SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
AND
THE CULTURE OF THE SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study was an investigation of one elementary school staff's experience with a school-based school improvement program. Using the conception of school "culture" as an analytic construct, the investigator examined the interaction of the culture of the school with a locally developed school improvement program. For the purposes of this investigation, culture was defined as a commonly held set of values and beliefs. Using interviews and participant-observation, the researcher collected data from the school setting over an eight month period. Observational and interview data along with data in the form of program documents and minutes of staff meetings were analyzed to obtain a) an understanding of the shared values and beliefs that constitute the culture of the school and, b) a picture of the developing relationship between the culture of the school and the school improvement program.

Data pertaining to the culture of the school was analyzed and categorized into seven broad themes that appeared to characterize the school's culture. As a further refinement of the construct of theme, five "key suppositions" were identified. These key suppositions consisted of shared values and beliefs about a particular topic, and were seen as the cultural nexus of the school. They included a set of commonly held values and beliefs about the importance of 1) active involvement of students in learning, 2) ongoing professional development, 3) a cooperative ethos among staff, 4) active administrative leadership, and 5) time as a valuable commodity in the school environment.

Using these key suppositions as a framework for analysis, the researcher examined the interaction of the school improvement program with the culture of the school. Analysis of the program's implementation in the school indicated that
there was a reciprocal interaction between the program and the school's culture. There was evidence to indicate that three of the key suppositions had an influence on the way the program was implemented in the school. The key suppositions that had an influence on the program's implementation were 1) active involvement of students in learning, 2) active administrative leadership, and 3) time as a valuable commodity in the school environment. There was also evidence to indicate that the school improvement program acted to strengthen two of the key suppositions of the school's culture. The key suppositions that were strengthened were 1) a cooperative ethos, and 2) ongoing professional development.

An examination of teachers' perceptions of the school improvement process indicated that, on occasion, the improvement process held the potential for conflict when staff engaged in debate about multiple interpretations of some of the program materials. The researcher has hypothesized that in such situations of potential conflict, the culture of the school acted as a stabilizing mechanism in that it provided staff with a common set of assumptions on which to focus their school improvement efforts.

Advisor's signature________________________
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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Study

The characteristic one first notices when approaching Charles Kettering Ford (CKF) school is the sheer size of the building. Originally built in 1921 to a height of two and half stories, the school typifies the rectangular red brick architecture of Canadian schools of the early twentieth century. A row of cedar trees, taller than the school itself, stands outside the front of the school. An addition of a gymnasium and several classrooms, built in 1954 to accommodate the children of the post-war baby boom, extends the original structure of the school. Within the school grounds, an elaborate adventure playground and fitness track, built jointly by the local school board and the parks board, provide students and their parents with a place to exercise and play. Nestled beneath the cedars is a circular flower garden and speaker's podium built by the local chapter of the Rotary Club. Despite easy access to the garden through an opened iron gate in the meter high red brick wall, the blooming tulips are remarkably untouched by the 315 students who attend the school.

A visitor approaching the school during the noon hour on a typical day would see many students playing outside, releasing pent-up energies and emotions. Some would be playing on the adventure playground and fitness track, others would be running around on the gravel playing fields in back of the school, and still others would be walking and talking with the adults who monitor and supervise the children's outdoor activities. The school's principal, a teacher, and four of the personal attendants who work in the school's special education classes would all be outside circulating among the children.
Proceeding up the two flights of stairs and through the large double doors that form the main entrance, the noon hour visitor would enter the school to the sound of more young voices in the library, hallways, and classrooms. The traditional pattern of all students being outdoors at recess and noon hour does not hold here. Before and after school, and during recess and noon hour, students mingle in classrooms; some read, some play board games or just visit, while others work on homework assignments or use classroom computers. Downstairs during the noon hour the Daycare's games room bristles with adolescent energy. Some of the Grade Seven students chalk pool cues in preparation for a quick game of snooker, while others dance to music selected by the appointed disc jockey.

En route to the main office an observant visitor would notice hallways that tell of accomplishments past and present. Poster size framed photographs from the city's archives show the school as it existed over half a century ago in its original coastal forest setting. Photographs of muddy roads, false storefronts, wooden sidewalks, and rough hewn fallen timber show the pioneer community of which the school was initially a part. One photograph of the school's staff and students taken in 1921 provides remarkable contrast with a similar one taken three generations later in 1985. Student displays in the hallway describe the life cycle of the salmon and the school's involvement with a salmonid enhancement program. A display on a field trip to Fort Carlton presents a visual and written account of a curriculum project designed to introduce students to the history of the region in which they live. Further down the hall, modern technology boldly announces its impact on the school in a display titled "Compute Into Spring", which presents Grade Two musings about Spring in the form of illustrated stories that have been composed, edited, and printed using a word processing program.
Should the visitor return to the school on a regular basis, it would become apparent that embodied in the social system of the school is a rich collection of tradition and belief. There are underlying assumptions and commonly held values that structure and influence the daily operation of the school. In short, there is a "culture" of the school. For the visitor who comes to the school to learn about how and why it operates the way it does, there are stories to listen to and histories to be learned. Staff members can speak of career changes, professional growth, teaching style, and the philosophies that guide their pedagogy. They can tell of changes in student population over time, school philosophies, and the impact of leadership and innovation on the school. So too can the principal tell of old and recent changes; she can speak of her vision for the school, her efforts to introduce new programs, and her perceptions of the role she must play as educational leader.

Learning about the shared ideational bases that underlie the culture of a school is not easily done. It requires much time; repeated visits, the gaining of confidences, and the development of numerous working relationships are all necessary if one is to enter the world of the school in a way that provides in-depth understandings of what people think and believe.

This study is built upon such a process. The findings reported here are the result of an eight month investigation of one school's experience with a locally developed program for school improvement. The purpose of the study and the research questions that guided it are described in the following sections.

**Purpose of the Study**

This study grew out of the researcher's dual interests in the processes of school improvement and schools as socio-cultural entities. Central to the investigation was the thesis that every school has a "culture" which embodies a set of shared
beliefs and values, and that any change initiatives or innovations will be interpreted and utilized in ways that represent a reciprocal interaction between the innovation and the school's culture. Recent educational research reflects this idea, and indicates that culturally-focused research is a promising area for understanding the complexities of change in education. (cf. Sarason, 1982; Lieberman & Miller, 1984; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Flodin & Feiman-Nemser, 1986; Cohen, 1987). This specific study furthers this emerging research tradition through a detailed examination of the interaction of school culture and a program of school improvement.

A focus on the role of culture in the process of educational change significantly broadens the base for the analysis of change initiatives in education. A criticism of the recent thrust towards programs of school improvement and school effectiveness is that much of the research literature identifying effective schools focuses only on particular end-states or characteristics and neglects the processes that bring about those characteristics. Johnston (1987) argues that "characteristics" of effective schools are often artifacts and that these artifacts by themselves actually tell us little about the schools that produced them.

Much has been written about the characteristics of effective schools. We know that they give frequent, monitored homework, that they display order and discipline, and that instruction is focused on basic subjects.

But those are simply artifacts of a good school--the things that are produced by its operation. They are not necessarily the things that make the school excellent in the first place.

For years, archeologists and anthropologists have studied the artifacts produced by alien, and sometimes ancient cultures. The purpose of their study is to understand the culture that produced the artifacts, not simply to recreate the artifacts in modern society. Much of school reform, though, has been directed at recreating the artifacts of effective schools, rather than recreating the culture that produced those artifacts. (Johnston, 1987, p. 79)
A question of immediate and pragmatic concern arises from Johnston's claim that efforts at school reform often focus on the artifacts of effective schools, and in doing so, neglect the processes within the school that may have initially created those artifacts. Using Johnston's perspective, educational researchers can ask questions about the role of the culture of the school in school improvement initiatives. As Johnston has indicated, the links between artifacts and the cultures that created them are not always clear. Archeologists often begin their studies by looking at artifacts because that is all they have available to them in their attempts to recreate past cultures. We in educational research are more fortunate in that the cultures we study are not extinct; they exist in real form in the schools themselves, and that in itself allows us to explore deeply, in purposeful ways.

In a recent review of the literature on school improvement, Cohen (1987, p. 485) states that "to date, there has been little systematic research into the experience of schools participating in such [school improvement] programs or into the impact of these programs on student achievement".

The purpose of this study, then, was to examine in depth, the processes of school improvement not simply from a perspective that focuses on the implementation of previously identified artifacts, but from a much broader perspective, the theoretical basis of which is an emerging research tradition recognizing the importance of the culture of the school in the creation and adoption of innovation.

The Research Questions

Several broad questions guided this investigation. The central question and two sub-questions stemming from the thesis are as follows:

1) Within a context of school improvement, what is the nature of the developing relationship between the culture of the school and the school improvement program?
1a) How does the culture of the school influence the school improvement program?

1b) How does the school improvement program become integrated into the culture of the school?

Central to an investigation of the role of school culture in school improvement is an understanding of the conceptions of "effectiveness" and "improvement" held by the members of the culture. The following research question focused this part of the investigation:

2) What are the conceptions of "improvement" and "effectiveness" that are held by teachers who are involved in a process of school improvement?

**Design of the Study**

This study consists of a number of components. Historical, interpretive, and descriptive components combine to present a detailed picture of the school's involvement with the school improvement program. A brief description of the various components of the study follows.

Despite an eight month period of on-site field research, elements of the school's early involvement with the school improvement program occurred prior to the researcher's arrival in the fall of 1987. An accurate account of the school's involvement must therefore contain an historical component. Interviews with those staff members who were involved in the improvement initiative from the outset, along with program documents and school records provide the data for this portion of the study.

In addition to an historical reconstruction of the early phases of the school's involvement with the school improvement program, there is a component of this report that describes the essence of the "culture" of the school. It is important to note here that inferring cultural behavior is very much an interpretive act on the
part of the researcher. Wolcott (1985, p. 192) notes the extent to which descriptions of culture rest on researcher interpretations:

Culture is not lying about, waiting patiently to be discovered; rather, it must be inferred from the words and actions of members of the group under study and then literally assigned to that group by the anthropologist. "Culture" as such, and as an explicit statement of how the members of a particular social group act and believe they should act, does not exist until someone acting in the role of ethnographer puts it there.

Inferring "culture" from the words and actions of even a relatively cohesive group such as a school staff is a difficult and time consuming process. Research projects such as this one that use a group's culture as an analytic construct must first identify and describe the culture. Only after the culture has been described can the researcher begin the process of analysis which builds upon an understanding of the group's culture. The terrain one traverses in the conduct of cultural interpretation is often swampy ground. As a way through the slippery morass of qualitative data analysis, this research project has utilized a framework designed to assist in the elaboration of an organization's "culture".

For the purposes of this study, the conception of culture advanced by Sathe (1985) was used to decipher this school's particular configuration of values and beliefs. Sathe's conception of culture is built around the premise that cultures have at their root a set of shared beliefs and values. The details of this conception of culture are presented in Chapter Two.

The second component of this study, then, is an elaboration of the school's culture using Sathe's framework. The researcher's assertions about the nature of the school's culture and the evidentiary warrants for those assertions are drawn from the field notes and interviews with staff that were collected over the eight months spent in the school.
The third component of this investigation is an examination of the interaction between the culture of the school and the school improvement program. The way in which the culture of the school has influenced the operation of the school improvement program is described. Conversely, the effects of the school improvement program on the school's culture are also described. As is the case for the section of the study that describes the school's culture, assertions about the reciprocal interaction of the school's culture and the school improvement project, and the evidentiary warrants that support those assertions are drawn from materials collected during the field work segment of the study.

Research Methodologies

The research methodologies used during this investigation are those which are collectively known as "field research". Field research methods draw upon an interpretive research paradigm and utilize the researcher as the primary instrument for data collection. Intensive and complete immersion into the phenomena under investigation characterizes the data collection processes of this type of research. The two primary methods of data collection used for this study were interviewing, both formal and informal, and participant observation.

Formal and informal interviews were conducted with the principal and fourteen of the teaching staff. In addition, interviews were conducted with two district level staff who were closely associated with the district-wide implementation of the school improvement program.

The researcher's participant observation in the school consisted of a variety of activities including the following:

1) Observation and participation in classroom activities at a variety of grade levels.
2) Attendance at weekly staff meetings.
3) Attendance at after school inservice sessions and school-wide non-instructional (professional development) days.

4) Socializing in the staff room.

5) Noon hour supervision of students once a week.

A detailed sampling frame that spells out the people, places and events from which data were collected is presented in Chapter Three.

In addition to interview and observational data, various kinds of program materials were collected during the study. These materials describe the written structure of the school improvement program and include both district developed materials and the school's records of its improvement efforts.

Analysis of the Data

The claims contained in this study have been arrived at inductively. By moving the analysis from the particular to the general, and by using a comparative method of grouping data to develop explanatory constructs in the form of "themes" and "key suppositions" I have utilized a process of analytic induction to explicate the school's culture. In addition, a number of hypotheses have been developed that relate to the thesis that the culture of the school and the school improvement program have a reciprocal effect on each other.

Selection of the Site

The school site for this study was selected after consultation with district-level staff of a large urban school district (hereafter referred to as Ocean City School District). The primary criteria for selecting Ocean City School District as a site for the study was the district's recent involvement with a district-wide school improvement program. In September, 1987, Dr. Peter Grimmett (my research advisor) and I met with representatives of the district. At that meeting, I described my interest in the processes of school improvement, and asked for permission to
undertake a doctoral study that would focus on one elementary school's experience with the district's school improvement program. I asked the district staff to suggest an elementary school that was ready to begin implementation of the school improvement program during the fall of 1987.

Three weeks after my initial meeting with the district-level staff, they informed me that they had in mind three possible sites for the study. It was suggested that I approach the principal and staff of the first school and present them with my proposed research, and that the staff would then decide whether they wanted to participate in the study. If the first school chose not to admit me as a researcher, then I would repeat the same process with the second, and if need be, the third school.

In mid-October, 1987, along with Dr. Grimmett, I went to meet Mrs. Christine Brown, principal of Charles Kettering Ford Elementary School. (All subject names, including that of the school, are pseudonyms.) After I discussed my proposed research with Mrs. Brown, she suggested that she call a recess staff meeting so that I could speak to the staff that morning. At the staff meeting, I briefly outlined my proposed research and answered several questions about the investigation. The next day, at a one of their weekly staff meetings, the school's staff decided, by a majority vote, to allow me access to their school and classrooms to conduct the study. I was informed of this decision when I phoned the school to find out the results of their meeting.

There were, however, two teachers at the school who chose not to participate in the study. In accord with their wishes, I did not conduct any observations in their classrooms, nor did I interview them. All other teachers on the staff were observed or interviewed during the study.
The School Site

The school in which this study was conducted was a 315 student elementary school located in one of the older neighbourhoods of a large coastal city in Western Canada. While it is known officially as Charles Kettering Ford Elementary School, (a fictitious name) the staff and students usually refer to the school using only the initials CKF. In keeping with that, I have also used the initials CKF to refer to the school throughout this study.

The present-day neighbourhood in which the school is located is predominately a working-class area with a mix of housing that includes single family homes, large apartment blocks and recently built cooperative housing complexes. Family structures in the neighbourhood represent a range from multi-generation extended families, through nuclear families, to single parent families. A large portion of the student population live in homes in which the parent or parents are away at work before and after school. This is evidenced by the more than 100 school children who attend the before-and-after school daycare that is located in the basement of the school. Run by a city wide non-profit daycare organization, the Free Time daycare employs a total staff of ten childcare workers and currently has a good working relationship with the school.

Student Population. The seventeen staff at the school are keenly aware of the socio-economic make-up of their school's neighbourhood and perceive it to be an important factor in the operation of the school. When teachers were asked by the researcher to describe what they felt to be distinguishing characteristics of CKF, many teachers spoke first about the broad range of characteristics embodied in the student population. The following segment from an interview with one of the school's primary teachers is a typical description of the student population:
It's a school that has a lot of different characteristics, different make-ups, children and people with all sorts of different backgrounds - culturally and socially. Even in terms of money and order in society, some middle class people, and also some very lower class, needy people in the school....It's a school with some children that are very academically oriented and come from good backgrounds with no problems, no needs, and then we have some very needy children and parents....Its mixing probably cuts lines through such a wide socio-economic strand. You get both extremes here. You have the daycare here. A lot of children are looked after by other people....And yet, it's unique that there are stable families whose parents are at home, whose parents don't work, who are very stable, have some money and take regular holidays and so on. So you have a mixture of two extremes here, and it makes CKF quite unique. (Interview, Marion)

**School Staffing.** The staff at CKF are mature and experienced teachers. Only three of the seventeen staff have less than ten years teaching experience. Of those who have taught for ten years or longer, the average teaching experience is sixteen years.

Within the school, a broad range of educational programs is offered. There are 10.5 regular classroom teachers in classrooms that span from Kindergarten to Grade Seven. In addition, there are three special needs classrooms in the school. Two of the classrooms offer lifeskills programs to children designated as trainably mentally handicapped, and the third special needs classroom offers a program for children who are socially and emotionally disturbed. The school library and its accompanying program is run by a fulltime teacher librarian. Another teacher runs the school's gifted and music education program, while another runs the school's fulltime learning assistance program. A number of students in the intermediate grades are learning how to play stringed instruments from the itinerant strings teacher. CKF has one fulltime principal, a fulltime non-teaching administrative assistant and a fulltime secretary. Building maintenance is provided by a fulltime engineer and his assistant.
Limitations of the Study

The purpose of this study was to document and examine one school's experience with a school improvement program. It is recognized that elements of school improvement draw upon school effectiveness research, and that school effectiveness research often uses student achievement scores as an outcome measure. However, during this study, an analysis of student achievement scores did not constitute part of the investigation. The reason for this relates to the intentions of those who designed the school improvement program. As conceptualized by staff at the school board office, the particular school improvement program that CKF School was using was not intended to orient schools towards the use of achievement scores as a way of measuring school effectiveness. The following excerpt from an interview with one of the district level staff relays the rationale behind not focusing on student achievement as a measure of effectiveness:

I think there are a lot of different types of outcomes that you can look at in terms of effectiveness. The easiest one of course is achievement. That hasn't been our focus and we've been very careful to say to people that it isn't, because, I think it leads to some fairly simplistic lock-step kinds of solutions. (Interview, Shelly)

One limitation of this study then, is the lack of outcome measures of which achievement scores are an example.

A second limitation of this study is related to the use of a single site for the investigation. Though the findings of this study will be discussed in terms of the implications they hold for settings beyond this particular case-study, the findings of the study will not produce knowledge claims that have been statistically tested as to their generalizability beyond the single site. Instead, the transferability of the knowledge claims pertaining to this study to other situations will depend on the degree of "fit" between the contexts.
A third limitation of this study relates to the passage of time. The events portrayed here are part of a fluid, dynamic kind of interaction between people, programs and contexts. As contextual considerations change, or as staffing within the school changes, familiar patterns of interaction and key cultural assumptions may also change. The work presented here is best considered metaphorically, as a snapshot or a portrait. It is a portrait of one school's experience with a school improvement program, frozen in time and bounded by the context in which it originated.

Delimitations

As described above, this study is a portrait of one school's experience with a school improvement program. The perspective used to examine this school's experience utilizes the concept of the culture of the school. However, this is not a study of culture per se but a study of the developing relationship between the culture of the school and the school improvement program. It is important to note that the conception of culture used in this study does not include the school's students, their parents, or any other community representatives. "Culture", as it is used here, refers only to the set of shared assumptions held by the staff of the school. The study is "ethnographic" in that it does involve "describing a particular culture" (Spradley and McCurdy, 1975, p. 670), but it does not reflect a focus that is strictly anthropological in nature. Describing the culture of CKF School was not an end in itself, but rather, a necessary precursor to documenting the developing relationship between the culture of the school and the school improvement program.

Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter Two of this document presents an overview of the literature on school effectiveness and school improvement. Chapter Two also describes the conception
of culture that was used to orient the investigation. The third chapter describes the methods and procedures that guided the collection and analysis of data. Chapter Four presents the reader with an overview of the history and structure of the school improvement program used in Ocean City School District. Chapter Five describes the culture of Charles Kettering Ford Elementary School, and Chapter Six describes, from a chronological perspective, the school's experience with the improvement program. Chapter Seven contains assertions about the interaction of the culture of the school and the school improvement program. The concluding chapter, Chapter Eight, discusses the implications of the findings and suggestions for further research.
CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the literature pertinent to this study. This review begins with a brief description of how research that focuses on school effectiveness differs from research on school improvement. It then moves to a discussion of the origins of the school effectiveness movement and the resulting moves towards programs of school improvement. Several recent reviews of the literature on school improvement are discussed, and the predominant forms of contemporary school improvement initiatives are described. Also included in this chapter is a discussion of research on the culture of the school. Included in the discussion of this research is an overview of those studies that have looked at school culture as it relates to school improvement. The final section of this chapter presents a description of the conception of "culture" that was used as a sensitizing framework this study.

School Effectiveness and School Improvement

In a comparative analysis of school effectiveness and school improvement research, Clarke, Lotto, and Astuto (1984) describe what they see as the essential differences between school effectiveness and school improvement.

The outcome variable of central interest to the school effectiveness researcher has been a measure of student achievement; for the school improvement researcher, it has been a measure of level of adoption of an innovation by a school or school system. The inquirers are, in fact, in pursuit of different questions. In the former case, the question is whether altering resources, processes, and organizational arrangements will affect student outcomes. In the latter case, the issue is whether schools can change and, if they can, how they do it. (p. 41-42)

Clarke, Lotto, and Astuto, go on to note that while effective schools researchers and school improvement researchers are often pursuing different kinds of
questions, they do however examine similar kinds of variables. Such factors as school climate, curricular materials, instructional strategies, educational leadership, teachers, and students may be considered by effective school researchers and school improvement researchers alike.

The Origins of Effective Schools Research

Though the current body of literature on school effectiveness is a disparate one, the study most often linked with a development of interest in school effectiveness is the study by Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weinfeld, and York, (1966). Now known as the Coleman report, this study suggested that a student's socio-economic status was as important a determiner of a student's academic achievement as any other factor, including differences between schools. Five years later the Rand Corporation received federal funding from the American government to undertake an investigation into the factors and determinants of educational effectiveness. Written by Averch, Carroll, Donaldson, Kiesling, and Pincus (1972), this wide-ranging review surveyed various studies of school effectiveness and came to a conclusion similar to that in the Coleman report. Averch, et al stated:

We must emphasize that we are not suggesting that nothing made a difference, or that nothing "works." Rather we are saying that research has found nothing that consistently and unambiguously makes a difference in student outcomes. (p. x)

Though Coleman (1966) and Averch et. al. (1972) painted rather dismal portraits about the effects of schools on student achievement in relation to socio-economic status, other researchers were, at the same time, identifying schools that were effective in bringing about academic achievement among students of lower socio-economic status. One of these researchers was Weber (1971). Weber studied reading achievement in inner city schools in New York, Kansas, and Los Angeles. After
comparing schools that did have high levels of student achievement in reading. Weber identified a series of factors that he saw as being related to high achievement. These factors were:

1. Strong administrative leadership.
2. High expectations for student achievement.
3. Positive school atmosphere.
4. A strong emphasis on reading.
5. Additional reading personnel.
6. Use of phonics.
7. Individualization of instruction.
8. Regular evaluation of pupil progress.

Another researcher active in the search for instructionally effective schools was Edmonds (1979a 1979b 1981). In a manner similar to that employed by Weber, Edmonds listed a number of ingredients that he saw as characterizing an effective school. The five characteristics Edmonds identified are as follows:

1. Strong administrative leadership.
2. High expectations for student achievement.
3. An orderly atmosphere conducive to learning.
4. An emphasis on basic skill acquisition.
5. Frequent monitoring of pupil progress.

It is interesting to note the overlap between Edmond's five characteristics of an effective school and the eight described by Weber in his 1971 research. Other studies of effective schools have generated similar lists, some having a fair degree of overlap with those listed above, while others include characteristics that neither Weber nor Edmonds mentioned. Austin (1979, 1981) listed twenty-nine
characteristics of an effective school. His list is far more encompassing and wide-ranging than those provided by Edmonds or Weber, and includes such factors as school principals who have had an education as elementary school teachers, and principals who have had a hand in selecting their school staff.

The Shift From School Effectiveness to School Improvement

An outgrowth of the school effectiveness research has been an attempt to use the findings of this research in programs of school improvement. In a review of the effective schools research, Purkey and Smith (1983, p. 429) comment that the school effectiveness literature has in some cases become a recipe for school improvement.

At the moment, public discourse on effective schools is dominated by literature reviews and scholarly editorials. These have captured educators and the public's fancy by reducing a disparate literature to simple recipes for school improvement.

It is striking to note the extent to which the school effectiveness literature has provided the content for many school improvement initiatives. In some cases, the two terms are used almost synonymously. In a 1983 article, Mackenzie reviews much of the work in the area of school improvement. While he focuses on what he calls "school improvement", much of Mackenzie's review is grounded in the school effectiveness literature. For Mackenzie, the objective of the improvement process is to bring about changes in the school so that the school resembles an effective school. A more recent review of school improvement programs indicates that the findings of school effectiveness research are still a predominate part of such programs. In their review of mandated school improvement programs, Levine and Leibert (1987) describe the focus of school improvement programs as essentially a derivative of school effectiveness research.
Individual school plans usually specify a number of areas and dimensions on which improvement is to occur. For example, subject-area headings for which improvement must be planned at the elementary level typically include: reading, language arts, math, social studies and science. Other dimensions for which goals must be specified and plans developed often include descriptions such as school climate, attendance, staff development, parent involvement and testing. As often as not headings are generated by research-based lists of "effective school" characteristics such as the common six-part rubric delineating outstanding leadership, high expectations, positive climate, frequent monitoring of instruction, focus on basic skills, and parent involvement. (Levine & Leibert, 1987, p. 398)

Cohen (1987) also describes the majority of school improvement programs as being based on school effectiveness research. In a major review of the literature, he describes the similarities of school improvement programs.

Although programs vary in their particulars, they typically incorporate the following key features.

First, school leadership or planning teams consisting of the principal, representatives of teachers and other professional staff, and sometimes parent, community, or student representatives, provide overall guidance to the school's efforts. The team is generally responsible for conducting a needs assessment, identifying targets for improvement, developing improvement plans and overseeing implementation, and assessing the results and effects of improvement activities.

Second, the programs use assessment instruments based on the effective schools research. The instruments are typically questionnaires or interview guides, often supplemented by school records and data on student achievement and background. The general strategy here involves engaging the school staff in comparing current schooling practices with those identified as optimal in the research. On the basis of these comparisons, as well as the input of the school staff and the informed judgements of the school team, priorities for school improvement are identified.

