

**THE POLITICS OF REDISTRIBUTION AND RECOGNITION:
A RETROSPECTIVE CASE STUDY OF ONE INNER-CITY SCHOOL**

by

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ABSTRACT

This *retrospective critical case study* is directed toward educational leaders, practitioners, administrative bodies, and policy writers who work in partnership with government agencies and the public school system. Overall, this original study critiques, analyzes, assesses, and reports on the work of one scholar-practitioner leader over a period of four and one-half years. The purpose of this *retrospective critical case study* is to explore three topics which influence students' learning and academic achievement within the public education system in general and designated inner-city schools in particular ... the application of integrated social-justice principles, adoption of school-choice and open-boundary policies, and the development of full-service year-round schooling. This study reports on the negative consequences of the implementation of school-choice and open-boundary policies upon an inner-city school and explores the structural and discursive strategies implemented to address these outcomes.

The study is guided by the following research questions: How did various interests and ideologies inform the introduction of school-choice and open-boundary policies and how did they support or inhibit redistribution and recognition at the school? What was the impact of these policies? What were the limits and possibilities of various structural strategies, such as year-round schooling, that were implemented to mitigate the negative impact of school choice and open-boundary policies? What were the limits and possibilities of various discursive strategies, such as efforts to change the school's reputation internally and externally, that were implemented to mitigate the negative impact of school choice and open-boundary policies? And finally, what recommendations can be made based on this case study, for a more socially just approach to open-boundary, school-choice, and public-education policy development?

In answering these questions, this dissertation takes the reader through the successful implementation of structural and discursive strategies at one elementary school and concludes with recommendations for policy, practice, and future research relevant to public education. Recommendations include: the provision of social-justice education for all practitioners and administrators; the evaluation of the impact of proposed learning initiatives and policies through a social-justice framework prior to implementation; compensation for schools that experience negative repercussions from the implementation of choice policies; study into the relationship between time and learning including the implementation of full-service year-round schooling; and, differentiated hiring practice for schools with high-needs populations.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ACEbc	Association for Community Education in British Columbia
AICAFMHA	Australian Infant Child Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association
BCTF	British Columbia Teachers' Federation
CYMHP	Child and Youth Mental Health Plan
CUPE	Canadian Union of Public Employees
ESL	English as a Second Language
FSA	Foundation Skills Assessment
HSD	Henderson School District
KMCS	Kenneth Mann Community School
MOE	Ministry of Education
NLSCY	National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth
UBC	University of British Columbia
YRS	Year-round schooling

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And finally, I would like to express my gratitude to my colleagues and to the students, parents and community members at KMCS who allowed me to share their educational and social experiences. They inspired me to lobby for change.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to the memory of my mother, Elsie Lorraine Boys, who believed in the power and pursuit of education and to my father Richard Lorne Boys, who although not privileged to pursue a formal education, was a voracious reader and a consumer of knowledge. I believe that they would have been proud to know that I completed this academic journey.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Overview of the Study

In this retrospective case study, I explore the politics of redistribution and recognition in the context of one under-resourced inner-city school. The study details my work as a scholar-practitioner leader addressing the implications of school-choice and open-boundary policies that exacerbated issues of financial and social inequity in the school. It also documents the structural and discursive interventions introduced to move the school towards advancing socially-just opportunities for its students. This case study is written from my perspective as a scholar-practitioner and the former principal of this inner-city school.

Scholar-practitioner leaders are described as those who scrutinize their own learning, participate in the ongoing and rigorous assessment of the knowledge that is uncovered through their practice, and strive to develop “socially just and caring democratic communities” (Horn, 2006, p. 192). My dissertation, a retrospective case study, critically reflects on my work as a scholar-practitioner leader endeavouring to provide socially-just educational opportunities for students attending one under-resourced school. In particular, I explore social justice in relation to the provision of equality of opportunity in education through the framework of year-round schooling (YRS).¹

¹ Year-round schooling refers to a schedule wherein the calendar is re-organized to provide instructional periods and vacation weeks that are balanced over 12 months. An examination of the literature around YRS in Canada reveals minimal work that examines YRS in small elementary schools with inner-city designations. In this dissertation, I augment the work of Shields and Oberg (2000a, 2000b) who conducted studies internationally and in Canada noting the successful implementation of YRS while acknowledging a range of “pitfalls” associated with imperfect implementation.

This dissertation is directed toward educational researchers and practitioners, administrative bodies, trustees, and policy writers working with government ministries and the public school system.

Background and Context

The school at the center of this case study, Kenneth Mann Community School (KMCS), is located in the Henderson School District (HSD),² a public school district in the province of British Columbia. The inner-city designation was granted based on the socio-economic status of the students, many of whom lived in poverty. Its community school designation was awarded upon application and required a relationship between the school and its external community. KMCS, an elementary school, recorded the highest or second highest percentage of students with ‘special-needs,’³ Aboriginal,⁴ English Second Language (ESL)⁵ and transient students within the district.

During my tenure at KMCS, school-choice and open boundary policies had become institutionalized within the school district. Choice program offerings in the province include French Immersion, Montessori, fine arts, traditional education, sports academies,

² I have identified both the school and the school district using pseudonyms.

³ The BC Ministry of Education (MOE) describes students with ‘special needs’ as having a disability of an intellectual, physical, sensory, emotional or behavioral in nature, a learning disability or have exceptional gifts or talents.

⁴ An Aboriginal student is described by the BC Ministry of Education as a student who has reported him/herself as being of Aboriginal ancestry (First Nations: status and non-status, Metis or Inuit).

⁵ ESL students are described by the BC Ministry of Education as those whose primary language is other than English.

international baccalaureate and outdoor education (Steffenhagen, 2008). For purposes of this work, I describe school-choice policy as the policy crafted by the Board of Trustees of a public school district that permits children to register at schools-of-choice offering specialized programs developed under the auspices of the Board. Brown (2004) describes open boundary policies in B.C. as “the right to attend any public school as long as space is available” and explains how “this form of open enrolment . . . gives students who live within a catchment area first priority to attend their designated school” (p. 77). According to these policies, parents are guaranteed two rights. First, they have the right to select an alternate school for their children, and second, children residing in a particular neighborhood are guaranteed access to a seat in their designated neighborhood school.

It is my contention that KMCS was negatively affected by school choice policies and my challenge as a school administrator was to respond. Choice policy is contentious within public education. Some educators have come to believe that school choice is essential to encourage change within a uniform and bureaucratic system (Merrifield, Dare, & Hepburn, 2006). Proponents furthermore assert that through school choice, competition and the marketization of schools will result in improved student achievement in all schools (Bergstrom & Sandstrom, 2002; Coulson, 2001; Merrifield et al., 2006; Yair, 1996); that choice programs permit space for specific educational interests (Raham, 2002); and that they improve student achievement (Dosdall, 2001). Critics of school choice point to the lack of attention given to the impact of school choice upon the issues of equity and social justice (Bomotti, 1998); the lack of equal student accessibility to schools due to transportation issues (Maguire, 2006); and the negative impact on neighboring schools when high achievers leave one school to cluster in a school-of-choice (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Others have pointed

to the tendency of selective admission policies to discriminate against low-achieving students (Maguire, 2006) and argue that “choice initiatives further diminish the power of urban educators to effectively and equitably meet the needs of children in the urban context” (Horn, 2006, p. 188). In chapter four, I elaborate on these key assertions in the debate on school choice and evaluate them in light of my experience at KMCS.

Contributions of the Study

My research into the relationship between the impact of choice policies and the provision of socially-just educational opportunities for children attending under-resourced schools is timely given the increase in the incidence of child poverty in British Columbia as well as the promotion of school choice policy by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The initiatives described and analyzed in this study grew from my goal, as the school principal, to meet the academic and social requirements of the students in a designated inner-city urban school. This vision was shared with a dedicated staff, parents, caregivers and community members who contributed to or participated in the implementation of the initiatives. Based on these experiences, it is my contention that educators must explore assumptions around the concept of school choice and open boundaries and, in particular, investigate both the impact of such policies on under-resourced schools and the structural responses and outcomes that can address a broad range of needs within student populations.

Through my experiences as an educational leader and this *retrospective critical case study*, I now argue that school-choice and open-boundary policies have contradictory outcomes. On the one hand, they provide expanded educational opportunities for some

students, and on the other hand, they simultaneously exert a negative impact on other students living in low-income homes and attending such under-resourced schools. Indeed, rather than expand opportunities for all, such a policy has the effect of limiting chances for the most marginalized. These students (and their families) described in this dissertation as non-choosers, are those for whom school choice is not an option due to issues related to poverty, language barriers, transportation, or health concerns. I argue in this dissertation that educators and government officials have a collective responsibility to provide all children, whether they are identified as choosers or non-choosers, with programs and services that fully meet their social, emotional, and intellectual needs.

Research Questions

As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the purpose of this project was to explore, through a *retrospective critical case study* of one under-resourced inner-city school, the politics of redistribution and recognition. My goal is to contribute to wider discussions and research about the application of social-justice principles in educational planning. It is my hope that by providing this account, I can contribute to the development of equitable and thoughtful education policies, most specifically regarding school-choice and open-boundary policies. By providing a detailed description and analysis of a number of interventions that were implemented during my tenure as principal of KMCS, the centre of which was full-service year-round schooling, this study can inform other educators contemplating various interventions to address social inequities, most particularly a calendar change in their schools. The specific research questions in relation to the main purpose of this study are:

1. How did various interests and ideologies inform the introduction of school-choice and open-boundary policies and how did they either support or inhibit redistribution and recognition at KMCS? What was the impact of these policies on KMCS?

2. What were the limits and possibilities of various structural strategies, such as year-round schooling (YRS), that were implemented to mitigate the negative impact of school choice and open-boundary policies?

3. What were the limits and possibilities of various discursive strategies, such as efforts to change the school's reputation internally and externally, that were implemented to mitigate the negative impact of school choice and open-boundary policies?

4. What recommendations can be made based on this case study, for a more socially just approach to open-boundary, school-choice, and public-education policy development?

Research Methodology

The research methodology I have selected, that of single-case study design, provides the framework to critically examine the impact of school-choice and open-boundary policies and the implementation of several structural and discursive interventions at KMCS. Stake (1995) argues that “the real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others, but what it is, what it does” (p. 8). This inquiry is also a *critical case study* that is framed by my position and worldview and provided from my perspective as the school principal and leader of various initiatives that will be outlined. This study is a reflection on my experience which has been significantly shaped by theory, most particularly that of social

justice, which is briefly discussed below and elaborated on in chapter three.

My study can be further defined as a *retrospective critical case study* because I review and analyse my practice at KMCS in retrospect. The case is examined with a critical lens in order to provide insight into specific issues or problems with emphasis on the least privileged and powerful and where my role as a practitioner scholar provides access to context-specific information and the opportunity to reflect on past practices (Saunders, 2007). Case study methodology is appropriate to my study of my work at KMCS in that “critical case studies are grounded in a critique of existing social structures and patterns” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 106) and because, “a critical case can be defined as having strategic importance in relation to the general problem” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 78). In this dissertation, the structure under investigation is the public education system, and the general problem is the consequences of school-choice and open-boundary policies. These consequences are examined in conjunction with an investigation into the adoption of several interventions, most particularly, but not exclusively, full-service year-round schooling (YRS) as a response to the negative impact of the policies on KMCS.

This study is also a case of practitioner research. I approach my educational practice and research as a scholar-practitioner leader, who as described by Horn (2006), “. . . has the disposition and the ability to acquire and effectively use a diversity of inquiry methodologies” in accessing and evaluating diverse knowledge bases such as “. . . scholarly, professional, practitioner, and locally contextualized knowledge” (p. 190). Horn argues that scholar-practitioner leaders understand that these diverse knowledge bases are equally important and inform and mediate each other (p. 190). Shavelson (cited in Horn, p. 190) describes these bases as a “science of confirmation” and a “science of discovery.” Both

sciences are applicable to the KMCS *retrospective critical case study* where questions that require confirmation are answered through quantitative data collected by the MOE and the HSD and where questions of discovery are addressed through contextualized qualitative information about the school and community.

This dissertation is based on my experiences as principal of KMCS from September 2002 through to January 2007. Conducting this retrospective analysis requires the utilization of publicly available sources of empirical data and engagement in the systematic collection of personal data. A range of sources provided quantitative information relevant to my study.⁶ Demographic data, available at the local and provincial level, and representing the percentage of students requiring support through ESL and Aboriginal programming have been recorded since 1994, whereas data representing the percentage of students with identified special needs have been recorded since 1996. Statistics representing attendance and mobility patterns have been recorded sporadically by the school district since 2001. The HSD academic data utilized in this study were collected from assessments administered by the school district over a period of four or more years. Demographic data representing the KMCS neighborhood and its surrounding city were accessed through Census Canada.

Essential to this case-study analysis is my extensive collection of personal records. Although at the outset of the KMCS initiative, I did not intend to write a dissertation that included my work at the school, I maintained a diary that chronicled the development of the YRS proposal through to the completion of my work as the principal of the school. The

⁶ To access the above data, I used the services of on-line Ministry researchers who were proficient in searching for archival records and prompt in answering queries. These researchers were knowledgeable about government policies and procedures and were adept in explaining current and past practices. As mentioned, school districts maintain some archival records. In my research in the HSD, access to these data was granted by an assistant superintendent and the data were collected by internal staff. The website of the Trustees Association of British Columbia chronicles the policies of each school district in the province. I also relied on the assistance of university librarians to help me with accessing relevant Census Canada data.

diary included meeting agendas and dates, attendance records, personal memos, pertinent emails, budget information, reports prepared for the Board of Trustees, photographs, conference proceedings, and my own conference presentations. I also maintained an inventory of applicable printed and electronic data including archived newsletters, school-board office missives, and a website that contained current information and provided a chronology of historical events. And finally, two local newspapers which profiled KMCS were a source of retrospective stories. However, the publication of these data in my study was limited by the district requirement that the school and the district remain anonymous. While the district approved my case study, it wanted to protect the anonymity of students and families. Overall, protecting anonymity meant that I could not quote directly from the information I had collected during the time I was principal of KMCS. Although I could not include my information verbatim, it was essential in completing this dissertation. In an effort to provide some details and contextualization of KMCS, and to give the reader more evidence of the school and program interventions, I have developed descriptions of characters and events and measures I undertook as principal, all of which are based on my own worldview and from my notes and recollection. The character descriptions are “drawn from data about several different people” (Rossman & Rallis, 2003, p. 345) and the event descriptions are modeled on actual events and are intended to help the reader visualize the daily life of this urban school. I have used pseudonyms, and at times, altered the specifics slightly to address the concern with anonymity. The details which enrich these descriptions are drawn from memory.

Researcher Position

My dissertation and the research which it describes was undertaken in the Doctorate of Education in Leadership and Policy program at the University of British Columbia, a program that supports students to pursue research that critically examines their own practice. The recommendations and conclusions are a reflection of my experiences as a practitioner-scholar able to move from practice to theory and back to practice. The theory-practice scholarly discourse which evolved through the doctoral cohort model contributed to my knowledge of the complexity of the interrelationship between leadership, ethics, research and policy as they existed within my practice. Exposure to critical theory provided me with both the knowledge and courage to challenge and question many educational and societal practices which influence the provision of socially-just educational opportunities for children.

The work that I undertook at KMCS, located in the HSD,⁷ was shaped by my formal education and my role as the school's principal. My formal education includes certificates, undergraduate degrees, graduate diplomas, and a graduate degree in educational administration. My teaching assignments have ranged from kindergarten through middle school, while my leadership assignments have taken me from elementary to secondary school to college and finally to a university. My work at KMCS was also shaped by my experiences as a parent, and as a volunteer within the community and at my own children's schools. As a member of the executive of the Parent Advisory Committee in my children's school and as a

⁷ As noted, the Henderson School District approved my request to publish this case-study under the condition that the school and the community, as well as the children and families, were not identified. To satisfy this requirement the names "Kenneth Mann Community School" and "Henderson School District" were selected as pseudonyms representing the school and the district.

‘stay-at-home mom,’ I learned about the workings of an elementary school from a parent’s perspective. It was there that I learned about the challenges of living in poverty, how passionately parents cared about their children’s education, and how diligently teachers and principals worked to satisfy their expectations. These experiences informed my knowledge of the public education system, and in my practitioner roles, led me to challenge inequities and injustice in society in general, and at KMCS in particular.

The thoughts, assumptions and descriptions presented here are based on reflections of my practice and illustrate a journey that began with my recognition of the need to address issues around measurable student achievement and learning through the implementation of a school restructuring and transformation plan. My journey was guided and informed by social justice principles.

Conceptual Framework

As has been noted, the main conceptual framework that I have employed for this *retrospective critical case study* is that of social justice. I utilize Young’s (1990) work to define social justice as “the full participation and inclusion of everyone in a society’s major institutions, and the socially substantive opportunity for all to develop and exercise their capacities and realize their choices” (p. 173). To this end, justice is accomplished through the provision of legal, civil, and human rights that support the equitable participation of children and families in our social structures. In this study I approach social justice through the lens of several key sensitizing concepts: recognitive, distributive, and representative justice, concepts based largely on Nancy Fraser’s (1997; 1998; 2001; 2005) theorizing.

Distributive justice speaks to issues of equality, equity, and need, and concerns the fair allocation of physical resources, and in this case study, the distribution of resources within the public school system. Recognitive social justice speaks to the matters of recognizing the importance of cultural differences, and in this case study, it directs attention to individual student need, and it involves the provision of spaces for all children to fully participate in their education and to contribute to their school and its external community. Representative social justice refers to ensuring equal political voice.⁸

Fraser further argues that while claims for social justice are divided into two main categories - claims for the redistribution of resources and claims for the recognition of cultural differences - justice today requires their integration, rather than polarization. In a polarized situation society is asked to name priorities or “choose between class and identity politics, social democracy and multiculturalism, redistribution and recognition” (1998, p. *i*), whereas in an integrated situation, although challenging, both claims can be accommodated. This study explores an integrated approach to providing socially-just educational opportunities for children at KMCS and appraises, evaluates, and critically examines the structural and discursive approaches taken. While the recognitive and distributive paradigms are often pursued and described as single entities, in this study it is their integration and application that provided social justice through participatory parity.

Participatory parity or the principle of parity-of-participation as articulated by Fraser (2001) is also a central concept in this study. Since distributive justice refers to the economic

⁸ Fraser, in discussing the matter of representation in her social justice framework, focuses on women having a voice. The politics of representation is also a concern for other marginalized individuals and groups having a voice in decision making. That said, given the significant role that women play in caring for their children and interacting with schools, emphasizing their representation in decision making in schools is important.

structure of society and recognitive justice refers to concerns pertaining to status and culture, Fraser integrates these paradigms into a comprehensive framework which acknowledges their interlocking relationship without reducing one to the other. To guide this integrative work, she proposed the principle of parity-of-participation in which parity is defined as the “condition of being a peer, of being on par with others, of standing on equal footing” (1998, p. 12). Fraser (2001) recommends parity-of-participation “as a guidepost for the understanding of justice that is needed in the knowledge society” (p. 7) and as a single normative standard for assessing both distributive social justice (economic structures) and recognitive social justice (status order). Two conditions are required of parity-of-participation: the distribution of resources to ensure participants’ independence and voice; and institutional patterns of cultural value which express respect for all participants and ensure equal opportunity for achieving self-esteem (p. 6). One overarching goal of my work at KMCS was to remove impediments to parity-of-participation for students through the pursuit of recognitive and distributive social justice. For students within KMCS, and in comparison with students of well-resourced schools and communities, parity-of-participation represents equal access to remedial programs, rigorous curriculum and skilled pedagogy, equal expectations for student-agency also defined as self-advocacy, and equal access to enrichment and extracurricular activities. For parents, through special community forums, parent-teacher conferences, and individual discussions with school administrators, parity represents inclusion in the discourse around school restructuring and continues to represent opportunities for conversations around student achievement and learning. For example, the school district requires that KMCS administrators conduct an annual parent survey which seeks parental support for the continuation of the year-round schooling initiative. This study

reports on a range of structural and discursive interventions implemented at KMCS and reflects on the value of social-justice discourse in arguing for parity for students attending under-resourced schools.

In general, the concepts of distributive, recognitive, and representative social justice provide lenses to explore the ways in which some policies lead to a lack of availability of equitable educational opportunities for students and the ways in which these policies could be challenged. This integrative orientation provides a rationale and language to illustrate the potential for inequities which can result from school-choice and open-boundary policies. When viewed through the lens of social justice, issues of inequality that are often overlooked in the school-choice discussion and in the application of choice policies come to the forefront. These concepts are also employed in this study to help frame a discussion of structural and discursive interventions, which I initiated as a school leader in an effort to address distributive, recognitive and representative justice.

Organization of Dissertation

The work of this dissertation is organized into six additional chapters which include academic research, empirical data, a report on the implementation of a comprehensive year-round schooling plan at KMCS, character and event descriptions which contextualize activities, and recommendations for the development of policies to address challenges which may occur in schools that educate students with diverse needs. Chapter two, entitled “Social Justice and Public Education Practices,” describes the theoretical framework utilized both for my work at KMCS and for guidance in developing the recommendations for practice and

policy included in this dissertation. The recognitive and distributive perspectives of social justice articulated by Fraser (1997, 1998, 2001, 2005) and Gale (2000, 2005) and undergirded by the work of Young (1990, 1997) are described and critiqued in this chapter. Chapter three is entitled “The Case of an Inner-City School” and introduces the reader to the complex, culturally-rich, and economically-challenged community where the majority of the students at KMCS reside. In order to protect the anonymity of the children and their families, limited descriptions are provided of the geographic location, the surrounding neighborhood, the students, their families, and the ‘service community’ which supports the school. The chapter also includes a history of inner-city and CommunityLINK schools, a discussion of childhood risks and vulnerabilities, and a summary of essential services for families. In Chapter four, I focus on the school choice and open boundary policies which had significant bearing on the school and I address the question, “What interests and ideologies informed the introduction of said policies and what was their impact on KMCS?” In doing so, I outline several main assumptions that guide educators and parents in their decision making about school choice. These claims speak to how choice leads to educational improvement, informed decision making, and equality of opportunity. In my investigation and critique of these assumptions, I present the opinions of both the proponents and opponents of school choice evident in the research literature. I include both qualitative and quantitative data to illustrate the impact of the policies on the school. Chapter five covers four areas. First, I provide an overview of year-round schooling (YRS) including the structure, purposes, advantages and disadvantages of YRS as they apply to schools in general and to KMCS in particular. Second, I elaborate on and evaluate the complex and challenging process of developing a proposal for the implementation of a comprehensive YRS plan.

Third, I outline the creation of programs within the YRS calendar and provide data which substantiates the enhanced learning opportunities for children. And finally, I explore the community school designation and the utilization of resources afforded to schools with this designation. In chapter six, I discuss the interventions implemented at KMCS intended to shift the school philosophy and culture. These interventions are less structural and more discursive in orientation. First, I elaborate on the overarching principle of parity-of-participation and the strategies which contribute to parity for children: pedagogy and social-justice thinking, language-of-possibility, pathologies and deficit thinking, communities-of-difference, and privilege. Second, I discuss school pride and a media plan dedicated to changing the school image. In my final chapter I revisit my research questions, comment on the integration of the distributive and cognitive principles of social justice, summarize my findings, and discuss the limitations of my study. I then reflect upon the implications of my work and make several recommendations for policy development, practice, and future research.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL JUSTICE AND PUBLIC EDUCATION PRACTICES

In this chapter, I outline the social justice theoretical framework that informs this study beginning with an outline of how social justice is a key feature of public schools as articulated in the British Columbia School Act. I then map out the key concepts of my social justice framework: distribution, recognition and representation. As I explore these key concepts, and the ideas of scholars who are central to my study, I also begin to build a profile of KMCS by providing data from sources such as Census Canada.

The purpose of the British Columbia school system, as articulated in the *School Act*, is “to enable all learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy, democratic and pluralistic society and a prosperous and sustainable economy” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, Governance and Legislative Branch, 1989, D-88). “To achieve this purpose, the school system must strive to ensure that differences among learners do not impede their participation in school, their mastery of learning outcomes, or their ability to become contributing members of society” (British Columbia Ministry of Education Standards, “Diversity in BC Schools,” 2004, p. 4).

To this end, the British Columbia Ministry of Education strives to create and maintain the conditions that foster success for all students and makes explicit its intent to meet certain goals. The Ministry’s goals that have particular resonance for my study are to provide (a) equitable access to and equitable participation in quality education for all students, (b) school cultures that value diversity and respond to social and cultural needs of the communities they serve, (c) decision-making processes that give a voice to all members of the school

community, and (d) policies and practices that promote fair and equitable treatment (British Columbia Ministry of Education Standards, “Diversity in BC Schools,” 2004, p. 4). In the following definition, the *Diversity in BC Schools* document speaks of social justice as a gateway to maintaining these conditions:

Social justice is a philosophy that extends beyond the protection of rights. Social justice advocates for the full participation of all people, as well as for their basic legal, civil and human rights. The aim of social justice is to achieve a just and equitable society. It is pursued by individuals and groups – through collaborative social action – so that all persons share in the prosperity of society. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, *Diversity in BC School*, p. 13)

I argue that while it is the responsibility of the public school system to provide socially-just educational opportunities for all children, school choice and open-boundary policies can negatively influence this provision. As the school principal, and in response to these consequences, my hope was to limit the effects of socioeconomic background and student vulnerabilities which can preclude students from accessing the full benefits of the education system; to lead in a way that acknowledged the complexity of social issues within the school population; and, in the absence of sufficient government funding, to foster collaboration between the school, its community, and its corporate donors.⁹

My role as a scholar practitioner investigating the concept of social justice commenced within the first year of the KMCS restructuring. My belief that justice means fairness is reflected also by Rawls (1957) who supported a fairness tenant and argued that while some inequalities are permissible, “inequality is allowed only if there is reason to believe that the practice with the inequality will work to the advantage of every party” (p. 654). His statement that “justice is the elimination of arbitrary distinctions and the

⁹ The relationship between KMCS, the service providers in the community, and corporate donors is detailed in chapter five.

establishment, within the structure of a practice, of a proper balance between competing claims” (p. 654) reflects the challenge of school trustees and senior managers to achieve fairness as they allocate resources to a disparate range of schools.

To more closely examine the notion of social justice as it applies to public education and the case of KMCS, I now turn to key concepts that frame this study: distributive, recognitive, and representative social justice.¹⁰

Distributive Social Justice

The principle of distributive justice is grounded in the idea that, in society, goods should be distributed equally unless unequal distribution would provide needed resources that would “work out to everyone’s advantage” (Rawls, 1957, p. 654). Policy makers and social scientists wrestle with the dilemma around deciding which citizens qualify for and deserve the benefits of unequal distribution and have identified two approaches to the justification for distribution: the liberal-democratic model and the social-democratic model of social justice. Both models have relevance to the case of KMCS.

The liberal-democratic model is often described as a deficit or ‘simple equality’ model of social justice in that individuals who are deemed to be disadvantaged are evaluated by the elite who assess their needs and mete out goods and services accordingly. The term ‘simple equality’ argues that all individuals have the same basic needs (Walzer, 1983, as cited in Gale & Densmore, 2000, p. 12). According to Gale (2000), “equality in this sense is

¹⁰ Curricular justice is not a focus of this dissertation; however, I acknowledge the importance of including First Nations perspectives in the daily teaching in our schools. See R.W. Connell, *Schools and Social Justice* (Toronto: Our schools/ourselves, March/April 1993). Connell argues that curricular justice is as crucial as distributive justice.

a baseline measure. . . . From this perspective, the disadvantaged are those who are regarded as lacking what society deems to be the educational, social and cultural basics” (p. 255).

Evidence of the liberal-democratic solution to inequality could be found in the British Columbia Ministry of Education approach to funding through a social-equity envelope. This envelope contains funding that was designated to support inner-city and community schools and provides support for school meals, supplemental programs and services, and additional staffing. The distribution of funds within a school district is determined by the senior management of that district and within a decentralized system, the application of funds within a school is determined by the building principal. The equality of this distribution by senior management and the discourse around whose voice is included in these decisions are contested issues. For example, a building principal who is a strong advocate for her school may lobby for funds deemed as essential in providing adequate staffing levels and may disagree with funding decisions made by individuals who do not work within the school.

The social-democratic model, described as a difference model of social justice, argues for the issuance of different social goods to different people and is based on the belief that individuals have unique needs and unique resources at their disposal (Waltzer, 1983, as cited in Gale, 2000, p. 255). This model recognizes, for example, that while many individuals live in poverty, service providers should not assume that they share a common set of needs.

Within my role as the school principal, the social-democratic or difference model of distributive justice was valuable in that it assisted me to recognize the need to provide an equitable yet appropriate distribution of services and programs to students living in a community of poverty and it required educators to question who had been privileged and who had been excluded and marginalized by these allocations (Gale, 2000). The effects of

choice policies must be contextualized within the geographic area of the school communities that are influenced by these policies. Demographic statistics provide this contextualization in that they identify special community needs and document the presence of socioeconomic disadvantage. Although these data are primarily utilized by municipal and senior governments to rationalize specialized requirements for services, they are valuable in documenting needs within a school community and furthering a social justice agenda.

Issues of Distribution at KMCS: Using Census Canada Data

The statistics in Census Canada data provide concrete information which supported my contention that KMCS required social-equity funding and that a request for additional funding based on the principles of distributive social justice was appropriate given the demographic indicators of poverty and social disadvantage. The *Statistical Indicators for Social Planning Report* published in 2004 for the KMCS neighborhood provided data drawn from Canada Census. The report ranks 22 cities within the Regional Southland Area¹¹ (RSA). Within the region, the KMCS community housed the highest percentage of families in three indicators: lone-parent families, families receiving income from transfer payments, and those lacking a high-school graduation certificate. It registered the third highest mobility rates in the RSA while 17.2% of neighborhood families earned incomes below the poverty level. Although only 0.8% of families in the city do not speak an official Canadian language, the ESL population of KMCS hovers at 25%.

¹¹ The Regional Southlands Area is a pseudonym chosen to protect the anonymity of the school and school district in this case study.

Burbles, Lord, and Sherman (1982) argue that it is important to identify and justify relevant characteristics as a basis for equal distribution of resources, and I would argue that we must contextualize equality since resources that are considered relevant or unequal in one context may not be relevant or unequal within another. It is the contextualization and relevance of specific economic realities such as parental-unemployment that frame the need for distributive justice in the KMCS neighborhood, while it is the financial implications of a decentralized school district that framed this need within the school. The following example both describes and captures the reality of the budget implications of a population decline at KMCS, a school in a decentralized school system.

HSD operated on a decentralized decision making model. This model required school principals to hire all staff and build their school budgets in accordance with the funds allocated by the senior managers of the school district. As opposed to centralized systems, specialist teachers such as librarians, music teachers, counselors, and physical education teachers were not assigned and paid for by the central office; rather they were funded through each school budget. The salaries of special education teachers and support staff were funded according to a provincial formula as opposed to the actual needs identified within the school.¹²

Based on my experience as the school principal, the implementation of school-choice and open-boundary policies in the district enabled the creation of a two-tiered education

¹² In order to qualify for Special Needs funding from the MOE, students requiring extra support must be appropriately assessed, identified, and placed in funding categories. Schools educating low-incidence students (dependently handicapped, deafblind, Autism Spectrum Disorder, etc.) are eligible to receive funds in addition to the basic allocation assigned to school boards. This funding provides for additional staffing to assist the student. Support for students with mild-learning or intellectual disabilities is funded according to a provincial formula. In some schools, the number of students requiring support may exceed the percentage of students funded by the MOE. In this situation, the school and or district is required to “stretch resources” to provide support for all students (British Columbia Ministry of Education, “Ministry policy site,” 2008).

system driven by budget constraints and deficits. The budget did not provide essential programming and services for all children. The following summary tells the story of a two-tiered system and provides the rationale for my commitment to the distributive perspective of social justice.

