachers. The success of this meeting has benefitted all stakeholders, but is only a very small part of what must be done in achieving interagency collaboration among those working with children with special needs.

The Strategic Planning Process has yielded many positive results for the Student Services Department who are now a unified team with a focus for daily operations and for the future.

Collaboration among all professionals takes place on a continuous basis whether informally or formally. Expertise is shared and the problem solving occurs together whether with the whole team or with one or two individuals. People are growing in a climate of trust and are empowered to take risks. Issues are discussed openly and the support that is needed in these days of uncertainty and overwhelming stress is there in the team.

Changes in personnel have made some people feel on the outside because they were not part of the process from the beginning. It is the responsibility of the leader to incorporate the Strategic Goals into Strategic Management and to keep the team motivated, enthusiastic, cohesive and producing good results. New staff members need to be aware of team goals and to be included in decision making. The leader must, especially in these tough economic times when job security is an issue, bolster team members with encouragement and make everyone feel valued and respected for tasks well done. Building and working with a team is an emotional experience which allows a new side of people to be seen. The results the team achieves are proportionate to the

motivation they feel and the support they receive. People are moving beyond protecting and promoting individual goals for children to a wholistic view. By doing so, they are growing and accepting new challenges.

Needs Assessment

One of the actions in the Strategic Plan was to conduct a Needs Assessment with school personnel to give an indication of what support services were deemed necessary for those working directly with students with special needs and to focus the Student Services Team in their collaborative effort with the schools. The original intent had been to seek this direction in September 1993, but the Instructional Support Department, of which Student Services is an arm, was slated for audit in November, so the Needs Assessment was pre-empted until April 1994.

Since the District conducts many surveys and teachers are constrained by time, it was decided that the design of the Needs Assessment would be simple and quick to complete. After a review by the Student Services Team of the type of services they are called

upon to deliver, a nineteen item list was generated. It was recognized that the categories are not discrete and some can be delivered in conjunction with others. However, all items listed are services which the team is asked to deliver independently of any other.

Questionnaires were colour coded according to school. Instructions for completion were that respondents had to imagine that they had \$100 to buy support services for students with special needs. The \$100 could be spent however they wished but it must all be spent. The minimum that could be used to buy any item was \$10. Space was available for demographic information and for elaborating on the choices made (Appendix B). Four members of the Team were responsible for distribution and collection of the survey. The instructions given were (a) to distribute the surveys, read over the vision and mission statements, then have respondents indicate their position; (b) explain how the survey was to be completed; (c) read over the list, answer queries but remain neutral and (d) collect the surveys on completion.

The School District employs 298 teachers and teacher

assistants and the data collection design should have allowed for 100% return. Because of rapidly changing environmental factors in education both external and internal to the District, it was decided to limit the survey time over three days in an effort to control these factors as much as possible. During this time one elementary/junior high school suffered a tragedy so collection of data was impossible. Another school completely misunderstood the instructions rendering the data useless. Of the remaining schools there was a possible 249 respondents of whom 189 or 76% took part in the survey. Data is compiled on the information from ten schools.

Items on the survey were ranked according to priority and the percentage of the vote was calculated for each school. Aggregate ranks and percentages were calculated for elementary/junior high schools, high schools, all schools, administrators, teacher assistants, special education teachers and learning assistance teachers/counsellors. Confounding factors are that many teachers fill dual roles and teacher assistants may work either in the mainstream with a child with special needs or in a program, categories were not discrete and there were two professional

development categories.

Table 3

ALL SCHOOLS n =189	RANK	PERCENTAGE OF VOTE
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	1	10.80
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	2	9.30
Working with families	3	9.00
Individual direct teaching	4	8.20
Programming Assistance	5	7.30
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	6	6.70
Program placement	7	6.50
Classroom Management Assistance	8	6.40
Curriculum modification	9	5.90
Professional Development opportunities/training for teacher assistants	10	5.70
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	11	3.20
Parenting Skills Courses	12	3.80
Crisis intervention	13	3.40
Classroom observation and consultation	14	3.30
Counselling co-ordination	15	3.20
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	15	3.20
Other (Reading Recovery LAC, Behaviour Specialist, Developing Lesson Unit Banks,Computers)	17	1.90
Liaison with other agencies	18	1.70
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	19	0.08

% OF RETURN = 76.0

Although there are some variations among individual schools reflecting school-based management and the location of the schools, there are some clear indications that professional development, assessment, interpretation and follow up and working with families

are high on the priority list being ranked in the first eight by all schools (Appendix B). When the results from all schools were aggregated, assessment, interpretation and follow up, professional development and working with families account for approximately 29% of the vote. If the two categories of professional development are considered together, it is clearly ranked first and would account for approximately 15% of the vote. The items ranked from 1-10 account for 76% of the total vote clearly separating the services that schools see as essential (Table 3).

In the elementary/junior high schools, there was a 78% return. Again professional development, assessment, interpretation and follow up, and working with families were ranked in the first three and accounted for some 29% of the vote. The same services that were considered important when items from all the schools were ranked are still within the first 11 and account for 80% of the vote (Table 4).

Table 4

ELEMENTARY AND JUNIOR HIGH n =129	RANK	PERCENTAGE OF VOTE
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	1	10.60
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	2	10.20
Working with families	3	8.20
Programming Assistance	4	7.80
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	5	7.30
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	6	7.10
Professional Development opportunities/training for Teacher Assistants	7	6.70
Curriculum modification	8	6.60
Individual direct teaching	9	6.00
Classroom Management Assistance	10	5.70
Program placement	11	5.20
Classroom observation and consultation	12	4.30
Crisis intervention	13	2.90
Parenting Skills Courses	14	2.80
Counselling co-ordination	14	2.50
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	15	2.40
Other (Reading Recovery, Lesson Unit Banks, Behaviour Specialist)	17	2.30
Liaison with other agencies	18	1.20
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	19	1.00

% OF RETURN = 78.0

The constitution of the two high schools is very different. One (School J) is considered to be an academic high school with no provision for vocational programs or for students experiencing academic difficulties while the other (School C) has a variety of special programs for the dependent, educable and trainable mentally handicapped, IOP programs and one program for students

experiencing behavioural difficulties. They also have a Resource Program to assist students with academic difficulties. Overall the aggregate ranking (73% response rate) of the important support services was similar to the aggregate results for all schools and the elementary/junior high schools (Table 5).

Table 5

HIGH SCHOOLS n = 60	RANK	PERCENTAGE OF VOTE
Individual direct teaching	1	12.40
Working with families	2	10.50
Program placement	3	9.10
Classroom Management Assistance	4	8.00
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	5	7.50
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	6	7.00
Programming Assistance	7	6.10
Parenting Skills Courses	8	5.90
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	9	5.40
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	10	4.70
Counselling co-ordination	11	4.60
Crisis intervention	12	4.50
Curriculum modification	13	4.40
Professional Development opportunities/training for Teacher Assistants	14	3.40
Liaison with other agencies	15	2.70
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	16	1.70
Classroom observation and consultation	17	1.10
Other (Computers)	18	0.08
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	19	0.02

% OF RETURN = 73.0

The fact that individual direct teaching ranked number one probably

was influenced by the perceived need for Resource Assistance in School J. It was interesting, and perhaps not surprising, that parenting skills courses ranked eighth in the aggregate reflecting perhaps a different interpretation than had been intended when the questionnaire was developed. The interpretation of the Student Services Team was providing Parenting Skills Courses to parents of students, while the High School interpretation may have been the provision of the courses to students in school. It is interesting also that Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends is ranked within the first ten and that curriculum modification is considered unimportant, particularly in School C where the programs for students with special needs are located. They, perhaps, have the expertise within the school.