Third, program developers provide some sort of technical assistance. Rarely is the staff in the school expected to implement a school improvement entirely on its own. (Cohen, 1987, p. 484-486) (original italics)

Examples of effectiveness-based school improvement programs abound. Often the program titles themselves incorporate the word "effectiveness"; others refer only to "improvement". An example of a recently developed large scale, effectiveness-based school improvement program is one known as the Midcontinental Regional Educational Laboratory's Effective Schools Program, or,
McREL-ESP for short. In an interim report on the progress of the program, the developers describe the roots of their program of "systematic school improvement":

The effective schools movement is a combination of two related but essentially separate phenomena. One is centered solidly within the educational research community and focuses to a great extent on systematic investigations of relationships between school characteristics and student achievement or between classroom characteristics and student achievement. The other is grounded in the world of educational practitioners, where state, district and building-level educators attempt to implement those characteristics of effectiveness which research findings suggest will stimulate improved student learning. (Everson, Scollay, Fabert, and Garcia, 1986, p. 35)

The last phrase of the above quotation, "attempt to implement those characteristics of effectiveness which research findings suggest will stimulate improved student learning" is representative of what I refer to as "naive school improvement." I use the term "naive" because I believe that many of those working in school improvement have lost sight of the original context and limitations of school effectiveness research. A less than clear view of the limitations of the effective schools research, combined with a sloppy and imprecise use of language, tend to lead would be school improvers to use jargonistic phrases such as "implement the characteristics of effectiveness" and "stimulate improved student learning". It is important to recognize that educators do not implement "characteristics" or "characteristics of effectiveness" which "stimulate improved student learning". Rather, educators who are interested in school improvement implement particular educational practices, policies and organizational structures that appear to have some correlation with higher than average student achievement (as measured by standardized achievement tests). The word appear is put in italics to highlight the fact that, at best, the findings of the effectiveness researchers are correlational. There is, to date, no evidence that can be clearly
claimed as causal evidence, and as the Johnston (1987) quotation in Chapter One indicated, "effectiveness" characteristics may indeed be artifacts of a particular school.

The bottom line, then, for many of the naive school improvement initiatives is to implement educational practices, policies and school organizational structures that are known to have some correlation with higher student achievement scores. Given this situation, it is important to ask, "What is the vision that guides such improvement initiatives?" Wherein lies the improvement if the only change in schools is an even greater reliance on mechanical measures of pupil performance? Is the recent thrust toward programs of school improvement merely a resurgence of a conception of "education" that is essentially measurement focused - education as a process that is concerned mostly with the attainment of prespecified objectives?

Writing on "the ecology of school improvement", Eisner (1988) lays out both a vision of school improvement and a criticism of what he sees as over-reliance on testing.

The aim of curriculum and teaching is not simply to help students meet the demands of schooling, but to help them use what they learn to meet the demands of life. What this means practically is that both the curriculum and the teaching should help students internalize what they have learned and relate it to life outside of school. We must move away from programs and methods and incentives that breed short-term compliance and short-term memory...What we evaluate and the ways in which we evaluate have a profound effect on what we pay attention to in school....Our standard evaluation mechanisms - essentially a narrow range of achievement tests - are inconsistent with much of what we need. They are too narrow, they neglect personal forms of achievement, they encourage educationally conservative practices, they foster an instrumental view of education, and they direct our students' attention to very limited goals....UCLA's Center for Educational Evaluation estimates that schools devote a full month each year to the testing of students. Is this use of time in our students' best interests? (Eisner, 1988, p. 28, 29)

Eisner's vision for a broad education relevant to life outside the classroom, and his concerns about an over-reliance on testing are a remarkable contrast to the view
of schooling represented in the following excerpts from a report on the outcomes of the McREL-ESP.

District Level Changes
A district-wide curriculum review and development system. The results of student assessments with standardized tests have been added as the motivating force behind program planning, program revision and textbook selection activities. The new process, which systematizes and integrates all these activities, now begins with a student-focused needs assessment based on detailed analysis and comparison of the content in and the student scores on the various assessment instruments used in the district, e.g., Kansas City Competency Tests; Lippincott Criterion Assessment Tests; Scott, Foresman Skills Tests and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. The content analysis of these tests feeds into and supports the K-12 articulation effort, and the analysis of student scores by subtest and item allows for a systematic, data-based and detailed assessment of strengths and weaknesses in both student learning and teacher instruction. This information is also used in curriculum and inservice planning.

School Level Changes
1. curriculum monitoring on the part of principals;
2. diagnosis and prescription as a component of the reading, mathematics and spelling programs;
3. analysis and discussion of test content as part of curricular review;
4. time allocation for skills development within every subject area;
5. systematic attention to test-taking skills.
(Everson, Scollay, Fabert & Garcia, 1986, p. 42-43)

It is clear in the above example that a concern with testing and test results is a large part of this particular school improvement program. The first section of the quote indicates, that in this instance, education has been stood on its head. That is, the tests themselves have become the instruments that determine curriculum content and focus. Here, we see the curriculum serving the tests - the measure of progress has become the master, and curriculum the servant. The age-old foible of "teaching to the test" has apparently been institutionalized. That this has come about through a program that uses the label of "improvement" is indeed ironic.

It is not my intention in this review to be overly negative. Rather, the intention here is to provide a radical criticism of school improvement. "Radical" as it is used here, refers to going to the root or origin of a phenomenon and looking at what is
essential and fundamental. "Critical" refers to making a judgement, forming an opinion about something. To engage in radical criticism then, means to look at, and think about the underlying standards, principles and value positions embedded in a phenomenon, and to form an opinion about what one sees. In applying such a critical perspective to the kinds of "naive" school improvement initiatives described above, it is apparent that for many programs, "improvement" equates with bringing about higher student test scores, greater standardization of curricula, and an increasing reliance on summative evaluation of student progress as a measure of "effectiveness".

Lest too bleak a picture of school improvement programs emerges from this review, it is important to note here the existence of school improvement programs that use much broader conceptions of improvement and effectiveness than those which are used in "naive" school improvement initiatives. I refer to these improvement initiatives as "context sensitive" school improvement. The term "context sensitive" is used here because the initiatives that draw upon broad conceptions of improvement and effectiveness, recognize the importance and complexity of context in attempts to improve schools. One such example of a school improvement initiative that draws upon a broad conception of improvement is Goodlad's proposed National Network for Educational Renewal (Goodlad 1987). Built around the idea of school-university partnerships, Goodlad's vision for school improvement involves "simultaneous individual and institutional renewal" (p. 4). Maloy and Jones (1986) describe a similar program of school-university partnership that aims to bring about school improvement. They report that one of the positive outcomes of their school-university partnerships was an enhanced
communication among teachers and an increased reflexivity about teaching practices.

This kind of school improvement is not an add-on, a special reward, nor a response to a "problem". It is an ongoing process of identifying priorities; communicating about positive aspects of school among peers, supervisors, parents and community members; and sharing of successful coping strategies as they relate to the goals of the school....Effective partnerships provide "occasions" for teachers to consider and reconsider their own roles in light of the school's larger purposes. An outsider's perspective invites reflexivity about one's cultural presuppositions. A context that starts with school improvement goals - happily a common characteristic of partnerships - invites positive, fresh approaches and appeals to teachers' professional expertise. (Maloy and Jones, 1986, p. 24)

School improvement programs that revolve around school-university collaboration are one variant of context sensitive improvement programs that draw upon broadened conceptions of improvement and effectiveness. Other variants of such school improvement programs are those that draw upon the findings of the school effectiveness research, but downplay the concern with student achievement results as a measure of effectiveness. The school improvement program that was the subject of this investigation is an example of such an effectiveness based program. A substantial portion of The School is the Key program is based on school effectiveness literature. As described in the documents that accompany the program, there are five areas in which schools may focus their improvement efforts:

1. Focus on instruction.
2. School climate.
3. Instructional leadership.
4. Staff development.
5. School organization.
A comparison of these five factors with the characteristics of effective schools identified by Edmonds and Weber indicates overlap in the areas of instructional strategies, school climate and organization, and instructional leadership. The binder of information that accompanies *The School is the Key* has as the first forty pages of its content, a history and review of the effective schools' research. Yet, as described in Chapter One in the section on limitations of the study, changes in student achievement was not one of the indicators of effectiveness that was of concern in this program.

When I asked one of the two key developers of *The School is the Key* to describe an effective school, he gave this description:

> In this context, I'd say a school that has looked at the five significant factors; their leadership and how it functions, and how it sets the mission and the goals and priorities and the decisions it makes around those for the staff. School organization - how it's put together. School climate - the factors that go into making the climate a positive one. Their instructional program - is it coordinated? Is it articulated? Is it being delivered in the structurally approved kinds of ways? Were teachers able to call upon different techniques and strategies to do it? And finally, is there a renewal built into a staff development model so they can as a staff embark upon a new issue, a new curriculum, or an instructional program, get the resources and the training, and maintain it. A school that does all those things is a school that's meeting its goals and is effective and is doing the job. (Interview, Derek Hathaway)

The conception of effectiveness articulated in the above quotation has a number of elements to it. Clearly, one sees influences from the effectiveness literature there, but also evident is a concern with renewal, decision-making and the introduction of change into the school setting.

*The Improvement Process: Beyond School Effectiveness*

While the findings of school effectiveness research have provided the focal point for much of the content of recent school improvement efforts, it is important to note that there is another dimension to school improvement. This other dimension is
that of the improvement process itself. Researchers working in the area of school improvement are interested not only in the content of school change but also in 'how' they change. In addition to a concern with the substantive content that constitutes the change itself, they are concerned with what factors inhibit, prevent, or facilitate change and improvement. The following section of this review briefly discusses school improvement as a kind of change and innovation.

School Improvement as Change and Innovation

Research in the area of school improvement has a much longer history than research in the area of school effectiveness. Clarke, Lotto and Astuto (1984, p. 51) see the interest in school improvement spanning more than fifty years beginning with Paul Mort's studies of educational change in the 1930's. Of the numerous studies on educational change and innovation that have been done, several large scale, landmark studies stand out. Berman and McLaughlin's 1977 study for the Rand Corporation looked at the implementation of federally sponsored programs designed to improve the quality of public education in America.

One of the more interesting conceptions to come out of the Berman and McLaughlin study was the notion of "fidelity implementation" as distinct from "mutual adaptation" of an innovation. By fidelity implementation, the authors meant that the innovation in question was implemented exactly as it was designed by the developers, with no modification or alteration by the teachers or schools that were doing the implementing. By mutual adaptation, the authors meant that the innovation was adapted by teachers or schools to meet the particular needs of the classrooms or schools in which the innovation was being implemented. However, at the same time that the teachers adapted the innovation, they themselves adapted their behavior in ways that allowed the innovation to impact
upon their practice or upon the program of the school. Berman and McLaughlan describe the process of mutual adaptation:

The initial design of an innovative project must be adapted to the particular organizational setting of the school, classroom or other institutional hosts, and, at the same time the organization and its members must adapt to the demands of the project. Many educational innovations may fail to have desirable effects because the project is not adapted to the institutional setting or vice versa during the implementation stage. (1977, p. 349-350)

A more recent large scale study on educational innovation by The Network Inc. (1981) casts doubt on Berman and McLaughlan's hypothesis that mutual adaptation is a successful way to implement educational innovation. The Network study, also known as Dissemination Efforts Supporting School Improvement, (DESSI) found evidence which indicates that fidelity implementation of educational innovation is indeed possible, and that mutual adaptation may not be the best way to implement innovation in educational settings. It is important to note though, that the innovations that Berman and McLaughlin were looking at in their 1977 study were of a different nature than the innovations examined by the DESSI team. In the case of the Berman and McLaughlin study, the researchers were looking at broadly based and often loosely defined programs such as compensatory education, or open classrooms, whereas in the DESSI study, the researchers were looking at innovations with an already proven track record of success in other districts. In the DESSI study, innovations that had been proven successful elsewhere were simply being taken and transplanted into other districts. In the Berman and McLaughlin study, the researchers were looking at innovations that were being developed, often for the first time, by the districts in which they were being used.
Grimmett (1987) has contrasted the DESSI approach to yet another approach to school improvement - that of the problem solving approach. He describes the problem-solving approach:

A local committee or task force is established (by central office personnel, the school administrator, the school-based teachers or by all parties together) to undertake an assessment of the needs of the school's educational program. A problem/need is identified and defined by the local group, with the effect that school-based practitioners' definition of a locally felt need or problem is respected. The task force then researches the problem, retrieving all the information it can before generating alternative solutions for the diagnosed need. In doing so, teachers practice cooperative learning because it is as a team that they decide on strategy for addressing the problem and gather the kind of information that enables them collectively and individually to understand the problem more fully. (Grimmett, 1987, p. 109)

Grimmett's description of the problem-solving approach highlights an important facet of many school improvement initiatives. Namely, that school improvement processes occur in contexts that are socially constructed. A construct often used to describe the social context of schools is that of "school culture" or "the culture of the school". The following section of this review examines the various conceptions of culture used in educational research literature.

Research on School Culture

Interest in school culture dates back as far as the 1930's, with Waller's sociological study of schools. Writing as an observer using a sociological perspective, Waller noted the complexity of schools as organizations:

Schools have a culture that is definitely their own. There are, in the school, complex rituals of personal relationships, a set of folkways, mores and irrational sanctions, a moral code based upon them. There are games, which are sublimated wars, teams, and an elaborate set of ceremonies concerning them. There are traditions, and traditionalists waging their world-old battle against innovators. There are laws and there is the problem of enforcing them, there is Sittlichkeit. (Waller, 1932, p. 103)
Almost forty years later, Jackson (1968) presented a view of classroom life that was richly descriptive of cultural phenomena. Jackson's portrayal of life in classrooms depicts teaching as a complex and demanding profession, structured by the underlying sameness that characterizes schools and classrooms.

Another important study was Sarason's *The Culture of the School and the Problem of Change* (1982). Sarason views school culture as consisting of what he calls programmatic and behavioural regularities. He develops this notion of programmatic and behavioral regularities using an imaginary case scenario in which an alien being comes down and observes the activities of the school. What the alien finds are a series of regularities, the total of which constitute the culture of the school. For Sarason, "...a central problem to the understanding of the school's culture is how to describe it so that regularities that characterize it can be apparent" (p. 87). He proposes that we examine the relationships between these regularities using an "ecological approach." The rationale behind using an ecological approach is to lessen what Sarason sees as an over-reliance on looking at individuals and individual characteristics.

Following in the tradition of Waller, Lortie (1975) used a sociological perspective to examine teaching as a profession. In a far-ranging study, Lortie looked at the role of history in shaping the teaching profession, the process of teacher socialization, the sense of uncertainty that accompanies teaching, and the kind of career and work rewards that teachers experience. Lortie's study is significant in that he claims that teaching lacks a shared technical culture that can be passed on. Unlike beginning practitioners in the fields of medicine, law, or engineering, beginning teachers are not able to start their teaching careers with a set of case knowledge upon which they can draw. While Lortie's observation about the lack of a shared
technical culture in teaching is arguably true, the conception of culture he uses is limited to those components of teaching that are technical rather than ideational in nature.

A conception of culture that does include ideational components is that used by Rutter, Maughn, Mortimore, Ouston, and Smith (1979) in their study of British secondary schools. Rutter et. al. (p. 187) argue that "...any self-contained organization tends to develop its own culture or pattern...". Building upon this premise, the authors go on to postulate that there may be a school "ethos" that has an effect on students' academic and social behavior. Included in the factors that contribute to a school's ethos are teacher expectations about students' schoolwork, teachers and students modeling acceptable behaviour, and teacher feedback to students regarding quality of work.

Lieberman and Miller (1984) also use a broad conception of school culture in their work on school improvement. For them, school culture is conceptualized as

A series of linkages that somehow make a school: the leadership, the interpersonal relations among the people, the individual personalities, the context of the school, and those ideas that look great on paper but often can't be transformed and made workable. (p. 83)

For Lieberman and Miller, the culture of the school represents an entity that is in some ways more than the sum total of its parts in that the various roles, relationships, institutional structures and individuals that comprise a school all interact to constitute the school's culture.

A view of school culture that links content with process is advanced by Purkey and Smith (1983, p. 440). In their conception of school culture, Purkey and Smith distinguish between content, which includes organizational structure, roles, norms, values, and instructional techniques, and process, which includes political and
social relationships, and the flow of information within the school. Purkey and
Smith see the culture of the school as consisting of an interaction between the
content and processes of the school. In their view, there is a "fluidity and
interconnectedness of the school culture" (p. 441).

In a recent review of the literature on "the cultures of teaching" Flodin and
Feiman-Nemser (1986) use a conception of culture that is largely ideational in focus.

Teaching cultures are embodied in the work-related beliefs and
knowledge teachers share - beliefs about appropriate ways of acting on
the job and rewarding aspects of teaching, and knowledge that enables
teachers to do their work. (p. 508)

Flodin and Feiman-Nemser review studies relevant to each of the three areas
encompassed by their conception of teaching cultures - norms of social interaction
in school settings, extrinsic and intrinsic rewards of teaching, and teachers' practical knowledge. In their examination of the genesis of teaching cultures they
argue that cultures are shaped by a number of factors. These include the classroom
contexts of teaching and a variety of organizational factors such as the cellular
structure of schools, the authority of the principal, and the inherent conflict that
exists between "the job of teaching" and "the work of teaching". The "job of teaching"
is described as those activities that are "concerned with the realization of
organizational and bureaucratic goals: maintaining order in classrooms and
corridors, keeping students busy, categorizing students so they can be processed by
the administrative machinery" (p. 517). This is distinct from the work of teaching
which includes "all those aspects directly related to the realization of educational
goals: motivating students, getting to know them as individuals, assessing their
understanding" (p. 516).
Flodin and Feiman-Nemser's review article is significant because it represents the emergence of a research focus that goes far beyond technical conceptions of teaching and schooling. For much of the research reviewed in their article, knowledge about teaching and schooling is to be found in the meanings the actors themselves attach to the things they do. As a research genre, this type of research focus is aptly described by Grimmett (1988):

Knowledge, then, in this research genre represents the explication of educator's meanings and understandings as they engage in the process of teaching. The purpose is neither prediction nor explanation; rather, it is to explore phenomenologically how educators create what Shulman (1987) describes as the "wisdom of practice" within what Lieberman and Miller (1984) have characterized as the complex and dynamic work of teachers.

The research genre described by Grimmett has largely an ideational focus. That is, it looks at the ideas - the values, assumptions, presuppositions and intentions - that guide action. Flodin and Feiman-Nemser argue that an ideational research focus has emerged with the recognition that the costs of an exclusively behavioral approach to educational research have been too high. At the same time though, they note that leaving a behavioral focus behind brings difficulties of a different kind.

Two striking things about research on the cultures of teaching is how little there is and how hard it is to do. The dominance of behaviorist psychology in American educational research in this century may partly explain the fact that meanings, perspectives, and beliefs have only recently become respectable objects of study. The problem of making inferences about beliefs and knowledge was one factor that led to the flight to behaviorism. While the benefits of behaviorism proved too costly, the complexities of cognitive research have not vanished. Research on the cultures of teaching is labor intensive - observations and interviews take considerable time to conduct and analyze. Even well-supported studies can seldom go beyond a small sample of teachers. The variation in teaching cultures limits the generality of conclusions from any one study. (Flodin & Feiman-Nemser, 1986, p. 523).

The inclusion of values and beliefs in studies of school culture provides researchers with new opportunities for insight. By examining the shared values
and beliefs contained in a culture, researchers can better understand why the
culture operates the way it does. This recent shift towards the examination of
values and beliefs as an important and integral part of school culture is exemplified
in the writings of Johnston (1987) and Deal (1987). Johnston and Deal both point to
corporate America's recent surge of interest in the culture of the work place and
suggest that cultural analyses may also be of use in education. Deal describes the
rationale behind corporate interest in culture.

Corporations across the United States are re-examining and focusing
on the culture of the workplace. Culture has become a preoccupation of
management because cultural patterns have been conceptually and
empirically linked with performance, morale, turnover, image and other
important business concerns. (Deal, 1987, p. 8-9)

While arguing that the concept of culture has great utility for an understanding of
schools, Deal makes a stark comparison between the members of two vastly
different cultures, with dramatic effect:

When someone at IBM is asked what she does for a living, most likely she
would respond confidently, "I work for IBM." She responds that way
because her identity is fused with the culture of the company. It is the
same in other existentially sound businesses.

Compare the culture of IBM with the culture of schools, an IBMer with
a classroom teacher. When teachers are asked what they do for a living,
many timidly respond, "I'm just a teacher." Their response may reflect a
long-term unraveling of the fabric that gives meaning to the process of
learning. Where cultures are cohesive, people contribute their efforts
toward a common destiny, rallying around shared values that give
meaning to work - and to their lives. When cultures are fragmented,
people "do their jobs", worry about salaries, and spend their time
struggling for power. (Deal, 1987, p. 9)

A similar viewpoint about the primacy of values in organizations is succinctly
expressed by Johnston:

At the very foundation of a culture are its values - basic beliefs that
control the choices we make...So it is in complex organizations as well.
Every organization has values that are clearly institutionalized and
which guide and control the behavior of the people in them. (1987, p. 80)
For the purposes of this study, a conception of culture similar to that described by Deal and Johnston was used to guide the interpretation of the culture of CKF school. The construct used was one presented by Sathe (1985). Sathe's conception of culture was used in this study as a "sensitizing concept" (Hammersley & Atkinson 1984, p. 180). That is, the concept of culture was used as an orienting framework in the collection and interpretation of data. The following sections of this chapter detail Sathe's conception of culture.

**Sathe's Conception of "Culture"

In presenting his model of culture Sathe identifies two major schools of cultural anthropology that have had an impact on current conceptions of culture; the "adaptationists" and the "ideational school".

The view of culture favored by the "adaptationists" is based on what is directly observable about the members of a community - that is, their patterns of behavior, speech, and use of material objects. The "ideational" school prefers to look at what is shared in community members' minds in defining culture - that is, the beliefs, values and other ideas people share in common. (Sathe, 1985, p. 9)

The debate between the two schools of cultural anthropology has a long and heated history, and Sathe does not set out to resolve the dispute. What he does instead, is refine a particular model of culture that incorporates elements of both the adaptationist and ideational schools. The model he builds upon is a three level conception of culture first advanced by Schein (1983). Sathe describes the three levels, moving from what is readily observable (i.e. an organization's behaviors), to what must be inferred (i.e. values and beliefs):

*The first level* of culture is composed of technology, art, audible and visible behavior patterns, and other aspects of culture that are easy to see but hard to interpret without an understanding of the other levels. This is the slice of cultural reality that the adaptationists have been most
interested in. We will denote this level by the terms organizational behavior patterns and behavior.

The second level of culture reveals how people communicate, explain, rationalize, and justify what they say and do as a community - how they "make sense" of the first level of culture. We will denote this level with the terms cultural communications and justifications of behavior or justifications. Both the adaptationists and the ideationalists have been interested in this level of culture.

The third level of culture goes deeper still and is the level in which the ideational school has been most interested. It consists of people's ideas and assumptions that govern their communications, justifications, and behavior. We will denote this level by the term culture which we will define specifically as follows. Culture is the set of important assumptions (often unstated) that members of a community share in common. (Sathe, 1985, p. 10, original italics)

The focal point of Sathe's conception of culture is clearly rooted in ideational conceptions of culture - that is, he is concerned with the shared values and beliefs held by a group. The first level, and to a lesser extent the second level, are seen by Sathe to represent manifestations of the shared assumptions that constitute the group's "culture". While the above quote succinctly outlines Sathe's conception of culture, a further distinction must be made with respect to the model's position within the ideational school of culture. Sathe's conception of culture and its use as an analytic tool represents what can be described as a functionalist perspective. (Sathe, 1985, p. 540) Functionalists hold that an organization consists of a number of interrelated components, each of which has a particular function within the organization. From a functionalist perspective, culture is something that an organization has. The functionalist conception of culture is different from a purely interpretive perspective that sees cultures as total systems of meaning that affect virtually all aspects of life. From this perspective culture is something that an organization is.

Sathe's functionalist conception of culture, then, asserts that within an organization there exists a "culture" - a set of important assumptions that members of the organization share in common. It is this basic definition of culture that
guided this investigation. A further elaboration of the definition is contained in the following sections.

Beliefs and Values as Shared Assumptions

Like Deal (1987) and Johnston (1987), Sathe argues that at the core of an organization's culture is a set of shared beliefs and values. The following definitions of beliefs and values are used by Sathe:

**Beliefs** include basic assumptions about the world and how it actually works. They derive from personal experience and are reinforced by it but, since some of the physical and social world cannot be experienced or verified directly by any one person, individuals also rely to some degree on the judgement and expertise of others whom they trust or can identify with to help them decide what to believe or not believe.

**Values** are basic assumptions about what ideals are desirable or worth striving for. They derive from personal experience and identification with those who have had an important influence on one's personal development since early childhood. They represent preferences for ultimate end states, such as striving for success or avoiding debt at all costs. (p. 11)

Sathe notes that it is important to distinguish between espoused values and beliefs, and the ones people actually hold. It is also important to consider that sometimes people are not aware of the values they hold.

A person may prefer not to admit internalized beliefs and values because of external pressure - peer pressure for instance. A person may also be unaware of these internalized beliefs and values. Assumptions that continue to be reinforced positively by experience may be taken for granted to the extent of dropping out of consciousness. One may be unaware of such preconscious or unconscious beliefs and values until they are violated or challenged. (p. 12)

Shared Assumptions: Internalization and Adoption

In addition to defining "culture", Sathe's model offers a powerful heuristic for understanding the processes of socialization and the way in which shared assumptions are maintained within an organization. For Sathe, an individual's commitment to an organization arises as a result of the individual's
internalization of the organization's beliefs and values. That is, when the person comes to hold the organization's beliefs and values as personal beliefs and values, the accompanying behavior that is premised on those beliefs and values provides the individual with a sense of personal satisfaction.

In this case the corresponding behavior is *intrinsically rewarding* for the individual: He or she derives personal satisfaction from the content of the behavior itself because it is congruent with corresponding personal beliefs and values. It is through the process of internalization by individual members of an organization that the assumptions become shared assumptions. (p. 12)

**Diversity in Belief: Cultural Knowledge and Individual Interpretation**

Though an organization's culture consists of a set of shared assumptions, there is also, within the culture, a range of acceptance and interpretation of those assumptions by the members of a culture. An explanation of this phenomenon lies in the distinction that can be made between knowledge and belief. For example, within a given culture, an individual may have knowledge of a particular cultural assumption, but he or she may believe and act upon that assumption in a way that is different from other members of the culture.

Consider, for example, a school culture in which there is a shared assumption that extra reading practice is a valuable aid to learning in all subject areas. One teacher believe this assumption and act upon it in a way such that the students in her class spend the first half hour of each day reading in their desks. The teacher across the hall may also hold this assumption, but act on it differently. If, for instance, he thinks that class time should be used only for instruction, he may set up an out-of-class reading program in which students take a book home each night, and parents supervise the student's reading. In this hypothetical case, both teachers
hold the assumption about the value of extra reading practice. At the same time though, they interpret and act on it in different ways.

Culture, then, as a set of shared assumptions may be believed in different ways by the members of a culture. As a construct for the analysis of human behavior, culture is best thought of as an organizer that encompasses individuals' actions within broad parameters, rather than as a detailed blueprint for individual's social actions.

**The Content and Strength of a Culture**

In addition to the idea that a culture consists of a set of important shared assumptions, Sathe's conception of culture also uses the notions of "strength" and "content", to characterize individual cultures. Content and strength are both seen as affecting the way a culture operates. Content is seen as affecting the *direction* of an organization's behavior whereas strength is seen as affecting the *intensity* of the organization's behavior.

**Strength.** The strength of a culture is essentially a relative concept, and since this is a single-site case study, there is no basis for comparing the strength of CKF's culture with that of other schools. However, the concept of strength does warrant description, albeit briefly. Sathe argues that the strength of a culture is determined by three factors:

1) *Thickness* which refers to the number of important shared assumptions. Thin cultures have few shared assumptions and thick cultures have many.