Elementary schools in the HSD were funded as follows:

1. An elementary school received a base allocation of \$89,555 to provide for operating expenses such as clerical and custodial salaries as well as supplies, services and equipment.

2. Each elementary school was allocated \$74,840 for each full-time equivalent (FTE) teacher. The allocation equalled the average annual salary and benefits of the employee. The purpose of this allocation was to provide funding that facilitated British Columbia School Act language related to average and/or maximum class sizes.

3. Each class in an elementary school was provided with an allocation of 6.32% of the average annual salary and benefits of a teacher to provide contractual preparation time.

4. An elementary school was allocated \$973.77 for each full-time equivalent (FTE) student.

5. Schools received additional funding based upon special designations (community school) and for identified student populations (ESL, Special Needs, Aboriginal).

Based on the funding formula of \$973.77 per FTE, the following scenario illustrated the financial inequities between KMCS and a neighboring school (School A). School A, which hosted a grade 7 class that registered 31 children, received a per-pupil allocation totalling \$30,186.87. KMCS, which registered 23 students in a grade 7 class, received a per-pupil allocation totalling \$22,396.71. Therefore, based upon the student population of this

grade 7 classroom, KMCS which was expected to provide the same level of educational experience as School A, received \$7,790.16 less than School A. KMCS was experiencing an overall decline in student population; therefore, the reduction in FTE funding was multiplied over several classrooms. The “absent” funding was revenue that would have supplemented the operating budget of the school and contributed towards providing additional staff, programs, materials and supplies. Additional staff, beyond that required by a collective agreement, included music teachers, librarians, physical-education teachers, special-services personnel and support-staff including custodial and clerical personnel. Schools that maintained their student population and/or experienced population growth were able to supplement and enrich programs, increase staffing, or at the very least, maintain the status quo. At the time of my assignment to the principalship of KMCS, the school did not employ a librarian, music teacher, physical education specialist or a sufficient complement of special-needs teachers, and did not have adequate supplies and equipment.

In response to many funding challenges, the social-democratic concept of social justice was operationalized in KMCS through a variety of measures including the work of the Community School Coordinator and the KMCS Community School Society which organized volunteer support within the school. This volunteer component included individual citizens, service club members, church groups and local business owners. The support provided to children and families, in response to needs identified by school personnel, was individualized and personalized and was delivered in the form of food, clothing, transportation, celebrations, career and financial counselling and direct learning support for children. More discussion detailing the various strategies employed to work towards equality of services at KMCS is included in chapters five and six.

Recognitive Social Justice

The inclusion of the recognitive perspective in conversations around the meaning of social justice highlighted the challenges that face a community living in poverty as was the case for KMCS. The perspectives of recognitive justice offered by Fraser (2001) and Gale (2000) provided a framework to guide my initiative and this *retrospective critical case study*. Fraser (1998) contributed to my understanding of social justice by arguing that inequalities extended beyond maldistribution of economic necessities to include exploitation, deprivation, and exclusion from labor markets and property ownership, a situation that was evident in families within the KMCS neighborhood. Gale (2000) argues that the recognitive perspective on social justice begins from the standpoint of the disadvantaged. He champions an approach to social justice defined as “rethinking social arrangements thought to be just, giving status to things thought to be counterproductive and de-centering concerns thought to be pivotal” (p. 253). This rethinking leads to a view of social justice that is based on a positive regard for individual and group social differences, and recognizes the centrality of social-democratic processes in working towards achieving this goal. In the recognitive perspective, educators are challenged to expand their view of social justice, to rethink what they mean by the construct of social justice and to acknowledge the place of social groups and social difference in this perspective. The goal of this thinking is to increase the potency of social justice while acknowledging the importance of political will in establishing a social-justice agenda within society. As defined by Gale, the recognitive justice model:

. . . advocates the following three necessary conditions for the enactment of social justice: (1) fostering respect for different social groups through their self-identification; (2) opportunities for groups’ self-development and self-expression; and (3) the participation of groups in making decisions that

directly affect them, through their representation on determining bodies. (p. 260)

The recognitive perspective on social justice serves both the discussion around school-choice policies and my efforts to respond to the consequences of these policies. Specifically, a recognitive approach challenges educators and parent-advocates to question the thinking that school-choice options have universally positive outcomes in the public-school system. From the basis of this perspective, educational leaders need to include all constituents in the discussion about the implementation of choice programs. Marginalized parents in the KMCS neighborhood, who could be negatively affected by the implementation of a choice-program, were not invited to participate in discussions around the implementation plan. School staff and administrators (myself included) were also not invited to participate in these discussions, thus senior leaders in the school district did not consider the broad ramifications of school choice policies upon the neighborhood schools.

In 2003, the senior management team of the HSD announced that the Board of Trustees was considering the development of a dual-track system in Carrington School,¹³ the elementary school adjacent to KMCS. The dual-track programming would consist of the addition of three intermediate specialized classes operating concurrently with the standard intermediate program. Meetings were organized for parents of children attending Carrington School, but invitations were not extended to parents or the administrative team at KMCS. While the addition of three specialized classes was not viewed as a serious threat to KMCS due to the limited availability of seats, our administrators were mindful of the fact that some KMCS parents viewed the specialized classes as elitist and desirable.

¹³ Carrington School is a pseudonym.

The concept of the specialized program at Carrington was popular with parents across the district who asked that their children's names be placed on a waiting list for admittance to the school. The Board of Trustees responded to the popularity of the concept. Unbeknown to the KMCS administration, and without consultation with parents or staff members in this adjacent school, the Board of Trustees deemed that Carrington School would become a single-track specialized school that would offer specialized programming from kindergarten through grade 7. As reported in the following example, which illustrates the hardship that resulted at KMCS, the necessary conditions for social justice outlined by the recognitive model were not evident in the development of a particular school-of-choice by the district.

Every day for the entire month of September I was faced with anxiety around the declining student numbers at KMCS. Prior to September 30, which was the government reporting day, the loss of a student had a serious negative impact on the school budget. When a student moved away, KMCS lost close to \$1000, a significant amount of money in a small school. The impact of the decision to open a specialized school nearby was devastating. Had we been included in the discussions with the school board, we could have asked for special consideration prior to the opening of the school.

Day after day parents came into the office to ask for my signature on a cross-boundary form. This signed form indicated to the receiving school that KMCS had "approved" the transfer. In most situations there was no need for approval . . . district policy guaranteed the transfer request unless the student had learning needs which required special programming. Fifty percent of the KMCS incoming kindergarten students transferred to Carrington School and students from all grade levels were accepted into Carrington classes until the end of September. For one month, the teachers at KMCS were unsure of their class

sizes and class compositions and whether certain classes or divisions would be closed! For one month I dreaded the fact that I could or would have to tell teachers with low seniority that they no longer had a job at KMCS.

Many parents arrived at the office to tell me how unhappy they were that they were not accepted into Carrington School. They stated that they were left with a poor second choice at KMCS. Some, in anger, told me that KMCS was a “loser school.” Although I was very disturbed by their accusations, I often felt that they had a valid point because students who remained at KMCS were provided with very limited specialized programs and services, while their peers at Carrington enjoyed enriched programming and an elitist image.

Misrecognition

Fraser (1997, 1998) defines misrecognition as cultural domination, non-recognition and disrespect, and she reasons that society must compensate by recognizing disaffected social groups and marginalized cultural groups including indigenous peoples, immigrant families, and families living in poverty. Fraser (2005) adds to the discussion of misrecognition, the notion of representation, and in particular, refers to a lack of political voice for women.

Misrecognized groups, who may be struggling to maintain their native language and a cultural identity, subsequently may be marginalized and excluded in their neighborhoods and within a Eurocentric school system. The system and its institutional practices including standardized testing, narrowed curriculum, ability grouping, academic failure, in-grade retention, suspension and expulsion may discourage and stigmatize students and exclude

them from success at school (Brandes & Kelly, 2004). These practices highlight the dominant approach to educational planning wherein the social, cultural, and linguistic capital of the dominant economic classes are represented and valued. Fraser's perspective honors the standpoint of the least advantaged and argues that social justice must begin from this standpoint.

Gale (2000) enriches Fraser's interpretation by arguing that the recognitive perspective rests on the recognition and legitimization of the equal moral worth of all citizens and requires the advantaged to value difference, to think from the standpoint of the disadvantaged, and to include the disadvantaged individual and groups in the discourse around decision making. Gale (2005) recognizes the challenge of meeting the social and educational needs of marginalized and disadvantaged groups within the dominant neoliberal ideology which endorses the "withdrawal of government from the welfare of the public" (p. 222) and "maintains that 'entitlement' only creates dependency and apathy" (p. 224).

Gale (2000) challenges educators to recognize the institutional practices that impede individual progress and development, those that reproduce social privilege, and those that prioritize Eurocentric ways of knowing. Gale's perspective draws attention to our roles as public-school educators and how our personal educational experiences influence our practice. As educational leaders we need to recognize our perceptions and biases and our position of privilege as adults who have successfully traversed the post-secondary education system. We need to examine and alter Eurocentric pedagogical and curricular practices to include the valuing of and respect for alternate ways of knowing and learning. Gale's perspective calls into question the discourses which label social and educational differences as deficits and disadvantages, rather than variations. Specifically, educators are called upon to recognize the

lived experiences of marginalized groups as worthy of consideration, examine the exclusion of social and cultural groups within the school community, and examine the marginalization of parent groups within the decision-making processes and discourse around choice programs.

Fraser's Comprehensive Social Justice Framework

Fraser (1998) integrated two social justice paradigms, the distributive and recognitive perspectives, into “an overarching conception of social justice that can accommodate both defensible claims for social equality and defensible claims for recognition of difference” (p. 1). Fraser argues that the two paradigms are inseparable because their dimensions interrelate. Butler (1998) defends this perspective as one which provides a spectrum that spans political economy and culture and recognizes the interlocking relationship of struggles for emancipation grounded in both dimensions. Specifically, Butler argues for the “systemic interrelatedness of social and economic conditions” (p. 34) and challenges the tendency of some scholars to discount economic factors for some groups by dismissing their social movements as ‘merely cultural.’ Young (1997) also acknowledges the relationship between economic concerns and cultural issues, and cautions that society must not ignore the distribution of goods at the expense of recognition.

Recognizing injustice is central to Fraser's (2001) model. Within the distributive perspective, “. . . injustice appears in the guise of class-like inequalities, rooted in the economic structure of society. Here the quintessential injustice is maldistribution” (p. 5). From the recognitive perspective, “. . . injustice appears in the guise of status

insubordination, rooted in institutionalized hierarchies of cultural value. Injustice occurs through misrecognition, which must also be broadly understood to encompass cultural domination, non-recognition, and disrespect” (2001, p. 5). Fraser’s remedy for maldistribution is redistribution and economic restructuring, while her remedy for misrecognition is the recognition of cultural values and status equality. Fraser (2005) has introduced representation as the third dimension of her social-justice argument. Her remedy for misrepresentation is to ensure the equal political voice of women in “already constituted communities” and in “. . . reconfiguring gender justice as a three-dimensional problem, in which redistribution, recognition, and representation must be integrated in a balanced way” (p. 305).

By integrating these paradigms, and in response to the potential privileging of either paradigm, Fraser offered a solution by developing a framework upon which categories of oppressions can be organized. The framework assigns injustices related to the political economy and the oppressions related to cultural issues to alternate but not dichotomous anchor positions. Through locating the oppressions of various groups on a continuum between the anchors, theorists and social-justice educators can guard against privileging the politics of recognition ahead of the politics of redistribution (Young, 1997, p. 147).

Fraser’s theory is not without its critiques. Swanson (2005) notes that Fraser calls for a combining of cultural and economic justice, and argues that approaches which prioritize economic oppression over cultural oppression should be corrected. Swanson agrees with Fraser in relation to how every struggle must be “analyzed simultaneously as economic and cultural,” but she finds Fraser’s framework too abstract and the perspectives too broad.

Because the multiple forms of oppression within each of Fraser’s two categories are not theoretically disaggregated, the categories do not illuminate

the possible tensions (and incompatibilities) between different economic struggles . . . or between different cultural struggles. (p. 91)

In response, Swanson (2005) argues that we need to recognize a multiplicity of categories of oppression. She takes up the work of Resnick and Wolff (1987), who for analytical purposes, categorize social processes into the following three categories: economic, political, and cultural processes. Swanson asserts that these categories are valuable in disaggregating phenomena “which when indiscriminately grouped together, can lead to determinist and essentialist conceptualizations and notions of causality” (p. 92).

According to Young (1997), Fraser “claims that some recent political theory and practice privilege the recognition of social groups, and that they tend to ignore the distribution of goods and the division of labor” (p. 147); hence, Fraser’s organization of oppression into the two categories of maldistribution and misrecognition. In critiquing Fraser’s theory, Young contends that the reduction of all injustices to only two categories (maldistribution and misrecognition) is too limiting and “distorts the plurality and complexity of social reality and policies” (p. 157).

While Butler (1998), Young (1997), Fraser (1998), and Swanson (2005) express different points of view, they provide social-justice perspectives that are all applicable to the analysis of KMCS. Each asserts that oppressed groups usually suffer from both cultural and economic injustices and that “injustice is not reducible solely to economic justice and that struggles against cultural oppression are equally important” (Swanson, p. 87). Butler acknowledges and validates Fraser’s comprehensive framework and her understanding of the complex relationships involved in emancipatory struggles against oppression (Butler, 1998). Swanson and Fraser contend that the injustice of maldistribution is linked to the

consequences of economic relations and the accumulation of profits rather than misrecognition (Fraser 1999a, as cited in Swanson 2005, p. 94). While arguing that “the ultimate cause of class injustice is the economic structure of capitalist society” both Fraser and Swanson acknowledge that every single struggle for equality must be analyzed as simultaneously economic and cultural (Fraser, 1998, as cited in Swanson 2005, p. 94). And finally, both Fraser and Young agree that “. . . redistributive remedies for economic injustice, typical of the public provision of goods and services for needy people do not change the conditions that produce this injustice, and in some ways, tend to reinforce these conditions” (Young, 1997, p. 153). Young (1990) argued that, for some, the disadvantages and injustices encountered in contemporary society may result from “the everyday practices of a well-intentioned liberal society” (p. 41). Young saw these oppressive practices as structural with causes “embedded in the unquestioned norms, habits, and symbols, in the assumptions underlying institutional rules and in the collective consequences of following those rules” (p. 41). Specifically:

In this extended structural sense oppression refers to the vast and deep injustices some groups suffer as a consequence of often unconscious assumptions and reactions of well-meaning people in ordinary interactions, media and cultural stereotypes, and structural features of bureaucratic hierarchies and market mechanisms – in short, the normal processes of everyday life. (p. 41)

Young (1997) expresses concern for the “groups that lie in the middle of the continuum, subject to both political economic and cultural injustices” (p. 151). She asserts that social theorists who treat oppression as a “unified phenomenon” may exclude groups or over-simplify injustice, and she responded by naming plural categories of oppression in an attempt to avoid reductionism. These categories which include exploitation, marginalization,

powerlessness, cultural imperialism and violence are not, according to Young, reducible to Fraser's categories of maldistribution and misrecognition (p. 151). Fraser counters by designating exploitation, marginalization and powerlessness as political economic injustices, and cultural imperialism and violence as cultural injustices.

The following explication of Young's oppressions, which include several illustrative examples from KMCS, have been included to deepen the discussion of the distributive and recognitive perspectives of social justice as they link to school-choice policy and year-round schooling or to the residents of the KMCS community. The criteria serve to identify oppressions within the structure of the school, families, and the neighborhood, and provide a rationale for locating injustices along the continuum of my social-justice framework.

Exploitation

Young (1997) argued that exploitation “. . . consists in social processes that bring about a transfer of energies from one group to another to produce unequal distributions, and in the way in which social institutions enable a few to accumulate while they constrain many more” (p. 53). Particularly cogent is the gender-based exploitation of women in which their contributions as homemakers and caregivers are often under compensated and go unnoticed and unacknowledged. According to Young (1997), eliminating exploitation within institutions requires more than a redistribution of goods. It may necessitate providing access to fair labor practices, initiating changes in institutional policies, examining institutional cultures, including constituents in decision-making processes, and recognizing individual contributions through fair and equitable compensation.

My most direct experience with exploitation in the KMCS neighborhood was through parents who were evicted from their homes or lived in poorly-maintained apartments. In my experience, families existing on an income below the poverty line and living in poorly maintained properties were the most vulnerable families in the community. On several occasions I was told that tenants, as a way of earning money to pay their rent, would complete very laborious tasks such as painting and cleaning for a certain landlord. Invariably, the landlord did not honor the arrangement and the tenants were not paid, were evicted, and lost their damage deposits. I was often asked for help and fortunately I had some influential colleagues within the social-services community. I assisted parents when possible by referring them to financial workers, law enforcement agencies, or local church groups. I never received a request for help from the most protected and non-exploited families in our catchment area . . . the refugee families supported by our local churches.

Marginalization

Simply stated, marginalization results from an act or attitude that excludes individuals from activities that are recognized or valued by society. Young (1990) describes marginalization, a distributive injustice, as “perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression” in that people are “expelled from useful participation in social life and thus potentially subjected to severe material deprivation and even extermination” (p. 53). The most explicit example of marginalization existing in the KMCS area is material deprivation and the potential link to dependency. For some, dependency is created through the provision of

social-support or welfare systems initially designed to assist individuals who are ill or require financial aid. These clients must follow rules and procedures, which they may deem to be very rigid, in an effort to maintain their assistance. In doing so, they may lose their independence, their right to privacy and their right to make many decisions around their lives and the lives of their children. Others, who adapt to the system, benefit in a substantial way from the financial support and skills-training available through a range of government agencies.

Mills and Gale (2007) illustrate the marginalization of school children through practices wherein the children's cultural capital and life experiences are not highly valued "by the schooling system in general" and argue how these qualities, which may be dichotomous to the explicit values of the middle class school system, are often considered to be liabilities (p. 435). Gale (2001) challenges the education system, within a recognitive-justice perspective, to recognize children's identities and differences as positive qualities; hence, the system would include, rather than marginalize, students (p. 271). The following example illustrates the hardships faced by students at KMCS.

I knew that KMCS sports teams were marginalized within the school district. Overall, we could not compete successfully against teams from other schools for a variety of reasons. Transportation was a constant problem since, in public schools, parents are assumed to "be responsible for helping out with driving." Parents at KMCS often did not own cars or were working; therefore, the responsibility fell on several teachers who were willing but not always available to drive or dedicate the time to drive to "away games." Our children did not have adequate uniforms until they were supplied by a generous corporate donor. It was obvious, that very often,

our players were not as robust as those from other schools and their physical development was not as advanced as well nourished children from advantaged families. It was also obvious that our KMCS students didn't have experience playing organized sports . . . it is far too expensive for most families. I knew that the students were very nervous when playing games and felt intimidated by other schools. Our opponents always had more players on the bench and more fans in the audience! I was discouraged to hear the students call themselves "the loser school" when they returned from competitions.

Powerlessness

Young (1990) links power to distributive social justice in a capitalist society wherein an individual's position or rank within the labor market either enhances or diminishes personal power. She contends that within the workplace, the powerless, often described as non-professionals, do not have the ability to influence policy, make decisions, demonstrate autonomy, give orders, or develop and exercise skills. People living in poverty and working in exploitative situations tend to be powerless as are individuals marginalized through social welfare systems. Young describes these powerless individuals as oppressed individuals (p. 56). For parents of students at KMCS powerlessness was often described as an inability to negotiate their hours of work. For example, children could be left without adequate care because their parents were required to work shifts that did not align with school or day care schedules, and on many occasions employers did not give parents permission to vary their hours of work to attend crucial appointments regarding their children's education or health.

Cultural Imperialism

Young (1990) considers cultural imperialism to be an oppression located within the framework of recognitive social justice. Cultural imperialism is evident when the experiences of an oppressed group are not represented in the experiences of the dominant group, and the dominant group imposes its experiences and social values upon the oppressed.

Young defines the reality of this oppression as follows:

To experience cultural imperialism means to experience how the dominant meanings of a society render the perspective of one's group invisible at the same time as they stereotype one's group and mark it as the Other Cultural imperialism involves the universalization of a dominant group's experience and culture, and its establishment as the norm. (p. 59)

Within the bounds of cultural imperialism, individuals are essentialized, and according to Young (1990), "undergo a paradoxical oppression, in that they are both marked out by stereotypes and at the same time rendered invisible" (p. 60). Examples of essentialism within the KMCS community were the entrenched views that poor people are lazy and unmotivated, and are inept money managers. Another commonly expressed view was that mothers who depended upon social assistance were choosing an easier existence than mothers who were employed. And finally, a meritocratic viewpoint was common in supporting the belief that the all affluent people worked harder than poor people and deserved their affluence.

Violence

Young (1990) contends that theorists typically do not consider “incidents of violence and harassment as matters of social injustice” (p. 61). She counters by defining violence as an oppressive social practice according to the following rationale:

What makes violence a face of oppression is less the particular acts themselves, though these are often utterly horrible, than the social context surrounding them, which makes them possible and even acceptable. What makes violence a phenomenon of social justice, and not merely an individual moral wrong, is its systemic character, its existence as a social practice. . . . It is a social given that everyone knows what happens and will happen again. It is always at the horizon of social imagination even for those who do not perpetuate it. (1990, p. 62)

Young (1990) cites examples of violence which oppress and are intended to humiliate, harass, ridicule, damage or destroy people as representing systematic violence. She names racism, sexual assault, and gender-based violence as examples of “violence as social practice” and argues that a recognitive rather than distributive understanding of social justice is required to respond to the injustice (p. 63). And finally, violence may be both visible and invisible within communities of poverty as demonstrated at KMCS. As a social practice, violence can be manifested through harassment, intimidation, bullying and racism. Within families and neighborhoods, domestic abuse and violent responses linked to addiction and mental health can be exacerbated through the frustration and stress of living without sufficient financial means.

At KMCS, I often dealt with visible violence linked to racism, harassment, intimidation, and bullying. Most often this violence involved children and was resolved by trained school staff. However, on many occasions, the violence involving youth and adults

escalated to the point where law enforcement officers were involved. My colleagues and I knew several police officers on a first-name basis. Somehow the conflict between parents would spill onto the school campus and I would be forced to mediate between conflicted parents who bullied each other, each other's children or school staff. These episodes of violence were very upsetting to me; and often were very frightening to staff who dealt with abusive and threatening adults and angry youth until I was able to intervene. I was gratified, on many occasions, to participate in a restorative-justice approach to solving these conflicts. The intent of restorative justice was to work through disputes and to resolve conflict through education and "righting the wrong" that resulted from the dispute.

The following scenario is illustrative of how, in any given case, a range of oppressions including misrecognition, cultural imperialism and maldistribution of resources can be operating. When asked, I allowed parents to use the telephone or computer in the school office to deal with employment or health issues. Maureen, our school administrative assistant, disagreed with me and felt that the school should not be responsible for providing these services to parents. She was not alone in assuming that everyone has access to a telephone and a computer; a view that reflected a middle class orientation. In time Maureen came to learn that many parents lacked resources and without assistance from the school were marginalized. Often I was able to provide assistance for parents seeking employment. For most, applying for a job was impossible without technology. Prospective employers who wished to follow-up on an application required either a telephone number or email address or both . . . a job application was not accepted without contact information. On numerous occasions I witnessed the frustration of parents who were not able to return a phone call in a timely fashion and lost a job opportunity. Overall, the lack of funds to provide a basic

service such as a telephone rendered them extremely angry and contributed to a cycle of poverty in which certain tangible assets are required to find employment.

Conclusion and Summary

After careful consideration of the social justice literature and critiques of Fraser's work, I have concluded that Fraser's framework, undergirded by Young's five faces of oppression, provided sufficient scope and direction for the purposes of my work at KMCS. First, it established two social justice paradigms applicable to the community. Second, through concrete application, Fraser's theory provided for the creation of a continuum upon which areas of oppression could be assigned, discussed, evaluated and mitigated. Exploitation through labor markets, marginalization by educational institutions, powerlessness resulting from a lack of social capital, violence resulting from poverty and mental illness, or racism resulting from cultural imperialism are all present.

Value exists in creating a continuum across which the challenges of an inner-city school can be positioned since challenges linked to poverty tend to be entwined and do not fit within rigidly defined categories. When educators and service-providers work in communities of poverty, it is crucial that they interrogate the distinction between culture and the economy, investigate how they intertwine to create injustices, and determine how they can be integrated to remedy injustice within the school system (Fraser, 1997). Rather than treating maldistribution and misrecognition as mutually exclusive, utilizing the combined paradigms enables educators to reflect upon the complexity of the challenges of a community of poverty and to position these challenges on the continuum in relation to both perspectives.

Regardless of the disparate views of Fraser and Young regarding the juxtaposition of these categories of oppression, I maintain that the categories are relevant to the children and adults living in the KMCS neighborhood and can be utilized to name and identify social injustices. Young's five faces of oppression can contribute to the school-choice conversation by providing criteria through which injustices can be evaluated.

The next chapter introduces the reader to the KMCS neighborhood and delves into the history of the terms inner-city and CommunityLINK schools, the challenges inherent in these designations, and the vulnerable students who attend KMCS. I explore these categories through a social-justice framework. My objective is to place into context the negative reputation of the school and the lower academic achievement of the children. In order to protect the anonymity of the children and their families, limited descriptions are provided of the geographic location and the surrounding neighborhood.

CHAPTER THREE

THE CASE OF AN INNER-CITY SCHOOL

KMCS is located in the heart of the city and is adjacent to a community centre, a recreation centre, City Park, and the public library. It enjoys a strong connection with the citizens of the community and includes many individual volunteers and service organizations in the day-to-day activities of the school. Volunteers assist in providing a wide range of extracurricular activities and educational programs. Throughout the year, students and their families are invited to enjoy fellowship through participation in annual breakfasts and dinners, concerts, and Canada Day celebrations.

The school is a modest but well maintained building. Acquaintances that drive by are surprised that KMCS is designated as an inner-city school. They are also surprised that a school outside of a large urban area would be given such a designation. When they learned, that for educators, the term inner-city means a link to poverty they are even more surprised because the community around KMCS does not “look poor” and contains many attractive residences. These acquaintances never saw the homeless people who, at night, sought shelter from the wind and rain in the covered alcoves of the school. That said, there is a clear physical divide between the affluent and low-income families in the neighborhood. Two sides of the school campus are bounded by middle-class dwellings in the form of condominiums owned by retirees. The other residences surrounding the school are modest rental accommodations in the form of three-story apartment blocks. These stucco buildings, at least on the outside, are well maintained and neatly landscaped. We often used the term “sanitized” to describe this portion of geographic area around the school because for many

children living in the outwardly-attractive buildings, life is difficult.

Some information was provided in the previous chapter to illustrate how various kinds of oppressions are operating for KMCS students and their families. The purpose of this chapter is to continue to provide a profile of KMCS by considering its designation as an inner-city school. I begin by briefly reviewing the history of the inner-city school concept, a strategy that I frame as an attempt to address problems of maldistribution. I also note that the inner-city designation has now been replaced with the descriptor CommunityLINK, new terminology in British Columbia. I then outline the challenges for KMCS inherent in such a designation, challenges I argue are a result of misrecognition. The latter part of the chapter presents a profile of the students; considers the concepts of vulnerable and at-risk children; discusses some specific barriers such as poor housing, poverty and health problems; and, describes the types of services needed to address these issues. In many respects these problems and the services provided to address them point to the need for an integrated approach to social justice, one where resources need to be redistributed in a way that is grounded in recognition of difference and responds to the particular history and needs of the community.

Inner-City Schools: The Need for Systemic Change

For over 40 years, certain Canadian teachers, administrators, trustees, and community advocates have dedicated their intellectual and material resources to addressing the academic achievement of children living in low-income urban communities. For many of these children school success and academic performance has not equalled that of their peers living

in financially advantaged homes. To address this lag in performance levels, provincial governments and local school boards have targeted funds to support economically disadvantaged learning communities, and have attached the term “inner-city” to these schools. Consequently, for more than four decades, the term inner-city school has been synonymous with the education of children living in low-income communities (Levin, 2007, p. 2).

Despite the length of time and attention paid to low-income schools, research has shown a lack of systemic change. The persistence of problems and lack of progress is noted by Levin, Gaskell, and Pollock (2007), reporting on a study of inner-city education in Winnipeg and drawing on a similar study in Toronto, who concluded that “the policy ideas being advanced today around inner-city education are remarkably similar to the ideas – and in many cases programs and practices – of three decades ago, raising the question of what, if anything, has been learned and accomplished over that period of time” (p. 2). Of particular concern is the potential for a change or revision in a provincial education mandate when a new government is elected to power such that:

. . . the ability of local school boards to manage issues of urban education and poverty are deeply affected by factors beyond their control and include the relationship between local boards and provincial governments; the vagaries of political events; and the impact of the diversity of the population within urban areas. (Levin et al., p. 19)

Levin et al. also note how program sustainability is negatively affected by funding cuts or a lack of succession planning for staff. Often programs, which are complex, are only sustainable through the efforts of inspired and visionary educators or community activists. When these individuals leave an assignment or funding levels are reduced, it may be difficult or impossible to attract employees with sufficient motivation, qualifications and experience

to maintain the initiatives. Of even greater concern is succession planning in schools and school boards wherein a new principal or superintendent who has a different point of view, can cancel or alter the course of a program. The organization or reorganization of government ministries also influences the work of schools and school boards when programs or areas of responsibility are transferred between ministries. For example, within the province of British Columbia, budget reductions and the reorganization of the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) resulted in staffing and revenue reductions for local boards including School Liaison Officers, Community Health Support and Family Advancement workers (Vancouver School Board, “Media Release,” 2004). Another barrier to structural change for economically disadvantaged urban schools is the struggle to prioritize competing demands for public spending. Communities may question the provision of funding for certain programs and may see a greater urgency in supporting consistent health care for children compared with providing consistent social support or enhanced education programs which do not provide visible or immediate results. For example, “although the health care system delivers more care to sicker children, other child support systems appear to be less designed to target extra funds to high needs groups” (Manitoba Centre for Health Policy, 2004, p. 9). A related struggle occurs when “the communities served by such programs tend to have weak political voices, policy makers tend to have little direct knowledge of issues related to inner-city education, and few policy makers are aware of research supporting programs in place” (Maynes, 1993b, as cited in Maynes & Foster, 2000, p. 56).

In BC, between 1970 and 1996, the British Columbia Ministry of Education (MOE) utilized a variety of designations to allocate funding for vulnerable children in public schools.

The children are described as at-risk for school completion and vulnerable to the negative health and nutrition factors associated with poverty. The range of government funding targeted children whose vulnerability was primarily due to socio-economic factors and for whom the term inner-city student became popularized.