Teacher Assistants are an integral part of the team working with students with special needs so it was decided to isolate the results from this group to determine whether their needs were different from those of the general population (Table 6). There was an 87% response rate. Not surprisingly this group ranked professional

development for Teacher Assistants first, closely followed by professional development relating to students with special needs.

Table 6

TEACHER ASSISTANTS n = 28	RANK	PERCENTAGE OF VOTE
Professional Development opportunities/training for Teacher Assistants	1	17.60
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	2	12.30
Individual direct teaching	3	10.10
Working with families	4	9.90
Programming Assistance	5	7.90
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	6	6.90
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	7	5.30
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	8	5.10
Program placement	9	3.40
Classroom Management Assistance	10	3.30
Curriculum modification	10	3.30
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	12	3.10
Parenting Skills Courses	13	2.70
Counselling co-ordination	13	2.70
Crisis intervention	15	2.50
Liaison with other agencies	16	1.40
Classroom observation and consultation	16	1.40
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	18	1.10
Other	19	0.00

% OF RETURN = 87.0

These two categories accounted for about 30% of the vote but the ranking of the items did not differ significantly from the aggregates for schools.

Seventy three percent of Special Education Teachers (Table 7) responded to the questionnaire. These are teachers of special programs which are semi-segregated and housed in various district schools. They serve students with learning disabilities, educable, trainable and dependent handicapped and one program for high school students experiencing behavioural difficulties.

Table 7

SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS n = 28	RANK	PERCENTAGE OF VOTE
Working with families	1	13.10
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	2	11.80
Program placement	3	11.10
Professional Development opportunities/training for Teacher Assistants	4	9.80
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	5	7.80
Individual direct teaching	6	7.20
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	7	6.50
Curriculum modification	8	5.20
Classroom observation and consultation	9	4.60
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	10	3.90
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	10	3.90
Parenting Skills Courses	10	3.90
Other (Behaviour Specialist)	13	3.30
Classroom Management Assistance	14	2.60
Crisis intervention	14	2.60
Programming Assistance	16	1.30
Liaison with other agencies	16	1.30
Counselling co-ordination	18	0.00
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	18	0.00

% OF RETURN = 73.0

Working with families and the two categories of professional development accounted for approximately 33% of the vote. They, however, did not feel that support with classroom management or developing programs were high priorities. The fact that they have training in special education and are working in the field could be responsible for these results. A behaviour specialist was mentioned in the 'other' category, but was not a high priority.

Learning Assistance Teachers often double as counsellors so the results from these two groups were combined (Table 8). Assessment, interpretation and follow up, professional development and program placement were important, and not surprisingly, counselling co-ordination was more important to this group than to the general population. It was interesting that development of IPPs ranked fourth with this group when there has been considerable professional development opportunity offered in this area over the last two years. The 'other' category in which behaviour specialist and lesson unit banks were seen to be important was ranked fifth. Again, likely because of their expertise or because most are not classroom teachers, classroom management assistance and

suggestions for alternate learning strategies were of moderate importance.

Table 8

LAC and COUNSELLORS n = 11	RANK	PERCENTAGE OF VOTE
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	1	17.30
Program placement	2	14.50
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	3	8.60
Counselling co-ordination	4	8.20
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	5	7.70
Other (Behaviour Specialist, Lesson Unit Bank)	6	7.30
Curriculum modification	7	6.40
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	7	6.40
Programming Assistance	9	5.50
Working with families	10	4.50
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	11	2.70
Individual direct teaching	12	1.80
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	12	1.80
Classroom Management Assistance	12	1.80
Crisis intervention	12	1.80
Liaison with other agencies	12	1.80
Professional Development opportunities/training for Teacher Assistants	17	0.09
Classroom observation and consultation	17	0.09
Parenting Skills Courses	19	0.00

% OF RETURN = 84.0

The administrators group (response rate 66%) consists of some who teach part time and some who do not have classroom responsibilities. Their results deviated little from those of the general population (Table 9).

Table 9

ADMINISTRATORS n = 14	RANK	PERCENTAGE OF VOTE
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	1	13.90
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	2	12.10
Programming Assistance	3	9.30
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	4	8.90
Classroom Management Assistance	5	8.60
Working with families	6	7.10
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	7	6.40
Program placement	8	5.70
Professional Development opportunities/training for Teacher Assistants	9	5.50
Other (Reading Recovery LAC))	10	4.30
Curriculum modification	11	3.60
Individual direct teaching	11	3.60
Crisis intervention	13	2.90
Classroom observation and consultation	14	1.80
Counselling co-ordination	15	1.40
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	15	1.40
Liaison with other agencies	15	1.40
Parenting Skills Courses	15	1.40
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	19	0.07
% OF RETURN = 66.0		

While there are some variations in the rank order, overall there is clear direction that the priorities in which the Student Services Team can collaborate with the school staffs are in providing professional development opportunities, assessment, interpretation and follow up including speech/language assessment, working with families, individual direct teaching, program placement,

programming assistance, curriculum modification, development of Individual Program Plans and classroom management assistance. Professional development opportunities could be offered in topics such as classroom management, curriculum modification and alternate learning strategies with classroom follow up allowing the Student Services Team then to assist teachers in putting the information into practice. Allowing space for elaboration of choices on the questionnaire did not yield much useful information. Most people justified their choices rather than give suggestions as to the types of activities that would be beneficial. However, there were some useful suggestions made under the 'other' category such as hiring behaviour specialists, adding a Learning Assistance Centre Teacher trained in Reading Recovery methods, developing lesson unit banks and supplying more computers which is not the responsibility of the Student Services Department.

Instructional Support Audit

In the Spring of 1993 it was decided to conduct an audit of the Instructional Support Department which includes Student Services. This audit was part of the District's Master Plan for evaluation

which allows for two audits to be conducted yearly. The steering committee, consisting of a teacher representative from each of the twelve schools with the Supervisor of Instructional Services as chairperson, convened in May to compose the questions for the audit.

In November 1993, a team of thirteen teachers and administrators, including the Director of Student Services for the County of Strathcona, spent four days reviewing the Instructional Support Department. Interviews were conducted with members of the department and a sample of teachers and support staff in the schools. The objectives were to determine the level of awareness of Instructional Support, the level of support accessibility of service, essential services and effectiveness of services (Appendix C). There was a lack of specificity to the questions and the scope of the assignment, perhaps was too vast.

The information yielded was not new to the Student Services Team. Many items are actions items in the Strategic Plan and are already being put into place. The most benefit that Student Services can derive from the audit is the reassurance that areas of concern have already been identified and are being acted upon.