2) *Extent of sharing.* Cultures in which assumptions are widely shared are more pervasive in their impact because more people are guided by the culture's key assumptions.
3) Clarity of ordering of important assumptions. Cultures that have shared assumptions which are clearly ordered and prioritized are better able to respond in situations of crisis or conflicting interests than are cultures in which there is little or no ordering of assumptions. (p. 15)

**Content.** Sathe defines the content of a culture as the way in which an organization orders its basic assumptions.

Content is determined not by an aggregate of assumptions, but by how they interrelate and form particular patterns. A key feature of the pattern of a culture is the relative ordering of its basic assumptions, which indicates what policies and principles should prevail when conflicts arise between different sets of assumptions. (p. 13)

Sathe identifies several factors that affect the content of a culture. (p. 14-15). The first two he identifies as "business environment" and "industry type". Clearly, these two terms reflect the corporate focus of Sathe's work and are not appropriate for this study. However, considering the culture of CKF School from a perspective that looks at the impact of "environment" on the content of culture, one would logically expect then, that the culture of CKF would have a pedagogical focus to much of its content.

Sathe also identifies the values and beliefs of the leader as being highly important in the creation and maintenance of an organization's culture. In companies that have a long corporate history, Sathe suggests that the company's founder often has a lasting impact on the culture of the organization. As public institutions, schools do not have the same kind of historical structure as private companies. In this regard, Sathe's views of the importance of company founder are not applicable to the study of school culture. There is, however, much research documenting the importance of
the principal as educational leader, and a significant part of this study is an examination of the role of the leader in the culture of the school.

Two other factors are of prime importance in determining the content of a culture. One is the pre-existing assumptions, values and beliefs that people bring with them to the organization. What this implies is that to a certain extent, the culture of an organization will reflect some of the dominant values and beliefs of the larger culture of which it is a part.

A second source for the content of a culture is the experience members of the organization gain as they work together to solve problems, or as they adapt to pressures from the external environment of which the culture is a part. Sathe sees several implications stemming from this view of a culture's content. It follows, he argues, that cultures can change and develop because of the learning going on within the organization as members solve problems and adapt to external pressures. Sathe also argues that though change does occur in a culture, pervasive change is likely to be gradual because existing basic assumptions do not change quickly.

To summarize then, Sathe's conception of culture was used in this study as an orienting framework. This conception sees an organization's culture as a shared set of important assumptions. These shared assumptions consist of beliefs and values which may or may not be explicit to members of the organization. In addition, these shared assumptions may be interpreted and believed in different ways by the members of the culture. The content of an organization's culture refers to the relative ordering of the shared basic assumptions, and the content is influenced by the larger cultural environment, the values and beliefs of the organization's leader, and the values and beliefs that individuals bring to the organization. A culture's content is also influenced by the kinds of experiences individuals have as they
search for solutions to problems and adapt to external pressures upon the culture. In this way, a culture can change and develop over time.

Summary of Chapter Two

This purpose of this chapter was to present an overview of the literature relevant to this study. The origins of the effective schools research was briefly described, as was its use in programs of school improvement. In a discussion of school improvement, it was claimed that some school improvement programs use a conception of improvement that is limited to measurable increases in student achievement. These programs were contrasted with other school improvement initiatives that use a broader conception of improvement - a view of improvement that focuses on professional and institutional renewal, and considers the social context of improvement initiatives. Educational research that uses a conception of school culture was discussed, and the final sections of the chapter presented the conception of "culture" that was used to guide the examination of the culture of CKF School.
CHAPTER THREE

Methods and Procedures

The purpose of this study was to examine, in detail, one school's experience with a school improvement program. To achieve that end, I used research methodologies that allowed me to present an in-depth case study of the school improvement process as it occurred in one particular school. In order to answer the research questions posed in Chapter One, a variety of data sources were used. The data from these sources were of different kinds and were collected using a variety of data collection strategies. The research methodologies used and the data these methodologies generated are often described as "qualitative". Though it is sometimes argued that the dicotomy between qualitative and quantitative research paradigms is an oversimplification, (cf. Kaplan 1964; Goetz & LeCompte 1984; Reichardt & Cook 1979) it is worth noting here that research characterized as qualitative usually has a number of distinguishing features that set it apart from research based on a hypothetico-deductive model of scientific inquiry.

As defined by Bogdan and Biklen (1982), qualitative research has five general features that set it apart from quantitatively oriented investigation. Those features are as follows.

1. Qualitative research uses the natural setting as the direct source of data and the researcher is the key instrument.
2. Qualitative research is descriptive and the data is collected in the form of words or pictures rather than numbers.
3. Qualitative researchers are concerned with process rather than simply with outcomes or products.
4. Qualitative researchers tend to analyze their data inductively.
5. "Meaning" is of essential concern to the qualitative approach.

(Bogdan & Biklen 1982, p. 27 - 30)
In this study, a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis was adopted for several reasons. As described above, the purpose of this study was to describe one school’s experience with a school improvement program. Given the protracted nature of the process of school improvement, this study needed a set of research methodologies that would allow for continuous data collection over a long period of time. The ongoing processes of data collection and analysis normally associated with qualitative research made this methodology a logical choice for the study.

Another reason for the use of qualitative research methodologies related to the use of "culture" as an analytic construct. From both an anthropological and sociological perspective, the study of culture has traditionally relied on detailed descriptions of the activities and behaviors of those individuals who are the focus of the study. These descriptions are gathered by the researcher and then used as data and analyzed inductively to develop a picture of the group’s culture. The inductive nature of qualitative data analysis and the kind of descriptive data normally associated with qualitative research made this a good approach to use in the study of the culture of CKF School.

Another aspect of this study was a concern with teachers’ perceptions of the school improvement process. As noted above, Bogdan and Biklen identify a concern with meaning as derived from "participant perspectives" as one of the key features of qualitative research. That aspect - a concern with meaning as derived from participant perspectives - was an important part of this study, and I therefore used qualitative data and research methodologies to uncover the meanings school improvement held for the teachers of CKF School.
In summation, qualitative data and research methodologies were used in this study because the approach was conducive to a detailed description of a process that took place over an entire school year. A qualitative approach was also essential to the description and analysis of the culture of the school and in the elicitation and interpretation of the meaning of school improvement for the teachers involved in *The School is the Key*.

The next sections of this chapter describe the various data sources for the study. These sections are followed by a sampling frame that presents an overview of the people, places and events from which data were collected.

**Sources and Settings for Data Collection**

**Classrooms**

The key objective of this study was to examine the interaction of the culture of the school with a school improvement program. For the purposes of this study, culture has been defined as a commonly held set of assumptions (i.e. values and beliefs). It was assumed that classrooms would be an important setting in which to observe manifestations or expressions of values and beliefs. This assumption is based upon a more fundamental assumption - that a teacher's classroom activities are guided by a professional knowledge that has as a part of it, a value-based component. (cf. Clandinin 1986; Oberg, 1986; Court, 1988) These values can be expressed in a teacher's practice in a variety of ways. For instance, they may be reflected in the material that decorates the classroom walls, in the way that the teacher addresses students, or in the way the teacher interacts with a visitor to the classroom. The values that permeate a teacher's view of teaching and learning can be many and complex, and may not be readily apparent to a casual or short-term observer. In order to record the expressions of such values and beliefs, I observed over 300 hours
of classroom teaching in 16 classrooms. These observations were collected over 20 weeks and included lessons in the content areas of the language arts (reading, spelling, composition, printing, handwriting and oral expression), mathematics, science, social studies, music, library and art. In addition to observing lessons on these subjects, several of classrooms in which I observed had an interdisciplinary focus. These included the primary and intermediate lifeskills classes for the educateably mentally handicapped, the enrichment and learning assistance classrooms, and the primary special remedial classroom for emotionally disturbed children.

Staff Meetings

Weekly staff meetings were another major setting for data collection. Most of the staff's discussions about the school improvement program took place during these meetings. As such, the meetings provided a valuable source of data about the discussions and the decision-making surrounding the implementation of various aspects of the program. I attended all the weekly staff meetings that were held between November, 1987 and June, 1988. Though I took fieldnotes, I did not participate in any of the discussions that took place at the meetings.

Teachers

In addition to the classroom observations, I engaged twelve of the school's teachers in both formal and informal interviews. Each of the twelve teachers was interviewed once in a formal interview setting. These formal interviews took place after school and involved an interview protocol. A sample of this protocol is attached as Appendix A. Informal interviews were far more numerous and took place in the staffroom, hallways, and in classrooms.
The Principal

Much of the research literature on school improvement describes the principal as a key figure in the implementation of school improvement projects. To clarify the role played by the principal in this particular case study, the principal was interviewed in a formal interview setting and asked how she perceived her role in the school improvement process. Data from the formal interview, along with data from informal interviews were used to supplement my observations of the principal's role in the school. As with the teachers, an interview protocol was used to guide the formal interview.

District Level Staff

The School is the Key program was conceptualized and developed at the district level. In order to provide a description of the origins, purpose, and development of the program, one of the program's principal developers was interviewed. In addition, the school board consultant who was assigned to work with CKF School as they implemented the program, was also interviewed about her role in the school improvement process.

Program Materials

Accompanying The School is the Key, and The Elements of Instruction were sets of materials that contained information about the programs. These materials were gathered and used as part of the data set.

Sampling Frames

The following two sampling frames provide an overview of the people, places and events from which data were collected. The first sampling frame is a month by month list of all the meetings, non-instructional days, and school-based special events that I attended while at the school. The numbers in brackets ( ) indicate the
number of meetings and events attended during the month. The second sampling frame describes the context of the classroom observations and the formal interviews. Observations were made on a regular basis in sixteen different classrooms, over two time periods. Period "A" lasted seven weeks, and spanned from November 1 to December 18, 1987. Period "B" lasted thirteen weeks. It began January 4, 1988, and went until March 31 of the same year. In the sampling frame, an "X" under A or B indicates the period in which lessons were observed. All but two teachers were observed during both periods. Classroom observations were made on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. The day or days of the week on which the observations were made and the subject matter of the observed lessons are also indicated on the sampling frame. An "IP" in the "Subject" column indicates the use of an integrated program. The second sampling frame also shows whether or not the teacher was interviewed in a formal setting and indicates the time period in which the interview took place. Of the sixteen classroom teachers whose classrooms I visited, thirteen were interviewed.
Sampling Frame One: Staff Meetings and Special Events

November: Staff meetings (4)
*The School is the Key* planning meetings (2)
Noon hour staff development (1)

December: Staff meetings (3)
Non-instructional day (Science scope and sequence)
Christmas concert assembly

January: Staff meetings (1)
After school meetings (1)
Observation of peer coaching sessions (5)

February: Staff meetings (2)
*The School is the Key* meetings (1)
School musical

March: Staff meetings (5)
Non-instructional day (Individual teacher planning)

April: Staff meetings (3)
Non-instructional day (peer coaching)

May: Staff meetings (4)

June: Staff meetings (3)
## Sampling Frame Two: Classroom Observations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Period A</th>
<th>Subjects</th>
<th>Observation Day</th>
<th>Formal Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lesley K.</td>
<td>K</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>IP</td>
<td>M,F</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>K</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>IP</td>
<td>M,W</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa N.</td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Lang, Arts, Math.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1/2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Lang, Arts, Math.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marion R.</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>Lang, Arts, Math.</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olive S.</td>
<td>K/1</td>
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<td>Lang, Arts, IP</td>
<td>W,F</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Lang, Arts, Art</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorraine D.</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td>IP</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laurie C.</td>
<td>EMH</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>IP</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anna B.</td>
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<td>W</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3/4</td>
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<td>Lang, Arts, Lang.</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arla S.</td>
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<td>F</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jean R.</td>
<td>Spec.Rem.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>IP</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dana M.</td>
<td>EMH(Intl)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>IP</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EMH(Intl)</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>IP</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don W.</td>
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<td>Enrichment, Music</td>
<td>M</td>
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<td>Nicole H.</td>
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Methods of Data Collection

The diversity of data sources described above required the use of different data collection strategies. The following sections describe the data collection methods that were used in this study.

Participant Observation

Participant observation is the most common means for collecting data in research projects that involve extended field research. Burgess (1984, p. 79) describes the value and uses of participant observation.

In research involving the use of participant observation it is the researcher who is the main instrument of social investigation. On this basis participant observation facilitates the collection of data on social interaction; on situations as they occur rather than on artificial situations, (as in experimental research) or constructs of artificial situations that are provided by the researcher (as in survey research). The value of being a participant observer lies in the opportunity that is available to collect rich detailed data based on observations in natural settings. Furthermore, the researcher can obtain accounts of situations in the participant’s own language which gives access to the concepts that are used in everyday life. The researcher can, therefore, construct an account of a social situation on the basis of the various accounts that are obtained from informants. In these circumstances, there is an opportunity to collect the different versions of events that are available. Here, it is the researcher’s aim to compare these accounts with each other, and with other observations that the researcher has made in the field of study. The result is that researchers can utilise their observations together with their theoretical insights to make seemingly irrational or paradoxical behavior comprehensible to those within and beyond the situation that is studied.

Burgess (1984) and Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) see several possible roles for researchers who engage in participant observation. Gold (1958) was the first to conceptualize participant observation as a continuum of role possibilities. On one end of the continuum is the role of the complete participant, followed by the participant-as-observer, the observer-as-participant, and then on the other end, the role of the complete observer.
In the complete participant role the researcher conducts the research covertly. The group being studied is not told of the researcher's intentions or research interests. Groups that are studied in this manner are often "infiltrated" as was the case in Festinger, Riecken and Schachter's (1956) study of a group who believed the world was soon due to end, along with the arrival of alien beings from another planet. Covert research of this type is fraught with ethical considerations, not to mention the potential for physical danger that may occur if the researcher is ever "discovered".

In the complete observer role the researcher has no social contact with the participants being observed. This type of research may also be done covertly, for example, in the form of observation through one-way mirrors or through unobtrusive observation of public behavior in the street. (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983, p. 96)

Between the two poles of complete observer and complete participant are the roles of participant-as-observer and observer-as-participant. Much of the work that is done under the label of participant observation is usually done in one of these two roles. As described by Burgess (1984) and Roy (1970) the participant-as-observer role involves the researcher in both participating and observing. The researcher makes it clear that research activities are the main reason for his or her presence in the group and that he or she is there not only to participate in the group's activities, but also to observe and collect data. A second characteristic of this role is that the researcher circulates freely in the setting of the study while observing and collecting data.

The amount of contact time with the group under investigation is the distinction that separates the role of participant-as-observer from the role of observer-as-
participant. In the former, there is an extended period of contact with the group being studied, whereas in the latter, contact time is of a short duration. Burgess (1984, p. 82) favours the research role that provides extended contact. He also describes some of the shortcomings of the observer-as-participant role:

The nature of this role [observer-as-participant] is less satisfactory as the brevity of the relationship results in problems of bias arising out of the researcher's brief contacts. In turn, Schatzmann and Strauss (1973) have indicated that such brief encounters will mean that the researcher will find difficulty in gaining access to the meanings that participants use in social situations.

For the purposes of this investigation the role that was adopted was that of participant-as-observer. The nature of the research questions that guided this study required that I circulate freely within the setting and collect data about a variety of activities. While in the classrooms, at times I participated, working as an aide to the teacher, and at other times I observed the structure and flow of classroom activities and recorded those observations in the form of fieldnotes. As mentioned earlier, during the staff meetings I observed the course of the meetings and took notes, but did not participate in any of the discussions.

In addition to the settings of classrooms and staff meetings there were other less "formal" settings in which I acted as participant-as-observer. The morning recess break and the lunch hour in the staff room were also occasions on which data were collected. In the hallways, staff room, teachers' work room, and the central office, I made many observations and held numerous informal conversations with the school staff.

To summarize, participant observation, mainly in the form of participant-as-observer, was the primary means of data collection for this study. This strategy was
used in a variety of settings to collect data relevant to the research questions guiding the study.

**Interviews**

A method of data collection that is closely related to participant observation is the extended interview. As is the case for participant observation, there are a variety of types of interviews. Denzin (1978) describes three basic kinds of interviews: the scheduled standardized interview, the nonscheduled standardized interview and the nonstandardized interview. Scheduled standardized interviews ask all respondents the same kinds of questions in the same basic order. Goetz and LeCompte (1984, p. 119) refer to this type of interview as an orally administered questionnaire. The nonscheduled standardized interview asks all individuals the same questions though the order in which the questions are asked may be varied. In the nonstandardized interview, the researcher does not rely on a predesigned interview form, though general guiding questions and themes for inquiry may be planned in advance.

Hammersley and Atkinson's (1983) conception of the "reflexive interview" represents a combination of Denzin's descriptions of the nonscheduled standardized interview and the nonstandardized interview.

The main difference between the way in which ethnographers and survey researchers ask questions is not, as is sometimes suggested, that one form of interviewing is "structured" and the other is "unstructured". All interviews, like any other kind of social interaction, are structured by both researcher and informant. The important distinction to be made is between standardized and reflexive interviewing. Ethnographers do not decide beforehand the questions they want to ask, though they may enter the interview with a list of issues to be covered. Nor do ethnographers restrict themselves to a single mode of questioning. On different occasions, or at different points in the same interview, the approach may be non-directive or directive, depending on the functioning that the questioning is intended to serve. (p. 112-113) (original italics)
What Hammersley and Atkinson see as the key feature of the ethnographic interview is the way the researcher responds on-the-spot to the direction and content generated by the interview itself. Burgess (1984) holds a similar view of the interview process in which he sees interviews as "conversations". Burgess refers to this type of interview as "the unstructured interview":

Certainly, few field researchers have followed the structured approach, preferring to use an informal or unstructured or semi-structured style of interviewing which employs a set of themes and topics to form questions in the course of the conversation. This strategy, it is argued, gives informants an opportunity to develop their answers outside a structured format. It is this style of interviewing which I refer to as the "unstructured interview". (p. 101-102)

A central concern for those who use "nonstandardized", "reflexive", and "unstructured" interviews is that the respondent's thoughts, opinions and beliefs about a phenomenon emerge in as unhindered a way as possible. It is not easy to conduct this type of interview, and much has been written about how to construct and conduct such interviews. Goetz and LeCompte (1984, p. 125-126) have summarized several of the key works in this area. The literature they reviewed suggests that different kinds of questions should be used, depending on the kind of data one wants to elicit.

Patton (1980) suggests that researcher questions can be categorized into one of six types. Patton's typology of question types includes: 1) experience and behavior questions that ask participants to describe things they do or have done, 2) opinion and value questions that seek to clarify the values individuals hold, 3) feeling questions that focus on emotional responses, 4) knowledge questions that elicit how participants view their world, 5) sensory questions that focus on sight, touch, feel, sounds etc., and 6) background and personal history questions that draw upon the
individual's past. Patton suggests that these six types of questions be varied throughout an interview, depending on the kind of information the researcher is interested in.

Another typology of interview questions has been suggested by Spradley (1979) who suggests that researcher's questions can be divided into three categories. They are: 1) descriptive questions designed to elicit the respondent's representation of some aspect of their culture, 2) structural questions which are concerned with the constructs that respondents use to describe and organize their world, and 3) contrast questions which are used to elicit the meanings participants attach to the various constructs they use.

A third typology reviewed by Goetz and LeCompte (1984) is that developed by Schatzman and Strauss (1973). Schatzman and Strauss use five categories of questions: 1) reportorial questions that ask respondents to describe a particular event or situation in terms of who, what, where, and when, 2) devil's advocate questions that elicit what respondents see as controversial, 3) hypothetical questions that encourage the respondent to speculate about alternative situations, 4) posing-the-ideal questions that focus on the respondent's opinions and values, and 5) propositional questions that are used to elicit or verify respondent interpretations.

Goetz and LeCompte (1984) suggest that using a combination of these question typologies will help the researcher to orient the interviews towards the research questions guiding the study.

By examining these typologies, both individually and in combination, researchers can make a choice among alternatives that matches an interview format more precisely with the purposes intended in research questions. Such typologies alert investigators to aspects of their topics or research settings that otherwise may be overlooked. (p. 126)
For the purposes of this investigation, interview questions were designed using a combination of Patton's (1980) Spradley's (1979) and Schatzman and Strauss' (1973) typologies. In the sample interview schedule attached as Appendix A, the interview questions are identified as to question type (i.e. reportorial, devil's advocate, experience, etc.). The interviews were structured such that they began with several questions about the teacher's background and experience. Following that, in an open-ended question, teachers were asked to describe what they saw as the essential characteristics of CKF. In the next section of the interview I asked teachers to recount their perceptions of how they, and the school, came to be involved in *The School is the Key*. Teachers' perceptions of the kinds of things the school had done through its involvement in the program was the focus of the next section of the interview. Following that, teachers were asked a number of questions about their use of *The Elements of Instruction*. As part of that section, I engaged teachers in a discussion about some of the criticisms that have been directed toward programs such as the one they were using. The final section of the interview focused on teachers' conceptions of "improvement" and "effectiveness". In this section, teachers were asked to describe what, for them, constitutes an effective school.

A total of sixteen formal interviews were conducted for this study. Thirteen of the interviews were with teachers at CKF, one was with the principal, and two were with district central office personnel associated with *The School is the Key*. Interviews ranged from 45 minutes to 2 hours in length. Each interview was tape recorded and later transcribed. As a data source, the interview transcripts in total consist of over 320 pages of typewritten text.
Timeline of the Study

The field research upon which this case study is based was conducted over an 8 month period. Between November 1, 1987, and April 1, 1988, I was at CKF School four days a week. On Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays I was at the school for the whole day, observing and helping in classrooms. During those days, my time at the school followed the daily round of the school's activities in much the same way as it did for the other teachers. Forty minute periods of instruction began at 8:55 a.m., and were punctuated with the recess coffee break at 10:20, and the noon lunch break that went from 12:00 until 12:55. Classes were dismissed for the day at 3:00 p.m., though teachers usually spent from one to two more hours at the school, marking, planning, and preparing for the next day. On Thursdays, I was only in the school for a 2 hour period, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. to attend the weekly staff meetings.

At the end of March, I withdrew from full-time attendance at the school on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays. I did, however, maintain regular, ongoing contact with the school until the end of June by continuing to attend all the Thursday staff meetings. I also attended each of the school-based non-instructional days that were held in the spring months. At the close of the school year in June, the staff invited me back one last time for their end of the year pot-luck social, which brought my presence at CKF to a logical and friendly ending.

Working With the Data: Data, Analysis, Interpretation and Induction in Qualitative Research

To reiterate, the purpose of this investigation was to examine the way the culture of the school and a school improvement program interact with one another. Examining this interaction was dependent on an understanding of the culture of CKF. Only after a picture of the culture of CKF had been developed, could I undertake
an analysis of the interaction that took place between the school's culture and the improvement program. Therefore, an important part of this study is a description of the culture of the school. That description constitutes Chapter Five. The methodology that was used to develop that description is discussed below. However, before proceeding, it important that I make clear the epistemological suppositions that guided this portion of the study. In order to do this, it is necessary to clarify how the terms data, analysis, and interpretation are used in relation to the substantive content of Chapter Five.

Data is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED) as follows:

Data. Plural of datum. Thing known or assumed as basis for inference; reckoning. A thing given or granted; something known or assumed as fact, and made the basis of reasoning or calculation; an assumption or premise from which inferences are drawn. (Oxford English Dictionary, Compact Edition, Vol. 1, p. 648)

The data that were used to develop the portrait of the culture of CKF were observations recorded in fieldnotes, and teacher comments recorded in interviews. Viewed in terms of the definition of "data" offered above, these recorded observations and teacher comments were the materials from which inferences about the culture of CKF were drawn.

It is important to note here, that a key assumption underlying the use of such recorded observations as data, is a belief that human action is guided by the intentions and assumptions that are held by the individual. Included in these assumptions are values and beliefs. By values, I mean a preference for some ideal or idealized state. A belief is an assumption about the nature of the world, derived from experience or from the acceptance of some external authority. Beliefs may be held very strongly, as in the case of a conviction (i.e. a belief in God), or they may be readily subject to change, as in the case of an opinion. Beginning with this
assumption - that human action is oriented by assumptions in the form of values and beliefs - I examined interview and fieldnote data for the purpose of making clear the shared values and beliefs that characterized the culture of CKF.

Following Dilthey (Rickman, 1975, p. 5) I took a broad view of what constitutes meaningful human action. This was done in order to look for the manifestation of shared assumptions in as wide a range of phenomena as possible. That is, rather than focus on the overly narrow psychological conception of "behavior", I chose to use the broader conception of "expression" to orient myself to the recording of data. As described by Dilthey, human expressions encompass everything from a smile, or doodles on a piece of paper, through to literary texts, or a prepared speech. For this study, included in the fieldnote data as "expressions" are observations of pedagogical action (as conceptualized by Van Manen, 1982), instances of spoken language, and examples of teacher developed classroom and curricular materials. Each of these three forms of expression - pedagogical action, spoken language, and teacher developed materials can be premised on values or beliefs or some combination of both.

Analysis, as defined by the OED is:

The resolution or breaking up of anything complex into its various elements, the opposite process to synthesis. The exact determination of the elements or components of anything complex. (OED, Vol. 1, p. 305).

Thus, the phrase "analysis of the data" implies a process in which "the givens" (i.e. the data) are examined in such a way as to make clear the component parts of the larger, complex whole of which they are a part. The task then, during the analysis of the data was to group the data in a way that would highlight the elemental components (the shared beliefs and values) of the culture of CKF. Thus, the presentation of the culture of CKF involved drawing inferences from the data about
the values and beliefs that guided people's actions in the setting of the school. It is important to note though, that the act of drawing inferences from the data is itself an act of interpretation; it is the attribution of meaning to empirical observation. Interpretation is, in the words of the Oxford English Dictionary (Vol. 1, p. 1476), "a construction put upon actions, purposes etc."

In this study, then, analysis of the data and the interpretation of data were inextricably linked. Analysis, as the process through which essential components of a phenomenon are brought into view, cannot proceed without a concomitant process of interpretation. In this study dualistic endeavour of analysis and interpretation was pursued through a process of induction in which there was a movement from specific interpretation of individual bits of data (i.e. expressions) to the development of more general analytic categories.

Analyzing qualitative research data inductively involves first of all a careful reading of all materials considered to be data. During this careful reading of the data, the researcher makes note of particular instances of a phenomenon that appear again and again. The researcher reads through the data while watching for evidence of pattern and similarity. As patterns become apparent, the researcher examines the phenomena that constitute the pattern, and looks for features that the phenomena share. With the identification of similar features shared by a number of phenomena, the researcher is able to develop categories that have as their basis, the identified commonalities. Researchers apply a variety of labels to the kinds of categorizing devices that are used to structure the inductive analysis of data.

In the analysis and interpretation of the data that led to the portrayal of the culture of CKF, I used the construct of "theme" as a categorizing device. The use of "theme" as an analytic construct has been variously described by Spradley (1979),

The concept of theme has its roots in the general idea that cultures are more than bits and pieces of custom. Rather, every culture is a complex pattern....Cultural themes are elements in the cognitive maps which make up a culture. Themes are larger units of thought. They consist of a number of symbols linked into meaningful relationships. (Spradley, 1979, p. 186)

Van Manen uses the construct of theme in the analysis of phenomenological data.