In 1996 these designations and parcels of money were combined to create a funding mechanism called CommunityLINK. LINK is an acronym for **L**earning **I**ncludes **N**utrition and **K**nowledge. Although the term inner-city is common in the vernacular of public-school educators, funding is no longer targeted toward inner-city schools but is distributed at the discretion of school boards within guidelines prescribed by the MOE. According to the MOE policy site, the purpose of CommunityLINK funding is to provide programs and services which improve the education performance and social functioning of vulnerable students and as stated in the CommunityLINK Policy, “school districts will: establish effective programs which directly support vulnerable students; target CommunityLINK funds to vulnerable students; support family and community involvement; and promote partnerships and an integrated approach to supporting vulnerable students with families, communities and service providers” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, “CommunityLINK policy,” 2006).

School districts have the responsibility and flexibility to determine the most effective use of these funds in supporting vulnerable students, and are required to maintain evidence-based data to support their programming decisions. Within the province, a range of services are provided through elementary CommunityLINK schools which are defined as:

... schools with a significant percentage of vulnerable students. In determining vulnerability, schools may consider: low income measures, involvement with provincial social service ministries and related agencies; information obtained through community mapping; community socio-economic demographics, such as aboriginal ancestry, and other relevant information. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, “CommunityLINK

policy,” 2006)

The MOE maintains an inventory of programs that CommunityLINK schools provide for vulnerable students. This inventory includes school-meals programs, community partnerships, pre-school and school readiness programs, literacy initiatives, curriculum-related field trips, family-support programs, cultural presentations, parenting classes, summer camps, and home-reading programs. It is important to note that the inventory does not recommend extended-learning time as a suggested resource for CommunityLINK Schools. This dissertation is intended to make a contribution to the inventory of CommunityLINK activities, illustrating how the extended-learning time provided by year-round school (YRS) can enhance the learning of vulnerable children. More discussion about CommunityLINK is found in chapter five.

The resources that can be acquired when a school is designated as inner-city¹⁴ (or CommunityLINK) have enabled schools like KMCS to implement and manage enhanced programs and services. This approach, I argue, illustrates a liberal model of social justice where the focus is on more equal distribution of resources. However, as will be discussed below and in subsequent chapters, this designation and the accompanied funding also illustrates struggles with misrecognition because of the stigmatizing consequences.

The Problem of Labels: The Case of KMCS

My experience at KMCS has illustrated to me how the inner-city designation, while providing resources, can enable a form of misrecognition by negatively altering a school's

¹⁴ Although this designation is no longer utilized by the British Columbia Ministry of Education, it remains in the vernacular of educators and parents.

reputation, thus further marginalizing the school, the children and their families. For example, KMCS often attracted attention in the local press. Historically, newspaper articles focused on the inner-city designation of the school, as well as the challenges of health and social issues attributed to poverty. In this situation, the inner-city designation was a liability as illustrated in the following example.

During my first term at KMCS, a local newspaper learned that a high school in the catchment area had received supplemental funding from the Ministry of Education. This funding, which was categorized as inner-city, was distributed based on demographic information showing that a portion of the student population lived at or below the poverty line. Many of these students were graduates of KMCS. I knew that our parents were embarrassed by these public statements about their income. The newspaper, with good intentions, chose to profile the high school and to highlight the excellent programs and services that could be provided through inner-city funding. One of the active parents at the high school took objection to the inner-city designation and organized a protest at one school board meeting arguing that linking the high school to programs for low-income children through an inner-city designation was damaging to its reputation. This incident received additional press coverage and further tarnished the reputation of urban schools.

The negative reputation attributed to KMCS circulated very quickly within the parent community. On another occasion, I was upset when I learned that all residents moving into a “middle class” housing development in our catchment area were advised by existing residents the KMCS was a “bad school.” This information was taken seriously . . . no children from the development registered at KMCS over a three year period. With the exception of one family, these parents did not visit KMCS to review the curriculum,

programs or code-of-conduct. They simply asked me to sign a form approving of their transfer to other schools in the belief that their children would receive a superior education in a “good” school. During my term as the principal of KMCS I also struggled with the appointment of teaching staff who were skilled and committed to working in an inner-city school. This situation was exacerbated by the reputation of the school which influenced teaching applicants. I discuss this issue in detail in chapter five.

In the next section of this chapter, I review the literature that explores the concepts of at-risk and vulnerable children, note the problems and meanings of these categories, and provide a profile of the students and families at KMCS. I conclude this chapter with a map of the various challenges facing the children and families, and summarize the essential services that can address the issues.

Vulnerable Children and Families

In relation to the concept of *at-risk children*, academics have recently introduced the term *vulnerable children* to the discussion of the economic, health, educational, and employment challenges met by Canadian children and their caregivers. It has been argued that the term *at-risk* is too strongly aligned with socio-economic-status and thus may not acknowledge the impact of all social and developmental challenges which may render children vulnerable. This, I argue, is an example of misrecognition and of the limits of social justice approaches that are not integrative. For example, initiatives in the area of anti-oppressive education name five oppressions: marginalization, powerlessness, cultural oppression, violence and exploitation as systematic institutional processes which prevent

children from learning (Young, 1990, as cited in Brandes & Kelly, 2004). These oppressions may not be directly correlated to a child's socio-economic status.

Landon Pearson (as cited in Willms, 2002), in his forward to the volume *Vulnerable Children*, argued that *vulnerable children* was a preferred concept that avoided the list of pathologies common to discussions around at-risk children, while Willms (2002) defined these children as “. . . vulnerable in the sense that unless there is a serious effort to intervene on their behalf, they are prone to experiencing problems throughout their childhood” (p. 3). Willms argues that, in order to identify all children who are vulnerable, we must widen our investigation to include variables other than the economic factors which influence children's lives in that, “the relationship between children's outcomes and family income is so firmly entrenched in our understanding of human development that the term ‘children at risk’ has become synonymous with ‘children living in poverty,’ while other factors may be neglected” (p. 8).

Conversely, Rothstein (2004) calls for a focus on poverty, making the case that children's level of risk is congruent with their social-class positioning wherein disadvantaged children are influenced by “. . . a collection of occupational, psychological, personality, health, and economic traits that interact, predicting performance – not only in school, but in other institutions as well – that, on average, differs from the performance of families from higher social classes” (p. 207).

While I subscribe to the notion that a wide range of vulnerabilities influence children's opportunities for success, I maintain that both educators and policy writers must acknowledge poverty as the single most influential negative factor in children's lives. Galbraith acknowledges the injustice of poverty and misrecognition for those living in

poverty in stating that:

People are poverty stricken when their income, even if adequate for survival, falls radically behind that of the community. Then they cannot have what the larger community regards as the minimum necessary for decency; and they cannot wholly escape, therefore, the judgment of the larger community that they are indecent. They are degraded for, in the literal sense, they live outside the grades or categories which the community regards as acceptable. (1969, p. 245)

The stress of living with an inadequate income exacerbates and sometimes creates other vulnerabilities including mental and physical illness and behavioral problems. In summary, poverty is likely to devastate lives, rob people of opportunities and create a web of issues that educators can not disregard. In my study, I have utilized the following British Columbia MOE definition of vulnerable students: “. . . the term ‘vulnerable students’ means those students who may be at risk in terms of academic achievement and social functioning” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, “CommunityLINK policy,” 2006).

At KMCS, the financial difficulties that the families faced were often the most visible of their struggles; they impacted the children and influenced their abilities to be effective learners and good citizens within the school community. Many children arrived at school for breakfast and depended upon the school to provide lunch and food hampers for family use. Children often told stories of waiting in line with their parents at the Food Bank. For many children, their “failure to thrive” resulting from inadequate nutrition and health care was obvious, particularly when they interacted with robust students from other school communities. Many children and their families lacked affordable dental care because the ‘working poor’ are generally ineligible for benefit packages that include extended care and dental plans. They endured the bias that exists against children and adults without good dental hygiene and perfect smiles. On several occasions during my tenure at KMCS, families

lost all of their belongings due to fires in their apartment complexes. These families were not able to afford the luxury of home insurance and therefore depended upon the school for assistance. At KMCS, adults searched the clothing room in the school for adequate clothing for themselves and their children. Washing clothing and bedding was difficult for parents who could not afford the high cost of washing and drying clothes at a Laundromat. Telephone contact between KMCS and parents was difficult as many families either did not have a telephone or did not have the funds to “buy minutes” for their cell phones. Access to technology was challenging for children and their families, and often the public library or the school provided their only access to computers. The beginning of the school year was particularly difficult for families who needed to purchase school supplies and back-to-school clothing for several children. KMCS was very fortunate to receive supplies and materials from corporate businesses in the area. Through this corporate support, children received a backpack filled with a year’s supply of notebooks, papers, pens, pencils, crayons and glue.

Janis¹⁵ was a single mother I met during my tenure as principal of KMCS. She in many ways represents the multiple forms of oppression that are entwined with poverty, a situation shared by other women who raised their children without the support of extended family and who temporarily escaped violence by living in women’s shelters. I spent many hours talking with and helping Janis. She trusted “the school office” and shared many confidences with us. I learned that relocating to a new home was very difficult for Janis and her children. She was estranged from her husband and the children’s father. Recently, she had also become estranged from the members of their extended families. Janis was not able to work due to ill health and had fled her previous home to avoid domestic violence. The

¹⁵ Janis is a pseudonym; this story is a composite of several parents with whom I became acquainted at KMCS. It is not a ‘true’ story of one individual.

family lived in a shelter when they moved to the KMCS area. The children were visibly angry youngsters who showed the stress of living with poverty and uncertainty. They were not able to settle into school and were at odds with their classmates and teachers. There was never enough money to supply the needs of the family. Bicycles in poor repair served as the family transportation while the Food Bank provided many basic items. The school clothing room was a source of shoes and clothing, and entertainment outside the home was nonexistent due to a lack of transportation and funds. I learned from Janice that buying gifts for special celebrations was difficult and Christmas hampers were essential in December.

Essential Services for Children and Families

During my tenure as their principal, all of the categories of vulnerability and risk described by Willms (2002) and Rothstein (2004) were found in the lives of KMCS students. In my experience, these risks and vulnerabilities were antecedents to the academic and social struggles faced by the students. The intent of the discussion in this section is three-fold. First, it is structured to draw attention to the array of barriers to learning which diminish children's success and to articulate my contention that the risks and vulnerabilities linked to poverty would not be determinants of failure if appropriate supports were available. Second, this discussion is intended to identify essential services for children and families and to challenge the education and social-services systems to provide these services. In a deliberate attempt to avoid pathologizing children and their families, a form of misrecognition, these services are categorized according to program descriptors rather than student vulnerabilities. And finally, my view that Ministries in the British Columbia government must adequately

fund high-needs schools in low-income communities is reiterated in this section and grounded in a belief that poverty has never been neutral in its relationship with schooling and that the academy must stop treating poverty as a silent variable in urban school achievement (Jones, 2007, p. 601).

The risks and vulnerabilities discussed in this section include a range of challenges facing the children at KMCS; however, it is important to note that this spectrum is not a comprehensive summary of all issues. Rather it is a summary of the familial and childhood supports essential for healthy development and is organized into categories under the general heading of “essential services for families.” This spectrum includes the following educational, economic, and social-support topics: parental education services, financial supports, and mental-health support systems. The interrelationship amongst these vulnerabilities will be evident as many are linked through socioeconomic and familial factors and for this reason, my discussion does not isolate domains such as behavioral abnormalities and substance abuse as separate entities; rather, it integrates them into the general discussion.

Parent-Education Services

Children are vulnerable to the world around them. Researchers know that early-childhood development is of fundamental importance in determining long-term health and well being; that socio-economic conditions influence behavioral development; and that “variations in cognitive, social and emotional development evident by the mid-elementary school years can be traced to early differences in temperament and socialization, including experiences within the family, peer group, school setting, community and cultural context”

(Human Early Learning Partnership, 2002, p. 1). Research substantiates the crucial nature of child-development, and points to the following: (a) infant-brain development depends on an infant's environmental experience, (b) the brain develops according to the quantity and quality of the stimuli it receives, (c) the social and learning skills needed for success begin to develop in early childhood, and (d) that quality child care can reduce later anti-social behavior, delinquency and crime (Voices for Children, 1997, pp. 1-2).

The research conducted through the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) under the auspices of Human Resources Development Canada (2007), challenges the widely-held belief that poor children are unsuccessful because of poor parenting. Willms (2002) has investigated parenting through the NLSCY and concluded that "the family environment is the strongest determinant of childhood vulnerability" (p. 347) while "the effects of authoritative and responsible parenting far outweigh the effects of income" (p. 344). He states that the parental skills or challenges which influence childhood vulnerability include: parenting styles and the ability of parents to provide a nurturing environment, mental-health issues including maternal depression, family functioning, the provision of intellectual stimulation and family-literacy initiatives, parental involvement over time, the availability of community-support systems, and the availability of adequate daycare provisions, all of which are minimally linked to income. In summary, Willms (2002) argues that:

Children who do not get a good start in life have difficulties rebounding and achieving their potential. Thus the support of families in the effort to provide the best possible environment for children is a critical investment. It could be considered the foundation of social policy. (p. 332)

Some children attending KMCS experienced the multiple barriers to academic and social

success identified in contemporary society. Their incidence at KMCS is indicative of the increase in the number of children with emotional, physical, and neurological challenges enrolled in our schools. For example, in 2006, 13 percent of the student population at KMCS required special education services (Henderson School District, 2006).

I concur that the support of families is foundational to providing an appropriate environment for our children and argue that, in the KMCS environment, it is crucial that educators “. . . understand parenting in the context of poverty” (Adamson & Austin, 2006, p. 96) for within the school and its surrounding neighborhood, I observe that a direct correlation exists between the challenges identified by Willms (2002) and the ability of parents enduring situational and generational poverty to provide adequately for their children. In this regard, teachers must be provided with the training necessary to understand the influence of poverty, and parents must be provided with adequate parenting, counselling, and health-related supports for their families in a respectful culturally-relevant non-judgmental manner.

Child Care

In my experience, the low wage and lack of benefits paid to the ‘working poor’ directly aligned with the significant number of ‘latch-key’ children who attended KMCS. Out of necessity, these children were left alone at home and were often expected to care for younger siblings. Simply stated, these children were the victims of poverty wherein their underemployed parents could not access quality affordable daycare. It is these children who consistently arrived at school at 7:30 a.m. for breakfast, who remained on the school property well after dismissal, or attended school when they were unwell. Their parents, many of

whom were struggling to maintain paid employment, considered the school to be a crucial contributor to their child's safety and well-being. In my view, schools should receive funding to provide these essential services rather than relying on sporadic volunteer help, or depending on school administrators to incorporate this care into their workload. The following composite illustrates the need for childcare at KMCS.

Several children would arrive at school before 7:00 a.m. Sometimes they walked to school and other times they were dropped off by parents who were on their way to work. I supervised these students with assistance from the vice-principal, and the school secretary. It was often difficult to provide supervision because of meetings, telephone calls, team practices in the gym, or the myriad of administrative tasks in "our real jobs." These children read books in the office or used the computer lab until supervision was available on the playground. Generally this informal daycare arrangement and others like it simply evolved. Sometimes a parent did not ask our permission, while others did. They needed help and the school lights were on and the doors were open.

The lack of after-school care was also problematic. Although some types of care were available until 5:30 p.m., some parents could not afford the programs or did not approve of the behaviour of the other children. As an alternative, these parents chose to have their children play with friends after school. On most days this arrangement worked well but on several occasions when these children did not arrive home as expected a parent would frantically call the school for help. We in turn made phone calls to friends to try to locate the children or, if necessary, scoured the neighborhood by car or on foot. They were always safe, but the event was traumatizing for everyone concerned. Affordable licensed child-care would have provided a safe place for these children and could have alleviated one stressor for

all of us.

Financial Supports

A rich source of information for this dissertation is the work of Adamson and Austin (2006). *It's all about the children: Understanding poverty in early childhood programs* was written by child-care practitioners in this region of British Columbia. Adamson and Austin clearly articulate the reality of life for many families:

Families living in poverty feel imprisoned by the lack of freedom and choices they need to live their lives, and this leaves them in a state of desperation, shame and powerlessness. Grossly unfair disparities created by poverty discriminate against the child whose voice is lessened and whose spirit becomes broken. The significance of poverty is very real to children as they endure the daily struggle for survival whilst the once-in-a lifetime experience of a carefree childhood passes them by. (p. 2)

When children living in well-resourced families are compared to children living in poverty, the propensity for poor children to be unsuccessful at school is notable and is illustrated in the following social, physical and academic realities that drive the need for increased financial and emotional support for children and families at KMCS. Compared to children living in adequately-resourced families, children who live in poverty are more likely to: (a) be a member of family that experiences an unusually high-stress level, and lacks disposable income and secure housing, (b) possess fewer learning resources, (c) participate in fewer fee-based extracurricular activities, and (d) lack adequate and nutritional food, access to medical and dental care, adequate seasonal clothing, and reliable transportation (Adamson & Austin, 2006; Grant, 2003).

This discussion would be incomplete without reference to Canada's "working poor."

Although there is no commonly agreed definition of working poverty among researchers, an analysis of this demographic included in the document *When working is not enough to escape poverty* and published under the auspices of Human Resources and Social Development Canada (2006) states that:

A working poor individual is someone who works the equivalent of full-time for a least half of the year but whose family income is below a low-income threshold. A working poor family is an economic family including at least one working poor individual. (p. 13)

According to the 2001 Census Canada data, 17% of families and 43% of individuals living in the KMCS community were low-income and receiving a range of income supports (Statistics Canada, 2001). These families fell into the working-poor category wherein having a job is not sufficient to escape poverty. Within this dissertation the term “working poor” also applies to stay-at-home parents who are raising families and receiving social assistance. Factors which confine workers to poverty include increasing housing costs, earning inequalities, lack of transportation, language barriers, seasonal and temporary work, contract positions, inadequate training and education, and family structures including single-parent families wherein social assistance is not sufficient to provide a standard of living above the low-income threshold or even to meet what has been deemed the poverty line.

Secure Housing

Access to affordable housing influences the transiency and mobility rates of students. At KMCS the term “transiency rate” refers to the percentage of the total student population which transfers in or out of the school during an academic year, while mobility refers to the

number of schools an individual student attended over the duration of his academic career.

A student who is transient or mobile can face numerous challenges and is more likely, compared to a child living in a stable family, to reside with a parent who is unemployed or earns a low income. The continual search for secure and affordable housing, framed by parental employment issues, contributes to a transient lifestyle for children.

Characteristically, transient students, in comparison to their stable peers, are more likely to fail courses in school, live in a home where English is not spoken, live in a single-parent family, feel isolated and marginalized, demonstrate low self-esteem, live in a drug-related culture and reside with a parent who did not graduate from high school (Grant, 2003). Social integration and peer interaction may be difficult for transient children due to excessive absences from school, while foster children are considered vulnerable within the school system in that they may accrue lower-academic achievement due to separation and attachment issues (Adamson & Austin, 2006; Zetlin & Weinberg, 2004). And furthermore, according to the Child and Youth Mental Health Plan (CYMHP), mental health services have recognized that transient children may be underserved in that, “one of the most glaring deficiencies in the current state of child and youth mental health services is the lack of service continuity in the transfer of care . . . between communities and hospitals” (2003, p. 18). According to school district data, KMCS registered the highest or second highest transiency rates with the district between 2001 and 2006. I have developed the following composite to represent the numerous transient students who did not receive adequate learning support.

When our secretary brought me John’s file I guessed that he would need our help. The file was bulging with reports and photocopied documents which usually indicated that a

student had a complicated history. He was a highly-verbal intermediate level student. The school district identified him as a transient student. He registered at KMCS just after Christmas and our school was his fifteenth. When I reviewed his records, I noticed that there were many weeks when John was “in transit” and was not registered in any school. John was a very bright student but he did not read or write at grade level. We knew that absenteeism and mobility were directly linked to his delayed skilled development, but we suspected that learning disabilities might also be influencing his inability to cope with language-processing tasks. John avoided academic work by misbehaving. Experienced teachers know that very often students misbehave when they need to divert attention from their inability to complete academic work that is too difficult. John’s teacher employed a range of learning strategies to keep him engaged. During some classes, however, his behavior was so extreme that his teacher had no choice but to ask him to leave the room. She was trying to teach an entire class, many of whom were difficult to manage and found John’s behavior very appealing. John’s teacher was worried that he would leave the school and expedited the referral process for an in-depth assessment from a school psychologist. He moved before the assessment was complete. The impact of transiency on his learning continued.

Mental-Health Support Services

The teachers, administrators and support staff at KMCS were challenged to meet the needs of mentally ill children and their adult caregivers.

Currently one in seven (more than 140,000) children in British Columbia are (sic) estimated to have a mental illness serious enough to cause significant distress and impair their development at home, at school, and in the community. The majority of these children (and their families) do not receive

the services they need, with the result that impairments often continue, causing increased suffering and affecting productivity and functioning in adulthood. (Child & Youth Mental Health Plan, 2003, *I*)

According to the Kirby Report from the Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs (2006), 1.2 million young Canadians and their families live with anxiety, attention deficit, depression, addiction, and other disorders. The report states that when families are directly involved “. . . in caring for their younger members the impact of these high rates of illness is compounded. When a child or young person lives with mental illness or addiction, so too do his or her family caregivers” (Kirby, 2006, p. 37). As stated in the CYMHP (2003), children’s mental health programs and services are intended to serve a range of purposes within the Province of British Columbia. Specifically, the plan intends to reduce the impairments associated with mental illness, to optimize development and wellbeing for children, to ensure the effective and efficient use of public funds towards these ends and to “provide consultation to existing early child development, primary health care, school, recreation, and other community programs and organizations involved with the healthy development of children and families” (p. *iii-iv*).

The challenges faced by staff and their students at KMCS were exacerbated through the lack of diagnosis, early intervention and in-school support provided to these children who were affected by the following disorders: anxiety, attention-deficit/hyperactivity, depression, pervasive developmental, obsessive-compulsive, Tourette’s, bipolar, and schizophrenia. Specifically, our challenge around mental illness was the ability of the school to provide adequate support to children such that the individual child felt safe and protected and able to learn, while the learning environment of the entire classroom was maintained. In reality, the negative synergy created through a lack of specialized staff compromised learning in the

classroom.

An additional barrier to providing adequate support for some children attending KMCS was the fact that they were hidden from mental health providers. The Australian Infant Child Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association (AICAFMHA, 2001) report assigned the term *hidden child* to these youngsters who are not identified as the birth children of, or in the care of, a mentally ill adult and therefore do not receive dedicated service through mental health agencies or schools. Children are “hidden” to schools because social-service agencies may be concerned about a parent’s right to confidentiality and do not share information with the school; parents may be unaware their own mental illness or of the impact of mental illness on the children and their families; and, parents fear that social services might apprehend their child if they self-identify. Hidden children are not eligible for the limited range of services administered by mental health providers.

And finally, throughout my practice as an educator I have learned that parental mental health is a powerful determinant of a child’s well-being and I have observed the influence that parental mental illness wields upon a child’s social and educational experiences. I have observed that the negative relationship between mental illness and poverty diminishes the opportunity for children to live and learn in an emotionally healthy environment and that the cyclical nature of mental illness and poverty destabilizes families and creates a turbulent environment for children. The following composite highlights the challenges I encountered while trying to support numerous children at KMCS who were influenced by mental illness in their families.

I learned a great deal about mental illness during my tenure at KMCS. I quickly learned that several of our students lived with mentally ill parents and that life with a

mentally ill adult is stressful. I learned that unpredictable parental behavior was often linked to inconsistent medication and that many people stop taking their medication when they began to feel well. Children were particularly vulnerable when their parents or caregivers altered their medication. On many occasions, these adults displayed explosive and threatening behavior towards me and our vice-principal. Generally the rage was very public. We tried to be patient because we understood that the anger was related to health issues and that living in poverty exacerbated challenges. However, when the threatening behavior escalated to a certain level, police were involved and restraining orders were written. These public occurrences were extremely embarrassing for the children and traumatizing for the staff. On other occasions parents were hospitalized when they became seriously ill and required psychiatric care. In the absence of extended family, children were placed with respite families. During all of this, the stability of the school provided refuge and predictability in an otherwise confusing and frightening world.

It is essential to acknowledge that teachers and administrators are not trained as mental health experts and may not recognize the traumas experienced by children who live with mentally ill parents, or fully recognize the debilitating effect of mental illness upon the ability of parents to provide proper care for their children. I maintain that it is essential for practitioners working in communities of poverty to understand the realities and challenges of parental mental illness. My observations at KMCS are reflected in the conclusions of CYMHP (British Columbia) and the Kirby Report (2006). These conclusions are relevant and crucial to supporting my contention that the treatment of childhood mental illness is under-prescribed in public schools in general and KMCS in particular. The research reports have recognized that a negative difference exists between current capacity and identified

need, that services are fragmented, and that increased service is required in the following areas: school-based mental health services, early identification and intervention for children and youth experiencing or at risk of developing a serious mental illness, and flexibility in the provision of services with regard to time and location.

Summary

This chapter detailed the story of KMCS, an inner-city school located in an urban public school district. It included a discussion of barriers to change and a discussion of inner-city funding policies that are intended to assist school districts in implementing and sustaining changes that support children's learning. The chapter also explored various dimensions of childhood vulnerability and the essential services which should be enhanced at KMCS and in the neighborhood: parent-education programs, financial assistance, affordable and high quality child care, secure housing, and mental-health services to accommodate the increased number of students with mental illness.

Many children who attended KMCS were marginalized by poverty while living and attending school in an affluent region. One clear solution to their marginalization was the provision of adequate income, housing, and proper health care; however, as a school principal I did not have influence over social and economic policies. However, I did have influence over the educational opportunities provided for the children. The experience of the children and families at KMCS informed my understanding of injustice and of the importance of advancing the principals of recognitive and distributive social justice within the school district. Therefore, I created an opportunity to influence educational programs and

policies and to illustrate the importance of the social-justice discourse through the implementation of a full-service community school.

As I lobbied for increased funding, I learned that I was most successful in garnering support for KMCS when my requests to senior management in the school district were framed by social-justice principles. I also learned that it was essential to deepen my own theoretical knowledge in preparation for conversations and presentations where I was able to describe my students' needs in social-justice terminology. Although I did not formally articulate social justice-theory when I began the transformation of KMCS, I lobbied for increased funding through the social-democratic model of distributive justice. I understood that the liberal-democratic concept of social justice described as a 'simple equality' model, provided basic funding for schools according to the assumption that all individuals have the same basic needs (Walzer, 1983). My request for increased and differentiated funding at KMCS was based on the social-democratic difference model of social justice, which argues for the issuance of different social goods to different people and is based on the belief that individuals have unique needs and unique resources at their disposal (Walzer, 1893). My overarching goal, for our students, was to achieve parity-of-participation with children attending well-resourced schools.

The next chapter begins to tell the story of the implementation of change at KMCS by introducing the reader to school-choice and open-boundary policies. I address the question, "What interests and ideologies informed the introduction of school-choice and open boundary policies?" First, I identify and explore five assumptions that support the implementation of school choice and open-boundary policies. In investigating these assumptions, I present the opinions of both the proponents and opponents of school choice

evident in the research literature. Second, I report on the impact of these policies on KMCS.

CHAPTER FOUR
SCHOOL-CHOICE AND OPEN-BOUNDARY
POLICIES IN PUBLIC EDUCATION

In this chapter, I continue in my effort to provide detailed contextual information about the particular case of KMCS. My focus shifts from the inner-city designation and the attendant notions of vulnerable children, to focus on two policies, school choice and open boundary, which had significant bearing on this school. I begin by explaining what is meant by school choice and examine how choice has been taken up in BC schools. Next, I analyze the literature that discusses these initiatives, reviewing the claims of both proponents and critics in order to explicate several key assumptions that, I argue, illustrate the interests and ideologies underpinning the movement towards school-choice and open-boundary policies. As a component of my challenge to the key assumptions about the value of school choice, I consider the case of KMCS using publically available data to illustrate how the implementation of school-choice and open-boundary policies has negatively affected KMCS.

From Neighborhood Schools to Schools of Choice

The public school has long been considered the nucleus of the Canadian neighborhood. For decades, families gathered at their local schools to support their children and their communities as the school year unfolded in a series of parent-teacher conferences, fundraising activities, and special concerts and sports days. Adults walked or car-pooled their children to school while sharing the role of a prudent parent. They kept a watchful eye

on activities in their neighborhoods, formed Block Watch organizations and monitored each other's children as they played in parks and cul-de-sacs. Perspectives likely differed for families living in rural areas or for families of lesser means. Yet, in my experience, first as a student and then as a parent in a range of Canadian schools, these families generally assumed a collective responsibility for their children.

In my role as a school administrator, I observed a shift in the values and beliefs espoused in our school communities. Many neighborhoods have become increasingly fragmented and less communal. For some adults, an ideology of individualism or narcissism has replaced a commitment to the collective (Ungerleider, 2003, p. 12). For others, a focus on producing and consuming goods has replaced a commitment to rearing children and contributing to local neighborhoods. For other adults, nostalgia for a society framed by familiar religious values conflicts with the evolution of a culturally diverse society. And finally, a perceived decline in academic standards, coupled with the fear of a perceived increase in violence and decreasing respect for traditional law and order have driven some parents to search for socially and educationally exclusive environments for their children. Within the public education system, the search for exclusivity, specialized curriculum and/or coherence around faith and family values has resulted in some families selecting schools other than their neighborhood or designated school. The schools they choose are created by Boards of Education through the adoption of open-boundary and schools-of-choice policies which allow children to attend any school within their local district or the province of British Columbia, providing that a space and appropriate academic program are available. Trustees face conflicting priorities in their districts and in order to retain students, school boards must respond to the increasingly diverse demands of their clientele (Osborn, Broadfoot, Planel, &

Pollard, 1997).

Creating choices within the public education system occurs through three systems: voucher, charters, and choice schools. Charter schools are publicly funded, yet autonomous, wherein they “operate independently from a locally elected school board, and are designed instead to be more directly accountable to the families they serve” (Lubienski, 2001, p. 2). Charter schools are intended to provide innovative or enhanced educational programs to meet the needs of a specific group of students, and are organized by societies required to manage the schools in compliance with government legislation. Generally, schools are established with five-year charters, are tuition free, and employ certified teachers. Renewal of a charter is based upon a performance review (Maguire, 2006, p. 17).

Voucher systems provide parents with vouchers or certificates which serve as payment for education in a private school or a public school other than that designated by the district. “They constitute a system of certificate or cash payments by the government which enables public school students to attend schools of their choice, public or private. Vouchers have a fixed value and are redeemed at the time of enrolment” (Phillips, Raham & Wagner, 2004, p. 64).

Choice schools, which are offered to all students within a public school district and within the province of British Columbia, if space is available, are described as schools offering a distinctive or specialized program or those that subscribe to a particular philosophy. For this dissertation, “. . . school choice is defined as the ability of parents and their children to select schools. The act of choosing may be based on characteristics of an entire school or parts of it that are particular programs or services” (Brown, 2004, p. 21). Open boundaries within the public education system allow children to transfer from their

designated or assigned school to attend any school of their choice, space permitting.