Chapter Four

THE THINGS THAT MATTER MOST

From the beginning the professionals at Student Services recognized that in order to collaborate with the larger population they must first practice collaboration themselves. Major steps have been taken along the road to reaching the desired outcomes defined at the beginning of the project. From being a group of professionals working in isolation and concerned with their own problems, the people who work in Student Services have become a team committed to systems thinking and how the decisions made will affect the whole department. They are unified and focussed on the common goal of collaborating for the challenge of the future and they constantly encourage one another to remember the mission statement and function of Student Services as a part of the larger School District Team. There is a deeper respect for the opinions and problems of those from other disciplines, validation of professionalism, an atmosphere that fosters risk taking and, above all, trust. Everyone is empowered to be the best that they can be and to strive for personal mastery within the structure of the team.

Although the Supervisor is ultimately responsible for decisions made, a facilitating style of leadership allows others to assume the leadership role according to the situation. Decisions are made by consensus. Growth is evident in all members and will continue as the team becomes even stronger. New members have been assimilated although they do not feel the same ownership as the original members. Care needs to be taken that they understand the team commitment to the vision and objectives and that they have parity, although they were not part of the original decision making.

The team at Student Services continuously collaborate with each other in solving problems related to children. This often happens on an informal basis but it would be safe to say that since the Strategic Planning sessions in June 1993, no decisions have been made about children without consulting at least one other professional within the Department. This sharing can only benefit students since the research says that group problem solving in the human services is superior to that done individually. The result of this sharing has been that people feel more confident in making recommendations to parents and teachers, they have grown

professionally and are prepared to accept ever widening challenges.

The Needs Assessment clearly identified how the Team could support Staff in the schools as they teach students with special needs. While some of the service seen to be important involves working directly with students, the Professional Development aspect requires working with adults. Collaborative efforts will allow for shared leadership in disseminating information.

Student Services staff do not wish to be seen as experts as has been the tradition. When dealing with parents and teachers their role becomes that of facilitator collecting ideas and together solving problems related to the student. While there is some progress being made in this regard there is much work to be done to move from the expert model to one of true collaboration. Although this was not an item on the needs assessment it may be a topic for Professional Development. Better services to children will result from the input of more ideas and common goals for the student arrived at in a collaborative way.

Student Services have been involved in other collaborative initiatives with school staff over the last year, but they are beyond

the scope of this project. The consensus is though, that although these are very difficult times for education, people feel empowered by the facilitation of the team process in which all opinions are validated. One recent comment after a collaborative effort was that people feel liberated. Such feelings will allow people to rise above the present difficulties and foster a truly great organization which provides superior services to students with special needs.

The wave of the future is interagency collaboration in providing integrated services to students with special needs. While the Team works with many agencies, true collaboration where agency goals are set aside and a common vision identified, has not yet taken place. There has been some progress working with the Health Unit Speech-Language Pathologists who work in some schools. The benefits are that there are more uniform services to children with communication difficulties. A Collaborative initiative with Alberta Social Services in providing personnel to work in a short-term program for students with behaviour difficulties is also underway.

The ministers of Education, Justice, Health and Social Services are mandating collaboration (Appendix D). The time frame given is

extremely short and there seems to be little understanding that there are many difficult questions to be resolved before a new agency can evolve. Ultimately, collaboration is about the leadership of people and if it is handled well and the team process is fostered, there will be benefits to children and their families. However it must be remembered that true collaboration is always voluntary and cannot be mandated.

The research process followed in this study was active and continues to form the basis for further study and review. The Strategic Plan is future oriented and allows for growth and development as the educational environment changes. While the research has served to develop a strong team of professionals and to eliminate the interdisciplinary barriers of those who work for the same organization, further investigation is necessary into ways to foster interagency collaboration to benefit children. In doing so we must remember with Goethe that things that matter most must never be at the mercy of things that matter least.

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APPENDIX A

STUDENT SERVICES STRATEGIC PLAN

FORT MCMURRAY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

STUDENT SERVICES DEPARTMENT

STRATEGIC PLAN

1993 - 1995

COLLABORATING FOR THE CHALLENGE OF THE FUTURE

BELIEFS

We believe that:

- o working collaboratively, Student Services, home, school and community can make a difference to students

- o learning is lifelong

- o parents are the primary educators

- o an optimal learning environment addresses the unique needs of each student

- o trusting, respecting, caring and validating empowers individuals and builds self esteem

- o each child can learn

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Student Services is to support and collaborate with home, school and community in the provision of educational opportunities that address the unique needs of each student.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives indicate Student Services priorities for the two year period 1993-95. They are consistent with our beliefs and reflect our purpose as stated in our mission statement.

- o We will examine the effectiveness of our service to schools.
- o We will refine the referral process.
- o We will study the efficiency of office practices.
- o We will review the philosophy of Special Education.
- o We will continue to develop professionally.
- o We will maintain fiscal responsibility.

ACTION PLANS

WE WILL EXAMINE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR SERVICE TO SCHOOLS

We will:

- o conduct a needs assessment with school personnel
- o define responsibilities of each Student Services professional according to District guidelines, district needs and expertise of the individual
- o seek to ensure effective deployment of human resources by communicating with administrators, classroom teachers, learning assistance teachers, counsellors, special education teachers and teacher assistants
- o assume a leadership role in collaborating with home, school, community agencies and senior administration to promote better understanding of the students served through Student Services Department
- o study the equity of our services to schools
- o develop standards of reporting for all personnel working with students
- o collaborate with the Human Resources Department in developing job descriptions, performance standards and performance evaluations for Teacher Assistants
- o co-operate with Human Resources Department in streamlining the process of hiring Teacher Assistants

WE WILL REFINE THE REFERRAL PROCESS

We will:

- o review all forms used by Student Services Department and streamline the referral process

- o clarify with school personnel the hierarchical steps of the referral process

- o develop a cross-referencing system for referrals

- o review criteria for program entrance, and develop goals, outcomes and exit criteria for each program

- o continue to refine the IPP development process

WE WILL STUDY THE EFFICIENCY OF OFFICE PRACTICE

We will:

- o clearly establish roles and responsibilities to ensure equality and maximum efficiency

- o catalogue materials and develop a viable loan system

- o research and develop a filing system which clearly indicates professional involvement with students

- o review files and discard unnecessary material

- o organize a tracking system for Speech-Language Pathology statistics and develop a time frame for reporting information to the Board

- o develop a system for month end reporting which more accurately reflects work completed

- o review and update handout file and develop a cataloguing system

WE WILL CONTINUE TO DEVELOP PROFESSIONALLY

We will:

- o establish individual and collective goals for professional development
- o disseminate information to school personnel on learning disabilities and different areas of special need
- o make ECS teachers aware of the importance of early intervention
- o work with Teacher Assistants to enhance their present skills and abilities
- o train new Speech Assistant
- o continue to meet a multidisciplinary team to share expertise

WE WILL REVIEW THE PHILOSOPHY OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

We will:

- o work with Administration and the Board to determine future Special Education practices
- o build on the above information to develop a Special Education Handbook which will delineate protocol and practices

WE WILL MAINTAIN FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY

We will:

- o improve knowledge of grant structure to ensure access to government funding relating to students with special needs

- o implement goals for professional development to ensure equity and responsible use of monies

- o monitor budget to determine whether spending is on target

STUDENT SERVICES - ACTION PLAN

1993 - 94

"COLLABORATING FOR THE CHALLENGE OF THE FUTURE"