Phenomenological themes are the structures of experience. So when we analyze a phenomenon, we are trying to determine what the themes are, the experiential structures that make up that experience (van Manen, 1984, p. 59)

Polkinghorne uses the construct of theme in the field of explanatory narrative research:

Data collection results in a collection of stories. The goal of analysis is to uncover the common themes or plots in the data. Analysis is carried out using hermeneutic techniques for noting underlying patterns across examples of stories....Adequate analysis does not produce idiosyncratic results; other researchers, given the data from which the results were drawn, can agree that the results follow. (Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 177)

"Theme" as it is used in this study, refers to recurring elements in the data that were categorized on the basis of a common feature or features. For example, one of the themes in Chapter Five is titled *Principal as Leader*. Included in this theme are instances in the data that focus on the leadership actions of the principal, and the staff's and principal's perceptions of those actions. Each theme, as an analytic construct, represents a loosely coupled conglomerate of beliefs and values about a central topic. Themes, in this sense, represent patterns discovered in the data. Through the analysis of qualitative data collected while in the field, this study presents a picture of those patterns which represent the shared assumptions that constitute the culture of the school.
As the themes were developed from the data, it became apparent that there was a large degree of overlap between the values and beliefs contained in a number of the themes. Qualitative analysis of the component assumptions embedded in the seven themes confirmed the existence of various cross-theme linkages of many of the values and beliefs. For the purposes of analysis, this necessitated developing a more refined analytic construct that could account for the interrelation of the themes. As a way of refining the construct of theme, and at the same time accounting for the cross-theme linkages that were apparent, I organized the component assumptions of the seven themes into five groups. The component assumptions of the themes (i.e. the values and beliefs identified in the themes) were grouped together using an analytic process that was inductive in nature. Specific values and beliefs from across the themes were categorized on the basis of similarities, and then summarily described with a general overarching statement that encompassed the specific content of the various individual values and beliefs.

For the purposes of this study, I have used the term "key suppositions" to refer to the overarching statements that describe the collections of similar beliefs and values that were drawn from across the seven themes. These five key suppositions, in essence, represent the cultural nexus of CKF.

In Chapter Five, items from the data - conversations, classroom observations, and extended reconstructions of fieldnotes - are combined with analysis to highlight the central themes and key suppositions of CKF's culture. This method of presentation is what Erickson (1986) refers to as analytic narrative.

Analytic narrative is the foundation of an effective report of fieldwork research. The narrative vignette is a vivid portrayal of the conduct of an event of everyday life, in which the sights and sounds of what was being said and done are described in the natural sequence of their occurrence in real time. In the fieldwork research report the narrative vignette has
functions that are rhetorical, analytical and evidentiary. The vignette persuades the reader that things were in the setting as the author claims they were, because the sense of immediate presence captures the reader's attention, and because the concrete particulars of the events reported in the vignette instantiate the general analytic concepts (patterns of culture and social organization) the author is using to organize the research report. Such narrative is analytic - certain features of social action are highlighted, others are presented less prominently or not mentioned at all. (Erickson, 1986, p. 150)

Validity, Triangulation, and Reflexivity in Interpretive Research

Collecting, analyzing and reporting qualitative research presents investigators with the challenge of ensuring that what emerges from the study is a valid representation of the phenomenon under investigation. The issue of the validity of qualitative research findings has generated much debate in research circles. Any book on ethnographic or qualitative research methodologies includes a section that addresses the issue of validity as it applies to qualitative research. Although there has been much debate surrounding the issue of validity in qualitative research, there is still a wide range of opinion about the topic. Goetz and LeCompte, for example, claim that in comparison to a number of other research strategies, ethnographic research generally yields findings that have a high degree of validity.

Validity may be its [ethnography's] major strength. This becomes evident when ethnography is compared to survey studies, experimentation, and other quantitative research designs for assessment of internal validity. The claim of ethnography to high internal validity derives from the data collection and analysis techniques used by ethnographers. (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984, p. 221)

Goetz and LeCompte argue that the traditional hallmarks of ethnographic research methodologies combine to yield studies with a high degree of internal validity. That is, the collection of data over long periods of time, extensive use of informant interviews, the collection of data in natural as distinct from laboratory or contrived settings, and the self-reflective analysis of the ethnographer all combine to produce valid portrayals of the phenomenon under investigation.
A more doubtful view about high degrees of validity for ethnographic research is expressed by Van Maanen (1988). Writing about the recent shift in ethnographic research, in which there is less of a focus on causal considerations and more on interpretation and meaning, Van Maanen expresses doubt about the possibility of arriving at purely "objective" truths through ethnographic research.

At this point, suffice it to say, the sacred power of observation alone has faded (i.e. fieldwork is now seen as more of an interpretive process than a simple visual or auditory one); the view that ethnography is transparent has given way to an appreciation of the narrative features of the text (i.e., all writing that tells of one thing necessarily tells of another); and truth as judged by some external, invariant standard is untenable when applied to ethnography (i.e., all truths are partial and contestable)....I do not regard fieldwork as the simple observation, description or explanatory technique that radiates from the older, objective, laws-and-causes view of human behavior....I should note that my stance is opposed to the power of positivist thinking, since I regard the relation between the knower and the known to be a most problematic one and anything but independent in cultural studies. This is a phenomenological war whoop declaring that there is no way of seeing, hearing, or representing the world of others that is absolutely, universally valid or correct. Ethnographies of any sort are always subject to multiple interpretations. They are never beyond controversy or debate. (Van Maanen, 1988, p. 34-35)

Van Maanen's point is an important one. If, as Van Maanen claims, ethnographies are always subject to multiple interpretations, then there is a strong onus on qualitative researchers to ensure that the interpretations they present are in some way, empirically grounded, and therefore verifiable. A strategy commonly used to help develop valid research-derived interpretations of social phenomena is that which is referred to as "triangulation". The notion of triangulation was drawn initially from procedures used by surveyors and navigators for ensuring the positional accuracy of a sighted object. Triangulation in ethnographic research essentially follows the same principle. By using multiple reference points drawn from different kinds and sources of data, ethnographic researchers are able to
cross-check the interpretations they draw from the data. In doing so, they are thereby able to provide some measure of validity.

For the purposes of this study, several different kinds of triangulation were used to help ensure the validity of the interpretations. One type of triangulation involved the comparison of interview data with classroom observations. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983, p. 118) point out that the understandings that are elicited in an interview setting may not be those that underlie social action in other situations. In other words, ethnographic researchers cannot simply assume that what people say they do is what they actually do. One way to check that the understandings elicited in an interview setting are consistent with action in the social setting is to observe the actual setting and check for instances of the interview-derived understandings in the actual, observed behavior. In this study, interviews and classroom and staff room observations were cross-checked to ensure validity.

Another type of triangulation that was used in this investigation was that known as respondent validation. Respondent validation involves the presentation of researcher interpretations to members of the social setting, and asking individuals if the interpretation accurately describes the situation or setting. This type of validation procedure is particularly useful when the researcher is trying to reach an understanding of the nature of a group or shared consensus that may exist about an issue or phenomenon. In this study, I used respondent validation extensively in developing an understanding of teachers' perceptions of the school improvement process.

Related to the processes of developing valid interpretations through triangulation, is the notion of reflexivity. The term, "reflexivity", as it is used in
qualitative research, refers in part, to the reflective attention the researcher must pay to the context of the situation, and the effects that his or her presence may have upon the actors involved in the setting. Reflexivity also refers to the way in which the researcher must continually monitor and assess his or her emerging understandings of the situation. Thus, in qualitative studies, the collection of data is but one of the tasks that the researcher faces. In addition to collecting data, the researcher is constantly constructing interpretations of that data through an ongoing process of reflection. As explanatory schema are developed, tested, and refined through reflection, analysis, and triangulation, the researcher is continually refining his or her understandings of the setting under study.

In research of this nature, the thinking that lies behind this reflection and the ongoing refinement of understandings is recorded along with the fieldnotes, in reflective and analytic "asides". In these "asides" the researcher reflects about such things as the progress of the study, one's frame of mind at the time, the explanatory constructs that are emerging, the methods in use, and the possible directions in which he or she should continue or redirect the investigation. Sometimes these reflective asides are kept in a separate "field diary", or sometimes they are contained in the same book as the fieldnotes (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982, p. 87). For this study, I used the same notebooks to record both the fieldnotes and my reflective comments on the study. At the completion of the study, the fieldnotes and reflective comments comprised two hand-written volumes of two hundred and sixteen pages.

Qualitative Research and the Replication of Findings

Educational researchers who do qualitative research that focuses on a single site or a unique naturalistic setting are faced with an interesting challenge. That challenge is how to present research findings in a way that would allow another
researcher to replicate the study. One of the hallmarks of scientific investigation and its resultant generation of knowledge is the opportunity it presents to others to test the validity of the findings that are presented. Goetz and Lecompte (1984, p. 211) have pointed out that for qualitative researchers, the issue of replication is similar to the problem faced by Heraclitus when he tried to step into the same river twice.

Unique situations cannot be reconstructed precisely; even the most exact replication of research methods may fail to produce identical results. Like Heraclitus, who could not step into the same river twice, researchers cannot duplicate exactly a naturally occurring event studied previously. Because ethnographic research occurs in natural settings and is often undertaken to record processes of change, it is especially vulnerable to replication difficulties.

Fortunately, there are ways around what Goetz and LeCompte refer to as Heraclitus' problem. The outcomes of good qualitative research are usually a working hypothesis, a theory, or at the very least, a set of categories that can be used to interpret the social actions taking place in the setting of the study. This study contains both a working hypothesis and a set of categories that were used to describe the culture of the school. Both the hypothesis and the descriptive categories constitute knowledge claims that can subjected to testing and replication.

As will be described in more detail in a later chapter, I have hypothesized that the culture of this particular school acted as a stabilizing mechanism during times of potential conflict. A researcher who is interested in testing this hypothesis could take this idea and use it as a starting point for another study of school improvement at a different site. The reliability of my claim -that existing cultural values act as a stabilizing force during times potential of conflict- would be greatly strengthened if there were confirming evidence from a different site. Replication,
In this sense then, serves the same purpose in qualitative research as it does in quantitative research. Its purpose is the confirmation of findings and a resulting strengthening of theory.

Though the descriptive categories used to portray the culture of the school may be different in a different setting, I would argue that they are testable within the original setting of the study. That is, another researcher could enter the site of the study with the aim of replicating the findings. That researcher may wish to use my categories as a sensitizing framework, or he or she may wish to begin anew, and compare the products of his or her data collection and analysis with my results.

Either way, this study can be replicated. The findings may differ to some extent, but the nature of the study itself is such that another researcher could use the same methodologies to carry out a replication study that tests either the working hypothesis, or the categories used to describe the culture of CKF.

Culture as a Second Order Analytic Construct

The purpose behind studying and presenting the culture of CKF was to use that understanding to examine the school's involvement with a school improvement program. This topic - the interaction between the culture of CKF and The School is the Key - is the focus of Chapter Seven. In that chapter, the course that the school improvement program took in CKF is explained from a perspective that draws upon what is known about the school's culture. In this way, the culture of the school becomes a kind of second order analytic construct. If the description of CKF School's experience with The School is the Key (i.e. Chapter Six) answers the question, "What happened?", then Chapter Seven poses answers to the question, "Why did what happened happen that way?". From this perspective, then, school culture is the reference point for possible explanations of the ways that The School
is the Key was dealt with in Charles Kettering Ford Elementary School. However, also contained in Chapter Seven is a description of the effects that the school improvement program had on the culture of the school. As will be seen, the interaction that took place had an effect on both The School is the Key and the culture of CKF. Prior to those descriptions, however, is Chapter Six - a description of the chronology and content of CKF's experience with The School is the Key.

**Summary of Chapter Three**

This chapter described the methods and procedures of the study. Classrooms, staff meetings, teachers, the principal, and district office personnel were described as the major settings and sources for data collection. Two sampling frames showed the people, places, and events from which data were collected. Participant observation and interviewing were discussed at length, and described as the main data collection methodologies used for this study. The nature of the data for this study, and the linkage between the interpretation of data and inductive analysis were also discussed. In the final section, it was stated that CKF's "culture" is used as an analytic construct in a later chapter to explain the interaction that took place between the school improvement program and the school.
CHAPTER FOUR

Overview of the School Improvement Program

History of "The School is the Key" (TSITK) Program

The School is the Key program (which is not the program's real name) began in Ocean City School District as a response to central office interest in the school effectiveness and school improvement literature. By the mid-1980's, school effectiveness and school improvement were common topics in research journals that focused on school administration and staff development. Derek Hathaway, one of the program's two principal developers, described the effective schools research as the starting point for their interest in developing a school improvement program.

The origins basically started because we were hearing lots about the effective schools movement, and people were writing about it in the literature, so we began to take a look at it. We started by looking at some people in the U.S. who were doing some things. We looked at some American work, and the literature, and we started gathering some research. (Interview, Derek)

While the program developers initially looked at American research, there was a subsequent decision to also look at two Canadian programs. One of the programs was being used in a large city in Alberta, and focused on effective schools, while the other program was being used in the lower mainland of British Columbia. The focus of the B.C. program was school improvement. In order to see both of these programs first-hand, one of the developers of TSITK went to the training sessions of both the Alberta and British Columbia programs. Having gathered information through the observation of other programs, and from research based on a major review of the literature, Ocean City's district level staff had to decide how they could best proceed.
In developing their school improvement program, Derek Hathaway described what was done.

I went to do both those training sessions, and at the same time we had just completed our major research papers on effective schools and school improvement. We put them all together and decided we would go a certain route. We thought we would use a framework of the literature as a kind of starting point. We decided to look and see if we could group that information from the research in school improvement and effective schools, and change, all together under some factors that all seem to fit. (Interview: Derek)

As described by Derek, The School is the Key draws upon a combination of existing research in the areas of school effectiveness, school improvement, and change and innovation. As part of the development process, the research literature in these three areas was summarized and put together in a resource book. Involved in the development of the resource book were the two principal program developers, several district research staff, and a prominent educational researcher from one of the provincial universities. As the program evolved, it took shape as an amalgam of the different research literatures that had been examined by its developers.

School Improvement Within the Context of Professional Development

All of the staff and professional development programs offered by Ocean City School District can be found in an annual calendar of programs. The calendar is a lengthy one, and includes in its 125 pages, workshops and programs in 50 different areas. Within each of these 50 areas, a number of different workshops are offered. For example, in the area of gifted education, teachers can attend one of seven different workshops on that topic, or in the area of student assessment, teachers can attend one of seven workshops. The total number of workshops contained in the catalog, number in the hundreds. On the inside front cover of the catalog is a list of
the district's professional and staff development goals. That list is reproduced below:

1. to provide activities, programs and services that assist teachers in maintaining and refining their professional skills and competencies;

2. to assist teachers in the identification and further development of their instructional strengths;

3. to support schools in their efforts at addressing school improvement in their attempts at providing for the needs of our students;

4. to promote activities which foster creativity, enthusiasm and self-confidence in teachers;

5. to make available to teachers important research: in learning theory; in various subject disciplines; in teaching methodology;

6. to foster and support the exchange of ideas, practices and materials among teachers

(Professional and Staff Development Calendar, Program Services, Ocean City School Board)

As part of the document analysis for this study, I looked at the number of workshops offered within each of the areas referred to in the district's staff development goals. Content analysis of the above goals for professional and staff development reveals a concern with teachers' professional development in five broad areas. These areas and the professional development goals in which they are referenced are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Referenced In Goal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning theory</td>
<td>5,2,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching methodology</td>
<td>5,2,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject disciplines</td>
<td>5,2,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student needs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School improvement</td>
<td>3,6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
To determine the distribution of workshops among the five areas listed above, I grouped the fifty workshop categories listed in the calendar's Table of Contents according to which of the five areas they represented. The results of that analysis are presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Number of Workshops</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning theory</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching methodology</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject disciplines</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student needs</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School improvement</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is most striking about the results of this analysis is the fact that while school improvement is one of the district's stated goals for staff and professional development, there is only one workshop that deals with the topic. The most obvious explanation for this situation relates to the relative newness (to the district) of the concept of school improvement. While improving schools has long been a goal for school administrators, it is only recently that we have seen the use of a specific term (i.e. school improvement) to denote that process. Given the recency of the topic, then, it should not seem unusual that the workshops on school improvement are few in number compared to those in the four other goal areas of learning theory, teaching methodology, student needs and the various subject disciplines.

Although the above line of reasoning does provide an explanation for the uneven distribution of workshops among the five goal areas, the explanation is a weak one. An alternative line of reasoning about the discrepancy is to question why school improvement appears in the goal statements in the first place. If one considers that
only two per cent of the workshops listed are designed to bring about school improvement, it is unlikely that school improvement was placed in the district's professional development goals solely on the basis of the number of workshops in that area. I believe the inclusion of school improvement in Ocean City's professional development goals represents the degree and extent to which the idea of school improvement has been given a high priority within the district. As an educational concept, school improvement is relatively new. Yet, as a new concept, with a single, concrete workshop offering that represents only two per cent of the total workshops offered in the district, "school improvement" has been placed in the district's professional and staff development goals, alongside more established educational concepts such as teaching methodologies, the subject disciplines, and learning theory.

The rapid rise of the ideas of school improvement is something of an enigma. Tyler and MacGuire (1984) tell us that it often takes thirty years for research findings in education to be translated into practice. Assuming that the early school effectiveness research of the late 1970's is the basis for much of the present school improvement work, it has taken barely a decade for the findings of school effectiveness research to be translated into prescriptions for school improvement. Why this is the case, is not entirely clear.

One explanation for the rapid rise and implementation of school improvement initiatives derives from the political pressures of the teacher accountability movement and the need to strengthen "a nation at risk." There is, however, an alternative explanation to the political one, and I believe it is this one that is relevant to the situation in Ocean City School District. That explanation is that there is an existing recognition on the part of many educators that schools are
complex entities that present teachers, students, and administrators with numerous problems. From this perspective, the improvement of schools is an exciting goal. The idea that one can somehow improve schools has an implicit appeal to anyone who has been frustrated by the numerous shortcomings extant in the systems of public education.

For Ocean City School District then, facilitating school improvement was made a major goal of their professional development program. The mechanics of the district-wide implementation of this initiative, and the structure of the program itself, are described in the following sections.

**Description and Goals of The School is the Key**

A program description, along with the goals and objectives of the *The School is the Key* are described in the district's staff and professional development calendar:

**DESCRIPTION:**
A 2-day institute for elementary schools. This program will assist interested schools in identifying and understanding significant components of successful programs and the process of analyzing not only strengths and areas requiring attention in existing programs, but also how to make improvements through collaborative action.

**GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:**
To provide support for the development and implementation of a school-based program to assist interested staff in analyzing the strengths of their current program and meeting the challenge of improving areas requiring attention;

To provide a clear focus for "translating" and transforming research into practice with recommendations and alternatives for school-based action;

To identify specific district/area/administrative support required for staff development work at the school level.

(Professional and Staff Development Calendar, Program Services, Ocean City School Board)

Although it is not stated in the calendar description of the program, one of the intentions of the program's developers was to link effective schools research to a
process of school improvement in a way that takes into account what is known about change in educational institutions. As described in the above section on the origins of the program in Ocean City, a decision was made to use the research literature as an organizing framework. The format that was used grouped research findings on school effectiveness and school improvement into five main areas. These areas are: 1) educational leadership, 2) school organization, 3) school climate, 4) focus on instruction, and 5) staff development. Staffs that involved themselves in The School is the Key were expected to look at their own school in terms of these five main areas. To facilitate this self-examination, the program presented the five key factors in a way that described both the "critical attributes" of the area, along with a description of the "indicators" that would tell of the existence of the critical attribute. For example, the following segment from the program resource book describes one of the critical attributes and the indicators associated with effective school leadership.

FACTOR 1: EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

1. THE PRINCIPAL CREATES A SENSE OF DIRECTION FOR THE SCHOOL

Indicators

The principal:

• Ensures that everyone has clearly conceptualized goals for the school.
• Plans deliberately and acts to ensure goal clarity.
• Engages staff in the active attainment of these goals.
• Insists that the commitment to learning be manifest in every classroom.
2. THE PRINCIPAL SETS THE TONE OF THE SCHOOL

Indicators

The principal:

- Acts to create and maintain a stable atmosphere and a good learning environment.
- Communicates expectations and presents a good role model for both students and staff.
- Promotes actively a good learning environment by reducing instructional interruptions.

(The School is the Key Handbook, 1986)

The above two critical attributes and their indicators are two of nine indicators for the area of Educational Leadership. As can be seen in the above example, each critical attribute has several indicators. The following chart lists the total number of critical attributes and indicators in each of the five areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational Leadership</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Organization</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Climate</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on Instruction</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Development</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although space does not permit a full listing of the critical attributes and their accompanying indicators for each of the five factors, it should be apparent from the large number of attributes and indicators that there is a broad range within which schools can examine their own performance. Laying out the characteristics of effective schools this way, in a manner that focused both on critical attributes and their indicators, was for Derek Hathaway, a strong point in the program's design.
I think the contribution we've made in the whole process of school improvement would be that we have identified those five factors. We've looked at the attributes of those factors and talked about some indicators and I don't think anyone else has done that. As a result, it's understandable for a school. They at least get the key concept of the factor and look at the key critical attributes. (Interview: Derek)

Dissemination to Schools

Unlike some other school improvement programs, The School is the Key was not a mandated program. A school's participation in the program was voluntary, and that meant the developers had to first of all develop an awareness and generate an interest in the program. Following completion of the program's design, and the development of an accompanying resource book, word was circulated that The School is the Key was available as a professional development program. A description of the program was put in the district's professional and staff development calendar, and the program's developers also spoke at district principals' meetings informing principals of the new offering. Derek Hathaway described the way schools were made aware of the program, and the kind of response there has been.

We inserted it in our calendar of programs and we made it a highlight of our calendars. We spoke at principals' meetings about the opportunity we offered to the district. We had good response. We ran an elementary program and a secondary program the first fall and that's how it started. From that point on, there was always interest in the program. We have always had full institutes. (Interview: Derek)

The Structure of the Workshops

When the program was first offered, it was run in an "institute" format. Derek described the institute format, and the way the program was presented to the schools that signed up.

We decided to go the institute route, which was to bring in eight or nine people from the school, including the principal. This was new to our district. We hadn't really had that kind of an inservice model. We booked them in for a couple of days and we outlined what we thought this
Derek's description of the symbolism associated with the presence of the superintendent and deputy superintendents is an insightful interpretation of the way the program was presented. The impact of such a powerful legitimizing mechanism should not be underestimated. The principals and teachers who attended the institutes would certainly have attached special significance to the program given the presence of the district's top administrators, particularly if the teachers and principals were not used to seeing the superintendent and deputy superintendent at many other inservice sessions.

On the first day of the two-day institute, staff groups were involved in learning about the research findings on effective schools, school improvement and the implementation of change. Toward the end of the first day, the five factors (educational leadership, school organization, school climate, focus on instruction and staff development) were presented as areas that schools could focus on in their school improvement efforts.

The second day of the institute focused on the five factors in detail, looking at the critical attributes and their indicators in each of the areas. In addition, the mechanics of factor analysis, needs assessment, and school action planning were presented so that those attending the workshop would be able to take a leadership role in the implementation of school improvement. The idea behind the use of a core group from interested schools was to train individuals who would go back to the school and present to the staff what they had learned at the two-day institute. The school-based workshops that the core group were to organize had several purposes:
a) to present to the staff, information on school improvement and school effectiveness,
b) to allow the school staff as a whole, a chance to reflect on their own situation vis-
a vis the five factors, through a factor analysis and a needs assessment,
c) to develop, on the basis of a factor analysis and needs assessment, a set of action
plans designed to bring about desired improvements in the school.

It is important to note here that while the core group and the entire school staff
would look at all of the five factors, there was not a district expectation that the
schools would work in each of the five areas. Schools could choose one, or all, or
some combination of the five factors to orient their improvement efforts.

To help with the development of the school-based workshops and the enactment
of the resulting action plans, each school was assigned a consultant from the
central office. The consultants were to visit the schools and help with the school
based workshops. They were also to return on a regular basis to help with monthly
*The School is the Key* committee meetings.

**Assumptions Underlying the Program**

As a program for school improvement, *The School is the Key* rests on a number of
key assumptions. Some of these assumptions relate to the effective schools
literature from which the program draws much of its content, and some of the
assumptions are about the nature of change, and the processes of school
improvement. Even though these assumptions may seem to be readily apparent, the
purpose of this section is to make them explicit and to explore some of the
implications they hold for the school improvement process. Some of the
assumptions discussed in this section have been identified and made explicit by the
program developers themselves. These are contained in a document titled
"Assumptions About School Improvement" that was distributed to teachers at one of
The School is the Key workshops. That document is reproduced below.

ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

- All personnel in schools, to stay current and effective, need and should
  be involved in professional development throughout their careers.

- Our schools are presently effective and professional development
  should build upon this strength.

- Schools are unique social cultures and as such are constantly growing
  and developing in response to internal and external forces.

- The school is the primary unit of change, not the district or the
  individual. Therefore, it is the school which should determine its
  direction and how to get there.

- School districts have the primary responsibility for providing the
  resources and training for a school staff to implement new programs
  and improve instruction.

- The school requires a common philosophical base upon which to make
  its decisions and to plan for the professional development of its
  members.

- School decisions can now be based upon significant educational
  studies.

- Schools which develop cross-subject and cross-grade decision-making
  groups will find that the resultant consistency leads to a more positive
  ethos.

- Effective teaching is better facilitated in a school which has
  consciously developed a positive ethos based on consistency and high
  expectations.

- There are many ways that schools can build upon their strengths and
  determine their direction.

(The School is the Key: Workshop Document, March, 1988)

Analysis of the assumptions listed above shows them to be concerned primarily
with the processes of school improvement. The above list tells us that in this
district, the approach to school improvement starts with the assumptions that the
school is the primary unit of change, that school improvement efforts should work
from existing strengths, and that there should be district-level support for attempts
at improvement. Although it is not included in the above list, there are also district assumptions that school improvement efforts should not be mandated, and that those schools that do become involved in the program should be allowed to choose which of the five factors they will focus on.

While schools are given a choice about which of the five factors they will work in, there is another more fundamental assumption that underlies the program, and that assumption predetermines the scope of the improvement efforts. Implicit within *The School is the Key* program is the assumption that the re-creation of some or all of the attributes grouped within the "five factors" will result in an improved version of a school. This is an important feature of the program, and should not be overlooked, because it indicates that the directions for improvement and the criteria for effectiveness have to a great extent, already been determined by the structure of the program itself. In their quest for improvement and increased effectiveness, those schools that enrol in the program will work in directions that have been predetermined by the literature extant in school improvement and school effectiveness.

**Summary of Chapter Four**

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide an overview of the origins and the structure of *The School is the Key* program. Developed in answer to an interest in the areas of school effectiveness and school improvement, the program was intended to provide interested schools with a format for planned, school-based change. As a framework for the program, research literature from the areas of school improvement and school effectiveness was organized into five factors that were believed to be crucial to an effective school. Within each of these areas, the
program identified a group of "critical attributes" along with associated "indicators" that could be used to identify the existence of the attributes.

Through a comparison of the district's professional development goals and the workshops that were offered to support those goals, I indicated the priority the district has given to the idea of school improvement. I have claimed that the idea of school improvement has been given a high priority within the district's professional development programs. This claim is substantiated by interview data that indicates the program was made a highlight of the district's professional development calendar, and given powerful symbolic support through the involvement of top district administrators.

The format of the program was described as a two-day institute in which information on school effectiveness, school improvement and change theory was presented to core groups from interested schools. Following the institute, the core groups returned to their own schools to begin working with their school staffs. At their school, the core groups would present what they had learned about school effectiveness and school improvement, after which, school staffs would discuss their school in terms of the "five factors". The purpose of the school-based discussions was to identify areas within the school that the staff felt could be improved upon through the use of *The School is the Key*. To help facilitate the discussion process, and to help with the formulation and monitoring of action plans, each school was assigned a district level consultant.