Proponents of school choice also argue that the right to choose must be protected by democratic governments. In relation to this, Canada is a signatory of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which guarantees parental rights and was adopted by the United Nations in 1966, and enforced in 1976. The Covenant guarantees parental educational choice through the following declaration:

The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to choose for their children schools, other than those established by the public authorities, which conform to such minimum educational standards as may be laid down or approved by the State and to ensure religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions. (International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Part 2, Article 12, Section 3)

Within the province of British Columbia, parents are guaranteed participation in their children's education through a decree of the Governance and Legislation Branch *Statement of Education Policy Order* (1989) which states that parents:

have the right and responsibility to participate in the process of determining the educational goals, policies and services provided for their children. They have a primary responsibility to ensure that children are provided with the healthy and supportive environment necessary for learning. They have a responsibility to help shape and support the goals of the school system and to share in the tasks of educating their young. (D-90)

From a recognitive social-justice perspective, such government declarations appear to recognize and protect the rights of all parents to participate in their children's education and to ensure that the religious and moral education of their children is in accordance with their values. Of concern is the assumption that all parents are able to participate in the same way in their children's education. Parental participation often reflects a middle-class perspective. What is not recognized in this dominant view is this bias and how it influences the perception

that some families do not participate, in that they are not acting in accordance with particular norms and practices. Some families or parents are also perceived to have little engagement, at least according to the norms of parental interaction with schools, perhaps trusting that their children are receiving an appropriate education.

Opponents of choice argue, from the egalitarian standpoint, “that school choice is problematic because it threatens the cherished ideal of schooling children of many different social, racial, and achievement backgrounds in the same school” (Lauen, 2006, p. 3).

Bomotti (1998) captures the complexity of the school choice debate in saying that:

School choice is an education reform idea that seems to revel in paradox and cherish contradiction. It attracts the attention of a diverse range of people, who advocate or criticize choice proposals from different perspectives and for different reasons. They argue conflicting cases and usually appear certain that they are working in the best interests not only of their own children but of everybody else’s as well. (p. 313)

Choice Policy in HSD

My analysis of the texts of the HSD school-choice and open-boundary policies is framed in a discourse that, as described by Cummins (1995), “. . . constitutes . . . what counts as truth or knowledge” (p. 196). The belief that offering choice programs for students was important counted as truth and knowledge and underpinned the policy documents and emphasized the responsibility of a public school district to provide a broad range of enriched educational opportunities for its clientele. In the procedures outlined for parents in school newsletters, district websites, and in the policy texts, the school-choice policies adopted by the Board of Trustees are expected to be open, coherent, centrally controlled (Ozga, 2000, pp. 18-20) and are concerned with fairness and equity of opportunity. This framing and the

discourse surrounding the ideologies of fairness and equity helps to legitimize the policies to parents and the general public and is integral to “the construction of meaning” (Harker, 1992, p. 9). While claims are made that the policies are beneficial to all, contradiction and tension exist between the intent of the policies and the consequences of their implementation within the HSD (Taylor, Risvi, Lingard, & Henry, 1997, p. 30).

In 1985, through Policy No. 6042, the HSD introduced alternate programs and schools. In 2003, almost two decades later, the school district adopted Policy No. 8002 which provided for open boundaries across the province.¹⁶ This followed a provincial initiative in 2003, whereby the Government introduced education policy which encouraged school boards “to meet the diverse needs of their students by offering specialty programs or developing ‘magnet schools’ whenever possible” (Government of British Columbia, 2003). Suggested programming options included fine arts, international baccalaureate, Montessori, distance education, and language immersion programs. It is interesting to note that this policy does not suggest the development of specialized schools for inner-city students as a choice option. The rationale stated that open boundaries and specialty programs allow children to enrol in schools which best suit their needs and that through this initiative, every child in the province could attend an appropriate school. In conjunction with this policy, the government amended the School Act to require schools to establish catchment areas and geographic boundaries around schools so that children would be guaranteed a seat in their neighborhood school.

Together with provincial initiatives, the HSD policies have created a public school district which has seen a reduced portion of its students attend schools within their own

¹⁶ In my descriptions of these documents, the policy numbers and the policy text have been altered to protect the anonymity of the school district.

designated attendance areas; in this context “catchment area” and “neighborhood school” are becoming less familiar. It is essential to discuss both policy documents, since Policy No. 8002 which outlines attendance regulations, and Policy No. 6042 which provides for the establishment of alternate programs and schools, together contribute to creating opportunity for children to attend any school of their choice within the district. There were significant challenges related to the implementation of open boundaries and school choice options in the HSD, the complexities of which have been noted by Ball (1994):

Given constraints, circumstances and practicalities, the translation of crude, abstract simplicities of policy texts into interactive and sustainable practices of some sort involves productive thought, invention and adaptation. Policies do not normally tell you what to do; they create circumstances in which the range of options available in deciding what to do are narrowed or changed, or particular goals or outcomes are set. A response must still be put together, constructed in context, offset against other expectations. (p. 19)

According to the text of policy No. 6042, the HSD created specialized programming to serve the needs of its constituents. I argue from a recognitive and distributive social-justice framework and experience within the district, that the policy addresses only a certain segment of the population, those who are able to organize and lobby for choice programs. Historically, choice programs have been implemented for recognized groups who are articulate and powerful within the community as opposed to those who are marginalized by poverty. Policy No. 6042 (Henderson School District, 1985) states that:

According to provincial government mandate, public education must accommodate students with a broad range of interests. The Board of Trustees believes that this mandate requires it to provide options for students by developing a range of programs with diverse emphases including those with specialized curriculum, pedagogy or philosophy. Therefore, the Board supports the development of such programs if: the program meets the requirements of the School Act and Regulations; is consistent with provincially authorized or locally developed curriculum; and, is consistent with the goals and objectives of the Board.

Also within the HSD, Policy No. 8002 contains regulations, relevant to open-boundary policies, and that delineate procedures for application to attend schools.

Specifically,

The Board of Trustees acknowledges that a school age resident of British Columbia may enrol in an educational program in any school district and attend any school, providing there is space available and that an appropriate program can be provided without additional cost to the Board.¹⁷

It is important to note that during two decades following the adoption of Policy #6042 and prior to a government mandate, the HSD marketed itself as a “school district of choice.” Upon adoption of the policy in 1985, the culture of the school district reportedly became one of innovation where parent groups successfully lobbied to develop a variety of alternate programs. Therefore, the decision of the British Columbia Ministry of Education to mandate choice programs did not alter the philosophy of the HSD’s Board of Trustees, but it empowered groups advocating for alternate programming.

In the next section, I delve more deeply into the interests and ideologies and the key assumptions on which proponents of school choice have based their claims, examining how these assumptions relate to the case of KMCS.

An Exploration of Interests and Ideologies

In my review of school-choice literature, I argue that there are five key assumptions informing the introduction of open-boundary and school choice policies within the public school system in Canada, England, Sweden, Wales, and the United States. It is important to explore and name these assumptions in order to identify interests and ideologies that

¹⁷ The text of the policy is altered and is not a direct quotation.

rationalize the implementation of choice policies. In this dissertation, interests are considered to be common concerns or categories of motivation, ideologies as ways of thinking, and assumptions as suppositions which guide thinking. I argue that the ideologies driving the school choice movement are based on the following key assumptions about the benefits of choice.

1. School-choice policy provides for a better education than policies that restrict enrolment to a neighborhood or designated school.
2. Parents make informed choices when selecting a school for their children.
3. The exit of children from a neighborhood school will not have a negative effect on the school.
4. Competition, hence marketization, will result in improved schools and improved academic achievement.
5. School choice policies provide equal opportunity and equal access for all public school students.

Assumption No. 1: School-Choice Policy Improves Education

School choice proponents argue that school choice policy provides for better schools than policies that restrict enrolment to a neighborhood or designated school. Exploring the interpretation of the term “better education” is crucial to understanding the position of choice advocates. The descriptors of *The National Working Commission on Choice* (2003), Archbald (2000), and Chubb and Moe (cited in Lubienski, 2006), serve to provide an interpretation applicable to this dissertation. *The National Working Commission on Choice*

represents advocates' position in stating that "choice proponents rest their case on a belief that a system that creates options and responds to parent demands will introduce valuable elements of the market that will make most children's schools better and few children's schools worse" (p. 16), while Archbald (2000) suggests that for choice advocates, "better" is defined as a school with superior teachers and administrators, innovative programming and pedagogical practices, and strict behavior codes as evidenced in "good" student behavior (p. 230). Chubb and Moe (1990) expand this viewpoint by arguing that "consumers who are self-sorted into 'preference clusters' will have the benefits of schools that are more effective because they serve more homogeneous populations defined by public interests" (as cited in Lubienski, 2005, p. 248).

Proponents of school-choice policies are known to frame their argument in public-choice theory which posits that government institutions are not necessarily serving the public interest; rather, they serve institutional interests such as unions, administrators and school boards. Proponents argue that within society, markets are superior because they reflect incentives oriented towards consumers, not bureaucrats (Lubienski, 2006, p. 327). Chubb and Moe (1990) maintain that government bureaucracy leads to unacceptable pathologies: inefficiency, ineffectiveness, rigidity, and unresponsiveness. In sum, "choice theory emphasizes the sovereignty of individuals' preferences over other goals" and supports organizational autonomy as a conduit to market-style arrangements in the public school system (Lubienski, 2006, p. 327).

Additional arguments, both substantiated and unsubstantiated, contribute to the discussion. Unsubstantiated arguments include the rationale that schools-of-choice have profound positive effects on teachers and administrators and that these schools offer teachers

opportunities for self-actualization that are not available in neighborhood schools because choice schools can be more flexible and creative in curriculum delivery (Nathan & Ysseldyke, 1994, p. 6). In a survey of Minnesota Public School principals, it was argued that school choice policies:

. . . increased competition and collaboration between school districts; stimulated improvements to school curricula and support services; promoted greater parent and teacher involvement in school planning and decision making; fostered a more equitable distribution of school resources and student access to educational services; and increased the ethnic and cultural diversity of schools. (Nathan & Ysseldyke, 1994, p. 20)

Choice opponents, through a social cohesion framework, argue against the assumption that schools-of-choice provide a better education than neighborhood or designated schools. For example, Maguire (2006) maintained that “selective admission policies, or those which discriminate against low-achieving or more difficult to educate students, fundamentally contradict the moral purpose and mission of schools” (p. 84). The National Working Commission on Choice (2003) wrote that shifts in student population within schools can result in social polarization, aggravate cultural gaps and promote separatism as opposed to schools “where children meet others from different racial, economic, and religious groups, and where habits of tolerance and accommodation are developed, in part simply by being around different people” (p. 23).

Other opponents of school choice argue against the claim that the implementation of schools-of-choice will result in improved student achievement. Raham (2002) notes that within Sweden, the monitoring of ‘schools of choice’ is not focussed on student achievement: “the monitoring of non-municipal schools is largely for compliance with regulations, not for educational purposes” (p. 44). Willms and Echols (1992), in reference to schools which

control their student intakes, maintain that “some schools serving pupils from advantaged backgrounds achieve high results mainly because of their pupil intake” (p. 347). In studying public and private schools, Lubienski, Crane and Lubienski (2008) examined student achievement in both systems and reported that public schools outperformed private and charter schools once they “accounted for demographic differences in the populations they served” (p. 689).

Lubienski (2003a), in an examination of charter schools, notes how choice schools may be undertaking initiatives that have more to do with organizational matters than pedagogical ones. “Charter schools are implementing innovations in governance, management, and other organizational practices; and with few exceptions, rather than developing new educational practices, charter schools are embracing curricular and instructional approaches already in use in other public schools” (p. 418). Lubienski (2005) also points to how the changes in schools of choice have more to do with public relation exercises than educational practices. “In particular, many educational organizations engage to a remarkable and somewhat unexpected degree in marketing and other promotional activities having to do with symbolic management of a school’s image rather than substantive changes in educational processes” (p. 465). Lubienski (2006) notes that in England and Wales:

researchers report little evidence that schools seek innovations in classroom practice; schools in a position to control their enrolment emphasize an academic orientation and tend to seek a student body that will support that strategy; the pronounced importance of marketing and symbolic presentation highlights this pattern; the real diversification that has occurred has been as the result of government intervention, not competition and choice. (p. 332)

The Case of KMCS

The impact of school-choice and alternate-program options has significantly altered the landscape of the HSD. Issues of power were apparent in the school district. The adoption of policy in a public school district resides with elected trustees who are subject to the influences of their constituents. Historically, parent-lobby groups within the HSD exerted power and influence. Since the adoption of Policy No. 6042 in 1985, parent groups successfully lobbied Boards of Trustees to implement French immersion, Japanese, fine arts and fundamental or traditional¹⁸ programs. The formal support of school choice through the mandate of the provincial government and the adoption of Policy No. 8002 enhanced power for some parents within the school district; influential parents who wanted to establish or augment alternate programs saw their power to mobilize discourse increase (Fraser, 2005, p. 305).

The impacts and tensions linked to the implementation of Policies 6042 and 8002 reverberated through the HSD. Overall, the population of some schools increased, while, the viability of other schools was challenged due to student mobility and transiency, and in spite of the introduction of new programs and school-choice options across the district, the student population of the district continued to decline, partly due to a reduction in the number of school age children within the region. The adoption of Policies No. 6042 and 8002 also altered the power differentials of the employee groups within the school district. The implementation of school-choice policies and the subsequent restructuring of schools resulted

¹⁸ Fundamental or traditional programs offer a consistent structured approach to instruction and learning. They incorporate a teacher driven education, desire parental interest and involvement, and encourage parents to be respectful towards teacher decisions as well as informed and knowledgeable about their child's education.

in staff reductions with some employees being declared surplus. When schools were reconfigured, as in the development of a specialized program, some teachers were not qualified to practice within their current schools.

Assumption No. 2: Parents Make Informed Choices

A range of factors contribute to the ability of parents and caregivers to make informed decisions around school selection. Raham (2002) succinctly summarizes the importance of providing factual, reliable and current information around the effects of choice policies in saying that, “for choice to work properly, access to good information is vital” (p. 44). Yet, for contemporary families, attempting to make informed decisions based on what is best for their children may be challenging. Access to factual information about schools may be compromised through language barriers, the challenges of poverty and through inaccuracies and misinformation shared within the parent community and the media, and as a consequence of the complexity of the education system (Willms & Echols, 1992).

Maguire (2006), through a study of school choice in metro Edmonton (conducted via a telephone survey of 601 randomly selected parents), reported that 92% of parents strongly supported choice and believed that they were well informed about schools (p. vi). When queried about factors influencing choice, the location of the school was cited as the most significant factor in selecting a school (44.1%) with curriculum (40.4%) being the second most important factor in school selection. When queried about the information they sought as a guide to decision making, 62% of parents surveyed stated that they reviewed annual school performance reports and according to Maguire (p. 40), respondents were most interested in

school curricula (67.6%), class sizes (67.4%) and special programs (61.6%), and least interested in principal (39.3%) and teacher qualifications (33.9%). It is important to note that while 91% of parents in the Edmonton study were identified as having high expectations for their own involvement within their schools-of-choice and 88% of parents visited schools under consideration for their children, marginalized parents were described as possessing fewer resources, less comfortable approaching school authorities, less informed, and therefore, less likely to access choice options. Maguire's study concluded that the higher the education level of parents, the more likely they were to visit schools and to check academic performance reports; however, other factors such as class sizes and the availability of special programming were equally valued (p. 42). In general, Maguire's study supports the claim that parents make informed choices when selecting their children's schools; however, the study acknowledges that access to information may be difficult for parents who are not privileged through education or social capital.

School reputation rather than productivity has been cited as a rationale for school choice by the following organizations and researchers. The National Working Commission on Choice (2003) reported that families chose schools in order to gain perceived benefits including "affiliation with others of similar backgrounds or values" (p. 20); Willms and Echols (1992) and Lubienski (2003a) argue that parents choose schools based on the socio-economic status of its student intake, rather than on the school's achievement scores. Furthermore, Archbald (2000) reported that "it is assumed that the quality of a school (at least in lay perspectives) is in part determined by the socio-economic-status of its student body" (p. 218). While no statistics are provided in the Maguire's (2006) summary, parents were reported to place greater emphasis on school reputation than convenience, in that,

“schools with a good reputation have no difficulty attracting students by word-of-mouth in their community” (p. 48).

The Case of KMCS

School reputation and The Fraser Institute Report Card on schools. The Fraser Institute is an independent, registered, non-profit international research and educational organization located in Canada and the United States. The Institute supports public-choice policy as opposed to government-mandated policy. According to its website, The Fraser Institute (2008):

measures and studies the impact of competitive markets and government interventions on individuals and society. Our peer-reviewed research is distributed around the world and has contributed to increased understanding of how economic policy affects people. (www.fraserinstitute.org)

The Fraser Institute publishes an annual *Report Card* on education which ranks schools in British Columbia according to student performance on the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA). The FSA is a province-wide assessment mandated by the Ministry of Education. It is administered annually, under the supervision of classroom teachers, to students in grades four and seven. Students with certain documented learning challenges are excused from participation. The intent of the assessment is to assist schools in selecting areas of academic focus and to identify achievement trends over time (British Columbia Ministry of Education, “Foundation skills assessment,” 2008). The Fraser Institute which ranks schools according to student performance on the FSA argues that its *Report Card* provides information which allows parents to compare the performance of their child’s

school to others in their school district or the province and to compare the performance of individual schools over a period of years. The Institute also states that the Report Card:

. . . provides background information on the individual and family characteristics of each school's students. It reports the percentage of ESL, special needs, and French Immersion students at the school and an estimate of the average number of years of education of the students' parents. (Fraser Institute, "Report Card," 2008)

I maintain that three important factors relevant to the data comparison must be understood. First, although the Fraser Institute estimates parental education levels and records the percentage of ESL, special needs, and French immersion students enrolled in a school, the *Report Card* does not acknowledge that the overall achievement level in a classroom is linked to class composition. Second, the ranking system does not recognize a range of factors which influence student achievement and which include transiency, mobility, physical and socio-emotional health, nutrition, housing, and readiness for school. And third, the *Report Card* ranks a school's success according to the performance of a portion of its students on three academic measures and does not include the vast range of student learning and innovative programming reported in other academic areas or within the realm of social development.

In my role as the school principal, I listened to teachers express frustration around administering the "FSAs." They were concerned with the content of some questions, the stress placed on students, the teaching time lost to this particular assessment, and the inappropriateness of this "snapshot" in estimating their students' skills. However, it was toward the end of my first year as the principal at KMCS that I realized the potential for damage caused by the inappropriate use of the results of the assessments.

It was at the end of a long day at our school followed by a long evening meeting that I

read a newspaper article that mentioned KMCS. The Fraser Institute which ranks schools based on performance data from FSA scores listed KMCS as one of the “bottom five public and independent schools” in the region (Steffenhagen, 2003). I was very disturbed by the assessment of the school, and I was angered by what I viewed as total disregard for everyone associated with KMCS. The data discouraged and demoralized students, families and teachers at KMCS. The repercussions of this ranking were heard in conversations with adults and with students, were recorded on cross-boundary applications, and motivated parents to register their children at other schools within the district. Parents and grandparents told me that they were shocked by “how bad the school was” and that their friends and neighbors asked them why they would send their children to the school. The ranking hastened the transfer of students from KMCS and discouraged potential new families from registering. In summary, the Fraser Institute rankings further exacerbated our challenges, and collided with our efforts to encourage children to attend the school and enjoy the benefits of year-round schooling which was to be implemented in September 2003.

**Assumption No. 3: The Redistribution of Children
Has No Detrimental Effect on Schools**

Another key assumption held by proponents of school choice is that the exit of children from a neighborhood school will not have a negative effect on the school. As stated in assumption number one, proponents believe that schools-of-choice provide a better education than neighborhood schools and that the benefits of choice accrue to the majority of students. This assumption is coupled with the belief that competition stimulated by the

redistribution of students will lead to more effective schools is articulated in the following statement: “a system that creates options and responds to parent demands will introduce valuable elements of the market that will make most children’s schools better and few children’s schools worse” (National Working Commission on Choice, 2003, p. 16). Bergstrom and Sandstrom (2002) affirm this statement through their investigation of municipal (public) schools in Sweden wherein they argue that, “there is no evidence to support the claim that the establishment of independent schools is detrimental to municipal schools. . . . Rather, we find that students in municipal schools benefit from increased competition from independent schools” (as cited in Raham, 2002, p. 39). However, Bergstrom and Sandstrom did acknowledge that the correlation, based on a study of student performance in 34 municipalities, was “weak” (p. 39). Merrifield et al. (2006) concur with the overall positive effect of choice policies in reasoning that, “A shift to a market-based education system would transform and energize our children’s education by moving power from governments, bureaucracies, and special-interest groups to school-based educators and parents” (p. 13).¹⁹

Opponents of choice policies challenge the assumption that the exit of children from a neighborhood school will not have a negative effect on the school. These educators recognize the interconnectedness of schools and argue that socioeconomic integration and a concern for the public good are particularly relevant in contemporary society:

The fates of schools are increasingly intertwined. What leaders do in one necessarily affects the fortunes of students and teachers in other schools around them; their actions reverberate throughout the system like ripples in a pond. As exemplary or high-profile institutions draw the most outstanding teachers and leaders, they drain them away from the rest. . . . The more school

¹⁹ School based educators and parent groups are not considered to be special-interest groups.

houses run on the market principles of competition and choice, the tighter these interconnections become. (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006, p. 16)

For purposes of discussion in this section, challenges to the assumption that the exit of children from a neighborhood school will not have a negative effect on the school have been organized into the categories of social cohesion, segregation, and resource allocations. The empirical data that are presented in this section and collected at KMCS illustrate that the exit of children from a particular neighborhood school, as a consequence of school choice and open-boundary policies, did have a negative effect on the school.

Social Cohesion

As early as 1839, Horace Mann spoke of his concerns around socio-economic polarization and the creation of a two-tiered education system resulting from the introduction of independent schools. My dissertation to a certain extent argues that a two-tiered school system is operating more than 160 years later. According to Mann, independent schools were viewed as institutions that drew students from the public system, embraced social segregation, and contributed to the demise of democracy (as cited in Lubienski, 2001, p. 9). Ungerleider (2003), in a less dramatic fashion, highlighted his concerns around social cohesion arguing that, “increasing school choice has the capacity to fragment Canadians, reduce the influence that Canadian schools exert on the transmission of common values, and diminish social cohesion” (p. 199). In contrast to the assumption that the exit of children from a neighborhood school will not have a negative effect on the school, Mann in 1838, made these comments which resonate in contemporary society:

Some few persons in a village or town, finding the advantages of the common

school inadequate to their wants, unite to establish a private one. They transfer their children from the former to the latter. The heart goes with the treasure. . . . They have now no personal motive to vote for or advocate any increase of the town's annual appropriation for schools; to say nothing of the temptation to discourage such increase in indirect ways, or even vote directly against it. If, by this means, some of the best scholars happen to be taken from the common school, the standard of that school is lowered. . . . All this inevitably depresses and degrades the common school . . . until the common school is left to the management of those, who have not the desire or the power either to improve it or command a better. (Mann, 1838, as cited in Lubienski, 2001, p. 8)

Segregation

Ungerleider (2003) addressed the segregation of students within the public education system in British Columbia stating that, according to critics: “charter and voucher school options will increase segregation of students from different backgrounds and erode the public school’s capacity for socializing students for democratic citizenship” (p. 194). He noted that within Scotland, “social class segregation between schools increased substantially with the introduction of choice” (p. 196), and that due to the lack of resources including time and transportation, “choice produces higher concentrations of children from advantaged backgrounds in some schools and increasing concentrations of less advantaged students in the schools from which the more advantaged children have departed” (p. 197). He also maintains that, “the loss of high-ability students from a school tends to lower the performance of the students who remain in the school after the choosers leave” (p. 198). Choice options, he argues, “skim the most able students from the peer group, this increases the similarities among the remaining students. When most of the students who are left behind live in poor circumstances, their segregation amplifies and reinforces their

difficulties” (p. 197). In response, proponents of choice programming could argue that schools for Aboriginal children administered by Aboriginal Boards of Education provide a better educational, social, and cultural experience than that provided by the public system.

The Case of KMCS

Previous data illustrated that KMCS students recorded the greatest social needs in the school district. Table 1, which documents educational-programming needs, provides evidence of a segregation effect at KMCS. Within elementary schools in British Columbia, the Ministry of Education allocates funding which is targeted to support the learning needs of three groups of students. The following statistics indicate that as a percentage of its total population, KMCS has significantly more students designated as Special Needs, ESL and Aboriginal than the district average and that the percentage of students is remaining consistent or increasing over time (Henderson School District, 2006).

Table 1***Analysis of Student Groups within KMCS shown as a Percentage of Enrolment***

Year	Special Education		ESL		Aboriginal	
	School %	District %	School %	District %	School %	District %
1994	N/R		12		13	
1995	N/R		12		11	
1996	3.4		16		13	
1997	7.3		14		12	
1998	4.9		17		19	
1999	4.5		9		20	
2000	6.2		10		24	
2001	6.9		8		24	
2002	8.4		7		29	
2003	10.2	8.1*	19	2.2	25	5.3
2004	12.9	8.6*	17	2.7	21	7.9
2005	11.2	7.7*	16	2.5	23	8.1
2006	12.6	8.5*	17	2.5	20	8.0

*Special needs enrolment within the district includes all of the segregated classes for special education students; therefore, the percentages recorded in this table are higher than the actual percentages within neighborhood schools which do not register special classes. Data for these categories of students was not collected by the school district between 1994 and 2003.

Class Composition

Class composition data further inform the discussion around the influence of the exit of children from a school. The descriptor “class composition” refers to the mix of students

within a classroom and is derived from a variety of factors including gender, categories of special education, and second language learners. The following data in Table 2 provide a summary of class compositions for the 2004-2005 school year at KMCS. The total percentages of Special Needs and ESL students within each of 12 classrooms are listed. The students included in the Special Needs category are those assessed by educational psychologists as having met Ministry of Education criteria and entitled to receive special-education support services. The students included in the ESL category are those identified by school district personnel as meeting Ministry criteria for receiving ESL services.

It is essential to note that the percentages of children receiving, or on a wait-list, for learning assistance were not included in these data because, in my experience, statistics are not comparable across the school district. Learning assistance caseloads must be contextualized within the school community in order to be meaningful. There are no bounded criteria for identifying learning assistance candidates; therefore, it is probable that students identified as requiring learning assistance support in some schools would not be eligible for service at KMCS given the high level of need and the limited service available within the school. The lack of parity in providing service is grounded in both distributive and recognitive injustice wherein the need for additional services was not recognized or funded.

The statistics presented in Table 1 illustrate that the percentage of students requiring educational or social supports at KMCS far exceeded district averages. As stated, I suggest that an increase in the concentration of students requiring learning support may have been related to school-choice policies and shifting populations. Table 2 builds on the stratification

data presented in Table 1 and illustrates the demographics of all classrooms in the school.

The learning environment in classrooms was compromised when student needs exceeded the level of support available. Classrooms where the combined percentage of special needs and ESL students exceeded 40% of the total population were of particular concern.

Table 2

Analysis of Class Composition within KMCS 2004 - 2005

Grade	Combined percentage of Special Needs and ESL students
K	28
K	29
1	75
½ split class	45
2	36
2/3 split class	21
3	56
3/4 split class	19
4	30
5	48
6	33
7	40

Enrolment Data

In the last decade, the student population within the HSD, and within the province of British Columbia, has been in decline. Enrolment data for the school district indicated that 1999 was the last year in which the number of children entering kindergarten exceeded the number of students exiting the system in grade 12. For example, in 2006 the number of students exiting the system in grade 12 exceeded the number of students entering kindergarten by 297. Recent space utilization data published by the district showed that in the year 2000, elementary schools operated at 94% capacity, whereas in 2006, elementary schools operated at 78% capacity.

In this dissertation, I argue that enrolment patterns are linked to school-choice and open-boundary policies; they are recorded as the percentage of eligible students living within a catchment area who attend the catchment area school. The available enrolment-pattern data for KMCS showed that, on average, 56% of the children residing in the catchment area enrolled at the school. Comparisons with district enrolment patterns provided in Table 3 demonstrate that consistently, the number of in-catchment area students enrolling at KMCS is well below the district average. The rationale for this pattern is linked to transfer reasons including school reputation, student behavior, socio-economic dynamics and achievement rankings which are recorded on cross boundary application forms.

Table 3

KMCS Enrollment Patterns

Student population	2001	2002	2003
Catchment total	504	459	440
Attend in-catchment (#)	286	270	235
Attend in-catchment (%)	57%	59%	53%
District average in catchment (%)	72%	70%	69%

(Henderson School District, 2003)

Cross-boundary Request Forms

The data gleaned from cross-boundary applications submitted to KMCS further inform the discussion around the assumption that the exit of children will not have a negative effect on a school. Public school districts assign students to neighborhood schools based upon attendance-area boundaries approved by the Board of Education. Parents are required to complete a cross-boundary request form if they wish to register their children at a public school other than that assigned by the district. Generally, cross-boundary applications are granted on a one year basis.

During September 2003, 42 families submitted cross-boundary attendance applications to the administrators at KMCS in accordance with school district policy which required that applications be signed by both the current and receiving principal. The KMCS applications were reviewed in an effort to categorize the attendance rationale provided by

parents and were organized into four categories: (a) families living outside the catchment area and wishing to attend KMCS, (b) families of students in grades 1 through 7 who lived in the catchment area and had never attended the school, (c) families of students in grades 1 through 7 who were attending the school but wished to leave, and (d) families of kindergarten students who lived in the catchment area and who were entering the public school system for the first time.

Three of the 42 families applied to enter KMCS. Twenty of the 41 families who submitted cross-boundary applications to retain seats at another school had never attended KMCS. The written rationale that they provided stated access to daycare or the desire for a better education for their children as the primary reasons for attendance at another school. Ten of the 42 families were attending KMCS, but were requesting permission to attend other schools within the school district. Of these, three families stated that they were hoping to move households. Additional written comments on the cross-boundary form provided rationale for the applicant groups. Five parents did not approve of the behavior or “anger” of their children’s peers at KMCS. Two families stated that the negative Fraser Institute school rankings influenced their decision. Another parent deemed that the educators, parents and children were “nicer” in other schools. Two others indicated that deteriorating relationships and conflicts amongst families within their apartment complexes made it impossible for their children to be playing together at school. And finally, one parent stated that she was seeking a more stable environment for her children while another stated that her children were not thriving within the KMCS school environment.

Cross-boundary applications for nine kindergarten students were submitted for the 2003 school year. Of these, six cited daycare as a reason to select another school (although

daycare was available on the KMCS campus); one family stated that other schools offered better programs; one parent (according to her application) was advised by a teacher to register her child at a school other than KMCS; and, finally, a parent reported that Children's Hospital had recommended that her child not attend KMCS. It is important to note that teachers, support staff and administrators were of the opinion that parents named access to daycare as a reason to transfer their children to other schools, rather than express their desire to replace the community of poverty surrounding their children's school with a middle class environment.

Overall, the exit of children from KMCS was seen to have a negative effect on the school for two reasons. First, the declining population resulted in reduced funding and reduced program options. Second, the redistribution of children amongst schools had a detrimental effect on KMCS because services were not increased to meet the increased academic and social needs of the stratified student population.

**Assumption No. 4: Competition and Marketization Leads
to Improved Academic Achievement**

The debate around school governance and the implementation, within the public school system, of choice policies, competition, and marketization, is grounded in two conflicting beliefs (Coulson, 2001, p. 53). Proponents believe that the introduction of competition and marketization will transform schools into more productive and innovative institutions. Opponents are concerned with maintaining equal opportunities for children and in maintaining the public school as a core educational and social component of Canadian

culture. While the position taken by choice proponents is considered to have merit, I argue against the assumption that marketization and competition will improve schools or is necessary to improve schools. Although my argument is particular to the public school system, the literature is drawn from specific examples within the public system as well as independent and charter schools.