**OBJECTIVE: We will examine the effectiveness
of our service to schools**

ACTION PLAN	ACTION REQUIRED	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DATE INITIATED	DATE COMPLETED
Conduct a needs assessment	Develop and conduct a needs assessment with school personnel as a focus for Student Services Department's delivery of services.	Lori McKeown/ Team	On hold	April 1994
Define responsibilities of each Student Services professional according to District guidelines, District needs and expertise of the individual.	Review job descriptions and examine individual expertise. Assign duties according to strengths and expertise of each professional.	May Harvie/ Team	Aug. 1993	June 1994
Seek to ensure effective deployment of human resources by communicating with administrators, classroom teachers, Learning Assistance teachers, counsellors, Special Education teachers and teacher assistants.	Promote collaborative consultation. Examine ways to deploy Special Ed Staff to serve the needs of the greatest number of students.	Team	Sept. 1993	Ongoing
Assume a leadership role in collaborating with home, school, community agencies and senior administration to promote better understanding of students served through Student Services Department.	Network with schools, agencies and homes in an effort to ensure that services for students with disabilities are dovetailed rather than overlapped.	May Harvie/ Team	Aug. 1993	Ongoing
Study the equity of services to our schools.	Examine the method in which services are delivered and determine whether all schools should have an equal distribution of time.	May Harvie/ Team	Sept. 1993	June 1995

ACTION PLAN	ACTION REQUIRED	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DATE INITIATED	DATE COMPLETED
Develop standards of reporting for all personnel working with students.	Review reporting standards and work with Health Unit to determine what information should be contained in reports to make them useful to school personnel.	Leslie Molzan/ Team	Aug. 1993	April 1994
Collaborate with Human Resources Department in developing job descriptions, performance standards and performance evaluation for Teacher Assistants.	Work with committee to develop system of evaluation.	May Harvie	On hold	
Co-operate with Human Resource Department in streamlining the process of hiring Teacher Assistants.	Together with Human Resource Department examine processes used by other School Districts in hiring and assigning Teacher Assistants.	May Harvie	Sept. 1993	May 1994

ACTION PLAN	ACTION REQUIRED	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DATE INITIATED	DATE COMPLETED
Review all forms used by Student Services and streamline the referral process.	Revise and shorten all referral forms ensuring the information does not require duplication yet maintains clarity.	Kathy Hickey Bev Hagen Leslie Molzan Lori McKeown	Aug. 1993	May 1994
Clarify with school personnel the hierarchial steps of the referral process.	Through administrators educate school staffs in the referral and contact process.	May Harvie/ Administrators	Sept. 1993	Oct. 1993
Review criteria for program entrance and develop goals, outcomes and exit criteria for each program.	With administrators and program teachers examine what the intent of each program and the types of students who would best fit.	May Harvie Administrators Special Ed. Teachers	Oct. 1993	June 1995
Continue to refine the I.P.P. process.	Develop a Teachers' Guide and conduct workshops for personnel involved in developing I.P.P.'s.	May Harvie	Sept. 1993	Ongoing

ACTION PLAN	ACTION REQUIRED	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DATE INITIATED	DATE COMPLETED
Clearly establish roles to ensure equity and maximum efficiency.	Define roles and workloads for office staff.	May Harvie	Aug. 1993	Oct. 1993
Catalogue materials and develop a viable loan system.	Catalogue materials for loan and develop an effective tracking system.	Melissa Thompson	Aug. 1993	Oct. 1993
Research and develop a filing system which clearly indicates professional involvement with students.	Investigate systems in place by other agencies to track professional involvement.	Monika Young	Aug. 1993	
Review files and discard unnecessary material.	Continuously monitor files in use and discard irrelevant handwritten telephone notes, etc.	Monika Young Melissa Thompson	Aug. 1993	On going
Organize a tracking system for Speech Language Pathology statistics and develop a time frame for reporting information to the Board.	Work with Health Unit to ensure that statistics coincide with those of Student Services.	Leslie Molzan Melissa Thompson	Sept. 1993	On going
Develop a system of month end reporting which more accurately reflects work completed.	Develop a summary sheet to indicate activities of Student Services personnel for the month.	Monika Young	Sept. 1993	Oct. 1993
Review and update handout file and develop a cataloging system.	Discard old materials and add new. Develop a system whereby all personnel are aware of content of files.	Bev Hagen Melissa Thompson	Sept. 1993	Dec. 1993

ACTION PLAN	ACTION REQUIRED	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DATE INITIATED	DATE COMPLETED
Establish individual and collective goals for professional development.	Determine Department focus and attempt to gear all P.D. to that focus	Team	Aug. 1993	
Disseminate information to school personnel on learning disabilities and other areas of special need.	Through consultation, workshops and dissemination of printed material, educate school staffs in strategies for working with LD students.	Kathy Hickey Lori McKeown Team	On going	
Make ECS teachers aware of the importance of early intervention.	Through consultation and workshops alert ECS staff to the need for early identification and remediation of young children.	May Harvie Leslie Molzan Team Administrators	Aug. 1993	
Work with Teacher Assistants to enhance present skills and abilities.	Conduct a series of workshops as professional development encourage Assistants to take advantage of P.D. opportunities.	May Harvie	Oct. 1994	
Train new Speech Assistant.	Conduct training as to duties.	Leslie Molzan	Sept. 1993	June 1994

ACTION PLAN	ACTION REQUIRED	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DATE INITIATED	DATE COMPLETED
<p>Work with Administration and the Board to determine further Special Education practices.</p>	<p>Information from the Instructional Services review will serve as the basis for future decision making.</p>	<p>May Harvie/ Team</p>	<p>Jan. 1994</p>	<p>On going</p>
<p>Build on the above information to develop a Special Education Handbook which will delineate protocol and practices.</p>	<p>Once the Review has taken place, it will be possible to revise the Special Education Handbook which will contain all information relating to Student Services practices.</p>	<p>Team Administrators Teachers Parents</p>	<p>Jan. 1994</p>	<p>June 1995</p>

OBJECTIVE: We will maintain fiscal responsibility.

ACTION PLAN	ACTION REQUIRED	PERSON RESPONSIBLE	DATE INITIATED	DATE COMPLETED
<p>Improve knowledge of grant structure to ensure access to government funding relating to students with special needs.</p>	<p>As well as knowing grant structure, become knowledgeable about alternative funding.</p>	<p>May Harvie</p>	<p>Sept. 1993</p>	<p>On going</p>
<p>Implement goals for professional development to ensure equity and responsible use of monies.</p>	<p>Monitor professional development activities.</p>	<p>Team</p>	<p>On going</p>	
<p>Monitor budget to determine whether spending is on target.</p>	<p>In consultation with Supervisor and Finance Department, keep accurate records with monthly update.</p>	<p>Monika Young May Harvie</p>	<p>On going</p>	<p>On going</p>

APPENDIX B

NEEDS ASSESSMENT BY SCHOOL

STUDENT SERVICES.....

Collaborating to meet the challenge of the future.

Last Spring Student Services developed a *Strategic Plan* to guide our operation.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of Student Services is to support and collaborate with home, school and community in the provision of educational opportunities that address the unique needs of each student.

In keeping with our belief in collaborative team problem solving, we welcome this opportunity to assess your needs and to determine how best we can support you in the provision of educational opportunities for students with special needs.