Finally, the assumptions that underlay the process and content components of the program were presented. The program assumes that the school is the basic unit for change in education, and that the directions for change within the school are best determined by the school staff. It was also assumed that schools should build
from existing strengths when planning school improvement. It was pointed out that though participation in the program was voluntary, participating schools were guided toward working in five predefined areas in their school improvement efforts.
CHAPTER FIVE
The Culture of Charles Kettering Ford Elementary School

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the shared assumptions that make up the culture of CKF School. As outlined in previous chapters, the conception of culture used for this study views an organization's culture as consisting of commonly held beliefs and values. The rationale behind making the culture of CKF explicit is a belief that an understanding of a school's culture will greatly add to an understanding of the dynamics surrounding school improvement efforts. That is, an understanding of the school's culture will shed light on the way school improvement efforts take shape within the school setting.

Chapter Three described how the constructs of "theme" and "key suppositions" were used in the analysis of the data to arrive at a representation of the culture of CKF. As part of the analysis of the data, a microcomputer and an electronic database program were used to help categorize coded items from the fieldnotes and interviews. These items were then sorted into what eventually became the seven themes of the culture of CKF. As described in Chapter Three, the themes represent recurring elements within the data that were categorized on the basis of a common feature or features. The content matter of each of the themes consists of a variety of data, including a wide range of activities observed in the school, along with teacher language as recorded during formal and informal interviews. Imbedded within each of the seven themes described in this Chapter are a number of staff-held assumptions about the elements that make up a theme. The first part of this chapter describes the seven themes. Following the description of each theme, there is a summary section that lists the assumptions contained within the theme.
As a refinement of the analytic construct of theme, I have used the concept of a "key supposition" to group similar staff-held assumptions into categories. These categories (i.e. key suppositions) are comprised of comparable assumptions that appear in similar forms across several themes. As such, they represent a cross-linkage between themes. In that these key suppositions appear to join some of the themes together, they also represent a more fundamental analytic unit for describing the culture of CKF in terms of the shared assumptions of which it is comprised.

Each theme's location within the chapter corresponds to its frequency of occurrence within fieldnote and interview data. For example, Theme One, *Entering the World of the Child* appears first in the chapter because it is the theme that contains the largest number of items from the data. By arranging the themes in this manner, I have arrived at a crude measure of the relative "strength" of each of the seven themes. I use the term "crude" because, as later analysis will show, such a rough frequency count of fieldnote data shows only part of the larger context from which the data are drawn.

A somewhat different approach was used to arrive at the "strength" of each of the key suppositions described in this chapter. Following the sections that describe the seven themes, all of the assumptions contained within the themes are listed and grouped into five key suppositions. A tally that shows the number of component assumptions within each key supposition is also included. However, in addition to the raw tally of each key supposition's component assumptions, a matrix is used to show the cross-linkages that exist between the analytic constructs of key suppositions and themes. For the purposes of this study, the indices that are used to determine the relative strength or pervasiveness of the key supposition within the
culture of the school are: a) the raw tally of the component assumptions, and b) the extent of the key supposition's integration across multiple themes.

**Theme One: Entering the World of the Child**

As one might expect for an elementary school, the theme that incorporates the largest part of the data is that which focuses on the interaction of teachers and children. I have titled this theme *Entering the World of the Child* because most of the material included in this category reflects beliefs and values that are concerned with the importance of understanding and using the world views of children as part of the school experience. There was a strong concern among the teachers that the learning experience begin at a point that ensured the children's active and comfortable participation. While some may argue that such an approach to teaching is nothing more than good pedagogy, there was, at the same time, an empathic understanding embodied in this approach. This empathic understanding went beyond the typical view that children should have the prerequisite skills and knowledge in order to participate and learn in a teaching situation.

An example of this kind of empathic understanding was Lesley's reflecting on what it must be like for her new kindergarten student, who had just arrived from Hong Kong two days earlier. At five years of age Mai Li could speak no English. In coming to Canada she had left behind all of her once familiar world, except for her immediate family. Lesley empathized with this child when she imagined the student experiencing fear and bewilderment, landing in a strange country, surrounded by people whose language she does not understand. An immediate concern for Lesley on the day of Mai Li's arrival was to engage the class in games and activities that would help the child learn the names of her new classmates. (Fieldnotes, p. 84)
A similar example of a teacher's empathic understanding of students was contained in Teresa's staffroom conversation in which she described the frustration she experienced herself as a student. As part of that conversation, she linked the recollection of her own frustration to the importance of understanding the way her own students sometimes experience things.

Have you ever had the experience where you know that you are totally, completely lost in trying to understand something? I can remember sitting in a philosophy class at the university, knowing that no matter how hard I tried, and no matter how hard I listened, that I wasn't going to be able to understand what the professor was saying. I think of students experiencing that and how frustrating it is. That no matter how hard they try, they just aren't going to be able to do it. (From Fieldnotes, p. 178)

In addition to an empathic awareness of the difficulties children can encounter as students, teachers were also aware of the impact that out-of-school life had on the social, emotional and physical well-being of the children they teach. As mentioned in Chapter One, approximately one-third of the school's student population attended the before-and-after school daycare that operated out of the basement of CKF. For the primary teachers in particular, this was an area of concern. For the five year olds who had already spent up to two hours in the building prior to the 8:55 a.m. bell, the morning's classroom activities were sometimes long and physically taxing. Faced with tired and yawning children by 9:30 a.m., some teachers felt they had to plan their days in ways that would not demand too much of children who were already physically and emotionally stressed. (Fieldnotes, p. 10)

A teacher belief included in Theme One was the belief that it was important to maintain the individuality and creativity of students. Lesley's belief that schools can stifle creativity and "extinguish the spark" in some children led her, on many occasions, to celebrate the unusual in her classroom. One day for instance, during a whole-class oral reading of *Baa Baa Black Sheep*, one of the boys read the word
"bag", in the phrase "three bags full", not as one ordinarily would, but as a kind of long, drawn out bleating "baaaaag", much as a sheep would make. Toban's bleating "baaaag" was heard above the other childrens' voices - so much so that the class and the teacher all stopped the reading, and all eyes turned to Toban. In the second or two of silence that followed, I suspect, that in addition to myself, many of the kindergarten students were also wondering how the teacher would respond to Toban. Lesley's smile prefaced her comments. "Oh Toban, that's great! I love it!" And what began as an unusual response from Toban, continued as a twenty second mini-lesson on reading with expression, replete with an unplanned, but highly enjoyable example.

While Lesley's valuing of individuality was manifest in her reaction to Toban's spontaneous action, I also saw manifestations of this value represented in more ongoing and programmatic formats. In the primary grades, the most common way of using contributions from individual children was through the daily ritual of "show and tell". Variously known in different classrooms as "talking time", "news", and "show and tell", teachers used the knowledge that children brought to class to engage the students in peer-focused discussion. However, though the discussion was often student generated and peer-focused, the teachers also used the context of these discussions to present, review, and reinforce concepts. Teresa, for example made skillful use of the information that individual children brought to class in the form of "news". During an observation of one news session in her Grade 1/2 class, I could not help but be impressed with not only the sophistication of the children's language, but by the controlled and relaxed nature of the interactions that occurred among students, and between teacher and students. The following fieldnote excerpt
recounts a "news" session in Teresa's classroom. (Teresa is the teacher. All other names refer to the six and seven year old students in the class.)

One of the students has written February 5 1988 [sic] in large letters on the chart paper that hangs next to where the teacher sits. Looking first at the chart paper and then at the class (who are seated on the carpet), Teresa asks, "Who wrote this?"

"I did. And I missed an 'r'. I can see that now." replies Michelle.

"What are we going to do?" asks Teresa.

"Use a caret." volunteers David.

Teresa inserts a caret and the letter 'r'. Still looking at the date she asks in a pensive tone of voice, "What else should we put in?"

"A comma, it needs a comma" says another student.

"That's right", says Teresa inserting the comma, "It's like an upside down six with the circle filled in, only very, very tiny."

A student offers an alternative explanation, and at the same time, clarifies, "It looks like a tiny nine, and it's always on the line."

The first news item for today is a newspaper photo of a rare species of giant salamander. Since I had heard a CBC radio interview about the salamander that very morning while driving to school, I shared what I had heard, and remarked how that kind of salamander was in danger of becoming extinct. Teresa taped the student's photo to the chart paper and printed beneath the picture. "This salamander is very rare. It could become extinct." After printing these two sentences, Teresa tells the students to "Read it over, and if you don't know a word, go on and try it again." The students spend the next thirty or so seconds reading the caption that now accompanies the picture.

Next, David has a picture of two dogs that look as if they are driving a car. Teresa reviews the meaning of the word "humorous". When it comes time to write a caption on the chart paper, Teresa isn't sure how to spell "humorous". Following a brief class discussion that includes me, the
teacher ends up consulting the dictionary to check the spelling. Teresa asks the students to tell her some synonyms for the word, and the students suggest funny, silly, hilarious, and amusing, all of which get written on the chart paper. Teresa gets the students to act out the distinctions in degree conveyed by the different words by asking them to "Show me funny.", "Show me silly.", "Show me amusing.", and "Show me hilarious."

After Teresa has taped the picture of the two dogs on to the chart paper, Michelle comments that the picture looks symmetrical. Teacher and students engage in a brief discussion of whether the picture could be said to be symmetrical. At this point the students become noisier as their voices rise. Teresa asks the students, "Can Tristan have his news now?" The students do not stop talking. Teresa waits approximately ten seconds. She then asks, "Is Miss Viola Swamp going to have to appear?" [Viola Swamp is the crabby teacher portrayed in the popular children's book, Miss Nelson is Missing]. The students immediately settle down, and Tristan presents his photo of the new Alex Fraser Bridge. Teresa tapes the picture to the chart paper and writes, "Many people cross the Fraser River." As Teresa leans back in her chair, Jessica reads the sentence aloud, and smiles at her accomplishment.

Ranjit comments, "That doesn't sound right, sort of."
"What should it say?" asks Teresa.

The students talk among themselves for several seconds, then one of them suggests that the word "river" be replaced by the word "bridge". Teresa draws a line through "River" and writes "Bridge" above it.

The next news item is a picture of two people playing tennis. Teresa asks the students what they would need if they were going to play tennis. "Get your fingers out and figure out how many things you need."

Student suggestions include a net, balls, tennis rackets, runners, tennis court, an opponent, and knowing the rules. Teresa turns to David and says "Thank-you David for putting your hand up. You knew the answers all along but you didn't call it out, so the others could think. Thank-you for
doing that." David smiles and nods, apparently pleased with Teresa'a recognition of his self-control.

Next, it is Michelle's turn. She describes her news photo. "These people only had a little bit of snow so they took all the snow and they made a little hill so they could slide."

Teresa asks the students, "What is the name for the surface they slide on?"

"A slope." answers a student.

"Yes, that's right, and it helps if the slope is what.....?", she continues.

"Steep." is one student's answer.

"Now, did they do that quickly?" asks Teresa.

"No. It took them about three hours", replies Michelle who has read the newspaper caption attached to her photo.

"So they had to cooperate to do that then?" asks Teresa.

"Yes, they would have to cooperate.", is the consensus among the students.

"It says here, a TRIO of people", reads Teresa, "How many is in a trio?". End of observation. (Fieldnotes, p. 129-131)

Embedded in this thick description is a range of pedagogical action that reflects Teresa's belief that it is important to recognize the legitimacy of her students' knowledge. That Michelle should so casually and quickly point out her own mistake to herself, her teacher, and her classmates ("I missed an 'r'. I can see that now.") indicates that for the students in Teresa's room, the admission of making mistakes is a natural and acceptable thing to do. Michelle's ready acknowledgement of not only her publicly displayed work (in big letters, on the chart paper), but also her mistake, indicates a kind of confidence. That confidence comes from feeling both accepted and respected by the teacher. In Teresa's classroom, student knowledge and student mistakes are legitimate aspects of the learning process. Both have credence within the philosophy that guides her pedagogy.
Other examples of Teresa’s recognition of the legitimacy of students’ knowledge can be seen in the way she responds to their suggestions for remedying a situation. When the student suggested that they use a caret to correct the missing ‘r’ in February, she quite simply did as he suggested. There was no asking for a “better” way, or no suggesting that they do the whole word over. The student’s suggestion was accepted and implemented in a non-judgemental, matter-of-fact way. A similar response was evidenced in her reaction to the students’ suggestion that “River” be replaced with “Bridge”. The final form of this sentence was clearly negotiated between teacher and students, beginning with the teacher’s written sentence, moving to the student’s expressed discomfort with the way the sentence read, and ending with an agreed upon solution.

In this way - through their teacher’s acceptance of the legitimacy of their knowledge, and through the teacher’s use of that knowledge in the learning experience itself - Teresa’s students are in a sense architects of their own “news” experience, as they use what they already know about punctuation, symmetry, playing tennis, or, in the case of Ranjit, how something should intuitively “sound”.

But what of learning situations in which there is little or no room for the negotiation of form and meaning? Even in situations that called for mastery and strict adherence to particular principles, such as learning to regroup numbers as part of the concept of place value, Teresa would involve her students in ways that drew upon meaning structures of the child’s world.

Students in Teresa’s class began their adventures in learning place value not with the concepts of ones, tens and hundreds, but by planting imaginary plants in rows and gardens, using plastic bingo chips and pieces of green paper. Adopting the persona and costume of a wicked witch, Teresa transports her students into a
virtual fantasy world, where the object is to trick the witch by following the rules for planting. If one tricks the witch she gets angry, and rants and fumes. But if one is not careful, and does not plant properly, the witch will shrivel the plants and steal the gardens.

As teacher-turned-witch, Teresa conducts the lesson, momentarily slipping out of role to help students who do not understand, or those who have forgotten the procedures they are trying to follow when planting their gardens. Having clarified things, she slips back into the witch persona to heighten the students' anticipation of the next regrouping operation. Students shriek with delight as they continually trick the wicked witch and spoil her attempts to wither their gardens. The forty-minute lesson on place value progresses with every student on task, completely involved in mastering and practising the techniques of regrouping. Toward the end of the lesson, as part of the build-up for the next learning objective, Teresa-as-witch takes the students beyond the limits of their understanding of the regrouping operation.

Confusion sets in - the students no longer know more than the witch. The witch has found a loop-hole in their planting/regrouping practices and is going to shrivel their gardens. Certainty fades, and apprehension sets in among the students. Worry can be heard in the voices of first one or two students, and then in the whole class as they begin to call for the good fairy to come and help them. Magically, Teresa-as-witch passes through the cloakroom and emerges as the good fairy. As teacher-as-fairy, she provides the students with the knowledge they need to thwart the witch. Several practice sessions with the good fairy guiding the students through the new technique provide Teresa with a check for understanding, and the lesson ends. The
good fairy and the witch disintegrate, leaving Teresa firmly ensconced in her role as teacher.

While Teresa's teaching is in many respects exemplary, and therefore not representative of the norm, there is, however enough evidence from across the setting of the study to warrant a claim that teachers at CKF School strongly value a teaching approach that includes and builds upon the world of the child. In addition to the five referenced incidents described above, there are in the fieldnote data 25 more expressions, in the form of pedagogical actions, classroom materials, and spoken language that support the view that entering the world of the child is a strong theme within the culture of CKF School.

Thus far, the description of this theme has focused on teachers' empathic understanding of children's experiences, the maintenance of individuality within the school setting, and the use of children's knowledge in learning situations. In addition to these elements, there is evidence in the fieldnote data of several other related elements concerning positive social interaction among children, and the development of a positive self-concept in each child.

Owing to a "bulge" in the student population, one of the intermediate classes contained thirty-five students, twenty-three of whom were boys. Within the class as a whole, there was an inordinate number of children with social and emotional problems. For Linda, the teacher of this class, a tremendous amount of her energy was spent in trying to foster positive interaction between and among students. As part of her attempts to help her students develop socially and emotionally, Linda would, after class was over, engage some of the more difficult students in a kind of guided reflection. During these after school sessions, Linda would get the students to reflect upon their school day, and evaluate their interactions with their peers.
Another strategy Linda used in trying to lead her problem students to more socially acceptable behavior was to arrange the seating in the classroom so that "problem" students were paired with "good" students. Her hope was that the better students would be a positive influence on the students with whom they were paired. However, this approach created a dilemma for Linda when she saw the negative and disturbing effects that the "problem" students were having on their "model" partners. By Christmas time, Linda decided to rearrange the class seating arrangements so that the good students had "...a chance to sit with someone like themselves for a change."

This issue, with all its attendant moral considerations encapsulates the dilemmas with which teachers are sometimes faced in dealing with large groups of children. With thirty-five twelve-year-olds in a classroom, there is very little room for anything other than bodies and desks. The stresses of over-crowding compounded by the actions of children who are socially maladjusted can make classroom life a frustrating experience for teachers and students alike. And yet, despite working and learning conditions that are both physically and emotionally taxing, teachers believe it is their responsibility both to maintain a positive working atmosphere and to help students develop intellectually, socially and emotionally; further, they believe they must do so in a way that reflects a just and impartial approach to student actions. It is in roles such as these that we see the teacher not simply as an educator, but as counsellor, social worker, and mediator of classroom justice.

Among the teachers of CKF School there was a strongly held belief that a child's self-concept had a great degree of influence on the behavior of the child. A strong and positive self-concept was believed to correlate with a happy and well adjusted
child. This belief underlay many of the activities in Lesley's kindergarten class. The purpose behind much of what Lesley did with her students was to strengthen children's self-concepts. For example, each day a "star" would be chosen and accorded special privileges such as wearing a special "crown", being allowed to sit in the rocking chair (itself a place of privilege), and being the first to line up. In this way, each child had a turn, on a rotational basis, to feel special. At the same time as according one child the status of "star" on each day, Lesley also worked at building self-concept among the rest of her class. As part of the daily routine, the children were to complete one of several dozen "baggy games". Baggy games were simple games such as small puzzles, and matching, sorting, counting, and sequencing activities. The games were contained in a small plastic bag, and stored on a peg board, hence the name "baggy games". Each day, students would spend approximately ten minutes working on a baggy game of their choice. After completing the game, students would approach Lesley, game in hand, and receive from her a hearty hand-shake and congratulations on a job well done. For Lesley, the rationale behind this daily ritual, was that by congratulating students on their work, she was building their self-esteem and instilling in them the pride of accomplishment that comes with successfully completing a project.

Summary of Theme One

Contained in this theme were instances in the data that reflected teachers' beliefs about the importance of understanding and using the world views of children in the educational experience. Part of this approach to teaching involved using an empathic understanding of the child as learner and as individual. A stress on the development of positive self-image and strong self-concept were also evident in the data. The following assumptions are evident in this theme:
1. Teachers should ensure a child's active participation in lessons.

2. An empathic understanding of the learner is an important part of being a teacher.

3. Children's out-of-school life can affect the kind of experience they will have while at school.

4. It is important to maintain the individuality and creativity of students.

5. Student knowledge and understandings should be included as part of lessons.

6. It is important to develop a strong self-concept in children.

7. Positive social interaction between students should be fostered and developed.

8. Teachers should help students develop socially and emotionally.

Theme Two: Developing Shared Referents About Teaching and Learning

The second theme that characterizes the culture of CKF School is an interest, among the staff, in developing shared referents about teaching and learning. The most visible manifestation of this interest was the school-wide use of a program called The Elements of Instruction. Offered as part of the district's staff and professional development program, this program was used daily, in a variety of forms, by the majority of the staff in their classroom teaching. Although The Elements of Instruction became one of the foci for CKF's school improvement efforts, the staff's use of this program (hereafter referred to as "Elements") predates the school's involvement with the The School is The Key program. The advent of The School is The Key provided the staff with an opportunity to develop a set of shared referents about teaching and learning. Because the Elements had had a major impact on the classroom practices of many of the teachers in the school, the set of shared referents understandably emerged from the principles of learning
emphasized by the Elements. The description of the Elements of Instruction workshop contained in the district's staff development calendar is as follows:

DESCRIPTION: A special program designed for teachers, administrators and district staff to enhance the analysis and development of effective instruction. Participants will be visited in their classrooms by an Elements of Instruction Staff Development Associate between the sessions.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES: The major focus of this program will be on the essential acts of teaching which make a difference for student learning:

• selecting learning objectives at an appropriate level of difficulty for the students;
• teaching to the objective;
• monitoring the student performance and adjusting the teaching when necessary;
• applying basic researched and validated principles of learning.

The Elements program was offered in the district under the tutelage of staff development personnel from a large school district in California. Local staff development personnel were also involved in presenting the workshops, and as described in the calendar, the follow-up components of the program made use of local Staff Development Associates. Staff Development Associates are full time practicing teachers with an expertise in a particular area, who are occasionally released from regular classroom teaching so that they can work with other teachers in a professional development context.

The substantive content of the Elements of Instruction draws heavily on the teacher effectiveness literature of the past ten to fifteen years, particularly on the work of Madeline Hunter. Close analysis of the list of references for one of the workshop's key handouts shows one referenced work by Berliner (1979), two by Bloom (1956a, 1956b), two by Brophy (1976, 1979), seven by Hunter (1967a, 1967b,
1971, 1974, 1976a, 1976b, 1976c), one by Kerman (1979), and one by Rosenshine (1979). Documents and handouts used at the workshops have been compiled by the Californian school district staff, and bear dates ranging from 1983 to 1985.

Interest in the Elements of Instruction among the staff of CKF School began several years ago. One of the first three staff members to attend the workshops described how her involvement came about:

I read in the Superintendent's Bulletin that these workshops on the Elements of Instruction were being put on, and that there were a principal and two teachers could go from each school, and you had to apply. So I went into Mrs. Brown's [the principal] office. I had not talked to anybody about it, just for my own professional interest I went in. And I said, "I am really interested in this Elements of Instruction. It sounds really good. It sounds like something I'd like to hear more about. Is there any chance that I could go?"
And she said, "Well I am too, so fine, I'll put your name down." Then two other teachers did [apply], and we had to draw names out of a hat. So there were just basically three teachers interested in it and two of our names got pulled out of a hat. We went to this workshop with Mrs. Brown and that's basically how I got started or interested and why I first attended. (Interview, Marion)

The response of the initial three staff members who went to the workshops was highly positive. Marion, who was quoted above, has 21 years of teaching experience, and in a later, informal interview described the Elements as "a tremendous shot in the arm" to her teaching. Ann, the other teacher who went to the workshop with Marion and the principal, was also a career teacher with fourteen years experience. Her enthusiasm for the program led her to go on to become a district Staff Development Associate for the Elements of Instruction. The principal was also highly enthusiastic about the program. As the original three participants expressed their enthusiasm for what they had learned at the workshops, the staff's interest in the Elements of Instruction grew.

Each of the teachers I interviewed described the Elements as highly useful, primarily in two areas. The first area that was consistently reported as being very
useful was referred to as "active participation". Active participation is one of the six "principles of learning" presented in the workshops. It is described in one of the program handouts: "The principle of learning called active participation deals with techniques for checking with all students during the lesson." (The Teacher Makes the Difference, 1983, p. 31 original emphasis).

The techniques for active participation that were drawn from the Elements and used in CKF School included oral, written and signal responses to teacher directives or questions. The most commonly used oral technique was a teacher request for students to tell a lesson related fact to the person sitting next to them. For example, a teacher may say, "Tell your neighbour the three classes of plants we have looked at today in science period." Teachers believed that this technique was valuable because it allowed students to verbalize what they had recently learned. The assumption here was that by verbalizing lesson content, students would be better able to remember it. Properly done, the technique was an effective way of getting students to verbalize material in a situation involving dyadic communication. However, without prior arrangements as to which students would be speakers, and which would be listeners, use of the technique could result in situations in which thirty children were all speaking simultaneously, and no one was listening to anyone else. Instances of this kind of use and the more structured dyadic communication in which there were both a speaker and listener were observed in the classrooms.

A second technique that was often used to involve students actively in the lesson was the use of student chalkboards. Particularly in mathematics instruction, students would each have a thirty by fifty centimetre piece of chalkboard on which they would do their work, and then hold it up for the teacher to see. Teachers found
this technique especially valuable, not only for the intrinsic motivation that using chalk and boards held for students, but for the quick check of student understanding that the teacher could gain through a glance at the boards.

The third technique for active participation used by the teachers was student hand signals to show agreement or disagreement with a teacher statement or question. Of the three techniques for active participation, the use of hand signals was the most widely used in the school. Thumbs up signaled agreement, thumbs down signaled disagreement, and a back-and-forth rocking of the hand meant "I'm not sure." The use of hand signals as a form of active participation was well established in all the classrooms in which I observed and worked. A single word question from the teachers, in the form of "Thumbs?" brought immediate student response. Like the use of the chalkboards, teachers felt that this technique enabled them to check for student understanding, and to monitor student learning through the course of a lesson.

In addition to valuing those components of the Elements that allowed for students' active participation, teachers also found that having been through the Elements workshops gave them "a common language" with which to talk about practice. What the teachers meant by the phrase "a common language" was that by using the labels of the various component parts of a lesson, as identified in the Elements workshops, they were able to talk with one another using a shared set of meanings. In this sense, these workshops appear to have supplied a rudimentary form of a "shared technical culture" that Lortie (1975) claims is lacking in the teaching profession. For Barbara, the outcome of having a "shared language" was that the Elements had been a unifying force within the school. (Fieldnotes, p. 37; Interview, p. 12)
Some teachers saw the Elements as providing them with a way to critique and analyze their own teaching. Reflecting on an unsuccessful lesson, and checking the lesson with their understanding of the Elements of Instruction allowed teachers to identify possible reasons for the lesson's failure. Several teachers also believed that a knowledge of the Elements helped them to be better cooperating teachers in practicum settings. A knowledge of the Elements, they felt, helped them to guide student teachers and offer explanations as to why a given lesson might have succeeded or failed.

The acceptance and use of these components of the Elements of Instruction - the principle of active participation, and the use of Elements as a language to talk about practice - are representative of beliefs and values that have linkages to other themes within the culture of CKF. Regarding the wide-spread use of the techniques of active participation, I would argue that such extensive use is evidence for a value-fit between this component of the Elements and the values and beliefs represented in the theme of *Entering the World of the Child*. Contained within that theme were the beliefs that it is important for teachers to draw upon and use the knowledge of the child, and that it is important to incorporate an empathic understanding of the child's experiences into the learning situation. In light of the beliefs contained in Theme One, and given the demographics of the student population, it is reasonable to assume that the ideas about active participation contained in the Elements would ring true for many of the teachers at CKF.

It is important to note, however, that although the two approaches share a common assumption about the importance of involving children's understandings in classroom lessons, the kinds of student involvement facilitated by the techniques of active participation are of a qualitatively different nature than those
described in Theme One. Including a child's response in a lesson in the way that Lesley dealt with Tristan's pronunciation of "baag" is a different kind of student involvement from that which involves students through the use of thumb signals or large-group practice with chalkboards. Critics of such programs as *The Elements of Instruction* often focus on the mechanistic, large group kinds of active involvement that accompany prescriptive approaches to teaching and learning. Such critics argue that these programs are overly technical, and can stifle the creativity and spontaneity that are a necessary part of teaching. (Van Manen, 1984)

Although the teachers at CKF were aware of such criticisms they believed the criticisms were not applicable to the way they used the Elements. The majority of the teachers I interviewed freely admitted that teaching could become stale and boring if the Elements were used in a consistent and unvarying way for every lesson. However, consistent and unvarying use of the Elements did not characterize the use of the program at CKF. Teachers at CKF integrated the Elements within their teaching practices through a selective use that was often context-dependent. For these teachers, using the Elements involved not only a thoughtful integration of the program into their existing teaching style, but a selective use of the techniques when appropriate for the teaching task at hand. The following interview excerpts represent this view of how the program should be used.