In 1991, Murphy captured a view held by choice proponents and argued that, “ingrained notions of schools as sheltered monopolies, or delivery systems, are breaking down under the incursions of a market philosophy into education,” that “the business of schooling is being redefined in relation to the customer” (p. 17); and that there exists:

a persistent argument afoot that only by breaking the sheltered monopoly status enjoyed by public schools will significant improvements be possible. Thus, many restructuring proponents clamor for the adoption of a market philosophy in education (Chubb & Moe, 1990), with the accompanying open enrollment patterns and choices for parents and students that this would entail. (p. 45)

Specifically, public-choice theorists, through a neo-liberal²⁰ approach to public policy, maintain the assumption that “market-style institutional arrangements represent the best alternative to bureaucratic administration” and that competition and marketization will improve the education system (Lubienski, 2006, p. 233). The stated rationale holds that because government schools are protected from market competition and do not face the accountability measures of the market place, they create institutional pathologies wherein they are ineffective, non-responsive to their clientele, and authority driven rather than out-put driven (Lubienski, 2003a, p. 398). Additionally, public-choice theorists maintain that market-based models are a recommended option to public school systems, in that markets reflect

²⁰ Neoliberalism refers to unregulated economic markets, privatization and the withdrawal of government from the welfare of the public.

incentives oriented around consumers, not bureaucrats as noted by Lubienski (2006) and Merrifield et al. (2006). They also maintain that market models provide the incentives for schools to experiment and to differentiate themselves in terms of innovation, diversification, and programming as noted by Bergstrom and Sandstrom (2002), National Working Commission on Choice (2003), and Lubienski (2006). Theorists argue, conversely, that municipal bureaucracies and public officials may encourage empire building, may be inefficient, rigid, unresponsive, self-serving, and “. . . recognize that their decisions are likely to influence the future votes of special interest group members” (Merrifield et al., 2006, p. 7).

Opponents of school choice and open-boundary policies challenge the assumption that competition, hence marketization, will result in improved schools and improved academic achievement. Social justice advocates who argue against the assumption maintain that for them, “issues of justice and fairness have a different logic than that of market-driven institutions” (Yair, 1996, p. 454). For social justice advocates opposed to neo-liberalism, choice policies which result in both expected and unforeseen negative consequences reported in this dissertation are of concern.

Critics argue that the evidence to support the benefits of school choice, marketization and competition as conduits to school improvement is weak and contradictory. Bergstrom and Sandstrom (2002) provided a concrete example when they reported that, while in general, studies investigating the effects of competitive practices within the public education system find that the “positive effects of competition are greater than the negative effects . . . some of the studies that have come to this conclusion have been criticized because the results are not robust” (p. 12). Lubienski, Weitzel, and Lubienski (2009) concur, arguing that much of the current research cited by choice proponents is advocacy driven, that advocates “draw

from a limited and flawed body of research to claim a consensus in the effectiveness of school choice” (p. 186), and that the “. . . traditional scholarly process for review of quality control have been circumvented” in the collection of data (p. 184).

The Case of KMCS

As noted above, school choice proponents argue that marketization is good because public schools are not held accountable. In this subsection, I speak directly to this claim and offer a counterargument that illustrates the extent of accountability measures built into public schools in BC. The MOE in the province of British Columbia, and individual Boards of Education, including that of the HSD, have developed a range of policies and procedures which delineate the responsibility of educators in relation to accountability. These include: Accountability/Achievement Contracts, School Planning Councils, Parent Advisory Councils, Foundation Skills Assessments, Satisfaction Surveys, class-size limits, targeted funding mechanisms, professional development, and teacher credentials.

Accountability/Achievement Contracts are the boards of education’s public commitment to improving student achievement. They are based on thoughtful consideration of student performance information at the classroom, school, district and provincial level. . . .contracts reflect the unique characteristics, priorities and needs of each district. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, “Accountability/achievement contracts,” 2008)

In 2001, districts were first asked to complete the contracts, which are considered to be a portion of the accountability cycle for schools, districts and the MOE. The three-year plans are updated annually, are grounded in evidence-based assessment collected at the school level, are developed collaboratively, and are linked to the Superintendent’s annual report on

achievement prepared for the Board of Education. The overall intent of the contract is to respond to identified student needs and to develop strategies and processes which support continuous progress for all students within a school district. I maintain that the development of these contracts beginning at the school level and progressing through the offices of the Superintendent, the local Board of Education, the provincial Superintendent of Achievement, and finally that of the MOE provides for accountability. I also maintain that the process challenges and contradicts the position held by choice proponents who theorize that schools which are under the mandate of a public bureaucratic system are not accountable to the public.

School Planning Councils are advisory bodies consisting of three parents, one teacher, one administrator, and one grade 10 through 12 student, where applicable. In July 2002, the Province of British Columbia amended *The School Act* and mandated that every public school in the province form a School Planning Council based on the belief that parents have the right and responsibility to participate in their children's education and that they possess insights and opinions valuable to the development of the education system. The councils are charged with the responsibility of consulting with the school community in developing, monitoring, and reviewing achievement plans for their schools. In particular, "school plans focus on setting out strategies to improve students' intellectual development, but they also deal with other areas of student achievement, such as human and social development, and career development" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, "School planning councils," 2008). Through their structure and mandate, School Planning Councils are a vital component of the accountability mechanisms developed by the province.

Parent Advisory Councils, the governance and structure of which are mandated by a

constitution, are the organizing bodies of parents within a public school. Elected members from each school form the District Parent Advisory Council which holds the legislated and representative parent voice at the school district level. At the school level, the committee supports the government accountability mandate through its role in the formation of the School Planning Council. Members of the parent community are eligible for election to the School Planning Council, and must be nominated by a voting member of the parent committee and elected by secret ballot in order to represent the school community in developing their achievement plans. Both elected councils are responsible to their membership, are required to report to the membership, and to represent the wishes of the parent community (British Columbia Ministry of Education - Media Room, "EduFacts," 2008).

The Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA),²¹ a provincial assessment, provides accountability in that it measures and reports student achievement levels in reading, writing and numeracy in grades 4 and 7. In 2008, British Columbia introduced changes to the process in an effort to improve accountability and to provide parents and schools with enhanced achievement data. To this end, the assessment schedule was revised so as to provide achievement data which could guide instruction over a longer portion of the school year; the content was revised to reflect mid-year learning; scoring of the written portion of the assessment was conducted at the school district level; and, in addition to reading and

²¹ The FSA is intended to be an instructional tool for educators. The subject matter domains are limited to reading, writing and numeracy and do not measure other components of a student's learning including social responsibility, fine arts, or athletics. The MOE makes data public for reasons of transparency, not for purposes of rankings. The *Fraser Institute* uses these limited data sets to produce rank ordering of schools, does not take into account the temporality of a school, and does not include entire dimensions of a student's performance. Although the *Fraser Institute* includes a listing of demographic information which documents parental education levels and the numbers of ESL and students with special needs in its school listings, it does not factor these numbers into its ranking.

numeracy scores, parents were provided with their students' written responses in order to assist them in understanding their child's achievement and performance level (British Columbia Ministry of Education, "Foundation Skills Assessment," 2008). As a consequence of the FSA revisions, the 2008 assessment has established new baseline data and direct comparison over time with these data will begin with the 2009 assessment. All school based-data are published on the MOE website and are available to the public. Individual student scores are password protected.

The British Columbia MOE established the provincial *Satisfaction Survey* in 2002 (British Columbia Ministry of Education, "Satisfaction Survey", 2008). The survey was developed as a census survey for students, parents and teachers across the province. The purpose of the instrument was two-fold. First, the survey was designed to add an additional level of accountability to the public education system, and second, to augment the existing data provided to schools. The primary objective of the survey was to provide data that would generate school and district-level conversations and decisions around improving individual student achievement in particular, and student educational experiences in general. Specifically the *Satisfaction Survey* was intended to gather and summarize perceptions around a range of topics including academic achievement, human and social development, school environment, and safety (British Columbia Ministry of Education, "District Data Summary," 2008).

Under the *Education Statutes Amendment Act, 2006*, new class size-limits, accountability measures and requirements for consulting with parents were established in British Columbia school districts. According to legislation, class-size limits and class composition requirements must be honored except with the consent of the classroom teacher

and approval of the principal and superintendent. Additionally, the rationale for exceeding limits must be made public; principals must consult with the School Planning Council on the topic of class organization; the superintendent must verify to the MOE that the school district is in compliance with class size and composition legislature and that, in the opinion of the superintendent, the organization of the classes within the school district is appropriate for student learning. Mechanisms exist within the legislation to guarantee compliance by school districts; and finally, the MOE must make class-size reports available to the public.

Although concern exists within teachers' associations around the consultation process and learning environment within some classrooms, such as those at KMCS, the legislation attempts to ensure "that all education partners have a voice in improving students' learning conditions" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, "New class-size limits," 2006).

I do not argue against all positions taken by choice proponents. Specifically, I do not argue against the conclusion that public officials "recognize that their decisions are likely to influence the future votes of special interest group members" (Merrifield et al., 2006, p. 7). However, I submit that in my experience, public officials within the education system in general and the HSD in particular have operated from the position of a prudent parent and are committed to the well-being of the children. I also do not argue against the statement that teacher unions and vocal parent groups influence policy making for I have observed the influence of both groups. I do question the use of the term "special interest" which may suggest that certain groups are more legitimate than others.

I do argue against choice proponents who maintain that "free educational markets have consistently allowed a harmonious coexistence of different moral, religious, and pedagogical views in a way that government schools have not and, by their very nature

cannot” (Coulson, 2001, p. 68) while government systems have marginalized students and discriminated against disenfranchised groups. In contrast to historical practices in some constituencies, the current funding formula within the province of British Columbia makes provision for all children by guaranteeing them a seat and education services deemed to meet their learning needs. While this targeted funding for Special Needs, ESL, and Aboriginal students is not a panacea and did not provide parity of service at KMCS, it is a legitimate mechanism through which school districts can provide a guaranteed basic level of service for all students.

Finally, I argue against the thinking that only market models, as opposed to the public education system, provide the incentives for teachers and administrators to create innovative curriculum, to develop best practices, and to experiment with learning. Lubienski (2006) supports my argument in stating that “in many cases, the most innovative practices are generated in regulated sectors free from competitive pressures” (p. 337) and that “R&D requires investment of resources over time and the ability to afford the loss of those investments if innovations do not work” (p. 338). I submit that it is the public education system with its program implementation funding and a wealth of curriculum and pedagogical expertise that can utilize government funding to complete the short-term action research projects and longitudinal studies that contribute to knowledge around teaching and learning. It is important to acknowledge that the HSD, through its collective agreement and as standard practice within the province, provides salary increases to teachers who enhance their credentials through additional course work, and through its professional development fund, provides release time and tuition fees for teachers wishing to participate in professional development activities. As a decentralized school district that has adopted a site-based

management model, the HSD is particularly supportive of activities which drive innovative practices within its schools.

**Assumption No. 5: School Choice Policies Provide
Equal Opportunity and Equal Access**

The discourse surrounding the school-choice and open-boundary policies of the HSD and the MOE frame the texts within the parameters of fairness and equality of opportunity, yet the intent of the policies and the reality of implementation are incongruent. The opportunity for children to attend any school or program within a school district appears laudable, yet the policies marginalize a significant percentage of the population whose opportunities are limited by their circumstances. An assumption is made that all parents entitled to make application to a school of choice have equal access to information, are functionally literate, are financially able, are comfortable functioning within a public institution. The assumption that choice policies provide equal opportunity and access deserves investigation. I maintain that this assumption can be challenged across four areas: social advantage, academic advantage, economic and cultural barriers, and institutional structures and rules.

Research indicates that children from families who choose schools outside their catchment area are more economically and socially advantaged than non-choosers (Bomotti, 1998; Echols, McPherson & Willms, 1990; Lauen, 2006; Maguire, 2006; Raham, 2002; Willms & Echols, 1992). They may be advantaged through occupation, income, educational attainment, social capital, cultural capital, and access to transportation and information.

Demographic data published by the HSD were limited in scope prior to 2001 and the collection of data since 2003 has been sporadic due to the availability of dedicated statisticians. For example, the analysis of greater-needs factors in Table 4 is specific to and limited to the 2003-2004 school year. However, I submit that these data which reflect non-choosing families and compare student needs across all elementary schools in the district are useful in providing a community profile.

The following table documents the percentage of students demonstrating identified “needs factors” relating to transiency and housing in particular, and ranks these needs in comparison to all other elementary schools within the district. The data clearly documents that, on average, the students at KMCS demonstrate the highest level of need within the district.

Table 4

Analysis of Greater Needs Factor - KMCS

Greater need factor	Percentage of school population	District ranking
% of enrollment having attended 3 or more schools	44%	1 st
% of enrollment living in subsidized apartments	86%	1 st
% of students who are transient	27%	1 st

(Henderson School District data, 2003)

Certain admission processes contradict the assumption that school choice policies provide equal opportunity and equal access for all public school students. According to

entrance policies and processes, a choice school has the potential to shape its enrolment through the selection of students with high academic attainment, or by “. . . resegregating student populations in terms of social class” (Lubienski, 2006, p. 332). For example, a critical proportion of the students admitted to a school may be selected according to economic affluence and academic excellence in an effort to “establish a favorable disciplinary climate and strong norms for academic success” (Willms, 1986, as cited in Willms & Echols, 1992, p. 348). Contrary to neighborhood schools which welcome all students, choice schools may utilize screening processes including academic, behavioral, and psycho-educational assessment to select or reject students according to predetermined criteria. Similarly, less able students with learning and or behavioral needs may be excluded from alternate schools (Bomotti, 1998) and, “high needs students are frequently counseled into other schools where the specific program and personnel supports that they require are more available” (Maguire, 2006, p. 28).

Many families attend their neighborhood schools and do not wish to register their children at schools outside of their designated areas. However, families who wish to register at a school of choice may face financial and cultural barriers. These distributive and recognitive barriers limit equal opportunity and equal access. In general, families may be marginalized because they may lack one or more of the following: experience with the education system, access to information and technology, flexible employment schedules, literacy skills, stable housing, cultural capital, social networks, and transportation (Bomotti, 1998; Echols et al., 1990; Jones, 2007; Maguire, 2006; National Working Commission on Choice, 2003; Willms & Echols, 1992).

A variety of institutional structures and rules influence parental decisions around school choice, and limit equal opportunity and equal access for students. For schooling in general, rules, regulations, and structures may be problematic for parents who are new citizens of Canada, who do not speak fluent English, who are not literate, and who are not knowledgeable or comfortable with the bureaucracy of the education system. Specific schooling challenges come in the form of registration procedures and processes, timelines, school rules, peer effects and influence, admission criteria, and the parameters around target populations for specialized schools or special needs students. Numerous rules, regulations and structures may be particularly problematic for this subset of parents if they endeavour to register their children at schools-of-choice wherein individual school districts constrain the types of choices available, choices are limited to geography and transportation, and socio-economic factors restrict opportunity (Lauen, 2006).

Summary

In this chapter, I outlined several trends that led to the implementation of school choice policy and several related activities that have occurred in BC. I then examined five assumptions that dominate the school-choice literature. These assumptions which support the position taken by choice proponents state that: (a) choice policy provides for a better education than policies that restrict enrolment to a neighborhood or designated school, (b) parents make informed choices when selecting a school for their children, (c) the exit of children from a neighborhood school will not have a negative effect on the school, (d)

competition results in improved schools and improved academic achievement, and (e) policies provide equal opportunity and equal access for all public school students.

I challenged these assumptions employing arguments in the literature and data from my school district. Reflecting on this discussion through the principles of recognitive and distributive social justice raises important points. To begin, the assumption that schools-of-choice provide for a better education than policies that restrict enrolment to neighborhood schools is based in the belief that overall, choice schools with homogeneous populations are more likely to serve the public interest than are neighborhood schools. Proponents of choice suggest that government bureaucracies are more likely to serve institutional interests and to be inefficient, ineffective, and unresponsive. In making this assertion, proponents fail to recognize the value of the diverse experiences that children enjoy in neighborhood schools, the professionalism and expertise of public educators, and the vast curriculum resources available through government departments.

The research literature and the data collected at KMCS challenge the claim that, on the whole, parents make informed choices and select a school based on productivity. My contention that many parents also choose a school based on its social reputation and the socio-economic status of its student population was confirmed through conversations, anecdotal comments and school-choice literature.

The data collected at KMCS also confirmed my assertion that the exit of children from a neighborhood school does have a negative effect on the school. KMCS was greatly affected by the exodus of children to the newly specialized school in the community. And from a social-justice perspective, parents were not represented in decision-making pertinent

to the development of a school-of-choice in their neighborhood and were not recognized as important participants in the school-choice conversation, while their children were disadvantaged by the distribution of resources following the implementation of the choice program.

The assumption that competition will result in school improvement is widely held and proclaimed by school-choice advocates. However, this type of marketization is equally challenged by academics. The district-wide data collected in the HSD also did not support competition; rather, it demonstrated that advantaged children generally perform well in school and perform better than economically or socially disadvantaged children attending under-resourced schools.

And finally, I argue that the evidence is substantial that school-choice policies do not provide equal opportunity and access for all public school children and that families that choose to attend schools outside of their catchment are more socially and economically advantaged than non-choosers. It was this inequality of opportunity and the lack of access to a full range of educational programs that inspired me to begin to challenge the consequences of choice policies through distributive and recognitive social-justice principles and to investigate a variety of strategies that could be implemented at KMCS. In this study, achieving my overarching goal of removing obstacles to parity-of-participation was essential for student success.

In the next chapter I report on year-round schooling (YRS) and the implementation of the comprehensive YRS plan at KMCS. This schooling plan addresses the negative outcomes of choice policy at KMCS and identifies the type of learning environment and

funding formulas that enable “vulnerable” children, like those at KMCS, to achieve success in their learning.

CHAPTER FIVE
MOVING TOWARDS SOCIAL JUSTICE - STRUCTURAL
INTERVENTIONS AT KMCS

Implementing a full-service year-round schooling (YRS) plan at KMCS was both challenging and invigorating and included a range of interventions. For purposes of this analysis, I have categorized these interventions as structural and discursive. In this chapter I address structural interventions that predominately address issues of distributive justice, but in reality they were closely intertwined with efforts to address dimensions of recognitive justice. In describing my work, I use the term YRS to refer to a full-service or comprehensive year-round schooling plan which encompasses a range of educational, recreational and social services. This chapter, which delves into the implementation and outcomes of the plan, is organized into four sections beginning with an overview of YRS which examines the structure, purposes, advantages and disadvantages of YRS as they apply to schools in general. In the next section, I delineate the process of developing a proposal for the implementation of YRS, the intent of which, although not clearly articulated during the development phase, was to provide socially-just educational experiences for the children in response to the implementation of school-choice and open-boundary policies which exacerbated existing problems at the school. Next, I outline the creation of programs that enhanced learning opportunities within the YRS calendar. Finally, I turn to a discussion of the community school designation and the ways I utilized resources afforded to schools identified as community schools, adjusting them to address the specific context of KMCS.

Year-Round Schedules

Year-round school schedules are centered on reorganizing the academic year in order to provide more continuous learning for children. The calendar is organized into instructional periods and vacation weeks that are balanced across a 12 month period by reducing the summer vacation and redistributing those vacation weeks throughout the year. The curriculum and the number of days of instruction are generally identical to the traditional calendar. When a school operates on a single-track, as opposed to a multi-track schedule, all students and school personnel follow the same schedule. Intersessions, the periods between terms organized through redistributing the summer vacation days from the traditional calendar, are a structural component of a year-round schedule. Intersession weeks can be utilized as vacation days or developed into remedial or enrichment programs or a combination of these. The year-round schedule allows schools to remain open year round to provide additional learning and recreational opportunities for students. YRS creates a consistent environment in which children can be supported and guided along a 12 month continuum wherein educators and community members, in partnership with parents and caregivers, are empowered to enhance the social and educational environments which contribute to children's well being.

A key rationale for a year-round schedule is the relationship between time and learning as outlined in *Prisoners of Time* (2000),²² the study published by the National

²² *Prisoners of Time* is based on the original report published in 1994 by the National Education Commission on Time and Learning. The 1994 report is a U.S. government publication.

Commission on Time and Learning. Included in this report are five premises that illustrate the need to examine the way in which educators organize instructional time for their students (National Education Commission on Time and Learning, 2000). Each premise is alternately described as an assumption, notion, pretence, myth, or fiction which emphasizes that, “by relying on time as the metric for school organization and curriculum, we have built a learning enterprise on a foundation of sand; on five premises educators know to be false” (p. 6). The *Prisoners of Time* publication argues *for* increased learning time. It also argues *against* some common practices of schooling including the following: (a) students arrive at school ready to learn in the same way, on the same schedule, all in rhythm with each other, (b) academic time can be used for non-academic purposes with no effect on learning, (c) because yesterday’s calendar was good enough for us, it should be good enough for our children despite major changes in larger society, (d) schools can be transformed without giving teachers the time they need to retool themselves and reorganize their work, and (e) it is reasonable to expect “world-class academic performance” from our students within the time-bound system that is already failing them (p. 7.)

Advantages and Challenges of YRS

There are both qualitative and quantitative data relevant to the implementation and assessment of YRS schedules which provide empirical evidence that delineates both the documented advantages and real or perceived challenges to the implementation and practice of year-round schooling. For example, Shields and Oberg (2000b) summarize the current

research on year-round schooling and report their own research on public school districts in Canada and the United States. In their view, YRS has the potential to improve student learning for the following reasons: (a) the more even rhythm provided by a modified, alternative, or balanced calendar seems to be associated with reduced fatigue, better attendance, higher levels of motivation, and increased student learning, (b) offering intersession programming to those students most in need of enrichment or remediation seems to help them to stay “caught up” with their more advantaged peers and hence, to perform better academically, and (c) studies of YRS indicate a reduced summer-learning loss or less regression in academic learning that can occur during a lengthy summer vacation.

Academic and Social Advantages

Various research studies demonstrate that implementing a year-round calendar and increasing time-on-learning provides a range of opportunities for students by increasing community support and enhancing curricular innovations. Year-round schooling is seen as an opportunity to reduce summer-learning loss and protect the continuity of learning that is disrupted through extended summer-vacation periods (Alexander, Entwisle, & Olson, 2007; Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003; Mannarino, 2003; McGill-Franzen & Allington, 2008; Speck, 2004; Shields & Oberg, 1999). This configuration is also seen to have the potential to reduce the amount of teaching time devoted to reviewing material when children return to school to begin a new grade (Shields & Oberg, 1999; Speck, 2004). Other researchers describe year-round calendars with balanced academic and vacation schedules as an

opportunity to continue a student's cycle of learning over an entire year (Jacobsen, Bonds, Medders, Saenz, Stasch, & Sullivan, 2002).

Proponents of YRS view the structure as supporting staff and student wellness. The schedule, which provides staff with consistent contact breaks, is seen to improve staff wellness in schools with challenging learning and social environments (Shields & Oberg, 1999; Waithman & Shields, 2004). As well, YRS can contribute to the reduction of student stress by providing children with consistent contact with teachers and school expectations. For many children, the re-adjustment to school routines and behavioral expectations following vacation breaks is challenging and stressful (Shields & Oberg, 2000a; Speck, 2004).

Academic and curricular benefits are also attributed to YRS. Researchers cite improved student achievement as the primary benefit (Kneese, 2000; Moore, 2002; National Task Force on Public Education, 2005; Shields & Oberg, 2000a; Shields & Oberg, 1999). Improved achievement is attributed, in part, to a year-round calendar which allows teachers to organize remedial and enrichment intersession programs throughout the school year, rather than at the end of the year when failure is imminent (Shields & Oberg, 2000a). Additionally, the implementation of a school calendar with restructured time periods can be a catalyst for curricular re-design that benefits student learning (Farbman & Kaplan, 2005). And finally, this range of academic benefits is believed to produce a decline in dropout rates and improve attendance (Smotherman, 2003; Speck, 2004).

YRS proponents also suggest a range of community and social benefits that may accrue to the schedule. For example, the flexible year-long plan can assist students and

families to maintain or increase participation in extracurricular activities (Shields & Oberg, 2000a; Speck, 2000; Zykowski, Mitchell, Hough, & Gavin, 1991). Additionally, the increased consultation that often surrounds the implementation of the new calendar tends to create lasting opportunities for communication and public involvement. Once the YRS calendar is implemented, the more regular breaks have been reported to contribute to increased school safety and to a decline in disciplinary incidents. Overall, the opportunity for innovation created through the implementation of YRS provides an environment in which community-support systems can align with the school to support children and families.

Challenges to the Implementation of YRS

A number of challenges related to reconfiguring the school calendar have been outlined. Shields and Oberg (2000b) found that these challenges are more perceptual than real, “although a number of people raised . . . issues as possible disadvantages, most indicated that they were perceptions or fears related to pre-implementation concerns that were not, in fact, borne out in practice following implementation of the single-track schedule” (p. 27). However, concerns about YRS are reported in the literature. Naylor (1995a; 1995b) prepared research reports for the BC Teacher’s Federation (BCTF) and cited variables that could be problematic for school districts including increased capital and operating costs, challenges with providing adequate services for ESL and students with special needs (1995a), and he questioned the efficacy of year-round schooling as a strategy for improving student learning (1995b) .

Opponents to YRS identify the following issues. In general, educators and families may exhibit both resistance and strong emotional responses to change and in particular, practical challenges may influence children and families, community agencies, and board-office and school-based staff. Families may face the following challenges: (a) parents may experience difficulty accessing child care, (b) children may prefer to attend classes on the same schedule as their friends and relatives who attend other schools, and who organize recreation and vacations according to these traditional schedules, (c) siblings attending elementary, middle and secondary schools could be required to operate on different schedules, and (d) the cycle of family and community life could be altered (Langley School District #35, 2003). And finally, agencies wishing to continue to provide services for all children in the community are required to reconfigure their program offerings and schedules. Specifically, parks and recreation departments, public libraries, and child care providers need to conform to the schedules of both year-round and traditional schools.

School district personnel working in a range of capacities will experience challenges. For example, centralized school-board office services including (a) accounting, special education services, and payroll require reconfiguration during summer months, (b) district-wide sports schedules need to be reorganized to accommodate YRS, and (c) traditional year-end clerical tasks need to comply with or accommodate year-round schedules (Waithman & Shields, 2004). Also, it is likely that building administrators will experience an increased workload in general and in planning intersessions and managing schedule changes in particular. School custodial departments could experience challenges in completing annual repairs and maintenance in a building that remains open on a year-round basis, while schools may require additional maintenance due to increased usage. Operational costs could increase

due to increased utility costs, especially if there is a need to install air-conditioning in older buildings (Naylor 1995a; Waithman & Shields, 2004).

In the next section, I outline the process of implementing YRS²³ at KMCS, beginning with opportunities provided within the HSD, my participation in key meetings, and consultations with key stakeholders.

A Proposal for Change

In September 2002, the senior management of the HSD invited interested school administrators to join an ad-hoc committee called the Calendar Restructuring Committee. The goal of the committee was to provide an opportunity for educators, the Board of Trustees, and parents to explore options for the implementation of innovative school calendars within the District. The objectives of the committee were to review current research around school calendars, to investigate the relationship between time and learning, to discover ways of providing increased learning opportunities for students by enhancing academic-learning time, and to publish a report of its findings.

I had been intrigued with year-round schooling since I completed my Master's degree in Educational Leadership several years previously. During my Master's studies I undertook an extensive review of full-service schools which offer, in partnership with the community, comprehensive educational, social, and health services beyond the traditional school day. Extending these services across a 12 month calendar seemed logical. I often thought of

²³ A series of guidelines and recommendations garnered from this case study are organized to inform decision making and strategic planning around leadership, human-resource issues and fiscal matters. (Appendix A)

implementing full-service programs and year-round schooling at KMCS as we struggled to meet the needs of our children and families. Therefore, I immediately accepted the opportunity to participate in the district Calendar Restructuring Committee. With my colleagues, I explored research literature, participated in conversations, wrote a discussion paper and represented the district at the National Association for Year-Round Education (NAYRE) conference in San Diego. I returned from the conference convinced that I should endeavour to implement year-round schooling at KMCS.

The practitioners who made presentations at the NAYRE were passionate about year-round education. Clearly they were accustomed to singing its praises. It was also obvious that they were accustomed to defending the concept against criticisms, because they were armed with empirical data, scheduling models, curriculum packages, and financial advice. I was impressed by their willingness to share and to participate in a network to assist beginners. I listened to many presentations, took notes, photocopied materials, asked questions, bought books and chatted with keynote speakers. The theme was consistent . . . year-round schooling could improve student achievement but it was complicated and often controversial. Most presenters said, “YRS is really hard work, but it can make a difference for kids.” Interestingly, I did not hear anyone explicitly speak of social justice; some school principals talked about urban schools and poverty. They were passionate about the children and said that Saturday classes made a difference. When they spoke of how often teachers visited students at home, I questioned them about collective agreements and bargaining units and they responded that teachers in their regions were not restricted by collective agreement language. In addition to speaking about improved academic achievement, several principals said that student behavior improved. Given that student behavior and student achievement

were major concerns at KMCS, I decided that I had much to gain and nothing to lose by attempting to introduce a full-service year-round calendar at our school.

During the development of the KMCS proposal for change, I sought advice from professional and academic colleagues and from the academic literature in reference to public policy, change management, community relations, and the meaning and application of the principles of social justice. Rist (1994) provided a policy development tool including three phases in the policy development cycle which were applicable at KMCS: policy formulation, policy implementation, and policy accountability. I address the formulation phase in the following paragraph and the implementation and accountability phases in subsequent sections.

Rist (1994) recommended that three research questions guide the collection and organization of information for the formulation phase. Answering these questions required that I develop a statement regarding the identification of the policy issue, past practices developed in response to the issue, and finally, the outcomes of these practices which provided the framework for the collection of information at KMCS. This component of the development cycle, which encouraged me to review academic and social programming and to evaluate academic-achievement data, was instrumental in identifying effective interventions to include in the restructuring initiative at KMCS.

In April 2003, I submitted the KMCS proposal to the Board of Trustees of the HSD asking that the Board accept the document as an application to pilot a single-track year-round initiative at the school. The development of the proposal was the culmination of seven months of challenging work. I was strategic in my planning. Before I left for the NAYRE

conference, I spoke about year-round schooling with the teacher-leaders at KMCS. I was careful to include those staff members who influenced the thinking of others and who I anticipated could be resistant to the innovation. I discussed my interest in the concept in an attempt to “sow the seeds of change.” I was gratified by their positive response and I knew that they would share the idea with their colleagues.

Upon returning from the NAYRE I prepared a presentation for the entire staff at KMCS. My presentation was structured to provide basic information around options for calendar change and the current research on the relationship between time and learning. More importantly, my presentation was grounded in issues of equity and fairness and was structured to link the learning challenges experienced by children living in poverty with the potential for support available through a comprehensive calendar change.

Five ad-hoc committees were struck to investigate and make recommendations around staffing issues, change and communication strategies, year-round schedules, intersession programming and professional development. A series of conversations and meetings ensued followed by a survey of all staff including teachers, educational support staff, custodians, clerical staff and administrators. Over 90% of the staff completed the survey, and of those individuals, 96% indicated that they were supportive of the implementation of year-round schooling. The minority who voted against the concept did so based on their family and vacation needs. The majority of supporters valued a well planned innovation to improve learning opportunities for the children; while others were intrigued by the potential to change long-standing practices within the school. The outstanding level of support gave me “permission” to prepare a proposal for submission to the superintendent.