Position:	Administrator	_____
	Classroom Teacher	_____
	LAC Teacher	_____
	Counsellor	_____
	Special Education Teacher	_____
	Teacher Assistant	_____

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1. Imagine you have \$100 to buy support services for students with special needs. You can divide your \$100 however you wish. No "purchase" can be less than \$10.

- _____ Classroom Management Assistance
- _____ Programming Assistance
- _____ Suggestions for alternate learning strategies
- _____ Curriculum modification
- _____ Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs
- _____ Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs
- _____ Assessment, interpretation and follow up
- _____ Program placement
- _____ Classroom observation and consultation
- _____ Individual direct teaching
- _____ Working with families
- _____ Liaison with other agencies
- _____ Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings
- _____ Counselling co-ordination
- _____ Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends
- _____ Parenting Skills Courses
- _____ Professional Development opportunities/training for Teacher Assistants
- _____ Crisis intervention
- _____ Other

2. Please elaborate on your choices by giving specific examples.

SCHOOL A

n=15

	<u>RANK</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE OF VOTE</u>
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	1	15.00
Curriculum modification	2	10.00
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	3	8.00
Other (Reading Recovery)	4	7.30
Individual direct teaching	5	7.00
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	6	6.30
Programming Assistance	7	6.00
Working with families	7	6.00
Crisis intervention	7	6.00
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	10	5.00
Classroom Management Assistance	11	4.70
Program placement	11	4.70
Liaison with other agencies	13	3.30
Counselling co-ordination	13	3.30
Professional Development opportunities/training for teacher assistants	15	2.70
Classroom observation and consultation	16	2.00
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	17	1.30
Parenting Skills Courses	17	1.30
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	19	0.00

% OF RETURN = 94.0

SCHOOL B

n = 22

	<u>RANK</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE OF VOTE</u>
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	1	12.5
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	2	11.8
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	3	10.0
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	4	9.3
Curriculum modification	5	7.7
Professional Development opportunities/training for teacher assistants	6	6.8
Working with families	7	6.4
Program placement	8	6.1
Programming Assistance	9	5.9
Individual direct teaching	10	3.6
Classroom observation and consultation	11	3.4
Counselling co-ordination	12	3.2
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	12	3.2
Parenting Skills Courses	12	3.2
Classroom Management Assistance	15	2.6
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	16	2.0
Crisis intervention	17	1.8
Other	18	0.0
Liaison with other agencies	18	0.0

% OF RETURN = 81%

SCHOOL C

n = 36

	<u>RANK</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE OF VOTE</u>
Working with families	1	12.40
Program placement	2	11.00
Classroom Management Assistance	3	9.00
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	4	7.80
Programming Assistance	4	7.80
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	6	6.70
Individual direct teaching	7	6.00
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	8	5.30
Parenting Skills Courses	9	5.10
Crisis intervention	10	4.60
Counselling co-ordination	11	4.40
Liaison with other agencies	12	4.30
Curriculum modification	13	4.20
Professional Development opportunities/training for teacher assistants	13	4.20
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	15	4.00
Classroom observation and consultation	16	1.50
Other (Computers)	17	1.40
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	18	0.03
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	19	0.00

% OF RETURN = 75.0

SCHOOL D**RANK****PERCENTAGE OF VOTE**

n = 17

Working with families	1	16.50
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	2	12.60
Programming Assistance	3	11.50
Professional Development opportunities/training for teacher assistants	4	7.60
Classroom Management Assistance	5	7.10
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	6	6.80
Individual direct teaching	7	6.20
Parenting Skills Courses	8	5.90
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	9	5.60
Program placement	10	5.30
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	11	4.70
Curriculum modification	12	3.50
Classroom observation and consultation	13	2.10
Crisis intervention	14	1.80
Counselling co-ordination	14	1.80
Liaison with other agencies	16	0.06
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	16	0.06
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	18	0.00
Other	18	0.00

% OF RETURN = 80.0

SCHOOL E

n = 19

	<u>RANK</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE OF VOTE</u>
Curriculum modification	1	12.60
Classroom Management Assistance	2	11.10
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	3	10.00
Programming Assistance	4	8.20
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	5	7.90
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	5	7.90
Other (Behaviour Specialist)	7	7.60
Working with families	8	7.10
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	9	5.80
Professional Development opportunities/training for teacher assistants	10	4.20
Individual direct teaching	11	3.90
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	12	3.70
Counselling co-ordination	13	2.90
Crisis intervention	14	2.60
Program placement	15	2.00
Parenting Skills Courses	16	1.80
Classroom observation and consultation	17	0.10
Liaison with other agencies	18	0.00
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	18	0.00

% OF RETURN = 83.0

SCHOOL F

n = 15

	<u>RANK</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE OF VOTE</u>
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	1	12.70
Professional Development opportunities/training for teacher assistants	2	11.30
Working with families	3	10.00
Individual direct teaching	4	9.30
Programming Assistance	5	8.70
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	6	8.30
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	7	7.70
Classroom observation and consultation	8	5.70
Classroom Management Assistance	9	5.30
Crisis intervention	10	4.70
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	11	3.30
Curriculum modification	12	2.70
Program placement	13	2.30
Liaison with other agencies	13	2.30
Counselling co-ordination	15	2.10
Parenting Skills Courses	15	2.10
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	17	1.30
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	18	0.07
Other	19	0.00

% OF RETURN = 71.0

SCHOOL G

n = 16

	<u>RANK</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE OF VOTE</u>
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	1	12.30
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	2	8.40
Classroom Management Assistance	2	8.40
Program placement	2	8.40
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	5	7.80
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	6	7.10
Working with families	7	6.80
Curriculum modification	8	6.50
Individual direct teaching	9	5.80
Professional Development opportunities/training for teacher assistants	10	5.20
Classroom observation and consultation	11	4.50
Parenting Skills Courses	11	4.50
Counselling co-ordination	13	4.20
Crisis intervention	14	2.60
Liaison with other agencies	15	2.30
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	15	2.30
Programming Assistance	17	1.30
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	17	1.30
Other	19	0.00

% OF RETURN = 84.0

SCHOOL H

n = 11

	<u>RANK</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE OF VOTE</u>
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	1	26.40
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	2	13.20
Program placement	3	11.80
Programming Assistance	4	10.00
Classroom observation and consultation	5	7.30
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	6	4.50
Individual direct teaching	6	4.50
Working with families	8	4.00
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	9	3.60
Professional Development opportunities/training for teacher assistants	9	3.60
Curriculum modification	11	3.20
Crisis intervention	12	2.30
Other (Speech)	13	1.80
Parenting Skills Courses	14	1.20
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	14	1.40
Counselling co-ordination	16	0.09
Classroom Management Assistance	17	0.00
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	17	0.00
Liaison with other agencies	17	0.00

% OF RETURN = 69.0

SCHOOL I

n = 13

	<u>RANK</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE OF VOTE</u>
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	1	11.70
Programming Assistance	1	11.70
Professional Development opportunities/training for teacher assistants	1	11.70
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	4	9.40
Individual direct teaching	5	8.60
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	6	6.30
Working with families	7	5.50
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	8	4.70
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	8	4.70
Program placement	10	2.30
Classroom observation and consultation	10	2.30
Curriculum modification	10	2.30
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	10	2.30
Classroom Management Assistance	10	2.30
Crisis intervention	15	1.60
Other (Purchasing Specialized Equipment)	15	1.60
Liaison with other agencies	15	1.60
Parenting Skills Courses	18	0.08
Counselling co-ordination	19	0.00