I suppose if the teacher were looking for a diagram or a blueprint of how to teach, and totally accepted someone else's system, it could lead to problems. But I feel that the benefit of programs like Elements and Madeline Hunter's, all of them, are to take the ones that fit best with your style and integrate them into what you're doing rather than grabbing a whole system and rejecting what you've done before. It's like reinventing the wheel with a new fad. You have to pick and choose, and choose what works best for your class. (Interview, Linda)

I don't use Elements of Instruction forty minutes out of a period. But if I am teaching something that they must know, then I will do it. But if it's creative thinking, which is what I'm doing in enrichment, that's a whole
different kettle of fish. I use brainstorming for ideas. I put everything down, right or wrong (which is the rule for brainstorming) and then we look at each idea and then we think about them. (Interview, Barbara)

I would say there is lots of time for creativity in my classroom because I don't use it [Elements] all the time, for every lesson, for every day. Sometimes there is a day goes by that I am reviewing. I may be playing a little card game or a puzzle game with the children. But, if it's something new and I think the children need to be focused on it, yes, I use it. But I don't think you have to use it all the time. (Interview, Marion)

I think it was Madeline Hunter who said "It's the teacher". You can't give the teacher a formula and say 'do it' and she's going to become a good teacher. I mean, it's her style, the way she's going to do it. It's what she puts into the lessons. It's what she puts into the whole thing. I think that is what is going to make a lesson, what the teacher puts into it. There's no one set formula that's going to say you're going to be a good teacher....There was a question in The Elements of Instruction workshop that asked, "What makes a good teacher?". And most of those people [at the workshop] didn't say "The Elements of Instruction". They said, "A person who knows their children, who knows what level they're at." (Interview, Lorraine)

It appears that, at CKF, The Elements of Instruction was used in ways that reflect a value-fit with some of the values and beliefs represented in Theme One. Teachers valued the program, in part, because it allowed for active involvement of students in learning. Although the kind of student involvement facilitated by the Elements was of a less personal and individualistic kind than that described in Theme One, teachers indicated a strong sensitivity to the limitations of the Elements. In discussions of criticisms of the program they stressed both the importance of "knowing" the children one is teaching, and a selective use of the program under appropriate conditions.

**Summary of Theme Two**

Theme Two described how the staff of CKF were developing shared referents about teaching and learning. This was manifest in the widespread use of *The Elements of Instruction* by the staff of CKF School. Teachers believed that the Elements allowed them to dialogue with one other about teaching practices and the effects of those practices on student learning. Teachers also valued the Elements because it provided them with a framework to reflect upon their own teaching practices. The
part of *The Elements of Instruction* that was most widely used was a group of techniques that facilitated students' active participation in the lessons. I have argued that the acceptance of this particular portion of the program reflects a value-fit with some of those values described in Theme One. The following assumptions are represented within Theme Two: (This list follows in sequence from the assumptions listed as part of Theme One.)

9. *The Elements of Instruction* was a valuable framework for structuring one's teaching.

10. Early interest in the Elements was supported by the principal.

11. Using the Elements helped to bring about the active participation of students in learning.

12. Active student participation ensures more effective learning.

13. *The Elements of Instruction* provided teachers with a quick and easy way to check student understanding during a lesson.

14. The components of the Elements that required active student involvement were motivating for students.

15. The Elements provided teachers with a common language with which to talk about practice.

16. The Elements acted as a unifying force for the staff.

17. The Elements provided teachers with a way to criticize and analyze one's teaching.

18. The Elements should be only part of a teacher's teaching repertoire, and should not be used invariably for every lesson.
Theme Three: The Principal as Leader

In Theme Two it was noted that Christine Brown was one of the original three educators to attend the workshops on the Elements of Instruction. This active involvement in much of what her staff was doing, was typical of Christine's leadership. In her involvement with the planning and organizing of the school's programs, in her role as facilitator of staff development, and in her role as change agent, Christine acted as a strong and decisive leader. As principal of CKF, Mrs. Brown acted as a "hands-on" kind of leader. Given Sathe's claim that the values of an organization's leader have a strong influence on the content of the organization's culture, (Sathe, 1985, p.14) it should come as no surprise that Mrs. Brown has had a powerful influence on the culture of CKF School. This theme discusses Mrs. Brown's role as principal from three perspectives. These are: 1) principal as facilitator of teachers' work, 2) principal as disseminator of information, and 3) principal as change agent: The challenge of leadership.

Principal as Facilitator of Teachers' Work

One of Christine's concerns as an administrator was that she provide teachers with as much support as possible, so that they could do the best possible job. For Christine, providing teachers with support meant maintaining an ongoing awareness of what was happening in the educational programs in each of the school's classrooms. Frequent classroom visits and a strong "hands-on" approach to educational leadership were a noticeable part of Christine's actions as principal of CKF.

As part of her role as facilitator of teachers' work, Mrs. Brown also recognized the importance of giving teachers positive feedback. This giving of feedback, combined
with her active "hands-on" style of leadership, was appreciated by teachers. One teacher compared Christine with the principal of another school she had worked in.

There is one thing about Christine. She knows what people are doing, and over there [at another school] I felt that I could stand on my head, or whatever, and the principal didn't have a clue about what I was doing. Christine has another really good thing that I appreciate a lot, and I've told her many times. She has a real knack of coming in at the right time. You know, she walks in when things are nice and quiet, or something good is happening and she makes a positive comment, and I really appreciate that. It's a real gift I think to walk in when somebody's doing the right thing, and to say, "Gosh you're doing a good job!". Also, little things. You know, if you put up a display or something, then she'll put on the bulletin, for not just me, for anybody, "I certainly like the beautiful pictures that are hanging on the wall." Just little things like that that I, for one, appreciate. (Interview, Maria)

While Maria's comments speak of a supportive and keenly aware principal, there was a quid pro quo basis to Christine's relationship with the staff. In return for her strong support, active involvement, and positive feedback Christine expected much of her teachers. Although some teachers felt that Mrs. Brown was sometimes difficult to work for, they also recognized the importance of what they got in return for meeting her high expectations. Barbara, for example, expressed her view this way. "Christine holds high expectations for all of us. She expects 200 per cent, but all you need to say is, 'Christine, I need...', and she says 'How soon?'. She combines high expectations with strong support" (Fieldnotes, p. 160). Maria expressed a similar view, noting that what Christine expects from her teaching staff, she also demanded of herself. "She's not an easy person to work for. She demands a lot. But on the other hand, I think she gives a lot, so you have to give her marks for that. I mean, she doesn't ask you to work and then take off at 3:05 herself. (Maria: Interview)
Principal as Disseminator of Information

Christine played an important role in the communication networks that existed within the school. (These networks are discussed at length in Theme Four, Cooperation and Communication) In addition to her reporting of the various out-of-school meetings she attended, and her daily writing of The Bulletin, Christine also regularly distributed a broad range of professional-development literature to the staff. Some of this literature was distributed at staff meetings, and some of it was distributed through the school's internal mail. The literature Christine distributed during my stay at CKF included the following: 1) a series of fourteen brief synopses of educational research findings, and the implications those findings had for practice, 2) an article on peer coaching as a means of staff development, 3) an article on the role of the principal in professional development programs, 4) a summary of recent research findings on staff development, 5) an article on combatting the early development of illiteracy in young children, and 6) a Ministry of Education document about staff development. In addition to this type of information, staff were advised of a wide variety of upcoming workshops and professional development activities through the school's daily notice board.

Christine's role as disseminator of information was not confined to the internal operations of the school. Through a local school board initiative titled "Partners in Education", Christine established a "partnership" with a local credit union, that allowed the school a chance to showcase some of its activities. For example, when a video-tape of The Fire Song was made, the video was set up for display in the credit union. Another vehicle for information was the school's monthly newsletter to parents. These newsletters contained messages from the principal, information
about special events and accomplishments, dates to remember, and student artwork.

**Principal as Change Agent: The Challenge of Leadership**

Christine brought to her role as principal of CKF a belief that, as an administrator, she was in a position to bring about significant educational change. During one of a number of informal interviews, she spoke of her strongly held belief that "as a principal, you can really bring about change". As her first principalship, CKF School had been the recipient of her convictions about the possibilities for change.

Christine seemed well aware of the complexities of educational change, and how change, for some people, can be a threatening experience. Dealing with staff members who resist change because of the discomfort it causes is a major challenge for principals in their roles as leader and as change agent. In some instances, pressure must be brought to bear on individuals who steadfastly refuse to change. Christine recognized this, but at the same time, expressed the view that too much pressure is counter-productive if it creates situations of undue anxiety and stress. One of the tasks, then, for principals involved in change efforts is to find a balance between a comfortable but numbing stasis, and an overly stressful change situation that creates feelings of overload. This task is one of the challenges of leadership. The following section of this theme describes Christine's actions as school principal within the context of this challenge.

To be a leader is to be in the forefront of a group of people. The root word "lead" implies a directionality in the sense of forward movement through new territory. To be a leader, then, is to move people to new ground or to things previously unseen or unknown. Moving people from conditions of stability and comfort to unfamiliar
and disquieting experiences is not easily done. Yet, that is the job of leaders. Educational researchers are leaders, albeit of an ethereal kind. The ground they break is conceptual, the things they move forward are existing ideas - cognitive frameworks and ways of thinking. The results of their leadership are new ways of thinking, new ideas to be implemented, things for practitioners to try. In this way, their work as leaders is in some ways less onerous than those who must move not only ideas, but individual lived realities. It is at the level of redefining practice, not in intellectual terms, but in actual concrete changes in practitioner actions, that the most difficult and sometimes painful work of leadership is found.

How do leaders of practitioners move people to change? In her role as principal of CKF, Christine led in different ways. Often, she led by example. Through her active involvement in a variety of professional development activities, Christine presented a "follow me" (Schon, 1987) approach to staff development. Her enthusiasm for the Elements came directly from her own experiences at the workshop. Similarly, the idea of the integrated unit for the Grade Seven year-end fieldtrip stemmed from Christine’s involvement in a staff development workshop she attended with the school’s learning assistance teacher.

Another way that Christine led was through holding specific expectations for her staff. Ongoing staff development was a priority for Christine, and it was her expectation that all staff members would participate fully in the school’s staff development programs. Such an expectation was made clear to new staff when they joined school. One of the teachers who had recently joined the staff, described how, during the interview for the position, Christine made clear her expectations regarding professional development.
When I was interviewed (and there really wasn't much of an interview process because basically they had to find another school for me, and Christine was in a spot because she needed someone), we went through the formalities of an interview. She didn't know a thing about me. She had no records on me or anything at that point. It was done so quickly, but one thing, despite the haste and the urgency, she did say to me towards the end of the interview, and that was, "Everthing looks okay, but I do have to have your assurance that you will be committed to taking some professional development courses within school time"....She said, "We're very committed to The School is the Key program." And I said, "Well I know nothing about it, but that just suits me fine. I'd be very interested in upgrading my professional development, and I haven't been in the thick of it for some time now."

What I'm saying is, even though she was really down to the wire, and didn't have much choice, she did not just shrug it off. It was so important to her that she wanted to make sure that I wasn't going to say, "Oh, look I've been through that." I really feel that if I had shown a real reluctance, or a negative feeling, she probably would have said, "Right, I don't want her, and that's all there is to it."

Because I feel she is so strongly committed to following through with the professional development she started, that she would have put it on hold for a couple of more days until she felt that there was somebody who was at least willing to go along with it. (Interview: Lesley)

Despite leading by example, and making clear her expectations for the staff, there were times when Christine had to lead in a way that drew upon the ascribed authority of the principal's role. One thing that was simply not negotiable from Christine's point of view, was staff members maintaining what she called "a negative attitude".

Personally, from my point of view, I won't put up with negative attitudes. I mean if somebody has a problem, then we deal with it, and we try and provide all the help we can. But if you go around with a chip on your shoulder, then you don't belong here. (Interview: Christine)

Implicit in this statement is Christine's view that there is a point at which continued resistance to change will not be tolerated. Refusal to accept change, or the maintenance of a "negative attitude" for a prolonged period of time, would lead Christine to ask herself whether the individual in question should be a part of the school's staff.

Leading by ascribed authority can involve conflict. In her role as leader, Christine sometimes found herself in a conflict situation, in which her goals for the
school, or her vision for staff development were not always accepted by the all her staff. There were times during the investigation in which I noticed a tension between the principal and some of her staff. Yet, despite this occasional tension between principal and staff, there was also a concern among some of the staff that there not be a "we-them" attitude emerge between teachers and their school administrator.

I believe this concern, and concomitant attempts to maintain a kind of solidarity among the staff, despite differences of opinion, reflects the larger political context of teacher-principal relations that was unfolding in the province at the time of the study. Recent legislative changes, made in 1987, had removed school principals from the membership of the provincial teachers' federation. As part of a broad set of changes to the school act and provincial labour law, the provincial government had reclassified the position of school administrators to management positions in the year before the study began. Thus, the study was undertaken in the first full school year in which this reclassification was in effect. A number of teachers at CKF appeared to be keenly aware of the divisive potential that this reclassification held for school staffs. For instance, during a discussion at a staff meeting, in which there was criticism of a lack of support from "administrative personnel" in dealing with difficult students, Linda was quick to point out that such criticism did not include Christine. In her words, the issue of administrative personnel and the staff's perceived lack of support "is not a we-them issue that involves Christine" (Fieldnotes, p. 27).

It appears, then, that in terms of principal-staff relations, CKF school was able to overcome most of the tension arising from the recent recategorization of the
principal's job description and the stress brought about by the staff's involvement in the change initiatives.

Summary of Theme Three

This theme discussed the role of the principal in the culture of CKF School. Through her actions as principal, Christine Brown has had an important effect on the growth and development of professional development activities of the school. Her three approaches to leadership - leadership by example, by expectation, and by ascribed authority - reflect a style of leadership that combines an active professionalism on the part of the principal with demands for conformity to the school's professional development commitments. In her attempts to bring about change in the school, Christine often led through her own active involvement in a variety of workshops. Her expectation that staff would similarly participate in professional development was balanced by strong administrative support for the staff. In her role as facilitator of teachers' work, she provided her staff with both moral and organizational support. Although there was concern among some staff about the stress that resulted from Christine's strong commitment to school-wide professional development, there was, at the same time, a recognition that Christine had effectively stimulated much professional growth among the staff. The assumptions contained within this theme are as follows:

19. Teachers need strong administrative support to be able to carry out their work.
20. Teachers need positive feedback about their teaching.
21. The principal held high expectations for her staff.
22. The principal played an important role in the communication links within the school.
23. The principal can act as an effective change agent through the use of a variety of leadership styles.

24. The principal is in a position to set the agenda for change within the school.

25. It is important for a school staff and principal to work together in the operation of the school.

**Theme Four: Cooperation and Communication**

Within the organizational structure of CKF School there were a number of features that facilitated communication and cooperative interaction among the staff. Some of these features were internal to the school, and others involved personnel who were for the most part, external to the school. Those structures that involved persons who were partly external to the school are discussed first.

School district policy stipulates that every school in Ocean City School District will have as part of its structure a School-Based Team that reviews the situations of children who are academically, socially, and emotionally at risk. In keeping with district policy, CKF had a School-Based Team. School personnel on the team included the school principal, the school's learning assistance teacher and each teacher who had students who were being monitored and helped by the team. External district personnel on the team included a counsellor, a psychologist, a speech and language therapist, and a public health nurse. The School-Based Team met weekly. The meetings were referred to as "screening" by the teachers. Meetings began promptly at 8:00 a.m. on Mondays and usually ran until recess. Though teachers sometimes complained about the meeting time as cutting into valuable planning or teaching time, there was a consensus that the School-Based Team at CKF School was an effective and valuable one. Staff credited Mrs. Brown for the success of CKF's team. It was widely acknowledged by the staff that Mrs. Brown was
effective in getting the various members of the team to follow through with the
team's decisions and recommendations. (Fieldnotes, p. 34) Several teachers spoke
of their experiences at schools where the School Based Team was not nearly as
effective as it was at CKF. Again, the reasons for the other Team's lack of success
was seen as being the result of lack of follow-through by the principal. This
structure then - a successful School Based Team - was one instance of ongoing
communication and cooperative interaction within the school.

Another communication structure among the staff that linked the school with
things external was Mrs. Brown's regular reporting of what went on at her various
out-of-school meetings with senior district administrators. During the eight
months of weekly staff meetings I observed, Mrs. Brown regularly presented to the
staff, information from District Principals' and Area Superintendent's meetings.

Another formal mechanism for communication was "The Bulletin". The Bulletin
was a notice sheet posted beside the teachers' mailboxes in the main office, on which
important information for the day was listed. Written daily by the principal, it
contained notices of upcoming special events, changes in any of the school's
schedules, and even the occasional cartoon or humorous anecdote. Discussions at
staff meetings, and the daily operation of the school itself presumed that all
teachers had read The Bulletin. Reliance on The Bulletin as a means of
communication was especially strong, since CKF School lacked an intercom
system.

In addition to the actions of the principal - as leader of the School Based Team,
and as disseminator of information - there were other staff within the school who
had an influence on the development of cooperation and communication. One of
these was the teacher-librarian, whose vision for the school's library program had a
strong impact on the curricula taught in many of the school's classrooms. Through what she referred to as "teacher/librarian cooperative planning" Sarah worked with individual teachers to establish combined classroom and library programs that were designed to develop and strengthen students' research skills. Sarah's efforts at teacher/librarian cooperative planning could be seen throughout the school from Kindergarten to Grade Seven.

For example, during my stay at CKF, the students in Lesley's kindergarten class were involved in guided "research" on the topic of fairy tales. Grade Two students in Maria's class had worked through several sessions on note-taking, in which they learned how to record and organize information. The results of their efforts were reports about spiders and spider-webs. Grade Five students in Linda's class worked at different ways of classifying living things, and the Grade Seven students used library materials to compile reports on life in Ancient Rome.

Another individual who had an impact on cooperative interaction was Barbara, the school's music and learning enrichment specialist. Similar to Sarah in her role as teacher-librarian, Barbara touched every child in the school through her pedagogical actions as music specialist. A striking example of the extent of her influence occurred on the day of CKF's Christmas assembly. This example, which I have referred to as "the clapping incident" is reconstructed below on the basis of fieldnotes, recorded on the day the incident took place.

Sitting cross-legged on the gym floor, waiting for all the classes and musical groups to file in and assume their assigned spots, most of the school's 315 students appeared to be in high spirits. Many were talking with their neighbours and some were watching the string and recorder groups who were settling themselves on chairs off to one side of the gymnasium. Teachers were also chatting with their nearest seated colleague, occasionally shooting "the look" out to particularly fidgety children who, through their actions, threatened to upset all those sitting around them. As I watched the students and their teachers, I thought about
the incredible diversity of conversation taking place at that time. The noise level, all of it generated through talking, was quite high.

Within a minute of all the classes and performers having sat down, Barbara went and stood at the center of the front of the gym. Most of the students were too involved in their conversations to have noticed her move to the front. Then, without calling for their attention, or without waiting for them to notice her standing there, Barbara clapped out a five second rhythm on her hands and her thighs. By the time she had finished this five second rhythm, all talking had stopped. Conversation everywhere in the gym came to an abrupt halt, and within a second of Barbara’s finishing her clapping, the entire student body, in unison, clapped back an echoed response. Barbara then clapped back a second rhythm, this one longer and more complex. Again, without a word, and with a single unity of purpose, the more than 300 students echoed the rhythm back to her. After the students had clapped back the second rhythm, Barbara waited for a second. Within the total silence that now filled the gymnasium, she began to speak. She welcomed the students to the program, and after complimenting them on how quickly they had settled down, she introduced the first part of the concert. (Fieldnotes, p. 71)

From an analytic perspective, this clapping incident is significant for several reasons. First, it indicates the power that teachers can have over their students. A skilled teacher can very quickly focus and redirect the attention of his or her students. The moral implications of this kind of power, and the ethical responsibilities that must accompany such power are many. The speed with which the students of CKF entered into their collective clapping and listening dialogue with Barbara, speaks of a relationship built upon acceptance and trust, and an intention to cooperate. The magnitude and innocence of this trust, combined with the intellectual and status-specific vulnerability of students, attaches strong responsibilities to teachers as members of society.

As it relates to the culture of the school, the clapping incident is an example of how educational leadership need not be confined to the role played by the principal. In the above example, Barbara was definitely acting as a leader, exerting a positive influence on the entire school. The strength of her leadership, along with the cooperation it engendered, was clearly evidenced in the way she gently, but firmly,
got the attention of the whole school through a simple yet highly effective pedagogical technique.

A similar leadership effect was evidenced in Barbara's role in the school's production of a major musical. As an ongoing tradition in the school, every second year, the entire school population would work to put on a large and elaborate musical. These productions were mounted every second year, because there was a consensus among the staff that it would take too much time and energy to produce the musicals on an annual basis. During the 1987-88 school year in which this study was conducted, the school prepared and presented a musical known as The Fire Song.

As I observed the preparations for the musical, it soon became apparent that the central premise that underlay all of the planning was a belief that every child in the school should be involved in the musical. Staff were adamant that each child should have a chance to be on the stage, in the spotlights at some time during the presentation. As producer and director of The Fire Song, it was a major challenge for Barbara to stage the performance in a way that would actively involve over 300 children. In an informal interview, she recounted how her friends in the city's theatrical community told her that she was attempting the impossible. However, perseverance, and "many sleepness nights" finally provided a solution to the staging problems.

In a later conversation with Barbara, in which we were talking about the musical, I referred to her as one of the key individuals behind the production. She very quickly corrected my perception, pointing out that the show was very much a team effort, consisting of the cooperative efforts and hard work of the staff and students, parents, and the personnel from the day care.
Another example of cooperative interaction among the staff was manifest in the joint planning efforts surrounding the Grade Seven end of the year trip. Since early fall, the Grade Seven class had been planning a trip to a dude ranch in the interior of the province. The trip there and back took five days, and involved an eight hour train ride each way. Though the principal strongly supported the trip, one of her concerns was that the trip be fully defensible as an educational experience. In order to make the entire trip an educational experience, a group of the school's staff worked together to plan a series of learning experiences that would encompass as many aspects of the trip as possible. Under the combined leadership of the principal and the teacher-librarian, a team that included the school's learning assistance teacher, the learning enrichment teacher, the Grade Seven classroom teacher, and a classroom aide all worked together to create learning units for the students. These units focused on the geography and history of the area the students would visit, the flora and fauna they would encounter along the way, horses and horse-back riding, and Native Indian art work.

Less formal kinds of cooperation often took place in the staff room where teachers would share ideas from a variety of sources. Don, for example, after attending a workshop on classroom management in which he saw what he believed to be a particularly good video, brought a copy of the video to the school and presented it to the staff one noon hour. (Fieldnotes, p. 37) Ann, in her work at other schools as Staff Development Associate for the Elements of Instruction, would sometimes encounter novel uses of the Elements, which she would share informally with the staff. Also, during non-instructional days, groups of teachers would work together informally, planning units of study and coordinating curricula. (Fieldnotes, p. 61 - 62)
Summary of Theme Four

In this theme, the formal communication structures of the School-Based Team and The Bulletin were described. The informal leadership provided by the teacher-librarian and the school's music specialist, and the cooperation engendered by that leadership were also described. Observed instances of sharing of ideas and group planning among staff members were interpreted as an indication of a valuing of cooperation among staff members. Contained within the description of this theme were seven assumptions. These assumptions are as follows:

26. The principal was an effective leader of the school's School Based Team.
27. The Bulletin communicated important information to the staff about the school's daily operation.
28. The school's teacher-librarian had a positive impact on cooperation and communication among the staff.
29. The school's music specialist had a positive impact on cooperation and communication in the school.
30. Every child in the school should be involved in the school's musical production.
31. The school's musical production was a cooperative endeavor.
32. Joint planning of instruction was valued, and engaged in by the staff.

Theme Five: Precious Time

Within our society, there are a number of institutions with organizational dynamics that are heavily influenced by time. Schools are one such example of a strongly time-oriented institution. Client (i.e. student) entrance into the system itself is chronologically determined. To enter Kindergarten, children must be five years of age, as of December 31 of the school year in which they are to begin their
education. Having passed this chronological litmus test, children then proceed through the system in age-grade groupings organized around yearly blocks of time. Movement from one grade-level to the next occurs with the passage of calendar time. After spending from September to June at a grade level, a child generally moves on to the next level, following a two month summer break. Sometimes, if a child has serious difficulties in mastering the material taught at a given grade level, he or she may have to repeat the level. It is rare though, that the situation works in reverse. Prior mastery of grade level content is rarely considered sufficient cause to move to the next grade-level. Usually, a child must put in the requisite ten months before advancing to the next grade level.

Within the school year itself, the passage of calendar time marks an ebb and flow of activities. Throughout the seasons of the year, teachers and students in elementary schools build a variety of school-based activities around the major celebrations noted by the Gregorian calendar. Thanksgiving, Halloween, Christmas, and Easter all lend content to the elementary school program at particular times of the school year. Apart from the summer break, the major holiday within the school year coincides not with the mid-point of the ten month stretch, but with Christmas time, North America's major economic and religious celebration. Calendar time then, has a strong impact on the rhythm of the school year.

In the daily operation of the classroom, clock time is used to structure the day's activities. At CKF School, a morning buzzer at 8:55 signaled the onset of "instructional time", and students and teachers moved through forty minute periods until 10:20, when another buzzer signaled that it was "recess time". Time as a structuring device was an omnipresent factor of classroom life. The word "time"
itself was tagged onto numerous words to describe the activity focus of various periods. Thus, in addition to recess time, there was lunch time, home time, sharing time, reading time, news time, quiet time, work time, free time, and many others, too numerous to list.

An important consequence of the use of time as a structuring device emerges from a relationship that exists between the attainment of goals, and time as a mode of human existence. In a recent study of teachers' experiences of time during program implementation, Werner (1988) notes how "fixed time" or "objective time" can become a benchmark for measuring the attainment of program implementation. He describes the conflict teachers can experience as they try to learn about a new program while attending to the numerous demands of teaching.

Understanding a new program requires the teacher literally to dwell in it for intense periods without constant interruption from other demands. The tyranny of clock-time can run interference and play havoc with this pacing in a number of ways. (Werner, 1988, p. 96)

Although Werner is discussing teachers' experiences of time only in relation to the implementation of a new program, I would argue that his perspective of the tensions that exist between fixed time and lived time is applicable to the ongoing work of teaching itself.

As teachers set goals, be they daily lesson-focused goals or long-term, unit or yearly goals, they do so within a mode of existence (i.e. a time structure) in which movement is unidirectional. Having established a particular goal, teachers move toward the attainment of that goal as they move forward through a finite period of time (i.e. a lesson, a day, a term, a school year). Therefore, one of the benchmarks for measuring the attainment (or non-attainment) of goals is the passage of time. It is in this situation - in the comparison of things accomplished relative to the passage of time - that time assumes a dual nature in the culture of the school. In this
situation, time becomes more than a structuring device; it becomes a commodity, something that for most teachers is valuable or precious because of its relative scarcity. Werner (p. 104) also uses the metaphor of time as a commodity, and expands it to include three sub-categories: 1) time as a limited resource, 2) time as money, and 3) time as a container. From the perspectives of time as limited resource, and time as money, time becomes something that can be wasted, gained, spent, lost, or used up. Christine can "give" teachers time to prepare report cards, and teachers can "lose" time to meetings, problem students, or pesky researchers. They can be frustrated by having "not enough" time to help all the students that they believe need help, or they can be pleased because students catch on to a concept "in no time at all." From the perspective of time as a container, time is used to describe the boundaries of an occurrence or an accomplishment, as in "The meeting took place in two hours.", or "I did the whole thing in six months."