Senior managers stated that principals should not introduce a calendar change concept to parents and the community until the superintendent and trustees had evaluated a proposal and determined that it was worthy of further exploration.

School-calendar Re-structuring at KMCS

My proposal entitled *Meeting the Needs of all Learners through Calendar Restructuring* was grounded in the previously cited research on year-round schooling. The intent of the calendar change, as part of a comprehensive plan to improve student achievement and learning, was to provide socially-just educational opportunities for the students at KMCS. At that time, I was not explicit in naming social justice concepts in this proposal, rather I had envisioned full-service year-round schooling for KMCS for pragmatic reasons and at the time of writing, I simply understood that our students were marginalized, that our school was resource poor, and that as the school leader I felt responsible for addressing these inequities. My ability to participate in a social-justice discourse and to clearly articulate the challenges of KMCS through social-justice theory developed over time and, most particularly, through my doctoral studies.

Vision and Goals

The overall goals of the calendar-restructuring proposal were developed to provide equitable learning opportunities for KMCS students and to improve the school climate.

Specifically, the goals were intended to: improve student achievement, reduce student misbehaviors, improve community support systems, enhance professional practice, and improve staff wellness through the implementation of a single-track year-round calendar.

The following program timeline and actions are drawn from the text of the proposal and were based on the knowledge that simply rearranging the school calendar would have no effect on student achievement. In order to increase student achievement and reduce student misbehaviors it was essential to:

- establish a year-round calendar effective September 2003;
- offer remedial intersessions in October, March, May and July;
- embed professional development and enhance professional practice by rearranging the weekly schedule to allow for the early dismissal of classes one day each week. The early dismissal plan would include day-care provisions for primary students and extracurricular programs for intermediate students;
- offer a more protected environment for students by providing connections to the school on a sustained and continuous basis;
- provide an innovative climate in which parents, staff, and community-support agencies could pilot creative programming;
- sustain a community-based model which encompasses the resources of numerous partner agencies;
- cause minimal fiscal impact to the KMCS budget.

The Rationale for Change

The proposal for change was primarily based on a goal to improve academic achievement and reduce the student behaviors which were interfering with student learning. It also grew from the fact that students at KMCS lived and learned in an inner-city community where poverty and other related problems influenced daily life and where children and their families depended upon and trusted in the school to provide consistent social and educational support. And finally, the proposal was based on the knowledge that support from the HSD senior management team, the business community, and service organizations external to the school was essential to success. San Antonio (2008) captured our communal responsibility to advocate for and educate all marginalized children:

Despite citizens' frustration with inadequate and inequitable school resources, public schools are still locations of tremendous hope. The promise of education continues to inspire creative philanthropists, dedicated teachers, committed students, and hard-working parents. The value of good education prompted black parents to put their children on buses to integrate schools in hostile and dangerous circumstances, and the value of education continues to inspire community-based efforts to fight for equity and access for poor children. (p. 75)

The rationale provided in the proposal did not refer explicitly to social justice principles. As noted, my fluency with these ideas grew when I was required to defend the continuation of the YRS pilot and to defend my consistent requests for increased staffing and funding allocations. It was on these occasions, in the years following the submission of the original proposal, that the articulation of the principles of distributive and recognitive and representative social justice was invaluable. The rationale was developed according to the

parameters of the “request for proposal” from the Superintendent’s office and was entered into the text of the proposal as follows:

1. In spite of the fact that many of the identified “best practices to help meet the needs of children in poverty” had been initiated at KMCS, low student achievement and student misbehaviors remained a concern.

2. A full-service school, which offers a range of services to support families; hence an extension of the family, could provide a protected and consistently safe environment for children and the reorganization of the KMCS calendar could minimize the effect of school closure for many students.

3. Current research emphasized the crucial relationship between time and learning and reminded educators that students, particularly disadvantaged students, experience a summer-learning loss.

4. In addition to an academic learning loss, children must re-learn the school protocols regarding respectful behavior after each sustained separation from the structure provided by a supportive and caring staff.

5. The organization and delivery of an academic intersession program is crucial to improved student achievement in an impoverished school. Through the YRS initiative, compensatory programs would support disadvantaged learners, while enrichment opportunities would support advantaged learners. Students would be provided with remediation throughout the year (October, March, May, and July) as opposed to minimal year-end summer school offerings.

6. In order to enhance student achievement, teachers must be provided with the

opportunity to be reflective practitioners, to engage in discussion with colleagues, and to effectively plan instruction. The intense working environment at KMCS did not always provide for sustained professional development or the sustained examination of instructional practice.

The proposal to implement a YRS schedule included an early-dismissal component. This component, built around two goals, stated that classes would be dismissed 75 minutes early one day each week. Our primary goal was to enhance professional practice by embedding professional development in the school day. Our secondary goal was to restructure our schedule in order to provide extracurricular activities for students outside of the instructional day as opposed to the existing system where activities were scheduled inside the instructional day. I knew that improving the students' academic skills required that teachers reclaim this instructional time. Prior to the implementation of this YRS initiative, students at KMCS enjoyed extracurricular activities organized by community volunteers, but these activities eroded their academic learning time since up to 20% of the instructional time of intermediate students was devoted to these pursuits. The early-dismissal strategy was accomplished by enrolling classes 15 minutes earlier each morning, thereby meeting the MOE requirement that stipulates the number of instructional minutes required each week.

Early dismissal allowed teachers to reclaim instructional time and provided for the extension of our extracurricular activities to primary students. Previously, primary students were excluded from these extracurricular activities. The new format was structured to include the participation of younger children, was no longer compulsory for unwilling participants, and allowed volunteer instructors to control their own class sizes.

Accommodations for after-school child care were provided through several community providers.

Consulting the Constituencies

The KMCS proposal was created through the articulation of a vision. As stated, the vision came to life following a review of the literature, meetings, and conversations as well as a thorough analysis of the organizational and managerial challenges of full-service YRS. Following staff input and their supportive encouragement, the proposal was presented to parents, community partners, students, senior management, labor groups and the Board of Trustees. During this phase, the ability of school-based administrators to mobilize the discourse around the goal of improving student achievement enhanced the value of the proposal.

The preparation and presentation to the Board of Trustees of a proposal to implement year-round schooling was initially contingent upon staff approval. I would not have proceeded without their approval and support. Having received this, I endeavoured to acquire the support of the complex external community which assisted the school. This group was comprised of the Community School Society, the church which organized the Breakfast Program, the Boys' and Girls' Club and the preschools which offered before and after school care, as well as a legion of community organizations which provided for the children through service and financial means. All partner groups enthusiastically supported the YRS initiative.

Overall, gauging parental attitudes towards the adoption of year-round schooling at KMCS was challenging. The school district did not conduct a parental vote to ascertain approval or disapproval for any change initiative; rather, principals were asked to consult, provide information, answer questions, and address concerns through parent meetings and direct conversations. Trustees assumed the responsibility of accepting or rejecting calendar change initiatives. At KMCS, I organized concurrent presentations for the Parent Advisory Committee and the School Planning Council, as well as nine parent information sessions. The parent sessions were offered in the morning, during the school day, immediately after dismissal, or in the evening. Day care was provided at all sessions. A total of 26 parents attended the nine information sessions. Family transiency contributed to the low participation rates because many parents had not had the opportunity to develop a sustained relationship with the school over an extended period of time. Those parents who did attend expressed support for the program and appreciated the focus on improved academic achievement. Those who did not attend the sessions were provided information through school newsletters and notices. Whenever possible, communications were translated for ESL children and their families. I also met with numerous parents who requested individual appointments. Most parents who communicated with the school were supportive, although two families indicated dissatisfaction with the proposed schedule change and stated that they would transfer to a different school. Of these families, one indicated that the calendar change would conflict with their traditional summer vacation and the second family did not approve a schedule that conflicted with that of their older children who attended a traditional secondary school.

Negotiating With Teacher and Staff Unions

Three constituent groups in the school district were governed by and affiliated with unions. The leadership of the local teachers' association speaking on behalf of the BCTF and two Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) locals which represented a range of support staff opposed the implementation of year-round schooling. Discussions were framed around collective-agreement language. The discussions with CUPE representatives were generally congenial, and issues around hours of employment and benefits were resolved in a timely fashion. Conversations with the BCTF were more contentious. The union representatives challenged the proposal on issues which they indicated were of concern to teachers, such as service for children during summer classes, the early dismissal concept, professional development, and the right of teachers to attend university during the summer months.

A process for dialogue evolved wherein representatives from the Human Resources Department of the school district met with representatives of the BCTF. Issues raised at these meetings were forwarded to me. I reviewed the issues and either initiated revisions to our proposal to address the concerns or simply explained how our policies and procedures had taken the issues into account when planning for YRS. These conversations continued to be challenging. In the end, the BCTF representatives acquiesced in their belief that the Board of Trustees would approve the proposal in spite of the issues that they raised. From my perspective, we had developed a fair proposal which acknowledged and accounted for all issues raised by the teachers. The fact that the teaching staff at KMCS had worked

collaboratively to develop our plan was important.

Implementation of YRS at KMCS

In May 2003, the Board of Trustees approved the KMCS full-service YRS schedule as a pilot project for implementation the following September. The KMCS staff, the school district management team, the Board of Trustees, community members and service groups assisted in the implementation of organizational, structural, and pedagogical strategies designed to provide support to underserved students and families. I utilized Rist's (1994) policy tools to guide the YRS implementation and to measure and record our progress. According to these guidelines, I prepared written reports which summarized activities, budget reports which monitored resource allocations, and conducted annual staff surveys which documented satisfaction or dissatisfaction with program content and structure, academic outcomes, and time-on-learning issues. Throughout our YRS implementation, five overarching strategies, outlined in the next section, served to enrich student experiences and to enhance learning and academic achievement including extended and supplemental learning opportunities, professional enhancement activities, provision of child care, assistance from community volunteers, and targeted responses to resource allocations and budget implications. Over time, I learned to describe these strategies in relation to the distributive, recognitive and representative principles of social justice.

Extended and Supplemental Learning Time

The school strengthened learning opportunities by providing the following: (a) more time-on-task learning for students through the implementation of intersession programs entitled *Keep on Learning*, *Math in the Morning* and *Fun with Reading*, (b) increased professional development opportunities through programs organized by the Professional Enhancement Committee, and (c) for students, greater opportunities for enrichment and experiential learning through extracurricular programs offered on early-dismissal days. These activities were offered without compromising the instruction time required for core academic subjects; and, the potential for stronger adult-child relationships was available through increased interaction time between students and influential adults including teachers, volunteers and practicum students. Teacher-education students from several universities completed their practicum assignments during intersession programs.

The business and service communities responded to our requests for funding based on the distributive principle of social justice and through this financial support some primary students were eligible to participate in seven weeks of supplemental learning over the academic year. The generosity of the community provided for two four-week summer programs called *Math in the Morning* and *Fun with Reading* in addition to *Keep on Learning* which was offered during the winter and spring intersessions. Each program provided supplemental education, recreation and meals for selected students.

Keep on Learning became a signature program for KMCS and was offered during intersession breaks providing a total of three weeks of supplemental education throughout the

course of the year. It included ESL programming as well as supplementary training in literacy, numeracy and writing for selected students. Meals and recreational activities were also provided at no cost to parents. This very special program was developed and organized by our Community School Coordinator. Criteria for admission were established by the coordinator and the learning-support team. Students were nominated for the program by their teacher, or registered by their parents who often lobbied on behalf of their children. The curriculum content of the program varied, but was skill-based and linked to regular curriculum. For example, children could publish a small newspaper, write and illustrate short books, practice guided reading or participate in hands-on math activities in a relaxed and creative atmosphere. One session was devoted to developing test-taking skills, which in addition to assisting children to complete their in-class assignments, helped to prepare them to write the Foundation Skills Assessments, a foreign activity for many who were required to complete the assessments.

During our intersession programs, a low student-teacher ratio was maintained and classes were supported by energetic secondary and post-secondary student volunteers. Our greatest challenge was hiring teachers based on qualifications, not only seniority. We were gratified to set the precedent that the *Keep-on-Learning* teachers must be skilled in the pedagogy around literacy and numeracy for young children.

It was obvious that the children were excited about *Keep-on-Learning*. On most days they arrived at school for breakfast . . . long before the opening bell. Food was important for all the students; therefore, the program coordinator provided breakfast and a special lunch. Our caterers were very creative in supplying lunches that were different from regular fare . . .

chicken nuggets and pizza were favorites. The academic portion of *Keep-on-Learning* was focused on the development of literacy, numeracy, and writing. The intent was to give the children a “confidence boost” and to enhance their skills through innovative programming. Whenever possible the recreation activities were linked to and enhanced the academic programming of the morning. Generally the boys’ favorite activities were ice skating and hockey. The girls were more selective but generally liked making crafts. Both groups loved field trips and did their best to use good manners and good behavior on these adventures.

Professional Enhancement Activities

As recommended in the YRS proposal, KMCS dismissed 75 minutes early one day each week in order to provide professional development for staff. There were significant challenges in implementing this aspect of the new calendar because the teachers’ collective agreement stipulated that choosing professional development activities was the right of the individual teacher and could not be directed by a school district administrator. Subsequent to my conversations with the Teachers’ Association, a committee was struck to organize professional activities, and in response to concerns put forward by the Association, the term “professional development” was replaced by the term “professional enhancement” and the leadership role of the committee was assigned to teachers, rather than administrators. The activities were based on staff preferences indicated on surveys. Staff attendance was voluntary. Two teachers served as the co-chairs of the Professional Enhancement Committee. I worked in collaboration with these volunteers. Through bi-annual surveys, they assessed

the interests of staff and organized activities that supported primary and intermediate curriculum and topics of general interest. Most often our work was focused on the development of our skills around teaching reading and writing. Occasionally, a session was focused on strategies for supporting students with social-emotional or behavior issues. The committee was careful to organize events a maximum of twice a month and for the weeks around special events and report-card preparation no activities were planned.

Sustaining the energy of this initiative was challenging, yet worthwhile for our students. Teachers were not required to participate; rather, they volunteered to participate. While some attended all sessions, 20% of the teaching staff stated that they felt that the work was an infringement on their personal time. They were entitled to this viewpoint since attending these sessions required participation that exceeded their contractual teaching obligations. Overall, and in spite of some challenges, we were pleased that the opportunity for KMCS teachers to participate in meaningful professional development activities was significantly increased although no empirical evidence was available to compare the attendance of teachers during the YRS initiative to their attendance prior to YRS.

Child-care Provisions

All child-care providers in the community agreed to reorganize their schedules to support the YRS initiative and to guarantee that early dismissal would not create a hardship for families. Three on-site daycare providers and several community agencies aligned their services to coincide with the YRS schedule. Limited fee-for-service child care was available

before and after school, during intersession breaks, vacation breaks and early-dismissal days. One community agency provided after-school and intersession care at no cost to families. Additionally, one community agency and a local church organized on-site breakfast, while the school, through government funding, provided a daily lunch program during the regular academic year as well as during intersessions.

Community Volunteers

Community volunteers provided important services to KMCS prior to the implementation of YRS and they were also instrumental to its success. Over 100 individuals, as well as numerous organizations external to the school, reflected social-justice principles. They supported the students and their parents by providing social, financial and academic assistance and believed that children and their families were entitled to representation and recognition in the community. Our active volunteers included amongst others: the Seniors' Centre, Henderson Community Services, Women's Services International, Global Immigrant Services, St. Peter's Anglican Church, Morgan Creek University College, and Northgate Church.²⁴ The members of the Community School Society also provided countless hours of assistance, and community members provided instruction for activities organized for students on early-dismissal days. It is essential to recognize that the majority of the remedial and enrichment activities as well as the extracurricular programs provided for students at KMCS

²⁴ The names of all organizations and services are pseudonyms.

were funded through grants and awards as well as private and corporate donations. Donors²⁵ recognized that the full-service YRS schedule, *Keep on Learning Camp*, *Math in the Morning* and *Fun with Reading* were valuable initiatives and were pleased to join an innovative venture. The following is a sample of the grants and awards presented to KMCS based on the initiatives to improve student achievement and learning. KMCS received the School Achievement Award from a regional university and was one of only eight schools throughout the province that received the \$3,000.00 award for three consecutive years. The Madison Music and Book Company awarded our school, only one of ten in Canada, a \$150,000 grant to support literacy and build a library collection. KMCS was one of 89 schools in North America and one of 10 in Canada to receive a \$10,000 Johnson's Reading grant. And finally, over a period of three years, our community partners donated more than \$110,000 to support academic-intersession programs at KMCS.

Resource Re-Allocations and Budget Implications

In addition to implementing the YRS initiative, the attendant special programs, and the involvement of volunteers, I lobbied for supplemental funding from the HSD and the community because the budget allocated to KMCS was not sufficient to meet the diverse needs of the students. Distributive and recognitive social-justice theory highlighted the reality that the public school system did not provide sufficient funding or recognition for children living within the KMCS catchment area while it privileged students attending other schools. My goal of establishing parity-of-participation for the students provided the rationale for

²⁵ All donor names are pseudonyms.

requesting additional funding to augment staffing, materials, and resources for KMCS and acknowledged, that in the HSD, school choice and open-boundary policies created opportunities for students to transfer to schools other than their neighborhood schools. This transfer had implications for resource allocations for KMCS and as noted by Bergstrom and Sandstrom (2002) and (Lauen, 2006), “there is a risk that the share of resource-exacting pupils will grow while it is not certain that the resource allocation would increase proportionately” (Bergstrom & Sandstrom, 2002, p. 11).

During my first year as principal of KMCS I realized that searching for solutions to funding short falls was challenging and contravened the principles of distributive and recognitive social justice. Within a decentralized or site-based managed school system, a range of fiscal options and staffing strategies are available to school administrators for utilization in the preparation of annual budgets. Building principals are required to submit balanced budgets based on a district-wide funding formula and at their discretion, may utilize these strategies and options. Over time, and to some degree during my tenure as principal, KMCS incorporated several generic measures with the full knowledge and understanding that their implementation was not in the best interests of all children and did not represent parity for students. For example, the school reduced or eliminated professional staffing positions by increasing class sizes to the district maximum, thereby eliminating teachers; eliminating or reducing specialized teaching positions such as music, library, and physical education; eliminating or reducing special-services teachers such as learning assistance, behavior resource and counseling; and, eliminating para-professionals such as teaching assistants and child-care workers. In order to balance its budget, KMCS eliminated positions or decreased the hours of employment for custodial and clerical services, reduced or

eliminated the purchase of certain supplies and materials as well as bookings for fine-arts programs, multi-cultural presentations, and field trips. In June 2004, I responded to the inequities resulting from budget shortfalls by requesting additional funding for staffing and materials based on an integrated approach to social justice.

My funding request submitted to the Superintendent's office was grounded in the inequities experienced by the KMCS students and the need for the school to organize and deliver social programs and enhanced academic instruction to establish a productive learning environment. To begin, I addressed the implications of a declining student population wherein, historically, 50% of the children that reside in the catchment area do not attend KMCS and have transferred to schools in more affluent communities. Demographic data indicated that students who leave KMCS to attend other schools in the region continue to reside in the low-cost housing in the KMCS catchment area; hence, new students are not able to move to the neighborhood to attend the school. My funding request noted that open-boundary and school-choice policies contributed to this population shift and would contribute to a further population decline in September 2004 as a consequence of the implementation of an enriched and specialized "choice program" at Carrington School.²⁶ This shift in student population was documented by the numerous cross-boundary applications submitted by KMCS families who applied to attend Carrington School which is in walking distance of their homes and was viewed as superior to KMCS. The resulting population decline and reduction in the per-pupil funding allocation was significant in a small school operating within a decentralized budgeting process. I also noted in my funding request that while the institutionalization of year-round schooling would only occur over time, and based on data

²⁶ Carrington School, a pseudonym, was not required to accept students with Ministry of Education identified special learning needs unless space was available in existing programs.

which documented growth in student learning and achievement, HSD had approved the implementation of the Carrington program during the YRS implementation year.

My request for funding was based on three long-standing situations at KMCS. First, while the decentralized management model provides for autonomy around school-based programming and staffing decisions, it does not guarantee that students will receive adequate instruction in non-academic subjects. For example, KMCS did not offer two non-academic programs due to reduced funding, the need to provide a high level of support to children with special-learning needs, and the reduction of the allocation for our school-based behavior initiative at a time when the incidence of children with behavior disorders increased.

Overall, a declining population and subsequent reduced per-pupil allocations translated into the cancellation of several programs while Carrington School, the neighboring school, was reconfigured to offer enriched programming in modernized facilities. I argued that these programming inequities are not acceptable within our public school system. Second, playground supervision was very costly at KMCS because the school utilized six or seven supervisors to manage the playground each day. The aggression of some children and parents, the need to protect children from parents who are not abiding by custody agreements, and the drug culture surrounding the school necessitated that we be very diligent in caring for our students. This diligence resulted in a need for staff with expertise in dealing with conflict and aggression . . . Child Care Workers, Special Education Teaching Assistants, Aboriginal Support Workers, and Administrators. The funds that could have been allocated to supporting children with academic work in their classrooms was redirected toward guaranteeing safe playgrounds and teaching children alternatives to aggression. Third, the Parent Advisory Committee at KMCS was not able to raise funds due to the impoverished

nature of the community; therefore, the school was not able to supplement resources through this avenue as is common in affluent neighborhoods where typically resources such as computers, library books, sports programs, field trips, and cultural presentations are provided or supplemented through funds raised by their parent groups.

The request for funding, submitted to the Superintendent, and based in the integration of the distributive and recognitive concepts of social justice resulted in the allocation of limited additional funding. These funds provided programming, supplies, and materials that supported the YRS initiative and enhanced educational programming for students at KMCS. Additional revenue was generated within the community. The following specific measures, implemented as a component of year-round schooling, generated revenue but were not without compromises. For example, KMCS generated revenue by renting classrooms to child-care and community-service providers. These initiatives located valuable services within the school but eliminated classroom space which was otherwise utilized as multi-purpose, music and art rooms. The school also generated revenue through community partnerships with service clubs and churches. These relationships, while valuable, required the time and resources of a designated staff person who was responsible for developing and nurturing the partnerships. KMCS was successful in generating revenue by applying for corporate donations. This measure was fruitful, but was time consuming for administration and was not without controversy. And finally, the community school coordinator was successful in obtaining funds through a consistent grant-writing initiative. Overall, presenting a social-justice rationale for financial assistance that included concrete examples of the lack of parity experienced by our students was effective in garnering support from

service agencies and business partners.

The Community School Concept in British Columbia

Another aspect of my efforts to transform the structure and culture of KMCS involved a review of the designation of KMCS as a community school. I begin with an overview of the community school concept by outlining the history of its development and then move to discussing the development of community schools in British Columbia, summarizing current funding issues and policies including the application process for community-school designation, and implementation guidelines for the development of community schools. I conclude this section by discussing how the community school designation had developed and was revised under my leadership at KMCS according to a social justice framework.

The concept of community schools and community education grew from the vision of the American philanthropist Charles S. Mott who articulated a belief that we live in a world “in which each of us is in partnership with the rest of the human race – where each individual’s quality of life is connected to the well-being of the community, both locally and globally” (Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 2008).

It seems to me that every person, always, is in a kind of informal partnership with his [sic] community. His [sic] own success is dependent to a large degree on that community, and the community, after all, is the sum total of all individuals who make it up. (Charles Stewart Mott, 1875-1973, as cited in Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, 2008)

During the 1930s, under the auspices of the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, this

philosophy was translated into the concept of community education in the United States. The goal of community education was “to make schools the social, educational and recreational anchors of their communities and to involve youth and adults in lifelong learning” (Association for Community Education in British Columbia, 2004, p. 7). In the 1970’s, the United States Congress formalized federal support for community education initiatives through the passage of the *Community Schools Act*; while *The Full Service Community Schools Act* was re-introduced in an effort to provide incentives and financial support for community schools (Hoyer, 2005). The community school concept was implemented in British Columbia in 1971 and drew upon the leadership and guidance provided by the Mott Foundation and the United States government. There existed numerous definitions of community schools and community education. For purposes of developing the community school concept within a public-school district and within the British Columbia context, I include the definitions and descriptors published by the *Association for Community Education in BC* (ACEbc) which has existed as a non-profit organization since 1975. The goal of ACEbc is to foster and promote community education and community schools. The concepts and their definitions have many commonalities since community education is the philosophical base upon which a community school is developed. The term *community education* is grounded in social ideology and describes a philosophy which embraces the belief that all individuals and community agencies, whether public or private, share responsibility for the educational development and/or enhancement of all citizens. This philosophy also supports the notion that all citizens have a right and a responsibility to participate in the identification of needs specific to their communities as well as the responsibility to identify the service agencies and resources which address those needs. The

community education concept stresses the integration of community services and the utilization of the intellectual and social capital of all citizens.

ACEbc (2001), in its report *Building Healthy Self-Reliant Communities*, recognizes that each community school develops its own identity and culture while reflecting the uniqueness of the neighborhood. It defines community school as:

. . . a concept which advocates a process for empowering citizens in a community to address local needs. Its underlying values and principles are guided by practices such as: utilization of community resources for curriculum enhancement, life-long learning, shared resources, integrated services, leadership development, responsiveness, neighborhood-based action, self-determination and self-help, inclusiveness, sustainability, and accountability. Community schools offer an opportunity for local citizens, businesses, agencies and institutions, to become active partners to enhance the educational, social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions of their community. In a community school, processes are in place that develop and support programs, services, events and opportunities that empower the neighborhood to address community needs and provide developmental opportunities for everyone. (p. 4)

The concept of a community school is based on the belief that children will learn most successfully in a school which can support their intellectual and emotional growth while assisting in the provision of basic survival needs and a safe environment for those who are vulnerable (Dryfoos, 2008; Rothstein, 2008). Woven throughout is a commitment to social justice which challenges communities to provide for children and their families within a just and caring environment. Second, the concept supports the belief that children will learn and achieve best in a school which offers quality curriculum and teaching aligned with clearly articulated academic standards. Third, the development of intentional relationships with community partners supports the belief that children will learn best in a school which extends learning beyond the traditional school day through rich extracurricular learning opportunities.

In 1994, the MOE responded to the challenge of sustaining the community-school concept and as published in the *Community School Research Project* the government initiated an annual allocation of \$75,000 for specific programs to each designated community school. The MOE also introduced an application process

. . . and by 1996 there were a total of 71 designated community schools. During this period, a number of other programs were also initiated, including the School Meals Program (1991/92), the Inner City School Program (1994) and the Kids-at-Risk Initiative (1994/95). In 1996/97, the social equity envelope, which combined the Community School, School Meals and Inner-City School Programs, was put in place. (Association for Community Education in British Columbia, 2004, p. 7)

The challenge to sustain the schools continued when in 1997, the BC government placed the “social equity envelope” and staffing resources under the auspices of the Ministry of Children and Families in an effort to maximize assistance to vulnerable and marginalized children. Following a major evaluation and restructuring of school-based programs, further policy change occurred in 2004 when the “social equity envelope” was replaced by the CommunityLINK (Learning Includes Nutrition and Knowledge) initiative. CommunityLINK, which returned responsibility for management and leadership to the MOE, is described as “an innovative program that provides services and supports for vulnerable children and youth across the province” (British Columbia Ministry of Education, “About CommunityLINK,” 2005). This transfer of responsibilities between government ministries, combined with fluctuating funding allocations, has resulted in an uncertain environment for service providers. The sustainability of community-school initiatives is constantly in question as the continuation or cancellation of staffing contracts and program offerings must be evaluated on an annual basis. According to the British Columbia MOE, the Community

LINK concept will provide school districts and communities with the mandate to choose the approach and strategies most applicable to meeting the educational and social-development needs of vulnerable students; it posits that the funding model provides:

more equitable allocations of resources across school districts; resources focused on students most in need; improved accountability for outcomes through local delivery of services; and, flexibility for school districts to adopt an evidence-based approach using the best available research . . . to improve results in their communities. (British Columbia Ministry of Education, "About CommunityLINK," 2005)

Specifically, at the provincial level, funding is distributed according to an allocation model which stipulates that funding for a specific school district is dependent upon the needs of that district relative to all others in the province of British Columbia. According to the MOE, "CommunityLINK services are targeted to children from backgrounds that are considered detrimental to their educational outcomes. These vulnerable children are from socio-economically deprived backgrounds such as from families receiving Income Assistance, in care and/or are Aboriginal" (British Columbia Ministry of Education, "About CommunityLINK," 2005). Therefore, the factors used to determine need are: population, demographics (weighted according to the number of individuals between 0 and 18 years), socio-economic deprivation (determined according to a provincial index) and geographic location whether urban, rural and/or remote. School districts are required to allocate funds to individual schools based on student vulnerability, to target evidence-based strategies and to ensure that the allocated funds have a direct impact on vulnerable students. Specifically, school district personnel are charged with the responsibility of establishing effective programs for vulnerable students, supporting family and community involvement, and promoting community partnerships through an integrated approach. Community schools

themselves are vulnerable in that the Education Ministry does not mandate the percentage of CommunityLINK funding allocated to community schools; therefore, senior management within a district can direct funds to other areas.

When a school is assigned a community-school designation, several essential managerial and organizational components must be addressed and/or implemented. First, immediate attention must be focused on governance issues as the management of a community school is deemed to be the responsibility of an elected board of representatives generally identified as a Community School Society or Community Council. This board, which is elected annually and includes the school principal as well as staff, parent and community representatives, should be registered as a non-profit society with the British Columbia Registrar of Companies. Second, and of significance to the successful implementation and operation of a community school, is the selection of a community-school coordinator who is employed to (a) manage, coordinate, and create program offerings, (b) liaise with the community, (c) recruit, train and support volunteers, (d) manage facilities, (e) develop partnerships, (f) write grant proposals, (g) manage media relationships and publicity, and (h) organize fundraising initiatives. Third, The Coalition for Community Schools (2005) identifies the following elements as additional, but essential, operational elements of a community school: (a) a clear vision and goals, (b) flexible funding, (c) sufficient programs, services, and resources at the school site to achieve desired results, (d) effective research-based service-delivery strategies, (e) integration of after-school programs and community-based learning experiences, (f) engagement with community leadership, (g) technical assistance and professional development, and (h) adequate and accessible facilities (p. xi).

Kenneth Mann Community School Model

KMCS had received designation as a community school in 1997 and had employed consultants to develop the community school concept and manage programs. The structure and service-delivery model at KMCS was reviewed and revised in 2003 in conjunction with the adoption of YRS. Under my direction, the position of the community-school coordinator was changed from that of consulting role to that of a full-time school-based coordinator. I also revised the job description to require teacher certification within the province, experience in elementary education, inner-city schooling, curriculum development, and recreational management. According to my vision of school restructuring, the coordinator was crucial to the successful implementation and continued enhancement of the YRS initiative and socially-just educational opportunities at KMCS. Successfully implementing a comprehensive and creative year-round schooling initiative at KMCS would not have been possible without the involvement of a full-time coordinator. A consultant working on a part-time basis could not provide the “hands on” approach of an exemplary coordinator.

I was strategic in creating the job description for the position, and was diligent in screening applicants. I knew that the successful candidate would require certain credentials, skills and abilities. But more importantly, I searched for a coordinator who believed passionately in social justice and who had the “heart” to support the children and families at KMCS. The coordinator became part of the leadership team at KMCS. His ability to relate to children, to build school pride and to promote the school in the community was

instrumental in changing the negative attitudes and beliefs which influenced KMCS.