% OF RETURN = 59.0

SCHOOL J

n = 24

	<u>RANK</u>	<u>PERCENTAGE OF VOTE</u>
Individual direct teaching	1	21.90
Working with families	2	7.90
Assessment, interpretation and follow up	3	7.60
Professional Development opportunities relating to students with special needs	4	7.30
Parenting Skills Courses	5	7.00
Classroom Management Assistance	6	6.60
Program placement	7	6.20
Student Assistance/Peer Support/Circles of Friends	8	5.80
Suggestions for alternate learning strategies	9	5.60
Curriculum modification	10	4.80
Counselling co-ordination	10	4.80
Crisis intervention	12	4.40
Programming Assistance	13	3.80
Development/Implementation/Monitoring of IPPs	13	3.80
Professional Development opportunities/training for teacher assistants	15	2.30
Classroom observation and consultation	16	0.04
Reviewing and disseminating recent research findings	16	0.04
Liaison with other agencies	16	0.04
Other	19	0.00

% OF RETURN = 66.0

APPENDIX C
INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORT AUDIT __
DRAFT COPY

Instructional Support - Audit Questions

1. What is the purpose of the Instructional Support department?

2. Please comment on service provided by Instructional Support in the areas of:
 - a) Placement of students (identification, integration, special class)

 - b) Counselling support

 - c) Teaching assistants (placement and process, staff development needs, support)

 - d) Consultation and collaboration regarding:
 - Individual Program Plan (IPP) development for students with disabilities who are integrated

 - Gifted and talented students

 - Alternate programming (I.A.P., Young Mothers , Skills programs, V.I.P. program, L.A.C., Transitional Unit program, English as a Second Language)

- Speech pathology

- Family School Liaison

- e) Human Sexuality and AIDS
- f) Native students
- g) Curriculum support relating to native culture
- h) School library programs
- i) Curriculum implementation
- j) Curriculum updates and Alberta Education developments
- k) Achievement test support
- l) Professional Development/Inservice

- m) Second Chance School/Home Schooling

 - n) Teacher Resource Center (help with searches, Current Contents, teaching unit/theme and test bank files, Mecc)

 - o) Audio Visual/Computer Services
-
3. What are the greatest strengths of the department?

 4. What are the areas you would like to see improved?

 5. Aside from the services you are presently using, which other services do you feel are necessary?

OBJECTIVES

To determine the level of awareness of Instructional Support

There is a general awareness of services pertinent to the users. Some staff feel they need information on all of the services offered and how to access them. An increase in awareness may result in an increase in utilization of all Instructional Support.

To determine level of support from Instructional Support.

District staff generally feel satisfied with the services provided. A high level of appreciation of the personnel in terms of their commitment and expertise was expressed.

To determine the accessibility of service from Instructional Support.

Staff are aware of how to access the services of the department and feel comfortable doing so. However, due to high demand on programs and personnel, there are some frustrating delays in provision of service.

To determine essential/non-essential services relating to Instructional Support.

All services are directly related to students, and therefore deemed essential. Staff feel distinguishing services that are essential/non-essential is a difficult task.

To determine the effectiveness of services provided by Instructional Support.

There is a high level of satisfaction with the effectiveness of the services. There is also awareness of the conflict between the task and the time available. The demand exceeds the supply.

*** The prevailing theme throughout the interviews was the exceptional quality of the personnel in the Instructional Support department.**

Awareness

Continue to:

Provide the variety of expertise and support currently offered by the Instructional Support Department and continue to be approachable and offer assistance as needed.

Have well qualified and competent professionals in place to provide the level of service currently being given to District students, parents and staff.

Consider:

Improving the communication between school based staff other than Administrators, Counsellors and LAC teachers, and Instructional Support Department staff in all areas and at all levels.

Clarifying the roles and responsibilities of staff within the Instructional Support Department to facilitate, enhance and improve communication within the Department and to ensure that any possible duplication of service and effort is avoided.

Locating Instructional Services and Student Services staff in a common physical area to directly improve communication among departments and ease accessability to resources both human and material.

Student Placement

Continue to:

Provide alternate programs and integration where appropriate and to provide support (ie - teaching strategies and teacher assistants)for those placements.

Utilize the existing continuum of services.

Provide student assessment.

Consider:

Communicating to staff the District philosophy regarding the educational placement of students with special needs.

Increasing understanding among staff of expectations of the Cascade Model.

Increasing the understanding among staff of the criteria for placement of students in Alternate Programs.

Whether or not integration of special needs students is always in the best interest of the student and of others in the class.

Preparing intended placement sites (re: materials and training and students in existing class) prior to actual arrival of student.

Decreasing lag time between initial referral and final placement.

Providing in-class observation and follow-up to placement to verify that the recommended placement and strategies are suitable, particularly in integrated settings.

Increased teacher assistance when special needs students are integrated into the classroom.

Input of the receiving teacher when placement of students is being considered.

"Flagging" ,in a more consistent, identifiable manner, of students with potential problems from grade level to grade level.

Implementation of Behaviour Disorder classes so that students with severe behaviour disorders are not placed in classes designed for learning disabled students.

Increasing strategies, resources and inservice to assist schools in meeting the needs of the increasing number of behaviour disordered students in schools.

Developing measurable "exit" outcomes to provide for meaningful integration into higher level special programs or into regular programs.

Alternate Programs

Continue to:

Support existing Alternate Programs, to meet the individual needs of students with special needs.

Build on and strengthen the discussions among junior and senior high teachers with regard to articulation of programs, resources and student placements.

Consider:

Tracking the Second Chance and Young Mothers Programs, to determine the effectiveness of these programs in assisting students meet High School Graduation Requirements.

Tracking students who have been enrolled in special programs to reaffirm appropriateness of placement.

Changing the configuration of Alternate Programs so that there are programs available in each high school.

Communicating the roles and responsibilities of the School/Administration/Teacher/ Parent/Student in regards to home schooling.

Individualized Program Plans

Continue:

Developing IPP's with a view to refining the process and identifying target students and/or programs.

Consider:

Developing an IPP format that can be used on a computer.

Speech Language Pathology

Continue to:

Provide speech pathology at present levels.

Consider:

Developing mechanisms for reducing the time between testing and delivery of service.

Teaching Assistance

Continue:

Supporting the classroom program by providing teacher assistants as determined by the special needs of the student(s).

Consider:

Involving the school-based personnel in the selection of teacher assistants.

Opportunities for training, in-service and meetings for teacher assistants.

Change:

Better define specific job requirements of teacher assistants in order to ensure that the needs of students are effectively served in every situation.

Home School Liaison

Continue:

providing this service for District families.

providing feedback to schools.

English as a Second Language

Consider:

Clearly identifying District level responsibility for ESL support and clearly defining the role and responsibility of Learning Assistance teachers with regard to ESL.

Methods of reducing the impact on English as a Second Language students as LAC and counselling time are reduced.