This duality of time - its use as a structuring device, in the form of an objective calendar and clock time, and as a subjective, experienced time, in the form of a commodity central to the accomplishment of teaching goals - is another of the characteristics of the culture of CKF. There was a commonly held belief among the staff that teaching is an occupation that can expand to fill one's every waking hour. Time in teaching is a crucial and valuable resource that teachers guard very closely. This concern about the passage of time in relation to the accomplishment of teaching activities, I have called "the time press".

Evidence of the time press could be seen in various actions and words of the staff at CKF. A concern with time was apparent right from the outset of the study. In the question period that followed my initial introduction to the staff as a possible researcher in the school, the first question I was asked, was "How much of our time
is your research going to take?". The concern here was that the research would impinge upon one of their more valuable resources. When I assured them that apart from an hour long interview, my demands on their time would be minimal, the concern lessened. Following my offer to help in the classrooms during my stay at the school, the concern waned. Almost immediately, enthusiasm emerged as teachers began to talk excitedly about all the things they could have me do in their classrooms. (Fieldnotes, p. 2) This shift in teachers' attitudes toward me that came about when their perceptions of me changed from that of possible "taker" of time to a "giver" of time, reflects a strong concern with the time press.

Within the first week of my arrival at the school, teachers told me of the lack of actual lunch "hours" at CKF (Fieldnotes, p. 5). Many times during my stay there, the staff room would be empty by 12:30, only half an hour after students had been dismissed for the noon hour. Teachers would eat their lunch and be back working by 12:30. During interviews, teachers described the school as a busy, and sometimes hectic place to work.

While several teachers saw the time press at CKF as the result of the school's involvement with staff development projects, other teachers attributed the time press to factors such as the preparation and planning of the musical, and the endemic difficulties created by having one classroom teacher for every twenty or thirty-odd students. During a meeting in which the staff were discussing how better to help students with learning difficulties, Teresa noted that the discrepancy between diagnosing a problem, and actually being able to do something about it, was often the result of a shortage of time. "Sometimes we know exactly what to do with the child, it's just that we don't have the time to do it on an individual basis" (Fieldnotes, p. 27).
Summary of Theme Five

An important component of the culture of CKF School is a concern with time. Time was viewed both as a structuring device and as a valuable resource that was often in short supply. Teachers adapted to this time press as best they could, by taking shorter lunch hours, working (i.e. marking) during coffee break, and making use of extra help in the classroom whenever it was available to them. The key assumptions about time contained in this theme are as follows:

33. Teaching is an occupation that requires a tremendous amount of one's time.
34. Time is a valuable commodity.
35. In teaching, there is often not enough time to do things properly.

Theme Six: The Tone of the School

As part of the formal interview, I asked teachers to describe what they saw as the distinguishing features of CKF School. Teachers' responses to this question indicated a consensus that CKF was an active and busy school with open communications and sharing of resources among the staff. Several teachers found the bustle of the school excessive at times, and described it as a "hectic" place to work.

In addition to the above belief, several teachers suggested that CKF had a higher than usual number of highly conscientious and dedicated individuals on the staff. This view of the nature of CKF's staff was also expressed by Pat Smythe, the school's non-teaching administrative aide. Mrs. Smythe had thirteen years of experience working in a variety of schools in the district. In her experience, every school she had worked in had "a couple" of dedicated, hard-working teachers, but CKF seemed to have more than usual. (Fieldnotes, p. 121)
Several teachers commented on how much they enjoyed the students at the school and how compared to other schools they had worked in, there were not as many serious discipline problems.

There was a commonly held belief among the staff that the tone of CKF School had improved significantly over time. When talking about CKF as it used to be, teachers described a much less positive setting. As I listened one afternoon to teacher's tales of "How it used to be", I heard stories of CKF as a wild and sometimes frightening school for teachers to work in. This session occurred at the end of a long week of rehearsals for the upcoming Fire Song, when a group of senior teachers at CKF were relaxing in the staffroom, each of them recounting key impressions and experiences of their early years at the school. These stories were told not for my benefit - not as data for the research - but for their own enjoyment, as a kind of humorous recounting of the school's legendary wildness. The stories were illustrative of the kind of experience we have all had at one time or another, in which we feel that "It seems funny now, but at the time, it was anything but amusing."

Nicole and Olive spoke about the rough students, and how they used to be afraid to walk through the hallways, going to and from their classrooms. Don agreed that their concerns were valid, and told how he didn't like to leave the building too late in the day during the winter months, because he felt uneasy about the gangs of boys that used to hang around the school yard. There was agreement about the gangs of rough boys and a laughing remembrance by the group of Don's first year at the school, nearly a decade before, during which he "tried" to teach science to the Grade Seven students. The teachers also joked about the tale of the painters who were painting the exterior of the school. As the story goes, the painters took so much
verbal abuse from the students that they finally complained to the principal about all the foul language and swearing to which they were subjected. (That principal had left the school years before this study.) There was agreement that it was ironic that the impetus for dealing with student swearing ultimately came from a pair of painters. Mrs. Brown told of the first discipline related incident she had had to deal with on her arrival at the school six years ago. Two boys had been caught by one of the teachers as they were trying to set fire to the school's side entrance doors. As these teachers recounted the past incidents, there was an ongoing comparison of how it used to be with how it was at present. The session ended, with a commonly expressed belief that student behavior in the school was now much better than it was in years gone by.

In addition to a positive change in student behavior, some teachers also spoke of how the staff were much more unified now compared to what they were several years ago. I was told of a former "split" in the staff, and how the communication that presently existed was not as widespread in the past. The move from a split staff to one in which there was a considerable degree of unity apparently came about as a result of a number of factors. One factor related to personnel changes in the school. According to one of the teachers, after the "leader" of one of the factions left the school, much of the acrimony among the staff began to fade, and as new people joined the staff, the teachers began to work together more than they had in the past. I believe that a second factor for an increase in cooperation and communication in the school relates to the school's involvement with The School is the Key. An argument in support of this claim is presented in Chapter Seven.

A key interest for many researchers working in the area of educational change is how schools change from one form or state to another. Several factors seem to have
been important in the positive transformation of CKF over the years. The ones cited most often by the staff were a change in the make-up of the staff (as described above), a change in the demographics of the neighbourhood, and Mrs. Brown's implementation of a no-fighting policy shortly after her arrival as principal.

According to a majority of the staff, most of the severe discipline problems in the past involved students who were residents of two neighbourhood "group homes". These homes were for severely emotionally disturbed children who had been apprehended and put into protective custody by the provincial government. There was a consensus among the staff that when the group homes shut down, the incidence of serious behavior problems at the school dropped significantly.

The second factor that drastically reduced the incidence of serious misbehavior was Mrs. Brown's no-fighting policy. According to the policy, any students fighting at the school were immediately suspended for the rest of the day. Parents would be phoned and asked to come to the school to pick up their child. In describing the effects of the policy, Mrs. Brown said, "The fighting soon stops after you have called parents at work one or two times. They don't like that at all." The policy also covered "play" fighting, including mock karate-style sparring and all other forms of pretend aggression. However, students were only warned when it came to play fighting. They were not suspended unless real physical violence was involved.

**Summary of Theme Six**

In this theme, staff's perceptions of the present tone of the school were compared with their recollections of the way the school used to be. There was a consensus that CKF presently had a more positive tone than it did in the past, both in terms of staff relations and student behavior. Staff valued the present positive tone of the school,
as evidenced by their comparisons to the less positive staff relations and student behavior of the past. The main assumptions contained in this theme are as follows:

36. As a school, CKF was considered a busy place in which to work.
37. Staff at CKF shared resources and ideas with one another.
38. There were a higher than usual number of conscientious and dedicated staff members at CKF School.
39. Compared to other schools that teachers had worked in, CKF had fewer discipline problems.
40. The present tone of the school was much better than it had been in the past.
41. Staff, at present, were more unified than they had been in the past.
42. In the past, severe discipline problems were often linked to students from "group homes" located in the area.
43. The current principal's no-fighting policy had reduced the incidence of student fighting at CKF.

Theme Seven: Community Relations

On a number of occasions during my stay at CKF, the principal and several staff members expressed the belief that the school had an obligation to the community. This belief indicates an outward linkage to the broader culture of which CKF is a part. Even though the culture of CKF had an internally held set of assumptions that shaped instructional and philosophical approaches to schooling, (i.e. World of the Child, School-Wide Use of the Elements, Cooperation and Communication) a number of program planning decisions were made on the basis of long established traditions that linked the school to the larger community. For example, during an end of the year planning session, when the staff were organizing the school's
programs for the following year, it was suggested that the school drop the traditional Grade Four fall trip to camp. Scheduling difficulties and grade assignments were making it difficult to organize the trip, and a staff member suggested they not continue it as part of the school program. The suggestion was very quickly rejected by the principal and a majority of the staff because of the school's long-standing "commitment to the community" (Fieldnotes, p. 201). The Grade Four trip to camp had been a traditional outing for a number of years, and there was a feeling that it must continue.

Other examples of an expressed obligation to the community were Christine's meticulous arrangements in providing seating for the community during the matinee performances of The Fire Song. In arranging seating in the gym, she wanted to be sure that there were enough chairs for all the community members who attended the free matinee performances. In her words, "The community will be outraged if we don't accommodate them for the afternoon performances." (Fieldnotes, p. 151).

Christine's concern about the seating, and the view that the Grade Four trip to camp should not be cancelled, are indicative of the staff's sensitivity to particular community expectations. In this way, and in other informal quid pro quo arrangements, the larger community in which CKF was situated had a considerable (though not easily noticed) impact on the program of the school. Other factors that reflected the theme of community relations were the operation of the day care, the school's parent consultative committee, and the annual Settler's Days that were held on the school grounds in June. All of these brought parental involvement into the operation of the school in a way that was mutually beneficial for the community and the school.
Summary of Theme Seven

This theme described an awareness on the part of the staff that CKF had particular obligations to the larger community of which it was a part. The recognition and acceptance of these obligations had a formative effect on the program of the school in a number of ways. These included the maintenance of established traditions, such as trips to camp and the presentation of major musicals, and the use of school facilities to service community programs, such as the before and after school day care and the annual community celebration held in June. The major assumptions represented in this theme are listed below:

44. The school had an obligation to the community of which it was a part.

45. During public performances involving the students, the community should be accommodated first.

46. The Grade Four trip to camp was part of an ongoing tradition, and as such, should be continued.

47. The daycare, the parents' consultative committee, and local celebrations brought parental involvement into the school in ways that were mutually beneficial for the school and the parents.

Key Suppositions: Cross-Theme Linkages in the Culture of CKF

The seven themes described above contain forty-five assumptions that reflect the staff's beliefs and values about a variety of school related topics. These assumptions are listed below in the order in which they appear in the text.

1. Teachers should ensure a child's active participation in lessons.

2. An empathic understanding of the learner is an important part of being a teacher.
3. Children's out-of-school life can affect the kind of experience they will have while at school.

4. It is important to maintain the individuality and creativity of students.

5. Student knowledge and understandings should be included as part of lessons.

6. It is important to develop a strong self-concept in children.

7. Positive social interaction between students should be fostered and developed.

8. Teachers should help students develop socially and emotionally.

9. *The Elements of Instruction* was a valuable framework for structuring one's teaching.

10. Early interest in the Elements was supported by the principal.

11. Using the Elements helped to bring about the active participation of students in learning.

12. Active student participation ensures more effective learning.

13. *The Elements of Instruction* provided teachers with a quick and easy way to check student understanding during a lesson.

14. The components of the Elements that required active student involvement were motivating for students.

15. The Elements provided teachers with a common language with which to talk about practice.

16. The Elements acted as a unifying force for the staff.

17. The Elements provided teachers with a way to criticize and analyze their own teaching.

18. The Elements should be only part of a teacher's teaching repertoire, and should not be used invariably for every lesson.

19. Teachers need strong administrative support to be able to carry out their work.
20. Teachers need positive feedback about their teaching.
21. The principal held high expectations for her staff.
22. The principal played an important role in the communication links within the school.
23. The principal can act as an effective change agent through the use of a variety of leadership styles.
24. The principal is in a position to set the agenda for change within the school.
25. It is important for a school staff and principal to work together in the operation of the school.
26. The principal was an effective leader of the school's School Based Team.
27. The Bulletin communicated important information to the staff about the school's daily operation.
28. The school's teacher-librarian had a positive impact on cooperation and communication among the staff.
29. The school's music specialist had a positive impact on cooperation and communication in the school.
30. Every child in the school should be involved in the school's musical production.
31. The school's musical production was a cooperative endeavor.
32. Joint planning of instruction was valued, and engaged in by the staff.
33. Teaching is an occupation that requires a tremendous amount of one's time.
34. Time is a valuable commodity.
35. In teaching, there is often not enough time to do things properly.
36. As a school, CKF was considered a busy place in which to work.
37. Staff at CKF shared resources and ideas with one another.
38. There were a higher than usual number of conscientious and dedicated staff members at CKF School.

39. Compared to other schools that teachers had worked in, CKF had fewer discipline problems.

40. The present tone of the school was much better than it had been in the past.

41. Staff, at present, were more unified than they had been in the past.

42. In the past, severe discipline problems were often linked to students from "group homes" located in the area.

43. The current principal's no-fighting policy had reduced the incidence of student fighting at CKF.

44. The school had an obligation to the community of which it was a part.

45. During public performances involving the students, the community should be accommodated first.

46. The Grade Four trip to camp was part of an ongoing tradition, and as such, should be continued.

47. The daycare, the parents' consultative committee, and local celebrations brought parental involvement into the school in ways that were mutually beneficial for the school and the parents.

As described in Chapter Three and at the beginning of this chapter, the second stage of the analysis of the culture of CKF involved grouping these assumptions together in ways that reflected basic similarities. For example, analysis of the forty-seven assumptions shows that eight of them relate in some way to the staffs' professional development. Accordingly, these eight assumptions have been grouped together under the over-arching key supposition of Ongoing Professional Development. Each key supposition has been described in a way that encompasses
as many of its component assumptions as possible. In the case of the key supposition of *Ongoing Professional Development*, the over-arching, general supposition is described as: **Ongoing professional development is an important part of being a teacher.** Incorporated within this key supposition are the more specific values and beliefs that are contained in the forty-seven assumptions listed above.

For the key supposition of *Ongoing Professional Development*, these specific assumptions include:

9. Elements was a valuable skill to have.
17. The Elements provided teachers with a way to criticize and analyze their own teaching.
18. The Elements should be only part of a teacher's teaching repertoire, and should not be used invariably for every lesson.
20. Teachers need positive feedback about their teaching.
36. As a school, CKF was considered a busy place in which to work.
37. Staff at CKF shared resources and ideas with one another.
38. There were a higher than usual number of conscientious and dedicated staff members at CKF School.
44. The school had an obligation to the community of which it was a part.

Similar groupings have been done with the other specific assumptions to arrive at a total of five over-arching "key suppositions". The five key suppositions, the specific assumptions that they encompass, and the themes from which they were drawn, are described below. Following each key supposition, in brackets, is an abbreviated title. These titles will be used to refer to the key suppositions throughout the remainder of the dissertation. A description of each of the key suppositions follows.
The Key Suppositions of the Culture of CKF School

**Key Supposition One**

**The active involvement of students in learning is an important part of teaching and learning.** *(Active involvement of students)*

**Active involvement of students**

This key supposition is derived from the themes, *Entering the World of the Child*, *Developing Shared Referents about Teaching and Learning*, and *Cooperation and Communication*. Evidence presented in the discussion of these themes indicated that the teachers of CKF School valued the active involvement of students in learning, and that they believed that students learned better when they were actively involved in their own learning.

**Derived from assumption numbers:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Derived from assumption numbers</th>
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No. of Assumptions

12

**Key Supposition Two**

**Ongoing professional development is an important part of being a teacher.** *(Ongoing professional development)*
Ongoing professional development

In the themes Developing Shared Referents About Teaching and Learning, Cooperation and Communication, The Tone of the School, and Community Relations there was evidence of an ongoing commitment to professional development. As described in those themes the teachers and principal at CKF were involved in a variety of professional development activities. Underlying those professional development activities was an overarching belief that teachers could improve their teaching abilities through continued professional growth.

Derived from assumption numbers:  

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<td>44</td>
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No. of Assumptions: 8

Key Supposition Three

Cooperation and sharing with colleagues is an important part of being on a school staff. (Cooperative ethos)

Cooperative ethos

There were a number of important activities at CKF that involved working together as a staff. Staff valued the good working relationships that allowed them to do many of the things that took place at CKF. Examples included the operation of the School-Based Team, preparation and presentation of The Fire Song, informal consultation about materials, students, or professional development activities, and the planning of fieldtrips and units of study. Examples of this cooperative activity were contained in the themes Developing Shared Referents About Teaching and
Learning, Principal as Leader, Cooperation and Communication, Tone of the School, and Community Relations.

Derived from assumption numbers:  

<table>
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<td>47</td>
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Active administrative leadership is an important factor in the successful operation of a school. (Active administrative leadership)

Active administrative leadership

The teachers at CKF School believed that the leadership shown by a school's principal was crucial to the successful operation of a school. In keeping with this, they valued the leadership shown by Christine Brown. Despite some feelings of being overburdened by all the activity Christine's enthusiasm brought to the school, teachers acknowledged her as a supportive and effective leader. The component assumptions for this key supposition were contained in the themes Developing Shared Referents About Teaching and Learning, Principal as Leader, Cooperation and Communication, and The Tone of the School.
### Key Supposition Five

**Time is a valuable commodity that must be carefully managed in the school environment. (Valuing time)**

**Valuing time**

The time press at CKF was an omnipresent concern. As a result, time was a valued commodity. Teachers monitored their use of time closely in their attempts to make efficient use of a scarce resource. This key supposition was derived from assumptions contained in the themes *Developing Shared Referents About Teaching and Learning, Cooperation and Communication,* and *Precious Time.*

<table>
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No. of Assumptions 6

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**Key Suppositions as Cross-Theme Linkages**

As described in the above pages, each key supposition is comprised of a number of specific assumptions drawn from across the seven themes that were used to describe...
the culture of CKF. The following matrix illustrates the degree of cross-theme linkage that exists for each of the five key suppositions.

**Key Suppositions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Active Involvement of Students</th>
<th>Ongoing Professional Development</th>
<th>Cooperative Ethos</th>
<th>Active Admin Leadership</th>
<th>Valuing Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Entering the World of the Child</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Shared Referents About Teaching and Learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal as Leader</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooperation and Communication</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Precious Time</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone of the School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Relations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

( ) Numbers in brackets refers to the number of component assumptions. 

Key Supposition/Theme Linkage
The matrix indicates that of the five key suppositions, *Cooperative Ethos* has the greatest degree of cross-theme linkage, with component assumptions drawn from five of the seven themes. This is followed by the key suppositions of *Active Administrative Leadership*, and *Ongoing Professional Development* with linkages that span four themes. *Active Involvement of Students*, and *Valuing Time* each span three themes. Using the matrix as one indicator of the relative "strength" or pervasiveness of each of the five key suppositions within the culture of CKF it is apparent that the strongest key supposition is *A Cooperative Ethos*. This is followed by *Active Administrative Leadership* and *Ongoing Professional Development*.

Viewing the matrix from a perspective that examines the relative distribution of themes across key suppositions, it is apparent that Theme Two, *Developing Shared Referents About Teaching and Learning*, spans all five of the key suppositions. Theme Four, *Cooperation and Communication*, spans four of the themes. I interpret this as indication of the relative pervasiveness of these two themes within the culture of the school. It is interesting to compare the picture of the relative strength of each theme that emerges through an analysis of the matrix with the picture of each theme's relative strength that emerges if one uses only a raw tally of the number of theme related items contained in fieldnote and interview data.

As described at the beginning of this chapter, such a tally was used to decide the positioning of the themes within the chapter. At first glance, there is an apparent contradiction between the quantitatively derived positional strength of the themes and the degree of thematic pervasiveness derived from the above analysis of the matrix. Looking at the matrix and considering Theme One, *Entering the World of the Child*, one must ask the question, "If this theme contains the largest number of
observed phenomena as recorded in the data, why does it occupy such a minor position in terms of its pervasiveness within the culture?"

A possible answer to this question is the assertion that much of the data grouped into Theme One represent actions that are representative of what I shall call the "surface structure" of the culture. It will be remembered that within Sathe's multi-levelled model of culture (See Chapter Two, p. 35 - 36) there is a first level of culture that contains "...audible and visible behavior patterns that are easy to see but hard to interpret without an understanding of the other levels" (Sathe, 1985, p. 10). From this perspective, I would argue that the data entries grouped within Theme One represent what Sathe refers to as "the observable behavior patterns and other aspects of culture that are easy to see". Although such aspects of a culture are indeed easy to see, and in fact, present themselves quickly to outside observers, these aspects must be examined in light of the broader and more complex culture of which they are a part. Analysis of the culture of CKF using the constructs of theme and key supposition indicates that while the component elements of Theme One (i.e. teaching, showing empathy, building students' self-esteem, etc.) take up a large amount of the staff's time, they also exist alongside other powerful, but not so observable aspects of the school's culture. These include the strong concern for cooperation (Cooperative Ethos) and shared assumptions about the importance of the school's leadership (Active Administrative Leadership). It is apparent then, that what one sees and identifies as the surface structure of a culture, is only part of a larger and more complex set of shared understandings.
Summary of Chapter Five

This purpose of this chapter was to describe the culture of CKF School. Seven broad themes were used to describe the characteristics of the culture of CKF. These themes were:

1) Entering the World of the Child
2) Developing Shared Referents About Teaching and Learning
3) Principal as Leader
4) Cooperation and Communication
5) Precious Time
6) The Tone of the School
7) Community Relations

As part of this chapter's development, the underlying beliefs and values contained in the themes were described. In addition to descriptions of the beliefs and values contained within each theme, it was noted that several broad, over-arching assumptions link together the component assumptions of a number of the themes. These over-arching assumptions were described as the "key suppositions" of the culture of CKF. Those key supposition were:

1) Active involvement of students.
2) Ongoing professional development.
3) Cooperative ethos.
4) Active administrative leadership.
5) Valuing time.

The final section of the chapter showed the derivation of the key suppositions from across the seven themes. A matrix was used to show the degree of cross-linking that exists between the various themes and key suppositions. Several
inferences were made about the pervasiveness of several of the themes and key suppositions within the culture of CKF. It was claimed that of the key suppositions, A Cooperative Ethos appeared to be the most pervasive, followed by Active Administrative Leadership and Ongoing Professional Development. Theme Two, Developing Shared Referents About Teaching and Learning, and Theme Four, Cooperation and Communication were described as being more pervasive than the other themes identified in the chapter. And finally, it was claimed that Theme One, despite containing the largest number of references to raw data items, was representative of what is in essence the "surface structure" of the culture of the school.
CHAPTER SIX

The Improvement Experience

This chapter describes the chronology and content of CKF's experience with The School is the Key program. Some of the events described in this chapter took place prior to my arrival at the school. Descriptions of those events are based on teacher recollections obtained during interviews. Other events described in this chapter happened during my participant observation at CKF. Descriptions of these events are based on fieldnotes made at the time. This chapter begins with a timeline that places the major events of CKF's involvement with The School is the Key in a chronological perspective. My entrance and exit from the school are also noted on the timeline. The body of this chapter is an expanded description of the major events listed in the following timeline.

Timeline of CKF's Involvement with The School is the Key

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>October</td>
<td>The School is the Key (TSITK) is advertised in an administrative bulletin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November</td>
<td>Principal and five of CKF staff attend a two day The School is the Key institute.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December</td>
<td>Whole school involvement with TSITK begins.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>TSITK committee meets with district consultant to plan school-based meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>February</td>
<td>Presentations on the &quot;five factors&quot; begin. Committee meets with district consultant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March</td>
<td>Presentations continue: TSITK committee meets with district consultant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>April</td>
<td>The Country Club Sessions: Establishing priorities for school improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Month</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>District consultant ranks staff concerns using a frequency distribution.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>Setting school improvement goals and planning for next year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>School closed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>School closed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Return to action: School goals and Principal's goals.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>Researcher arrives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>Restructuring the process. TSITK committee disbands and a new format is established.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>New format continues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988 January</td>
<td>The time squeeze: TSITK vs. The Fire Song.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>The Fire Song.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Carrying on with school improvement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>School improvement continues.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>Leaving an established order: Planning for next year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>School year ends. Researcher departs.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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**Initial Involvement: Fall 1986**

The staff of CKF first learned of *The School is the Key* in the fall of 1986. As described by Christine, there was an announcement about the program in an administrators' bulletin issued by the district's central office. Participation in the program was voluntary and Christine decided to become involved. "You chose to do it or not to do it, and I chose to do it." (Interview, Christine). Following Christine's decision to become involved, she described the program to the staff at a staff meeting and five teachers volunteered to attend a two-day institute held in November of 1986.
This group, consisting of the principal and five teachers, I refer to as "the core group". Four of the five teachers who attended the institute with Christine were still on the staff of CKF School when I arrived to conduct this research. The fifth teacher, who left CKF at the end of the 1986-87 school year, was not interviewed as part of the study. Four of the staff members who attended the two-day institute spoke positively about the experience. The one teacher who did not like the institute was critical of the way the workshop was presented. She felt a more direct presentation of the material would have saved a lot of time.

I was quite upset with the people that were presenting it because they, I think, had gone through the Elements of Instruction and they were going a little bit too far. I wanted them to tell me a few things. I didn't want to have to sit there and fiddle around. I felt a lot of my time was wasted at that workshop....I feel a lot of the school board workshops are a waste of time. You could cut them into a third, and get just as much out of them. (Interview, Maria)

Maria's view of the institute contrasts with the view expressed by Nicole: "I left and I felt a lot of the things I might have known before hand, but they spelled everything out. I felt I had gained some information and I was rather excited" (Interview, Nicole).

Ann also felt positive about the institute, but in her description of the two days, she described the difficulties the group encountered while trying to develop a consensus about particular "attributes" and "indicators" of effectiveness. Ann believed the difficulties in reaching a consensus arose from differing interpretations of the same phenomena.

We heard all kinds of research on what they found in the schools that were most effective. It didn't matter about the program, it didn't matter about the teacher. Some had good teachers, some didn't. Some had good principals, some didn't. Some had plants in the hall, others didn't. But these were the five basic areas....They said all the good schools, that they felt...not good schools but excellent schools, the ones that went that one step further, had these five basic areas in common. Then they gave us
this checklist and we worked through, (it was a marathon), each of the five checklists very quickly. And by quickly, I mean like two and a half hours. It wasn't all that short a time. But to go through that amount of material...You can look at it and say, "Oh yeah, we're doing that.". Or you can say, "Now just a minute. You can say on the one hand we're doing that, but I don't think we can all say we're doing it all the time, or to the best of our ability." And that's what made it tough. Some said, "Sure we're doing that, let's go on to the next one...". And that's where I think it's still very tricky. (Interview, Ann. original emphasis)

As will be discussed later - the problem of meaning - the difficulty with multiple interpretations, that Ann described in the above quotation, was to remain a problem for the school throughout their involvement with The School is the Key.

After the two-day institute in November of 1986, the majority of the core group of six returned to the school, enthusiastic about what they had experienced. This enthusiasm was noticed and picked up by the staff. Dana describes the way this enthusiasm led staff at the school to become curious about the program.