Although he did not label his endeavours as such, our coordinator's work was guided by the principals of distributive, recognitive, and representative social justice. In this regard he focused on building community partnerships, fund raising, pursuing corporate relationships, writing grants, developing academic and extracurricular programs, organizing field trips, counseling children, comforting parents and advocating for children and families. Our coordinator was most persuasive in his fund raising activities for our school when he cited examples of inequity and marginalization that occurred within the community.

The role of the Community School Coordinator was developed to support the year-round schooling initiative at KMCS. In addition to organizing an array of social and recreational activities, the coordinator was required to organize the supplemental academic activities offered during intersessions. My research into YRS emphasized that, for practical reasons, the school principal should not assume the primary leadership role in developing intersession programs. For this reason, the coordinator at KMCS was required to hold a teaching certificate and to demonstrate expertise in curriculum development. The value of intersession programming at KMCS was directly linked to the quality and applicability of the curriculum prepared for the children.

Assessing the Effects of Organizational, Structural and Pedagogical Strategies

The accountability phase described by Rist (1994) was crucial to the continuance of the YRS project at KMCS and was based upon predetermined criteria. These criteria consisted of improved academic achievement, student attendance patterns in keeping with historical school averages, good fiscal management, parental approval, and community support. Each May, the Board of Trustees reviewed our initiative and indicated by a public vote that they chose to support the continuance of the program. Their decision was primarily based upon the results of a parent survey and my bi-annual reports. My bi-annual reports contained empirical data as outlined below. These data illustrate changes in attendance patterns, academic standing and levels of satisfaction.

The Board of Trustees expressed concern that the implementation of a YRS schedule would influence attendance. The Board was particularly concerned that students would not attend classes in July. Contrary to these concerns, attendance was excellent during July and was attributed to the wide range of special events organized during the month. While academic days were devoted to review and enrichment, non-academic days were devoted to recreation and celebrations including a festive Canada Day event. Table 5 showing data provided by HSD illustrates the average absence-rate (percentages) of all students for the previous five school years. According to available data, the average absence rate prior to year-round programming was 6.4 % and declined to a rate of 6.0% following the implementation of YRS in 2003. This data which indicated the YRS did not have a negative

effect on attendance was essential in convincing school trustees that children continued to attend school regularly when the calendar was changed from standard to year-round.

Table 5:

KMCS Attendance Patterns 2000-2005

Yearly absence rate of all students in Kindergarten – Grade 7

Year	Dates	Average absence rate
2000 - 2001	September through June	8.0%
2001 - 2002	September through June	7.9%
2002 - 2003	September through June	4.3%
2003 - 2004	September through July	6.7%
2004 - 2005	September through July	5.3%

The HSD administers a range of district-wide academic assessments and the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) which is a province-wide tool mandated by the MOE. The district assessments at the elementary level measure numeracy, literacy and writing skills. For purposes of discussion and comparison within this dissertation, I selected data from assessments which had been administered for a period of four or more years; therefore, only the data from grade two and six numeracy, grade one reading, and the Foundation Skills Assessment are included.

District Numeracy Assessment

The numeracy assessment introduced to schools in the 2003 school year, linked directly to the goals of the district accountability contract, and was designed to assess a cross-section of learning outcomes for grades three and six students. The purpose of the assessment was to provide empirical data which would assist teachers in planning instruction and developing lessons and strategies that would improve student achievement. Table 6 documents consistent improvement in student performance at KMCS, with the exception of the grade 6 performance levels attained in 2004. During the 2004 testing scenario, the children were required to solve problems relating to three mathematical concepts. The KMCS students had not reviewed one of the concepts taught several months prior to the testing and most were not able to answer the questions. Consequently, 0% of the students fully met expectations. (Henderson School District, 2006).

Table 6:

HSD Numeracy Assessment 2003 -2006

Percentage of students fully meeting expectations - Grade 3

Year	KMCS	District
2003	9%	33%
2004	21%	31%
2005	26%	52%
2006	32%	47%

Percentage of students fully meeting expectations - Grade 6

Year	KMCS	District
2003	4%	29%
2004	0%	26%
2005	20%	22%
2006	32%	33%

Grade One Reading Assessment

In the HSD, grade one reading was assessed by primary teachers utilizing the *PM Benchmark series* (Nelson Thornes Publishing, 2008). The student performance scores

collected through these tests must be contextualized. It is this contextualization that provided both quantitative and qualitative data to challenge, within a social justice framework, the level of financial and instructional support provided to the school. The class composition data recorded for each school year are essential to such a conversation. According to the *PM Benchmark* assessment, level 16 is considered to be the accepted reading level for students completing grade one.

The KMCS data recorded in Table 7 which compare school averages to district averages document consistent performance improvement with the exception of the 2005 cohort. Class composition data for the 2005 school year indicated the following: of the 24 students assessed, 19 or 79% required special educational support due to the following designations which were assigned at the time of assessment or within 12 months of the assessment: 42% required ESL services, 17% were identified as having learning disabilities, and 21% were identified as students with severe behavior disorders.

Table 7:

Five-year Trends for Grade One Reading

PM Benchmark Assessment

Year	KMCS % Level 16	District % Level 16	KMCS % ESL	District % ESL	KMCS % Aboriginal	District % Aboriginal
2002	20.0	55.0				
2003	24.4	56.0	19	2.2	25	5.3
2004	42.9	62.6	17	2.7	21	7.9
2005	8.0	51.9	16	2.5	23	8.1
2006	30.0	69.2	17	2.5	20	8.0

Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA)

The FSA which is administered to grades four and seven students is designed by teachers and is directly linked to the British Columbia curriculum and the BC Performance Standards. According to government, the intent of the test is to assist schools in identifying areas of academic focus and to identify achievement trends over time (British Columbia Ministry of Education, “Foundation skills assessment,” 2008). All students at KMCS, with the exception of certain second-language learners and special education students completed the assessment. In the years following the collection of the FSA data published in this dissertation, opponents of the FSA process have become increasingly vocal. Across the province, parents are demanding that their children be excused from the assessment, and

teachers are becoming more public in their criticisms. However, during my tenure at KMCS all schools and all eligible students were expected to complete the assessment and parents of eligible students did not challenge the process.

It is important to note that the MOE allowed KMCS to re-schedule the administration of the FSA. In 2005 (and in 2006), the provincial FSA administration dates fell within the intersession break created by year-round schooling when students were not in regular session. The Ministry agreed that KMCS could administer the FSA following the intersession break and *Keep on Learning* Camp. This decision supported student learning as it provided the opportunity for all KMCS students to receive days of instruction equal to those of all students in the province prior to FSA administration, and the opportunity for some students to receive remedial instruction during *Keep on Learning* Camp.

The FSA results for students attending grades 4 and 7 at KMCS are shown in Table 8, Table 9, and Table 10. Table 8 represents reading comprehensions skills, Table 9 represents writing skills and Table 10 represents numeracy skills. The scores for the years 2004/2005 and 2005/2006 document the assessment scores following the implementation of full-service YRS. The Grade 4 reading comprehension scores equalled or exceeded the district and provincial scores in 2004 through 2006. The Grade 7 reading comprehension scores show improvement in the years 2004 through 2006. The Grade 4 writing scores equalled or exceeded the district and provincial averages for the years 2004/2005 and 2005/2006. Grade 7 writing scores show progress and exceeded the district and provincial averages in 2006. The Grade 7 and Grade 4 numeracy scores exceeded both the district and provincial averages in 2004/2005 and 2005/2006. All assessment scores are illustrative of movement in the

desired direction, and are attributed to many changes including, in particular, YRS and increased time-on-learning. This movement was so significant that, in May 2007, the Fraser Institute placed KMCS at the top of its list of “schools showing the greatest improvement in British Columbia over the most recent five years” (Steffenhagen, 2007). Although this single statement was positive, KMCS staff continued to be very troubled by the overall negative influence of these rankings on certain schools.

Table 8

FSA Results - Reading Comprehension

% of students meeting or exceeding expectations 2001 - 2006

Year	Grade	School	District	Province
00/01	4	55	79	78
01/02	4	57	81	80
02/03	4	61	81	77
03/04	4	53	83	80
04/05	4	81	82	79
05/06	4	96	82	80
00/01	7	67	78	76
01/02	7	54	78	76
02/03	7	50	76	77
03/04	7	48	82	80
04/05	7	74	80	77
05/06	7	67	78	73

(British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2008, “FSA 2008”)

Table 9***FSA Results - Writing Skills***

% of students meeting or exceeding expectations 2001 - 2006

Year	Grade	School	District	Province
00/01	4	68	91	91
01/02	4	79	95	94
02/03	4	83	94	94
03/04	4	74	93	91
04/05	4	96	95	93
05/06	4	92	92	90
00/01	7	96	84	81
01/02	7	67	83	84
02/03	7	46	78	79
03/04	7	72	91	90
04/05	7	73	90	90
05/06	7	96	90	87

(British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2008, "FSA 2008")

Table 10***FSA Results - Numeracy Skills***

% of students meeting or exceeding expectations 2001 - 2006

Year	Grade	School	District	Province
00/01	4	56	83	84
01/02	4	67	87	85
02/03	4	64	88	87
03/04	4	72	90	88
04/05	4	96	89	87
05/06	4	90	88	86
00/01	7	67	83	81
01/02	7	64	83	82
02/03	7	53	82	84
03/04	7	67	84	83
04/05	7	96	86	83
05/06	7	88	87	84

(British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2008, "FSA 2008")

Summary

This chapter provided a detailed description of the structural changes that were implemented at KMCS in an effort to provide socially-just educational opportunities for children. In practice, while the changes addressed in this chapter were structural and focussed to a great extent on economics, in theory, they also required an orientation to recognitive and representative justice and the principle of parity-of-participation. In practice, a year-round schedule provided the framework for a restructuring proposal that was approved by the Board of Trustees and implemented in 2003. The YRS schedule was undergirded by a community school initiative which provided funding and staffing to assist in the implementation of academic and social-support initiatives, as well as a host of volunteers, service groups and corporate sponsors which provided direct assistance to students and their families. The extensive financial resources donated by both community and business partners were an explicit example, I argue, of a response to my quest for socially-just educational opportunities for children and were provided in a response to our rationale that made explicit the inequities that existed within the school system. KMCS assessment data are illustrative of a movement toward improved academic achievement within the school that I argue is attributable to the YRS initiative.

The adoption of a full-service YRS initiative represented a significant response to the academic and social struggles facing students at KMCS. It also spoke to the recognition that the continuation of current practices was unlikely to ameliorate these difficulties. KMCS was organized as a single-track year-round school that was designed to meet student needs rather than to provide efficient scheduling. The major components of the initiative were

linked to childhood poverty and marginalized families, topics which lie at the core of endeavours to establish a socially-just educational environment at KMCS. While the principles of social justice were not integrated into the text of the YRS proposal, the request for permission to develop the YRS pilot program was explicit in articulating a vision that supported parity-of-participation for students. The implementation of year-round schooling concluded a journey that began with the realization that systemic change within KMCS was essential to student success and ended with the adoption, by the HSD, of a full-service year-round schooling initiative.

In the next chapter, I discuss the interventions implemented at KMCS intended to shift the school philosophy and culture. These interventions focus on the discursive components of change. I begin by exploring parity-of-participation as an overarching concept of social justice followed by a discussion of pedagogy and social-justice thinking under the guise of parity-of-participation, pathologies and deficit thinking, communities-of-difference, and privilege. Second, I discuss the development of school pride and a media plan dedicated to changing the school image.

CHAPTER SIX

MOVING TOWARDS SOCIAL JUSTICE: CHANGING SCHOOL CULTURE AND PHILOSOPHY THROUGH DISCURSIVE INTERVENTIONS

The pursuit of socially-just educational opportunities through the implementation of a full-service YRS plan at KMCS required both structural and philosophical changes. In this chapter I explore the interventions which were more discursively oriented and which can be regarded as addressing cognitive aspects of social justice. These efforts were aimed at shifting the discourse and changing the school's internal culture and external reputation.

A shift in educational philosophy, or "the way we do things around here" as described by Fullan (2001) required questioning the habitual practices of the school in which students were pathologized to the degree that low expectations for learning were normalized. This normalization of reduced expectations for student achievement at KMCS was replaced by expectations of excellence. The belief that poverty is a pathologizing factor was replaced by the belief that ". . . all students can learn, which implies that, while individual differences are present and important, they are seen as a moderating rather than a limiting influence on learning essential skills" (Lezotte & Jacoby, 1992, p. 230).

The interventions that were essential to the transformation of KMCS included the development of a media and public relations campaign, the overarching concept of parity-of-participation, as well as the concepts of student agency, pathologies and deficit thinking, communities-of-difference, and privilege that were employed to address cognitive justice.

It is important to note that the structural and discursive dimensions are interrelated and mutually reinforcing. I begin by introducing the development of school pride as an

essential component of the transformation of KMCS, then discuss the concepts leading to parity-of-participation and close with a review of the communication and media strategies employed at KMCS.

School Pride

In 2003, when the year-round calendar was implemented at KMCS, there existed a wide-spread and decades-old belief that KMCS was not a ‘good school.’ The influence of this belief upon the school was damaging and persistently negative as reflected in statements made by students, parents and community members who indicated that they were not proud of the school and believed that the “inner-city” designation represented an institution with low-academic and behavioral expectations. Barth (2002) described the influence of this reputation in arguing that:

A school’s culture is a complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply ingrained in the very core of the organization. It is the historically transmitted pattern of meaning that wields astonishing power in shaping what people think and how they act. (p. 23)

I knew before I became its principal that KMCS did not fare well when compared to schools in middle-class communities in the HSD. Within the district, KMCS was often described as a school with low-academic standards and ineffective behavior management. Students were described as poor learners with a propensity toward an attitude of entitlement.²⁷ As soon as I began working in the district as a substitute teacher I heard that

²⁷ An attitude of entitlement was described as the propensity for individuals to expect to receive goods and services that were deemed to be “unearned.”

KMCS was a very challenging place to teach. Sadly, many of my professional colleagues in the school district echoed this thinking and described inner-city schools as undesirable places to teach. Colleagues told me on many occasions that they did not apply for positions at KMCS because of its reputation. The inner-city designation contributed to staffing challenges at KMCS in that, most often, experienced teachers searching for positions did not apply to schools in an inner-city community. Therefore, the pool of applicants was limited and the valuable pedagogical and leadership skills that are honed through experience were not consistently available to our students.

For staff, children, and parents at KMCS changing the school culture and developing a sense of pride required a thoughtful and strategic approach. To begin, it was essential to address our own lack of pride in KMCS and to be very intentional around our strategy to change the perception of KMCS within the school district and community. To this end, I began a structured media campaign shaped by the principles of restorative social justice and designed to promote the accomplishments of all of the constituents at KMCS. Utilizing the following discursive strategies was instrumental in shaping the school culture.

Parity-of-Participation

As I became conversant with the topic of social justice and critical theory, I began to share my knowledge and bring these concepts to conversations with teachers, support staff, community partners and my fellow administrators until social-justice terminology became the norm in discussions around student learning and pedagogy. I began by focussing on enhancing parity-of-participation for our students. This term represents a combination of

the distributive and recognitive dimensions of social justice and encompasses both justified claims for redistribution and justified claims for recognition without reducing either one for the other. Fraser (1998) identifies two conditions for providing parity-of-participation which resonated within the KMCS community; that of distributing material resources to ensure that all students were provided with essential school supplies and learning resources; and that of promoting institutional practices that expressed equal respect and opportunity for all participants (p. 5). Although parity is defined by Fraser as social arrangements that permit all adult members of society to interact with one another as peers, I argue that parity must extend to children, for it is essential that all school-aged children experience equal opportunities to learn and to develop self-worth.

Understanding and contextualizing the economic, cultural or political obstacles to parity is crucial in identifying the type of recognition which meets an individual's needs. In my view, parity-of-participation within my practice required that children were not marginalized through a lack of financial resources and access to programs, but more importantly, that they were not marginalized through deficit thinking, narrowed curriculum and pathologies-of-silence (Shields, 2004a). Narrowed curriculum refers to reducing the breadth of the curriculum in order to focus on a more narrow range of subject matter, while pathologies-of-silence (as opposed to overt pathologies which use discriminatory language or practices) are described by Shields (2004a) as

. . . misguided attempts to act justly, to display empathy, and to create democratic and optimistic educational communities. Educators often find it difficult to acknowledge difference, in part, because we have not learned to distinguish between recognizing differences in legitimate ways and using a single characteristic or factor as a way of labeling and consequentially essentializing others. . . . On the one hand it seems safer, kinder, and perhaps even the only reasonable position to pretend that all children are the same. (p. 119)

For students within KMCS, and in comparison to students of well-resourced schools and communities, parity-of-participation was described as equal access to compensatory programs, rigorous curriculum, and skilled pedagogy; equal expectations for student-agency; and equal access to enrichment and extracurricular activities. For parents it represented inclusion in the discourse around school restructuring and continues to represent opportunities for conversations with teachers and administrators around student-achievement and learning, extracurricular activities, and Parent Advisory Committee activities. Parity-of-participation was operationalized at KMCS through school restructuring and transformation. Restructuring was accomplished through the implementation of a comprehensive calendar change which provided for learning continuity, was directed towards reducing summer-learning loss, and introduced increased social-support programs for children and their families.

Developing Student Agency and Creating a Culture of Achievement

A crucial component of the transformation of KMCS was the creation of a culture of achievement. While the staff recognized that both situational and generational poverty continued to influence students attending the school, many individuals acknowledged that a shift in educational philosophy was necessary to inspire students, teachers, and parents towards improved academic achievement and learning. This belief reflected a systemic philosophical change at KMCS in which social justice and academic excellence were considered to be inextricably linked.

The normalization of reduced expectations for student achievement at KMCS was replaced by expectations of student-agency (Jackson, 2003) and reciprocity-of-effort (Fenstermacher, 1990). In this situation, agency is defined as a student's ability to advocate for her/his own learning, and self-efficacy as her/his ability to produce the intended results of a learning or social activity. The development of these skills and abilities within students was directly linked to concrete and successful learning experiences, positive social interactions, increased social maturation, and guidance from skilled and caring adults. At KMCS, the concepts of student-agency and self-efficacy were coupled with the concept of reciprocity-of-effort and the expectation, that whenever possible, the efforts of classroom teachers were reciprocated through students' regular attendance and the completion of their homework assignments.

The intermediate-level teachers at KMCS wholeheartedly embraced the concepts of student agency and reciprocity-of-effort. They refused to make excuses for students; rather, they expected their students to work diligently and to perform as well as every other student in the district. Students were held accountable for work completion and for appropriate behavior. They were often asked to stay at school until work was completed ... for a reasonable amount of time and with parental permission. They were expected to submit "quality work," and over a period of time, there was a visible change in the projects that were prominently displayed in the hallways. And most importantly students were taught to be effective self-advocates in their education and in their own lives. For example, upper-intermediate teachers taught their students that they were capable learners and that asking for guidance or assistance from school personnel, or challenging policies and procedures in a respectful manner, were signs of strength and good decision-making ability.

These teachers also encouraged parental involvement, and were willing to devote the time and effort to be quite persistent in asking for parental support. Some exchanged diaries with parents and one teacher drove to homes to deliver assignments. They consistently telephoned or wrote notes to discuss academic concerns, to inform parents that homework was not completed, or to celebrate a terrific accomplishment. These teachers did not wait for parent-teacher interviews to meet with caregivers; rather, they talked and met with them regularly. In summary, the teachers were successful with their students because they believed that the children should fully participate in their education, they were courageous in confronting issues, and they were generous with their praise.

The new culture of learning at KMCS also included the lessons which were previously described as the hidden (Schaps, 2003, p. 3) or informal curriculum and which were taught without formal recognition. This hidden curriculum became public and was described as socially-responsible behavior wherein teachers modeled the way (Kouzes & Posner, 2002) and did not accept inappropriate behavior as the school standard (Dill & Haberman, 1995). The expectation for socially-responsible behavior was articulated in the school-growth plan, operationalized in all areas of our campus, defined in school newsletters and correspondence, and discussed with parents during conferences.

Madeline had been teaching for less than five years. She serves as an example of a teacher who developed student agency and created a culture of achievement in her classroom. Madeline completed teacher-education practicums at both inner-city and neighborhood schools and honed her skills in special and regular education. She had “grown into” an understanding of social justice principles and chosen to apply them at KMCS in an environment where the children often displayed negative behaviors and struggled with

learning. Madeline taught in a classroom where the children challenged authority on a daily basis. They did not subscribe to the “niceties of society” when they were struggling with their own issues. Often they arrived at school hungry and tired and resented doing academic work. They did not hesitate to complain about school rules and their assignments. Madeline chose to try to change the culture within her classroom. She responded to their negativity with positive comments. When the children were rude to her she calmly reminded that their behavior was not appropriate. When they arrived at school late, she didn’t chastise them . . . she simply welcomed them into the classroom and required that they remain after school to discuss the reason for their tardiness and to complete their assignments. Madeline expected her students to complete all assignments. To this end, she provided tutorials, wrote notes to parents, and made numerous phone calls to remind parents that homework was not completed. When students received gifts from the community Madeline taught them to accept with graciousness, and then she taught them to reciprocate by doing something for less fortunate children. And finally, when parents complained, Madeline respected their concerns and worked diligently to develop a relationship with them. Her ability to be consistently kind yet tenacious earned the respect of her students and their parents. Overall, through diligent work, high expectations for herself, and a commitment to supporting children, Madeline created a relationship of mutual respect with her students and parents. The students responded by working hard to meet Madeline’s expectations of them. Very often they exceeded their own expectations and were growing into respectful students and successful learners.

Challenging Pathologies and Deficit Thinking

Closely tied to efforts to create a culture of achievement were discursive interventions intended to challenge tendencies that pathologize students and to characterize student behavior and learning styles as abnormal. It has been my experience that educators working within a community of poverty can become engaged in practices that pathologize students and refer to differences as deficits. While not intentional, these practices reflect dominant stereotypes, social constructions, and the frustration of working in an under-resourced system. As Shields (2004a) notes “. . . educators may unknowingly, and with the best of intentions, allocate blame for poor school performances to children from minoritized groups based on generalizations, labels, or misguided assumptions” (p. 113). At KMCS, the first step in addressing our deficit thinking was acknowledging and understanding its meaning and existence within our school and our community. The second step was to acknowledge that some of our practices were directly aligned to generalizations and assumptions around poverty and described by Rimstead (2001):

Poverty exists in relation to affluence. When a society and its national dream admire the rich because they acquire wealth and power that allows them to stand outside the community by virtue of elite schools, restaurants, and estates, the same community must denounce the other polarity, those who do not succeed in the national dream and are therefore denied access to education, nourishment, and housing by the same logic of meritocracy. (p. 5)

At KMCS, as an alternative to pathologizing students through deficit thinking, I challenged teachers and support staff to recognize and respond to the responsibility for school failure that lies with the education system and society, rather than solely with children and their families, and to change their attitudes, beliefs, expectations and practices around

instructional practice and student capabilities (Gorski, 2008; Howard, 2007; Shields, 2006). Challenging deficit thinking and encouraging student agency and reciprocity-of-effort were discursive components of social justice that I integrated into discussions of teaching strategies and student achievement at staff meetings and in conversation with senior management in the school district. While my intention was to continue to encourage the theoretical and practical discourses of social justice that were taking place within the school “by inserting terms into everyday discourse” (Griffiths, 1998, p. 13), my intention was not, for example, to gain consensus on how individual teachers should respond to deficit thinking. My goal was to pose questions “in order to improve matters in schools” (Griffiths, p. 1) and to bring social justice theory to the forefront of our discussions. Some staff members immediately embraced these concepts and recognized that to some degree, we all participated in deficit thinking by identifying a lack of parental support and the influence of poverty as one of the primary reasons for low-academic achievement. I learned, that for others, understanding and embracing these dimensions of recognitive, distributive, and representative social justice required thoughtful self-reflection and the passage of time.

Communities of Difference and Exploration of Privilege

Closely related to the challenge to deficit thinking is the way in which educators approach difference; therefore, at KMCS, I introduced a social justice discourse that explored *communities of difference*. Creating a *community of difference* is challenging and complex, and requires that educators “show absolute regard for the intrinsic worth of every individual” (Shields, 2004b, p. 38) and move beyond, but do not disregard, traditional

school offerings including cultural presentations, multi-cultural fairs, visual-arts activities and language lessons relevant to the diverse student population within the school. Shields (2001), defines a *community of difference* as:

. . . a group of people from diverse backgrounds, with different beliefs, values, goals, and assumptions, coming together to achieve cohesion through new understandings, positive relationships, and the negotiation of shared purposes, and norms of behavior. A community of difference, like any community, depends on some degree of shared norms and values, but in this case, the starting points are values of inclusivity and respect, and the norms are commitment to reflection, critique, dialogue, and understanding of diverse perspectives. It is dissimilar in that it is not based on the assumption of commonality that often exists in more homogenous communities, but on explicit and negotiated understandings. (p. 71)

In beginning the conversation around *communities of difference*, the leadership team at KMCS examined our tendency to educate students based on assumptions around cultures that were different from their own. Subsequently, staff meeting discussions shifted towards a recognitive approach to educating the children. Central to this discourse is the recognition that the dominant culture represented by the public education system contributes to inequality and marginalizes certain groups. As San Antonio (2008) argues, “the will to engage in robust discussion about inequality . . . has been missing from our educational and political institutions” (p. 79) and that such dialogue “will require a rigorous effort to see what is often unseen, seek information from sources we rarely consider, and engage in collective action on the basis of what we learn” (p. 79). Razack (1994) suggests that central to creating a *community of difference* is the recognition of our own dominance and understanding of how the dominant world view operates in many educational institutions. Dominance and privilege operate by regarding difference from the norm as inferior when educators make decisions based on assumptions and on their own culture and experiences. At KMCS, for

example, our goal to honor and respect *communities of difference* required us to examine our beliefs and presumptions that education goals and strategies based on Eurocentric paradigms are more appropriate for students than those of the *First Nations* who understand that learning is embedded in memory, history, and stories.

Exploring the concept of privilege was essential to creating a *community of difference* at KMCS. Through experience, many educators learn that certain children in our school system reside with parents or caregivers that enjoy societal privileges while others live in families who are excluded from privilege. The matter of educators examining their own position of privilege is more challenging. Gale (2000) addresses this reality in arguing that individuals from advantaged groups have access to or possess a disproportionate amount of society's goods, and that if talent and effort were truly the basis for success, the access to goods would be organized differently. For Rimstead (2001), privilege operates such that:

. . . the poor are . . . subject to cultural exclusion in a variety of everyday situations, ranging from not being able to afford access to the technological revolution, bank credit and housing to not being able to thrive in school because of hunger, stigma, or lack of trust in the system. (p. 3)

Relating privilege to oppression, Paulo Freire states that “. . . the poor are subject to cultural invasion by the meaning system of the non-poor and must thus find a way to value their own thoughts about the world” (as cited in Rimstead, 2001, p. 3). These views challenge educational leaders to examine and respond to issues of privilege within their schools.

Howard (2007) contributes to the discussion of the KMCS initiative by articulating the relationship between privilege, marginalization and school choice in these words:

Systems of privilege and preference often create enclaves of exclusivity in schools, in which certain demographics are served well while others languish in failure or mediocrity. As diversity grows in rapidly transitioning school districts, demographic gaps become increasingly apparent. (p. 19)

Gale (2005) argues that privileging occurs in schools where the students who most closely model the language, culture, values and intelligence of the upper classes are rewarded. At KMCS, concerns were raised and struggles ensued when students displayed allegiance to the rules of their culture and contravened those of teachers. For example a teacher might expect a student to make eye contact with her during a conversation; whereas, in another culture children are taught that making eye contact in certain situations is disrespectful. A second concern was brought forward by ESL specialists who challenged non-specialists to examine our beliefs around the culture and values of children who immigrated to Canada. A particularly contentious issue was the absence of children whose families returned to their homeland for extended visits. The families saw the visits as opportunities to stay connected to their language, culture, and relatives, while teachers were frustrated that struggling students were not continuing with their academic work, particularly when a student's success would be measured by her performance on district and provincial assessments. Overall, our goal to challenge middle-class paradigms at KMCS through a social justice discourse challenged us to critique and reflect on our diverse perspectives and to identify the ways in which the school could shift the paradigm.

Communicating Through the Media

The need, within the public-school system, to communicate through the media has become increasingly important since the inception of school-choice policies. School-choice policy has resulted in scenarios wherein many families continue to reside in their traditional homes, yet participate in activities attached to their school-of-choice in a different

community, rather than their residential neighborhood. The migration of children to schools-of-choice has altered these residential neighborhoods such that common interests and a common purpose may no longer exist for the neighborhood, leadership and power relationships may not reflect the interests of the community, and social homogeneity may be replaced by social stratification.

While observing the negative reputation of the school, I directed my energies to building a thoughtful public-relations campaign communicated through the local media with the hope that it might inform the entire community of the accomplishments of the local school and possibly attract students to attend the school. In his pioneering work on the community press, Janowitz noted its key significance as a social indicator, as an indispensable source of information about the local community, and as an integrative force, emphasizing common values and consensus (as cited in Keller, 2003, p. 119), while Ediger (2001) recognized that persistence in communicating goals and accomplishments through the media is essential to establishing these goals. The overarching goal of a media campaign was to pursue recognitive justice for our students and to include them, rather than exclude from the public celebration of school accomplishments within the district. For our endeavours, a public-relations initiative encompassed “the methods and/or activities employed to promote a favorable relationship with the public” (Barclay & Boone, 1995, p. 183) and within the KMCS context, included enhancing the image of public education, fostering community involvement, and developing a sense of ownership and pride for children and their parents. This initiative, which was guided by the needs, interests and well-being of the students and their families, told a story of accomplishments by teachers, support staff, and community partners who thrive on a high level of collaboration with the school.

Developing Media Relations Guidelines

The initiative to change the culture at KMCS was a complex and challenging process. In light of school-choice options and student transiency, the incremental nature of change challenged the patience of school and community leaders at KMCS yet reflected the reality of transformation efforts within a complex organization. Overall, the public-relations campaign which celebrated academic achievement, student awards, community involvement, and school-recognition awards was directed towards the enhancement of school pride.

The overall goal at KMCS was to enhance school pride through affirmation and transformation and included a series of media and public relations initiatives which incorporated the following: (a) the term ‘inner-city school’ was used with discretion, (b) KMCS was referred to as an academic school, (c) the term community school was used with pride, (d) student-agency and student-endeavour were celebrated, and (e) a shift in media focus from student pathologies to student capabilities was requested. During my tenure as the principal, the expectation that students at KMCS could and would strive to attain academic and social success was reflected in classroom discussions, through the comments of adults who were encouraged by the spirit of fellowship and goodwill that was evident within the school, and through students who began to express pride in their attendance at KMCS. This shift in values in conjunction with the development of a public-relations campaign through the print media was viewed as essential to the development of a new school culture (Hulley, 2005; Saphier & King, 1985; Wilms, 2003; Zmuda, Kuklis, & Kline, 2004).