Increasing E.S.L. support such as in-service and resources, to schools.

Teachers' Resource Centre

Continue to:

Provide materials and services to teachers.

Consider:

Developing a catalogue of all resources available from Instructional Support and the TRC.

Ensuring access to all appropriate materials in the District office by housing and cataloguing them in the Resource Centre.

Reviewing the hours of operation of TRC to allow greater access.

Hiring a teacher-librarian for the TRC.

Implementing a process to improve and build the TRC collection so as to keep it current and up-to-date.

Encouraging teacher aides to access the TRC.

Ensuring that French Immersion teachers know how to access materials pertinent to their programs.

Achievement Test Support

Continue:

Providing achievement test support in the form of grade group meetings and sharing workshops.

Consider:

Providing more support at the grade nine level.

Focusing ownership of outcome on all teachers not just teachers of the grades tested.

Professional Development

Continue to:

Maintain the level of professional development offered.

Offer workshops.

Inform staff of availability of out of town workshops.

Provide leadership in selection of workshops while responding to requests from staff in the District.

Consider:

Developing an expectation that people going out of town for professional development share ideas upon return.

Expanding the trend toward large sessions when speakers are from out of town.

Expanding opportunities for grade level/subject specialists for idea sharing/planning among existing staff.

Providing more "hands-on" activities and strategies to use in the classroom.

Providing local in-service for teacher assistants in areas of identified need.

Providing further in-service for French as a Second Language and French Immersion staff.

Curriculum Information and Support

Continue to:

Support the present level of staffing in Instructional Support Department.

Consider:

Developing ways to increase staff awareness of I.S. services and how they can be utilized.

Addressing some teachers' perceptions that there is a lack curricular support from Instructional Services at the secondary level.

Developing strategies to address the diverse needs of teachers within the French programs.

Priorizing Instructional Support services available for elementary and secondary staff.

Establishing a method for addressing the issues of technology in education.

Native Liaison

Continue:

providing liaison and support for Native students and curriculum.

Consider:

providing support and service to all schools.

providing feedback to all teachers involved with the students served.

Human Sexuality and AIDS

Continue:

To offer this program in its present form.

Audio Visual/Computer Technology

Continue to:

Provide the A.V. Technical and Computer services currently available in the District.

Consider:

Increasing the amount of computer and audio-visual technical support, which may require additional personnel.

Providing District support for those schools who have IBM equipment and programs especially in the growing area of computerized Library Record Keeping.

INSTRUCTIONAL SERVICES AUDIT ACTION PLANS

<u>AREA</u>	<u>RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN</u>	<u>TIME LINE</u>	<u>CENTRAL RESPONSIBILITY</u>	<u>SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY</u>
1. Awareness	Develop and communicate a visual reference of Instructional Support for staff/parents (e.g. flow chart relating to personnel, roles and responsibilities.	August 28	Support Services	Communications Department
	House Instructional Services and Student Services in a common centralized area.	August 28		
2. Student Placement	Communicate to staff the District's position regarding the Cascade Model.	August 28	Student Services	School Administrators
	Prepare intended placement prior to arrival of student, and follow-up to verify suitability.	Ongoing	Student Services	Special Needs/LAC
	Develop a consistent "flagging" system to identify potential concerns regarding students as they move from year to year.		Student Services	School Administrators and Counsellors
	Develop measurable "exit outcomes" to provide for meaningful integration into higher level special programs or into regular programs.		Student Services	
3. Alternate Programs	Track the effectiveness of the Second Chance and the Young Mothers programs - how many achieve high school graduation requirements.	Ongoing		Teachers of the Programs

<u>AREA</u>	<u>RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN</u>	<u>TIME LINE</u>	<u>CENTRAL RESPONSIBILITY</u>	<u>SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY</u>
	Communicate the roles and responsibilities for the School/ Administration/Teacher/Parent/ Student in regards to home schooling.	August, 1994	Assistant Superintendent of Support Services	
4. Teaching Assistance	Better define specific job requirements of teacher assistants in order to ensure that the needs of students are effectively served in every situation.	Ongoing	Support Services Human Resources	
	Involve the classroom based personnel in the selection of teaching assistants.	Ongoing	Human Resources	Principals
5. English As A Second Language	Clearly identify District level responsibility for E.S.L. so that schools know whom to contact for information and support.	August, 1994	Assistant Superintendent Support Services	
	Define and support the role and responsibility of L.A.C. teachers with regard to E.S.L.	August, 1994	Support Services	
6. Teacher's Resource Center	Implement a process to improve and build the T.R.C. collection so as to keep it current and up-to-date.	August, 1994	Support Services	
7. Achievement Test Support	Focus ownership of outcomes of achievement tests on all teachers in each division, not just on teachers of grade 3, 6 and 9.	Ongoing	Support Services	Principals

<u>AREA</u>	<u>RECOMMENDED ACTION PLAN</u>	<u>TIME LINE</u>	<u>CENTRAL RESPONSIBILITY</u>	<u>SCHOOL RESPONSIBILITY</u>
8. Professional Development	Cooperate and share costs among schools and/or districts related to bringing out of town speakers to the city.	Ongoing	Support Services	Administration
	Expand opportunities for grade level/subject specialists to share and plan together	Ongoing		Principals
	Provide local inservice for all staff in areas of identified need such as behavioral disordered students.	Ongoing	Support Services	
9. Audio-Visual/ Computer Technician	Increase the amount of computer and audio-visual technician support for Apple, IBM and MAC systems.	August, 1994	Support Services	
10. Native Liaison and Home/School Liaison	Continue to offer Native liaison and Home School liaison in their present format.	Ongoing	Support Services	
11. Health & Family Life	Continue to offer human sexuality and AIDS instruction at the level currently offered.	Ongoing	Support Services	

APPENDIX D
REDESIGN OF SERVICES: PROGRAMS FOR
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

FACT SHEET

REDESIGN OF SERVICES: PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

In November 1993, a document entitled *Reshaping Child Welfare* was released. The document contained a commitment to redesign services provided to children and families. A Commissioner of Services for Children was appointed to design and implement a new approach to providing services within an eighteen month time frame.

This fact sheet identifies many of the programs and services for children and families that are currently provided by the departments of Health, Education, Justice, Family and Social Services and Community Development.

HEALTH

Public Health

- Public Health provides services related to the promotion and protection of health, prevention of disease and injury and community care.
- Some examples of the services provided are public health nursing, home care, dental care, sexual health, speech therapy, hereditary disease, early intervention, nutrition services and the provision of aids for daily living.

Children's Mental Health

- Alberta Health provides services to promote, preserve and restore the mental health of Albertans.
- Children's Mental Health Services include services provided in government clinics, paediatric psychiatry in acute care hospitals, and services provided through contracted agencies.

FAMILY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Child Welfare Program

- The objective of the program is to ensure protection of the survival, security and development of children.
- Services provided include child protection, out of home care (foster care, group care, residential treatment and secure treatment) adoption services, post adoption support, and services to unmarried parents.

Handicapped Children's Services

- The Handicapped Children's Services Program provides financial assistance to families of handicapped children to purchase needed goods and services.

Day Care Program

- This program is designed to assist parents who require child care outside the home.
- The program includes Family Day Home funding, Child Care Subsidies, Operating Allowances, Integrated Day Care, Licensing and Staff Qualification and Certification.

JUSTICE

Young Offenders Program

- The Young Offenders Branch provides custody and community based services.
- The program includes Alternative Measures, Probation, Community Service, Fine Options and Custody Facilities.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Recreation

- The department of Community Development delivers programs for families, such as recreation programs and services.

EDUCATION

Special Education Branch

- The Special Education Branch is responsible for policy, administration and the development of learning resources and student support services.
- Alberta provides Special Education Grants to assist school systems to meet the special needs of students.
- Services include the Calgary and Edmonton Materials Resource Centres, contracted regional assessment services for severely, multiple handicapped students and the development of classroom learning resources.

School Services

- School systems identify and assess students with special needs and provide instructional programs for students.
- About 10% of all Alberta students benefit from special education programs.
- School programs and services include counselling, classroom instruction, teacher aide assistance and non-instructional services in areas such as student physical and mental health.

FACT SHEET

REDESIGN OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

THE INITIATIVE

- The government has appointed a Commissioner of Services for Children to design and implement a new approach to providing services for children and families.
- The new system will be:
 - effective and efficient
 - affordable
 - based on an integrated service delivery network
 - accessible and responsive
 - based on community priorities and needs
 - managed by and delivered within communities

THE SCOPE OF THE INITIATIVE

- The initiative encompasses all services for children and their families. These services are currently provided by the departments of Education, Health, Justice and Family and Social Services.

THE COMMISSIONER'S OFFICE

- The Commissioner of Services for Children is Mr. Ray Lazanik.
- The Commissioner is independent of the departments of Health, Education, Justice and Family and Social Services. The Commissioner reports directly to the lead Minister for the initiative, the Honourable Mike Cardinal.
- The Commissioner's Office is staffed with individuals seconded from Education, Health, Justice, Aboriginal Affairs and Family and Social Services.

THE NEED TO REDESIGN SERVICES

- Although many agencies and individuals work hard to assist children and families, there are problems with the current approach.
- Over the past decade, the four departments that share responsibility for services for children and families have found that gaps in services and the fragmented approach to providing services have undermined their effectiveness.
- The departments have indicated that coordination and integration are necessary.
- In addition, there is growing recognition that effective services must build on the strengths of families communities.

THE DISCUSSION PAPER

- To initiate the reform process, the Commissioner has released a discussion paper entitled *Planning and Implementing a New Approach to Services for Children and Families: Beginning the Transition*.
- The paper outlines the goals of the initiative, the process for involving Albertans and key questions that must be addressed.

THE GOALS

- Although it involves the reform of service systems, structures and funding mechanisms, the task is not just the reorganization of bureaucracies or services.
- The redesign of services for children and families is about social change. The following are the goals for the initiative.
 - Children will be protected from harm.
 - More children will be born healthy and live healthy, productive lives.
 - Fewer children and youth will come into conflict with the law.
 - Children will achieve their optimum level of development.
 - Families will have the responsibility and the ability to find their own solutions.
 - Service strategies will focus on promoting strong, nurturing and self-reliant families.
 - Helping children will be everyone's responsibility.
 - Dependence on services will be replaced by people caring for people within the community.

THE QUESTIONS

- The discussion paper poses a series of general questions and thirty eight specific questions that should be addressed in the process of developing a new approach to services for children and families.
- The questions are grouped under the headings of vision, goals, service philosophy, achieving results, provincial structure, regional authorities, local service delivery and funding.

THE INTERIM WORKING GROUPS

- Six Interim Working Groups will be established across Alberta to assist the Commissioner to design a new approach to services to families and children.
- The Interim Working Groups will:
 - ensure that a broad range of perspectives are reflected in the task of service redesign;
 - provide advice to the Commissioner on the redesign of services for children and families;
 - propose initial regional services plans following consultation with the wider community.
- Service professionals from provincial departments and the community will be included on the Interim Working Groups, along with parents, children and individuals drawn from other sectors.
- Two individuals will be identified to organize and co-chair each Interim Working Group. One of the co-chairs for each Interim Working Group will be aboriginal.

GETTING INVOLVED

- People involved in the provision of services often have unique perspectives and insights. They are encouraged to contribute to the redesign of services for children and families.
- People may contact the Interim Working Groups to find out how they can get involved.
- Individuals and organizations are also welcome to contribute to the redesign initiative by making brief formal submissions.
- Submissions may be forwarded to the Commissioner's Office:

Mr. Ray Lazanik
Commissioner of Services for Children
22nd Floor, 10025 Jasper Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
T5J 3Z5

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

- To obtain additional information or a copy of the discussion paper, contact the Commissioner's Office at **(403) 422-5011**.

THE TIME FRAMES

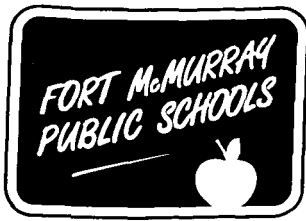
- The Commissioner must work with Albertans and with Interim Working Groups to develop recommendations for a new approach to services for children and families by June 1994.
- Implementation will take place from June 1994 to June 1995.
- Updates on the status of the initiative will be provided on a regular basis.
- The table on the following page outlines the phases of the initiative.

REDESIGN OF SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

PHASES OF CHANGE

	PHASE ONE	PHASE TWO	PHASE THREE
OBJECTIVE	Planning	Implementation	Fully Operational System
TIMEFRAME	January to June '94	June '94 to June '95	June '95 onwards
SCOPE	core children's services, such as Young Offender Services, Child Welfare, Children's Mental Health, non-instructional school based services, community based services and recreational services	additional services will be considered, such as day care, services for children with disabilities etc.	all services for children and their families
TASKS	<p>release of discussion paper</p> <p>research and analysis</p> <p>consultation</p> <p>establishment of Interim Regional Working Groups</p> <p>make recommendations to the Minister for a new system</p>	<p>ongoing consultation regarding implementation</p> <p>implement new regional system, with the assistance of the Interim Regional Working Groups</p> <p>implement structural, procedural and legislative change at the provincial level to support the new approach</p>	<p>key features of the new system will be implemented</p> <p>ongoing reform for continuous improvement</p>

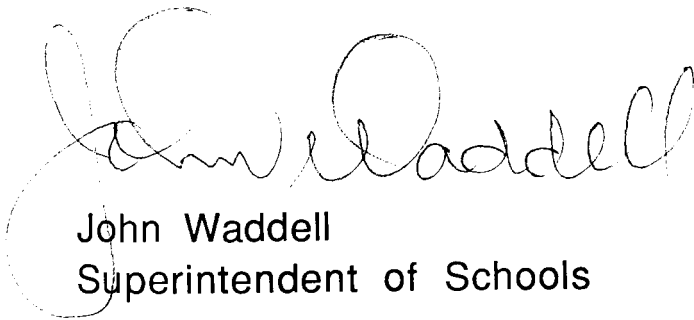
APPENDIX E
PERMISSION TO USE FORT MCMURRAY SCHOOL
DISTRICT INFORMATION



9401 - Franklin Avenue, Fort McMurray, Alberta T9H 3Z7
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April 11, 1994

I am aware that information in this project refers to
Fort McMurray Public Schools and I give permission for its use.



John Waddell
Superintendent of Schools