My goal was to implement a vigorous publication-relations campaign through the print media, which in addition to two community and two regional newspapers, included our school and community newsletters, local church bulletins, school-district bulletins, and municipal publications. At KMCS, working towards continuous improvement through a public-relations campaign was an iterative process and required planning, persistence and vision. The following strategies are those that I developed through research as well as experiences encountered through my practice as a school principal. To begin, I did not organize a school-based media committee, rather I enlisted the aid of the school leadership team and liaised with the Parent Advisory Committee, city councillors and leaders within the service and business community. I followed my research discoveries carefully and ensured that the public-relations plan respected the goals and objectives of school-district senior management and the Board of Trustees, that published messages supported our objectives, and that the medium was appropriate to the audience. Over the course of the initiative, and through trial and error, I learned strategies that were relevant to the KMCS constituents (see Appendix 1). I learned the importance of cultivating a relationship with local educational reporters and editors that were sympathetic to the school, respected the goals of the school, were committed to presenting a positive image, and responded positively to a request for support that was grounded in achieving social justice for students who had been marginalized by the press. I also learned of the need to acknowledge the assistance of each reporter, of the importance of a “thank you” after a positive article was written about our school, and of the value of profiling student representatives, as opposed to teachers or administrators, for interviews, photographs and feature articles.

My work was productive. Participants in the school community were delighted to

read articles about KMCS accomplishments in one national newspaper and in the two major newspapers in the region. They were even more excited when two full-colored front page profiles surfaced in the local newspapers and then became almost blasé when they read articles in the papers on a regular basis. We celebrated our new found publicity by (a) purchasing copies of newspapers for children who were featured in articles or photographs, (b) displaying all newspaper articles in a prominent location in the school, (c) consistently including the newspaper header with the article to identify the newspaper and publisher, and (d) advising community agencies, school-board personnel, partners and service providers of publications. The most exciting “publicity event” at KMCS was the day that our school was mentioned in an article in a national newspaper published in Eastern Canada. The article discussed the topic of year-round schooling and mentioned that YRS was being implemented at Kenneth Mann Community School. We became adept at attracting positive publicity. Our teachers did not hesitate to contact the local newspapers if their classes were undertaking interesting projects or working within the community. Our Community School Coordinator attracted a continuous stream of publicity to the school because of his contacts with local service groups and businesses. Everyone enjoyed positive newspaper coverage. We were proud when photographs were included in the two local newspapers in our small city. Each newspaper is part of a large chain, and each claims wide circulation. Both papers provided coverage for KMCS activities, but due to personal relationships with reporters, one newspaper provided more consistent coverage and regularly dispatched a photographer to the school. We were so successful in promoting the positive activities in our school that the editor of this paper directed his reporters to broaden their focus to include other schools in the area. According to some, KMCS had received an over-abundance of recognition.

Summary

This chapter addresses the more discursive aspects of the school's efforts to move towards a socially-just educational environment at KMCS and focussed upon the philosophical changes within the school and its surrounding community. These efforts have been identified as falling within the cognitive dimension of social justice. While separated out for discussion, these components are closely intertwined with the structural changes oriented towards redistribution of resources implemented at KMCS through YRS and enhanced programming.

It became apparent through conversations with the constituents that restructuring the school in order to improve student achievement and learning also required other efforts beyond year-round schooling, enhanced programs, and community school designation to transform the school's reputation such that KMCS was recognized as a "good school." While the staff and administration recognized that both generational and situational poverty continued to influence the lives of many students attending the school, both entities recognized that a shift in educational philosophy was necessary to inspire students towards improved academic achievement and learning, and to create an effective school. This belief, developed through staff research and professional development activities, reflected a systemic philosophical change at KMCS in which the acceptance of mediocre performance was replaced by the expectation of average or above-average student achievement.

Through a shift in discourse, the staff at KMCS raised awareness of the challenges faced by children and families living in under-resourced homes and attending under-

resourced schools, and under my leadership, many participated in discussions addressing pedagogy and social-justice thinking. Together we explored social-justice theory through topics including *communities of difference*, parity-of-participation, and privilege, and together we implemented the strategies that were appropriate to KMCS. Of most significance was the recognition that deficit thinking was influencing our practice and that students were pathologized because of this viewpoint. Our efforts to explore social justice theories proved educational and provided staff members with a new vocabulary that was valuable in working with professional colleagues across the school district. Understanding and applying social justice discourse was invaluable in preparing my reports and budget requests for the Superintendent's office. And finally, of significance was our ability to share the children's accomplishments and change our school image through a carefully constructed media and public relations plan.

In my final chapter I discuss the challenge of sustaining YRS, revisit my research questions, summarize the findings and discuss the limitations of my study. I then reflect upon the implications of my work and make several recommendations for policy development, practice and future research.

CHAPTER SEVEN

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this case study was to explore the politics of redistribution and recognition through a study of one under-resourced inner-city school and to share my findings with educators who are searching for strategies to improve their students' educational and social environment. The school at the centre of this case study is located in a public school district in a province which offers a range of choice programs. In general, choice policy is contentious within public education. As stated previously, the outcomes of choice policy are contradictory. As proponents argue, choice programs permit space for specific educational interests (Raham, 2002) and improve student achievement (Doddall, 2001). On the other hand, as opponents argue, selective admission policies discriminate against low-achieving students (Maguire, 2006) and "choice initiatives further diminish the power of urban educators to effectively and equitably meet the needs of children in the urban context" (Horn, 2006, p. 188).

The case study design provided the framework to share and critique the interface between theory and practice as the discursive and structural interventions unfolded at KMCS. The study detailed my work as a scholar-practitioner leader addressing the implications of school-choice and open-boundary policies that exacerbated issues of financial and social inequity in the school and it documented and analysed the structural and discursive interventions introduced to move the school towards advancing socially-just opportunities for its students. While the concepts of recognition and distribution were at times represented as two separate dimensions in my writing and reflection, in reality, it was the power of their

integration that made possible the positive structural and discursive changes at KMCS. The specificity of focus of a case study proved to be valuable in analyzing, critiquing, assessing, and reporting on my work at KMCS and for enabling me to enter into conversation with my fellow educators as I explored my research questions.

As a scholar-practitioner leader, I explored issues of privilege and marginalization, among others, and challenged educators, bureaucrats, policy authors, and community members to address issues of recognitive, distributive, and representative social justice. Through the application of a social justice imperative to my practice, I scrutinized my own learning, assessed the knowledge that was uncovered through my practice, and developed a learning community shaped by a social justice framework (Horn, 2006)). As a doctoral student who moved from practice to theory and back to practice, I was able to initiate and implement the structural and discursive strategies that created a more socially-just educational environment for students at Kenneth Mann Community School.

My social justice framework was informed by the work of Fraser (2001) and Gale (2000) who called for an integrated approach that primarily addresses both the distributive and recognitive dimensions of social justice. Distributive justice is concerned with how goods should be distributed equally unless unequal distribution would provide needed resources that would “level the playing field” for vulnerable citizens (Rawls, 1971, as cited in Gale, 2000, p. 255) and that injustice is rooted in the economic structure of society. The remedy to injustice is redistribution and economic restructuring. Delving into distributive social justice as one guiding force behind the restructuring of KMCS engendered a set of questions that shaped my work and the implementation of a full-service year-round schedule. In particular, asking questions with respect to issues of inequity and fairness challenged

school-based educators, senior managers in the school district, and community partners to examine and supplement resource and material allocations, staffing assignments, program offerings and social and recreational support systems.

Recognitive justice addresses matters of misrecognition that occur through cultural domination, and through non-recognition, often in the form of disrespect. Society must compensate by recognizing disaffected social groups and marginalized cultural groups. The recognition and legitimization of the equal moral worth of all citizens requires the advantaged to think from the standpoint of the disadvantaged, to generalize this standpoint and to include disadvantaged individuals and groups in the discourse around decision making. Fraser and Gale also point to the need to recognize those institutional practices that impede individual progress and development.

Overall, this *retrospective critical case study* illustrates the power of the integrative model of social justice that was envisioned by Fraser. The recognitive, distributive, and representative dimensions became inseparable in my work as a scholar-practitioner leader advocating for social justice. At KMCS, these dimensions are integrated and together provided the rationale for increased resources and recognition that were essential to the successful implementation of the comprehensive full-service YRS model.

Review of Research Questions

My first question asked the following: “How did the various interests and ideologies inform the introduction of school-choice and open-boundary polices; how did they either support or inhibit redistribution and recognition at KMCS; and what was the impact of these

policies on KMCS?” To answer these questions, I examined the claims made by both proponents and critics of these policies and through that process I explicated five key assumptions with respect to the benefits of school-choice policies and schools-of-choice that are not supported by empirical research. The assumptions that schools-of-choice provide a better education than neighborhood schools; parents always make informed choices around school selection; the exit of children from a neighborhood school will not harm that school; competition will automatically improve schools; and school-choice policies will provide equal opportunity and access for all students are not supported by empirical data. Using publically available data, I pointed to how these policies exacerbated the challenge of fully meeting the needs of the students at KMCS in that the open-boundary policy contributed to a population shift, where historically, approximately 50% of the students living in the area registered at other schools. During my tenure as the school principal, this population shift and decline was exacerbated by the opening of a specialized program in a nearby school-of-choice. Empirical data from the HSD and Census Canada indicated that, in comparison to other HSD schools, the students remaining at KMCS constituted the highest percentage of children with social needs and the highest percentage of students with learning needs. Our challenge as teachers, support staff, and administrators was to meet the needs of our children while working with insufficient resources, not the least of which was inadequate learning time for this particular population.

My second research question asked, “What were the limits and possibilities of various structural strategies, such as year-round schooling (YRS), that were implemented to mitigate the negative impact of school-choice and open-boundary policies?” This involved the implementation of full-service YRS at KMCS, the creation of enhanced programming, and a

critical appropriation of the community school designation. In chapter five, I began by examining the literature that discusses the concept and implementation of year-round schooling and then provided a detailed map of how I brought this proposal to fruition. I outlined the KMCS comprehensive YRS schedule and its component parts which included enhanced programs and a designation as a community school. In relation to this designation, I outlined the history and policies and practices of community schooling in British Columbia, as well as my approach to utilizing the community-school resources at KMCS. The structural changes that were outlined in the proposal to implement full-service schooling were grounded in social-justice theory. They were supported by documentation of injustices that were created through insufficient family income and a lack of recognition that children were marginalized within the community. Overall, I rationalized my requests for increased support for the children by identifying injustices and comparing the privileges of affluent schools against the lack of privilege for KMCS students. Arguing for social justice and parity-of-participation was an effective overarching strategy in my struggle to improve opportunities for the students.

Without question, the implementation of the full-service year-round schooling initiative at KMCS was dependent upon the support of teachers, parents, the senior management of the school district, trustees and community partners. The sustainability of the YRS project was also dependent upon improved academic achievement, student attendance patterns in keeping with historical school averages, good fiscal management, parental approval, and community support. My leadership was essential to the development and sustainability of the KMCS initiative. It was important that I consistently reviewed and reaffirmed, for all stakeholders, the goals and rationale of the initiative (Shields & Larocque,

1998), while the practical realities of the comprehensive calendar change and the challenges around budget shortfalls, revenue generation, space allocations, turf issues, staffing assignments, enrolment declines, and curriculum development required constant review and adaptation.

In summary, the implementation or operational phase at KMCS consisted of the translation of the policy initiative and goals into programs, procedures and regulations and served as the “incubation period” (Stevenson, 2000, p. 556) during which all components of the initiative were evaluated. The accountability phase, which was documented for the Board of Trustees, required the annual “study of both anticipated and unanticipated outcomes and changes in understandings and perceptions” (Rist, 1994, p. 413) and the determination as to whether the original goals remained in place and whether the objectives were realized.

Levin (2001) provided valuable insight into policy development and recognized trends that are “played out” in a public school district. The adoption of the KMCS initiative is reflective of the growing importance of the public debate around social justice. Levin argued that “the difference between reforms that disappear and those that last lies in the relationship of the reform to the larger social context” and that “reforms that are consistent with other important changes in society are much more likely to have lasting impacts than those that arise and are sustained only within the education system” (p. 195). Within the context of the KMCS program, all components of the initiative linked to the larger issues of child poverty, literacy levels, marginalized families and the need to improve student achievement. These issues are not limited to the case of KMCS, but are also found in high-profile societal and educational discussions. Thus, the issues garnered positive responses and financial support from many segments in society, particularly when the desire to increase

student achievement was linked with the implementation of early-literacy initiatives.

Stevenson's (2000) argument for the need to develop and articulate a public rationale links with Levin's (2001) claim that reforms which are consistent with important societal issues have the potential to be successful and sustainable. Within the KMCS community some parents and caregivers did not embrace the educational rationale for the implementation of a YRS initiative; rather, they stated that the traditional calendar with traditional school-breaks met their family and personal goals. However, the school goals resonated with many parents, educators and influential community leaders who recognized the potential for an enriched educational environment and improved social-support systems. As Stevenson (2000) notes, "students in schools involved in whole school reform were more likely to achieve greater academic gains than students in schools using pullout programs" (p. 551).

Stevenson (2000) also consistently articulated the need for policy initiatives to be grounded in empirical research. This reality played out in the adoption of the KMCS initiative. Staff, parents, senior management and the Board of Trustees requested empirical data as they assessed the validity of the claims around the educational advantages of reorganizing school calendars for the purpose of providing more continuous learning for children. During my tenure as the principal, the reporting of both qualitative and quantitative data remained the focus of all documents prepared for the Board of Trustees. These data supported my contention that implementing a full-service YRS plan could move us toward providing socially-just educational opportunities for students and could address the negative consequences of school-choice and open-boundary policies and existing problems that arise in impoverished and transient communities.

My third question asked the following: "What were the limits and possibilities of

various discursive strategies, such as efforts to change the school's reputation both internally and externally, that were implemented to mitigate the negative impact of school-choice and open-boundary policies?" In response to this question, in chapter six, I describe my efforts to shift the discourse at the school and in the community from a deficit orientation towards a capacity building approach. This involved integrating certain concepts into everyday school conversations in combination with a public relations plan to improve the school image. In my role as the principal of KMCS, I argued for the recognitive perspective of social justice in a variety of ways. I challenged my colleagues to recognize their positions of privilege as educators within the system, to reflect on how marginalization is intimately connected to and produced by the privilege of others, and to recognize the lived experiences of marginalized groups as valid. I also challenged my colleagues to examine the exclusion of social and cultural groups within the school community, to analyze and revise the pedagogical strategies within the school, and to inquire into the rationale for the exclusion of parent groups from the decision-making processes and discourse around choice programs. Overall, the recognition that institutional changes within KMCS were essential if our children were to flourish generated conversations with school-based and district staff with respect to policies that contribute to marginalization, cultural imperialism, powerlessness, discrimination, deficit thinking, and lack of representation.

I now turn to my final research question which asks, "What recommendations can be made based on this *retrospective critical case study*, for a more socially just approach to open-boundary, school-choice and public-education policy development?"

Recommendations

Through the following recommendations, I address my concerns around the relationship between social-justice principles and education in general, and around the unforeseen consequences of open-boundary and school-choice policies in particular. The following recommendations are based on my experiences as a school administrator, the *KMCS retrospective critical case study*, and my belief in the moral imperative to work towards improving educational opportunities for all children. The recommendations are developed around the following topics: social-justice principles, pedagogy and teacher training, school choice policies, staffing policies, and extended-learning practices.

Recommendation #1

I recommend that the MOE develop a policy which encourages practicing teachers, administrators and senior managers to pursue or continue to pursue the study of social-justice theories and principles as they relate to public education.

Teaching educators to recognize inequities within systems and to examine their own assumptions, preconceptions, biases and stereotypical ideas could assist them in becoming more effective social-justice practitioners. Specifically, researchers maintain that to begin a learning process, educators must first become aware of and be sensitive to social injustice and to the role that societal inequities play in the education and care of their students, and that teachers in particular, “have to see themselves as participants in the struggle to promote social justice. They have to see themselves as capable of and entitled to critique social and

educational practices and to bring about social and educational change” (Lucas, as cited in Michelli & Keiser, 2005, p. 174). Teacher-education programs offer a range of opportunities for pre-service students to engage in conversations and in practical experiences designed to foster a commitment to social justice (Michelli & Keiser, 2005), yet practicing educators at all levels of the public education system may not have been provided with an opportunity to explore social-justice principles. Practical learning opportunities to share and develop an understanding of social-justice concepts can be provided through school and district-based professional development activities, service-learning in university-based teacher education courses, community involvement, academic reading, and action research. My study provides both practical and theoretical knowledge for educators and illustrates the power of the integration of the recognitive, distributive, and representative principles of social justice as a conduit to parity-of-participation for students.

Recommendation #2

I recommend that school districts create a policy requiring that, prior to approval and implementation, proposed school-choice policies, learning initiatives, curriculum innovations, and assessment practices be evaluated through a social-justice framework. Educators could explore whether the repercussions of initiatives would result in inequities, marginalization, or cultural imperialism. If such conditions would result or be exacerbated, initiatives could be modified to redress or prevent harm or discontinued if modifications are not manageable.

As stated previously, and according to Fraser, the paradigms of distributive and

recognitive social justice, when placed on a continuum, provide a perspective through which an activity can be viewed. An evaluation could be guided by these paradigms, as Howe (1997) notes, “regardless of what a reform is designed to accomplish, we should ask, how will it affect the equality of educational opportunity of students in any school adopting the reform” (p. vii)? It is my belief that an evaluation should consider equality of access, equality of the compensatory measures available to students, and the equality of results.

Recommendation #3

I recommend that school districts compensate schools that experience negative repercussions from the implementation of school-choice and open-boundary policies and that districts adopt a weighted student-funding formula which would supply schools with additional staffing, learning resources, and extended-learning time based upon the needs of the population.

Compensation is particularly important in decentralized or site-based managed systems where building principals must finance most programs and services through operating and targeted funding. A decline in student population translates into a reduction of funds and the cancellation or reduction of programs and services. I maintain that schools that realize a population decline and a reduction in funding through school-choice and open-boundary policies should be compensated so that children remaining in the school receive socially-just educational opportunities. Of particular importance is the concept of parity-of-participation which maintains that all children in all public schools are entitled to equal participation in programs, services and extracurricular activities. A socially-just education

forbids two-tiered systems and requires, for example, that all schools have appropriate special education services and quality fine arts, physical education and music programs. Additionally, I advise school districts to develop a funding model that recognizes the cognitive effects of living in poverty and to provide learning-assistance and behavioral support based on the actual needs of the student population. Currently, these student-support programs are funded according to a provincial formula which does not adequately recognize the disparity between schools. In order to provide equality of service for students under this recommendation, and to reflect the actual needs of the school, learning assistance programs could be funded according to the percentage of non-readers or children reading below grade level in a classroom as determined by district-approved reading assessments.

Recommendation #4

I recommend that the Ministry of Education develop a policy which provides financial resources to study time-on-learning including year-round schooling, balanced-calendar schooling, and extended-school days, and to support pilot programs that extend learning time for students.

I am an advocate for more systemic experimentation and research into extended learning initiatives and into the academic and social benefits of extended time. *The National Centre on Time & Learning* is dedicated to extending learning time and to increasing student achievement. The Centre reports that increased hours and minutes in a school day provide for more time-on-task for academic activities, more in-depth learning, more student engagement through project learning, increased interaction between teachers and students,

and extended opportunities for teachers to engage in professional development activities (National Center on Time & Learning, 2008). Extended learning opportunities can include (a) extended days and years, (b) modified calendars with existing days spread over a longer period, (c) modified calendars with intersession programs, (d) before, after-school, and evening programs, (e) full-day kindergarten and pre-school programs, and (f) weekend academies and summer-school programs.

Year-round schooling schedules, which take a variety of shapes, are centered on reorganizing the academic year to provide more continuous learning for children. The YRS calendar is structured to provide instructional periods and vacation weeks that are balanced across a 12 month period and is created by reducing the length of the summer vacation and redistributing those vacation days throughout the year. The curriculum and the number of days of instruction are generally identical to the traditional calendar in the public education system. Intersessions, the periods between academic terms, are a structural component of a year-round schedule and in full-service schools; in particular, intersession breaks should be utilized to provide additional remedial and enrichment programming for students. Full-service YRS, which incorporates community initiatives, creates an environment in which learning, recreational and social-support systems are provided for children along a 12 month continuum. Overall, educators and community members, in partnership with parents and caregivers, are empowered to enhance the social, recreational, and educational environments which contribute to a child's well being.

The recommendation to increase academic-learning time requires supportive public-education policy at the provincial, school-district level, and union level. For some, such as the students at KMCS, the extended learning provided through a full-service year-round

schedule can support students by increasing academic learning time, and allowing for additional social supports and a safe environment.

Recommendation #5

I recommend that school districts identify the diverse knowledge and pedagogy essential for teachers assigned to urban or inner-city schools educating students with a diverse range of needs. This recommendation could require that a clause approving differentiated staffing for these schools be written into the collective agreement of the local teachers' association and the provincial association. Within this scenario, I define a differentiated-staffing policy as one which supports the hiring of teachers with specific qualifications for specific schools as opposed to seniority-based hiring. For example, expertise in teaching children experiencing the cognitive and social-emotional effects of living in situational and generational poverty, knowledge of the influence of mental illness on children and families, and an understanding of the discursive and distributive components of social justice could more fully prepare teachers for assignments in urban schools. The current structural policies and practices which place the needs of children in tension with the needs of teachers could be ameliorated through this altered hiring policy.

Limitations of My Study

As noted previously, this inquiry is a *retrospective critical case study* that documented my work as an inner-city school principal from September 2002 through to January 2007. During this time frame I implemented numerous discursive strategies and several structural strategies including full-service year-round schooling. Because I was not pursuing my doctoral degree nor writing a dissertation during the implementation phase of these strategies at KMCS, I did not seek permission to publish quantitative and qualitative data relevant to the changes at KMCS. Given the changes in the staffing of KMCS and the mobility of families served by the school, I was unable to locate people to obtain their consent to utilize the data when I made the decision to complete a retrospective case study of my work. Nor was I able to include data that I used as part of my rationale for year-round schooling; for example, data which measured summer-learning loss and school-based satisfaction surveys administered to measure the appeal of year-round programs were not admissible. I sought permission from the HSD to use this information; however, the district required that I protect the anonymity of the children and families of KMCS. To honor this commitment, I have used pseudonyms for the school and the district and have excluded data and demographic information that would identify the school. Addressing the goal of anonymity meant that I could not include information which would have enabled me to more fully contextualize my research findings and recommendations. This kind of description would have enhanced my efforts in this dissertation to represent the context and culture of KMCS and the outcomes of the various interventions. The data that are included in this dissertation are publicly available through the HSD and the MOE.

A second limitation that must be noted is in relation to my position as an educator and the author of this dissertation. Specifically, this case study is written from my perspective as the principal of the school and reflects my vested interest in the success of full-service year-round schooling and other structural and discursive initiatives. That said, in the 18 months since I resigned from the HSD to pursue a career in post-secondary education, I have continued to research and learn about social justice, school-choice policies, and childhood vulnerabilities. This research is reflected in my dissertation and has increased my knowledge and enriched and informed my understanding of educational practices and policies.

Finally, my perspective has been shaped by my social-justice ideology. I strongly believe in the right of all children to participate in a fully-funded and academically-rich educational experience. My viewpoint, which challenges elitism and conflicts with the opinions of those who support market principles and neo-liberalism, clearly shapes my questioning of school-choice policies and the initiatives undertaken to bring about structural and discursive transformation at KMCS.

Recommendations for Future Research

I have identified two areas of future research that are important to the successful implementation of the initiatives outlined in this study. These recommendations are derived from my experiences, first, as the principal of KMCS and second, during the transition phase when I assisted my successor in preparing to become the principal. My first recommendation is to conduct research into the long-term sustainability of complex year-round schooling initiatives in Canada. My second recommendation is to conduct research into leadership

succession in schools such as KMCS. These areas of research can be treated as separate entities as well as complex overlapping dimensions of school leadership. My intention in making this recommendation is not to define sustainability but to bring the issue of the sustainability of full-service YRS to the forefront of discussions with educational practitioners and policy developers. A large body of literature addresses the complexity of sustainability (Fullan, 2001; Fullan, 2005; Haser & Nasser, 2005; Mannarino, 2003; Marzano, Waters & McNulty, 2005; Shields & Oberg, 2000b; Zmuda, Kuklis & Kline, 2004). Similarly, I do not attempt to define succession or succession planning in my second recommendation. Rather, my goal is simply to acknowledge that leadership succession plays a significant role in the continuation of innovative educational initiatives (Haser & Nasser, 2005; Mannarino, 2003) and to call for research into succession planning in full-service year-round schools.

In relation to methodologies, I would encourage other scholar-practitioners to engage in critical and retrospective case study research as this approach proved to be an excellent means of presenting the qualitative and quantitative data essential for my study. Case studies are valuable because they are particularistic; we need more detailed accounts of scholar-practitioner leaders that focus on “a particularistic situation, event, program or phenomenon” (Merriam, 1998, p. 29).

Summary

The findings, recommendations and experiences shared in this dissertation were gleaned from my practice as an educational leader. They illustrate a journey that began with

the recognition of the need to address issues around student achievement and learning and continued through the implementation of a school-restructuring and transformation plan. My journey was prompted by a personal belief that children are entitled to equal educational opportunities within the public-school system and continues with the appropriation of social-justice principles as the guideposts of my practice as an adult educator.

This document is written from my perspective as an educator and a scholar. The challenge of completing this work has given me the opportunity to reflect upon the educational, social and cultural practices of one elementary school in British Columbia. The process has required me to become a critical thinker and to delve into a range of research literature in order to explore issues around policy development, social justice, school choice, social ills, mental and physical health concerns, and the impact of poverty on children. Most importantly, it has required me to link theory to practice and practice to theory, to converse in an academic environment, and to respond to theoretical challenges from my peers and colleagues.

My purpose in completing my doctoral studies was two-fold. First, I sought to bring attention to the negative consequences of the impact of school-choice and open-boundary policies on certain communities and, in relation to KMCS, to explore how these policies exacerbated an existing set of problems that are familiar to ‘inner city’ schools. Second, I sought to outline a number of interventions initiated under my leadership as a response to existing problems endemic to under-resourced schools. These interventions focused on structural as well as discursive transformations including a comprehensive year-round schooling plan, enhanced and specialized programming, critical appropriation of the community school designation, and various discursively oriented efforts utilized to shift the

culture and philosophy of the school. While engaging in a retrospective case study, I examined these various interventions through the lens of distributive, recognitive and representational issues of social justice. I learned the value of describing my requests for financial assistance and parity for children as issues of social justice, and I learned that I was most persuasive and successful when I integrated these social-justice concepts into my oral presentations and written proposals.

Although this dissertation is complete, my work in the area of social justice is far from complete. I recognize the difficulty of sustaining innovations and programs that challenge the traditions of a school system, and I acknowledge my responsibilities as an educator and scholar to contribute to the enduring conversation around social justice. As a consequence of my scholarly work, I feel confident that I have gained sufficient dialogical competence to speak publicly about my recommendations and beliefs and I often engage in critical dialogue intended to stimulate conversations around the oppressions which influence the well-being of children and families. The following statement challenges me to continue my work and it reinforces the importance of providing the quality education and social support system that is every child's birthright.

Children, it has been said, represent our future – and it is true! Each and every one of them, in their own way, will influence what the world of tomorrow will be like. They will help us to determine what values and what traditions we preserve, what ideas and knowledge we will hold, and, ultimately what we as a society and as a province represent. (British Columbia Ministry of Education Standards, “Diversity in BC Schools,” 2004, p. 4)

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APPENDIX A:
MEDIA GUIDELINES

Lezotte and Jacoby (1993) developed a public-relations checklist which includes the following recommendations relevant to a neighborhood school:

1. be conversant with and follow school-board communications policies;
2. establish a climate of openness and two-way communication with all partner groups;
3. establish a target audience;
4. accommodate and be accessible to the media;
5. develop a relationship with media personnel including local editors;
6. release information internally prior to communicating with the media and the public;
7. use the following four-point communication test to guide decision making . . .
who needs to know the information, what do they need to know, what is an appropriate timeline for communication, and, how do school leaders know if the message has been received by the target audience?

APPENDIX B:

YEAR-ROUND SCHOOLING GUIDELINES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Implementing a balanced-calendar schedule is a political issue within the parent community, the neighborhood and the educational community. A school principal advocating for year-round education is more likely to garner support if the initiative involves staff and parents from the outset.
2. Successfully implementing a calendar change requires a leader or principal with expertise, personal courage and positive relationships with staff. Personal courage is required to deal with the challenges and criticisms put forward when an initiative results in a change in policies and procedures.
3. The demands upon personal and professional time extend beyond the expectations of an administrator working within a ten-month school year. The availability of increased clerical support is essential to assist with the increased workload.
4. An intersession coordinator, other than the principal, is essential if a comprehensive full-service program is planned. The coordinator requires teacher credentials and expertise in curricular areas if the intersession programs are academic in nature.
5. Clerical tasks, at year-end, are less formidable than in a traditional school calendar. Reporting requirements which are normally completed within four weeks can be extended to seven weeks. Similarly, staff members report that organizing year-end activities (appreciation teas, sports days, and graduation) is less stressful than in a traditional calendar in that they can be scheduled over a seven-week period.

6. Teachers-on-call (substitute teachers) are in abundance during summer months since beginning teachers may seek work to supplement their incomes. Similarly, beginning teachers are available to teach mid-year intersession programs because they seldom have full-time contract work.
7. Beginning teachers, at the elementary school level, who are available for intersession and summer work, are often university graduates with current training in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Their ability to contribute to conversations around pedagogical practices and current research findings can be valuable to a school staff.
8. Special-services employees who work on a ten month contract can schedule individual student assessments and remediation programs during intersessions; therefore, students receive the mandated level of support throughout the school year. This procedure allows specialized staff to meet their obligations to students within a ten-month time frame.
9. Teaching staff must be informed that pension income should be examined for teachers who retire from a balanced-calendar schedule. Income may be reduced if the number of months of pensionable employment is recalculated.
10. It is essential that the human resources department of a school district commit to providing a range of assistance to teachers and support-staff members. To begin, staff currently employed within the school may not support calendar change. These individuals must be assisted in transferring to an appropriate school with a traditional calendar. Second, school staff must be supported in attending university summer courses if they were registered in a program prior to balanced-calendar implementation. And third, staff members who apply to postings within the school

must be informed of the balanced-calendar schedule and agree to work within the schedule.

11. Fiscal issues alter capital and operational expenses as follows: intersession programs require paid certified teachers as opposed to volunteer instructors, additional clerical support is required during intersessions, additional custodial support may be required throughout the year, maintenance costs increase due to increased usage of facilities, and air conditioning may required during the summer months.
12. At KMCS, offering intersession programming was contingent upon successful grant writing and through garnering financial support from service agencies and corporate sponsorships. Variable costs that would be borne by a host school district include staffing, recreation, supplies and meals.

APPENDIX C:



The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL- MINIMAL RISK RENEWAL

Table with fields: PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Shauna Butterwick; DEPARTMENT: UBC/Education/Educational Studies; UBC BREB NUMBER: H07-01509; INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT: N/A; CO-INVESTIGATOR(S): Marilynne L. (Lorna) Waithman; SPONSORING AGENCIES: N/A; PROJECT TITLE: The Intersection of School Choice Initiatives and Social Justice in a Public-School System: A Case Study of one Year-Round Elementary School

EXPIRY DATE OF THIS APPROVAL: September 15, 2009

APPROVAL DATE: September 15, 2008

The Annual Renewal for Study have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board

- Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Chair
Dr. Ken Craig, Chair
Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair
Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair
Dr. Daniel Salhani, Associate Chair
Dr. Anita Ho, Associate Chair