I remember them coming back and talking very excitedly and I definitely picked up their enthusiasm about it. There was a curiosity wondering what it was all about, because I was just hearing little snippets of it. Then we had a series of workshops after school where one member would present information, one member of that group that went to the workshop. (Interview, Dana)

The principal also remembered the staff as being receptive to the ideas that the core group brought back with them. From Christine's perspective, part of that initial enthusiasm was due to the program's assumption that it is important to involve the whole school. She compared the situation to the school's early involvement with The Elements of Instruction. Christine also credited Shelly Redding, the district level consultant assigned to CKF, with helping to involve the whole school.

They were very enthusiastic about that [The School is the Key] and were keen. And through Shelly Redding and through the school board, we then spread the gospel - that you like to involve the whole staff. Like anything, the reason that worked, the reason the Elements worked, was because the committee was very much involved and very much
enthusiastic. And by word of mouth, everyone else became enthusiastic too. (Interview, Christine)

As described in the quotation from Dana, part of the school-based follow-up to the two-day institute consisted of members of the core group presenting a series of after-school workshops. These workshops began in February of 1987 and ran until April of the same year. The purpose of the workshops was to relay to the staff, the school improvement and school effectiveness information the core group had encountered at the two-day *The School is the Key* Institute. The culmination of these after-school workshops was an inservice day held at a local country club in the spring of 1987. Shelly Redding, the district-level consultant, was actively involved in helping to plan much of the school-based follow-up. Between January and April she met monthly with the core group for the purpose of planning the weekly after school workshops. As part of those meetings, the core group also planned the full-day workshop that was to be held at the country club.

I met with the group that attended the two-day institute shortly after the institute to talk about how we would best take the information back to the whole staff. We had at least three or four meetings to plan the school-based follow-up day. They all took responsibility as group leaders in doing various tasks in getting that day rolling. (Interview, Shelly)

The Country Club Session: Establishing Priorities for School Improvement

In April of 1987, the staff of CKF spent a full day at a local country club for the purpose of bringing into focus the series of after-school workshops that were held in February and March. The day was designated a non-instructional day, and students did not attend school at all during the day. Derek Hathaway, one of the program's principal developers introduced the day. Several senior administrative staff were also in attendance for the opening remarks. Throughout the day, Shelly Redding, the district consultant assigned to the school, led the staff through a series of small-group activities. In these activities, the staff discussed "the five factors" and their
attributes and indicators as they were manifest in CKF School. The culmination of the activities was a factor ranking and needs assessment in which the staff listed the areas in CKF that they felt needed to be improved.

Information from the factor ranking and needs assessment was later used by Shelly Redding and the core committee to establish a set of priorities for the school. Shelly Redding described how she and the committee used the information from the follow-up day.

From that day, we met again as a committee to look at the priorities that had been established by the staff. After the follow-up date [the Country Club session] we had fairly lengthy notes from each of the group discussions looking at the positive examples of the attributes and indicators in the school, and looking at the needs and the focus factors. We met as a group to talk about how to deal with those. I took them away and constructed just a really rough staff survey for each individual staff member, and they ranked those needs, and I put that together for the committee. (Interview, Shelly)

The results of Shelly's staff survey showed the following rank ordering of the five factors:

1) Focus on Instruction
2) School Organization
3) School Climate
4) Staff Development
5) Educational Leadership

The results of the survey indicated that for the staff, a focus on instruction was their first priority for school improvement. The second most important area was school organization, followed by school climate, staff development and educational leadership.

Rather than work in all five areas, the core committee and the staff decided to focus their efforts on the first two of the ranked factors. Using the priorities that
were identified at the Country Club session, the core committee developed a list of goals for school improvement in the areas of "Focus on Instruction" and "School Organization". That list is reproduced below. (The staff of CKF used the word "goals" to describe the content of the following lists. In keeping with their terminology, I will use "goals" to describe the items on the list.)

**Factor 2 - School Organization**

1. To review general expectations, set priorities (consider feelings of overload expressed by some staff).

2. To develop clear intergrade goals with provision for annual adjustment.

3. To outline clear learning outcomes and strive for the agreement/commitment of all staff.

4. To provide more involvement for staff in goal setting and to define goals more clearly.

5. To provide more time for evaluating what is implemented.

6. To explore ways to provide more time for staff to communicate, fill out forms etc. (consider a modified day, more volunteers)

7. To develop a process for cooperative staff problem solving (i.e. use of committees, process for decision making at staff meetings, representation of teachers' views)

8. To ensure follow through when school damage is done.

9. To review counselling resources (i.e. consider time needs, the role vs. training etc.)

10. To consider ways to relieve teachers, especially the teacher-librarian, of routine clerical tasks.

11. To review parent complaints regarding homework and discipline.

12. To develop avenues for more student input in decision making (i.e. student council), and student responsibility (i.e. care of textbooks).

**Factor 4 - Focus on Instruction**

1. To provide planning time for curriculum coordination.

2. To decide on instructional priorities.

3. To explore different ways of creating time for peer coaching (i.e. timetable adjustments).
4. To provide a scope and sequence in content areas.
   a) reading   b) language
   c) science   d) math

5. To provide more help for students with learning and emotional problems (e.g.,
prescriptive program with assessment)

6. To outline and circulate more specific goals for the teacher-librarian.

7. To reduce interruptions to instructional time.

8. To develop a homework book procedure for Grades 4 - 7.

9. To ensure that all staff members have training in Elements of Instruction.

10. To acquire more library resources.

11. To accurately assess students in relation to school based curriculum.

12. To balance the use of standardized tests with informal or subjective teacher
   assessment when making placement or programming decisions.

   This list of goals for school improvement (12 each for School Organization and
   Focus on Instruction), became the central guide for CKF's improvement efforts. For
   the remainder of the 1985-86 school year, the committee continued to operate, with
   the core group of six meeting with Shelly Redding to discuss ways of achieving the
   staff's stated goals. The 1985-86 school year ended with CKF having in place, both a
   list of goals for school improvement and a committee whose purpose was to guide
   the staff's school improvement activities.

   Return to Action: Fall 1987

   In the fall of 1987, the staff of CKF returned to work, with the addition of several
   new staff members. Work on The School is the Key did not begin immediately in
   September because teachers were busy establishing classroom routines and getting
   used to their new classes. When work on the school improvement program did
   recommence in October, three factors had an effect on the dynamics of the
   program's implementation. Although it is necessary for the purposes of this
chapter to describe these factors, assertions about their effects on the implementation of the program are presented in Chapter Seven.

The first factor that had an effect on the program's implementation was a decision that the principal made in the early part of the school year. As part of the administrative organization of Ocean City School District, the district is divided into a number of areas. Providing leadership and supervision for each of the areas, is an area superintendent. Principals from each of the area schools work with the area superintendent, much as school principals work with their staffs. As part of the district's supervisory process, principals are expected to develop, in consultation with the area superintendent, a set of "principal's goals".

In developing her principal's goals, for the 1987-88 school year, Christine Brown decided to use the five factors from *The School is the Key* as an orienting framework. Christine believed that the five factors constituted an orderly structure around which she could organize her activities as principal of CKF. That belief, combined with the school's existing involvement with *The School is the Key* led Christine to assume that she could usefully integrate some of her principal's goals with the school's goals for school improvement. This linkage of the school's goals for school improvement with the principal's goals was endorsed by the area superintendent.

A second factor that had an effect on the program's implementation was Christine's impending transfer to another school. District policy in Ocean City School District was that principals were to be reassigned to a different school every five years. In some cases, however, the five year term would be extended. The 1987-88 school year was Christine's sixth year at CKF. She believed that her current year at CKF would likely be her last.
The third factor that was to have an effect on the way The School is the Key was implemented was a radical change in the structure of the school-based committee. As the program was originally designed, each school was to have a core committee that would meet monthly to provide leadership and direction for a number of smaller "action groups". These action groups were to be led by a member of the core committee, and work on a specific area of school improvement.

During November, in consideration of staff concerns about an excessive number of meetings, Christine decided to change the operating format of The School is the Key. Christine believed that by having a number of meetings - monthly core committee meetings, smaller action group meetings, and staff meetings - they were "constantly reinventing the wheel". As an alternative to this situation, Christine decided to make discussion of items related to The School is the Key a part of CKF's regular weekly staff meetings. In this way, she reasoned, the whole school would be involved in all the discussions about school improvement.

These three factors - the linking of the school's improvement goals to some of the principal's goals, the principal's impending move at the end of the school year, and the restructuring of the program's operation within CKF - all had an effect on the implementation of the school improvement program. The following sections of this chapter provide an overview of CKF's experience with implementing The School is the Key during the 1987-88 school year.

The Weekly Meetings: November and December

For the purpose of organizing the staff's school improvement activities under the new format, Christine provided each staff member with a special The School is the Key folder. On the inside of each folder was a list of the goals for each of the two factors (Focus on Instruction and School Organization). Staff were to bring these
folders to each staff meeting. Using the list of goals as a reference, the staff spent a portion of each weekly staff meeting discussing school improvement. As a follow-up to each staff meeting, Christine distributed special minutes which recorded the actions stemming from the staff’s discussion of *The School is the Key* items. These minutes were printed on coloured paper and were to go into the staff’s *The School is the Key* folders. As a result, each staff member had an ongoing record of CKF’s school improvement activities.

As part of the data collection procedures for this study, I collected copies of all the minutes relating to discussions of *The School is the Key* items. Analysis of these minutes and of minutes from the final core committee meeting shows that in the months of November and December, the staff addressed the following goals under Factor 4 - Focus on Instruction:

1. To provide planning time for curriculum coordination.
2. To decide on instructional priorities.
3. To explore different ways of creating time for peer coaching (i.e. timetable adjustments).
4. To provide more help for students with learning and emotional problems (e.g. prescriptive program with assessment).
5. To outline and circulate more specific goals for the teacher-librarian.
6. To reduce interruptions to instructional time.

**The Content of the Improvement Initiatives**

In order to give the reader a sense of how the staff dealt with the substantive content of their school improvement goals, the following sections of this chapter briefly describe on an item by item basis, how each of the above goals was dealt with.
To provide planning time for curriculum coordination

The concern underlying this goal was that staff did not have enough time to plan jointly units of instruction. The time problem was most severe in the area of teacher-librarian cooperative planning. Library period could take a number of forms. Often, students would work in the library, using reference materials as part of a follow-up to classroom activities. At other times, the classroom teacher and the teacher-librarian would teach jointly, and introduce students to a new research skill, or guide them through practice of a previously learned skill. In order for such cooperative teaching to take place, the classroom teachers and the teacher-librarian had to sit down together and plan what they were going to do.

Planning for library period was difficult due to the time constraints under which the librarian worked. Part of her job entailed supervising the library through the lunch hour. This left little "in school" time available for planning and coordinating library related curriculum. These concerns were discussed during the The School is the Key section of a staff meeting. A suggested solution was that a supervision aide be used to free the teacher-librarian for one noon hour a week, during which time she and the teachers could plan their library programs. This proposed solution was acted upon and Christine made arrangements to have a supervision aide open and supervise the library during noon hours on Tuesdays.

To decide on instructional priorities

Discussion of this goal took place at the second last meeting of the core committee that was held November 2, 1987. One of the things the staff wanted to do was to develop a scope and sequence for four of the content areas taught at the school. These areas were reading, language, science, and mathematics. Work on this had already begun prior to CKF's involvement with The School is the Key. During the
1986-87 school year, the staff already held a number of after school sessions in which they took turns presenting their reading programs to one another. As a follow-up to that, the staff decided to focus on science. One of the goals of *The School is the Key* was to decide which of the remaining content areas the staff would focus on in their efforts at developing scope and sequence. At the meeting of the core committee, the view was expressed that since they had already started on an examination and reworking of the school's science program, they should continue with that and see it through to completion. The feasibility of beginning work in the other content areas was also discussed at the meeting. The committee decided that, though needed, it would be too large an undertaking at that particular time. Work on the other content areas was postponed until a later time and a non-instructional day with a focus on the school's science program was planned for December of 1987.

To explore different ways of creating time for peer coaching.

One of the ways that teachers learned about their own use of The Elements of Instruction was through peer coaching. Teachers were paired with one another for coaching purposes, and at least once a month they observed each other teach a lesson. As a follow-up to the lesson observation, teachers would meet and discuss the lesson. A difficulty for many of the teachers was finding time to discuss the observed lessons. The issue of how best to facilitate peer coaching was discussed during one of the weekly *The School is the Key* sessions that were part of the staff meetings. During this meeting, a number of suggestions were explored. Christine volunteered to cover teacher's classes so that the peer coaching teams could get together to discuss the lesson. With Christine covering one of the teacher's classes, and the other teacher released from the class through a spare, the peer coaches could discuss their lessons.
Another alternative that was discussed was the use of video-tape to record the lesson for later viewing. The day care that operated from the school's basement had a video-camera that they shared freely with the school. It was decided that I could help the staff by operating the video-camera and recording lessons for those staff who felt comfortable with that approach to peer coaching. Six teachers asked to have lessons recorded using the video-camera. Each teacher was given their own video-tape, on which I recorded a lesson of their choice. As a way of facilitating follow-up discussions for these video-taped sessions, Christine made arrangements to hire two substitutes for an entire day to provide teachers and their peer coaches with time to view and discuss the video-taped lessons.

Although I helped by video-taping lessons for six of the teaching staff, the video-tapes were not used as data for this study. The video-tapes remained in the possession of the teachers. I did, however, attend the follow-up discussions between teacher and coach in which the taped lessons were viewed. Data from those sessions were used to gain an understanding of the staff's perceptions of the current state of peer coaching at CKF. Those perceptions are discussed in Chapter Seven.

To provide more help for students with learning and emotional problems

This goal was also discussed during one of the weekly sessions. Discussion for this item centered around two points. The first was how the Learning Assistance Centre (LAC) in the school was working to meet the needs of students with learning problems, and the second was the provision of district counselling services from outside the school. Regarding the school's LAC, there was a lengthy discussion about the difficulties of scheduling the LAC and how removing students from the classroom for help in one subject, often put them further behind in another subject. In the discussion of the counselling services that the school has available to them
when working with disturbed children and parents, the belief was expressed that existing services fall far short of dealing adequately with the problems that exist. Discussion then moved to a consideration of pupil-teacher ratios, and how a single disturbed child can take up as much of the teacher's time as do three or four "normal" children.

Despite a lengthy discussion of the topic, little concrete action evolved. I believe this was due to the complexity of the topic, and the fact that, when dealing with emotionally disturbed children and parents, there is little immediate impact that teachers can have. The entry from the special *The School is the Key* minutes that summarized the discussion is printed below.

**Assistance for students with learning and emotional problems**

- the LAC scheduling and how the needs of these students are met in the LAC was discussed at length. It was determined that the LAC is being used to the utmost and that teachers must be flexible in their homeroom programs when it comes to scheduling students into LAC as they are often drawn from several classrooms to attend special LAC programs.

- Teachers agreed that within the school as much help as possible was provided but that the system needed to provide schools and teachers with smaller pupil/teacher ratios and recognize that the students with severe behavior and learning problems count far more than one body in a classroom.

(The School is the Key/Staff Meeting notes, November 19, 1987)

Follow-up on this situation consisted of the principal making arrangements to bring in more resources from outside the school. Christine arranged to have a teacher from the district's special education centre come twice a week for several hours for the purpose of working with several of the students who were identified as having severe difficulties with their learning.
To outline and circulate more specific goals for the teacher librarian.

The teacher-librarian at CKF was concerned that her role at the school suffered from a lack of clarity of purpose. In her view, staff at the school appeared to hold a wide range of opinion as to what her role should be. One of the goals therefore, was to clarify for the staff, and for the teacher-librarian what the job of teacher-librarian encompassed at CKF. The teacher-librarian addressed this concern at the November 26th staff meeting. She spoke of feeling "caught in the middle" in her efforts to fulfill the expectations of the role as defined by school district policy, while trying to fulfill the expectations of the staff. The outcome of this meeting was a plan in which the principal would distribute copies of the district policy regarding teacher-librarians to all the staff. Teachers would study the materials, then at the next meeting they would write out their expectations of the school's teacher-librarian, taking into consideration what they had read in the district policy. This went as planned and at the December 3 meeting teachers wrote out their interpretations of what they thought should be the role of the teacher-librarian in the school. After that meeting, the principal and teacher-librarian then went over the teachers' written statements. They found that the clear picture that they had hoped for did not emerge. As a result, Christine suggested that the school district's principal-librarian specialist come to the school after the Christmas break and speak to the staff about the role of the teacher-librarians in elementary schools.

To reduce interruptions to instructional time

This topic was discussed at a meeting held November 26th. Teachers expressed concern about the existing practice of introducing new students into classrooms as soon as they arrived at the school. Teachers expressed the view that the unannounced arrival of new students in the middle of a lesson was a severe
disruption to the lesson, to the class and to the teacher. Sometimes, students would arrive and there would be no desk available, or the students would arrive without school supplies and this would compound the disruption. The result of this discussion was a decision to develop a school policy that would stipulate the time at which new students would be admitted to the classroom. In addition, it was agreed that a checklist, to be completed by the office staff would help facilitate a student's organized introduction to the school. During the discussion, Teresa told of a school of which she knew in which they used such a checklist. She agreed to get a copy so that it could be used as a model. Through input from the principal, the office staff, and Teresa, a policy and checklist was developed and presented at the next meeting for the staff's approval. The policy and checklist that the staff approved is reproduced below:

1987 December

NEW STUDENTS TO THE SCHOOL -

Charles Kettering Ford School Policy

Students who arrive at Charles Kettering Ford School during any school term, will not be admitted to class during teaching time. They may be admitted before 8:50 a.m., during recess (10:20 - 10:35), at noon (12:00 - 12:50) or after 3:00 p.m.

registration completed

desk provided before student enters classroom (by engineer)

parents given a copy of C.K.F. philosophy and goals

school fees paid

student and parents have met the principal

emergency contact card completed (both sides)

students new to Ocean City School district and kindergarten registrations must complete medical form

any school records requested from parent
any school records received by teacher

In addition to the arrival of new students, the staff also discussed unannounced entrances into the classroom by school board maintenance personnel. Teachers were sometimes annoyed at having maintenance workers walk into their classrooms in the middle of a lesson, for the purpose of checking on heating equipment or other items relating to the physical plant. The outcome of this discussion was a decision that Christine would work with the school's engineer to ensure that all maintenance people checked in at the office before proceeding to any of the classrooms.

These, then, were the issues that the staff of CKF dealt with in the fall of 1987 through their involvement with The School is the Key. With the list of school improvement goals as a guide, weekly discussions were held and various ideas and points of view were presented and debated. Some of the proposed solutions were well accepted by the staff and others were rejected, or only partially accepted. As the first term of the 1987-88 school year ended, the staff headed into the Christmas season looking forward to the break after a busy four months.

January 1988: The Time Squeeze

The first week of the new year following the Christmas break was a busy one for the staff of CKF. Work at the school resumed with the same intensity as that which characterized the first four months of the year. On Monday, as usual, the "screening" meetings began at 8:00 a.m. On Wednesday, after school, the staff attended a meeting with senior district administrators to discuss the district's policies regarding mainstreaming and integration. On Thursday, the regular staff meeting that included The School is the Key was held at lunch time. By Thursday, I noticed an undercurrent of concern among a number of the staff. Some of them were unhappy about
all the meetings they were having to attend. (Fieldnotes, p. 88)

On Friday these concerns boiled over and were brought into the open in an impromptu staffroom discussion during recess. A number of teachers expressed their concerns about the number of meetings that the staff were having to attend. The root of their concern was a worry that the time they were having to devote to meetings was going to put at risk the school's upcoming production of The Fire Song. Even though it was over five weeks until the performance dates, the planning and rehearsal sessions for The Fire Song were scheduled before and after school and during noon hours. Some of the staff felt that they did not have enough time and energy to do The Fire Song and maintain the active schedule of meetings that had heralded the start of the new term.

It was decided that one of the teachers would talk to Christine and relay to her their concerns about the time taken up by meetings. The outcome of the discussion between Christine and the teacher was a decision to suspend staff meetings until the completion of The Fire Song in late February. In explaining her decision to me, Christine said that she believed a number of the goals from *The School is the Key* were now in place and ongoing, and that they could afford to cut back on staff meetings for the next five weeks.

Over the next five weeks then, the staff of CKF devoted much of their non-instructional time to preparing for The Fire Song. Preparations for the musical included building and painting sets, ordering and setting up sound and lighting equipment, daily rehearsals with students, designing and sewing costumes, preparing tickets and programs, and planning and practising the show's choreography. Staff often returned at night to work on various aspects of the production as did a large number of parent volunteers and workers from the day
care who helped with everything from set design and make-up to choreography and
the sewing of costumes.

Amid much excitement and enthusiasm, The Fire Song was presented in late
February. Two casts presented a total of four performances - two matinees and two
evening performances - all of which were sold out. In reflecting on the show, all of
the staff expressed the view that The Fire Song was the best of the three musicals the
school had done. It was almost with a feeling of sadness that the routines of the
school returned to normal in the week following the final presentations of the
show. Barbara, the school's music specialist, expressed the sentiment well in the
week after the show, when she told a class of Grade Four students, "We are going to
put The Fire Song behind us now, and have some very happy memories."
(Fieldnotes, p. 159).

Return to Action: School Improvement Continues

After The Fire Song, the weekly staff meetings resumed. During March, April,
May, and June a number of items from the list of school improvement goals were
discussed and acted upon. In March, the primary teachers and the teacher-librarian
selected and purchased over $1000 worth of new books for the school library. This
was in response to Goal 9, Factor 4, "To acquire more library resources." In April, as
part of the school's plan to ensure that all the staff became proficient in The
Elements of Instruction, three teachers attended a day long workshop. Though six
more of the staff had planned to attend a further Elements of Instruction workshop,
they were unable to do so because of limited space at the sessions. Other activities in
April included a school-wide, half-day workshop on peer coaching as it applied to
the Elements, discussion of using a "modified day" to provide more time for
planning, and discussions of professional development for the next school year.
During May and June, as the end of the current school year approached, many of the staff's school improvement activities focused on planning for the next school year.

The school improvement goals that the staff planned to work on during the 1988-89 school year included a continuation of their work on developing scope and sequence in the content areas. Work in the areas of math and language development that was postponed in the fall of 1987 was planned for the upcoming 1988-89 school year. In addition, another workshop on peer coaching was booked for October of 1988, as was a workshop on the use of calculators in the classroom. Though Christine would no longer be at the school, the planning for school improvement that she and the staff did would have an effect right through the next year. Thus, despite her absence, there would be an established program of planned change in place at CKF. When I departed from CKF School in June, I left with the impression that the program of school improvement that had been established through the staff's involvement with The School is the Key, would continue for at least another year.

Summary of Chapter Six

This chapter presented an overview of CKF's experience with The School is the Key. The school's initial involvement with the program was outlined, along with a description of the how the staff established priorities for school improvement. The school's goals for improvement were listed and a description of the content of some of the school improvement activities was presented. It was noted that several factors in the school had an effect on the way the program was implemented. A change in meeting format and a conflict between the school's production of its major musical and the school improvement program both had an effect on the school improvement program. The end of the school year was described as a time in
which the school's improvement activities focused on planning for the upcoming school year. Planning was done to the extent that most of CKF's staff and professional development activities for the next school year were organized prior to the end of June.
CHAPTER SEVEN

The Interaction of School Culture and School Improvement

As described in Chapter One, the purpose of this study was to examine the reciprocal interaction between the culture of CKF School and The School is the Key program. This chapter contains assertions about the interactions that occurred between The School is the Key, and the culture of CKF. The evidence that supports these assertions is an integral part of this chapter. This evidence is drawn from descriptions of the program's implementation and from teacher's perceptions of the program as expressed in interviews. Non-corroborating evidence and alternative explanations for phenomena are also discussed.

The Chapter begins with the presentation and discussion of two key assertions regarding the interaction of The School is the Key and the culture of CKF. After those sections is a discussion of teachers' conceptions of improvement and effectiveness. Part of this discussion focuses on the potential for conflict that is embodied in programs of school improvement. The impact that this potential for conflict had on the implementation of The School is the Key in CKF is also discussed.

Assertion One

Three of the key suppositions of the culture of CKF had an observable effect on the form and operation of The School is the Key. Those key suppositions are: 1) active involvement of students in learning, 2) active administrative leadership, and 3) valuing time.

Assertion One has in essence, three components to it. It is claimed that the key supposition of Active Involvement of Students had an effect on the form that the school improvement program took in CKF. This claim is the first component of Assertion One. It is also claimed that the key suppositions of Active Administrative Leadership and Valuing Time had an effect on the program. These claims are the
second and third components of Assertion One. Evidence for each of the three
claims is presented and discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

Component One: Active Involvement of Students and
the Focus of CKF's School Improvement Efforts.

As described in Chapter Six, the staff's interests in each of the five factors
contained in The School is the Key, were surveyed and ranked by Shelly Redding,
the district consultant assigned to CKF. The factor that ranked the highest on this
survey was the factor titled Focus on Instruction. I would argue that the ranking of a
focus on instruction as the top factor in CKF’s school improvement efforts, was
influenced, in part, by the key supposition of Active Involvement of Students.

As described in Chapter Five, the key supposition of Active Involvement of
Students had linkages across three of the themes that characterized the culture of
CKF. In terms of the number of component assumptions it encompassed, Active
Involvement of Students ranks second of the five key suppositions. The three
themes from which the component assumptions were drawn were Entering the
World of the Child, Developing Shared Referents About Learning and Teaching and
Cooperation and Communication. The first of these themes was a conglomerate of
beliefs and values about the importance of using the world views of children, the
value of an empathic understanding, and the importance of the maintaining a
child's individuality and building a positive self image. The second theme,
Developing Shared Referents About Learning and Teaching, focused on teachers'
valuing of the Elements as a mechanism for actively involving students in lessons,
and as a way of dialoguing about and reflecting on practice. The third theme focuses
on the importance of cooperation and communication in teaching.
Comparing CKF's school improvement goals listed under Factor 4 - Focus on Instruction, with the thematic elements encompassed by the key supposition of *Active Involvement of Students*, one sees evidence of overlap between the key supposition and the school improvement goals. Of the twelve goals that the staff of CKF used to guide their improvement efforts in the area of Factor 4 - Focus on Instruction, six of the goals reflect elements of the key supposition and its three cross-linked themes. Those goals are:

3. To explore different ways of creating time for peer coaching (i.e. timetable adjustments)
5. To provide more help for students with learning and emotional problems (e.g. prescriptive program with assessment)
8. To develop a homework book procedure for grades 4-7.
9. To ensure that all staff members have training in Elements of Instruction.
11. To accurately assess students in relation to school based curriculum.
12. To balance the use of standardized tests with informal or subjective teacher assessment when making placement or programming decisions.

In the above list, Numbers 3 and 9 refer directly to the Elements of Instruction. Peer coaching (Goal 3) was an integral part of the way the staff learned the Elements. In Chapter Five, the school-wide use of The Elements of Instruction was described as the major manifestation of the one of the principal themes of the culture of CKF - *Developing Shared Referents About Learning and Teaching*. Because the majority of the staff already had some training in the Elements when goal 9 was established, those most affected by the goal were new staff members. What is significant about the decision to ensure that all staff had training in the Elements of Instruction is that for new staff, competence in the Elements, or at the very least, a willingness to
learn the Elements, was in essence, almost a condition of being a staff member at CKF. Thus, when new staff came to CKF school, they went through a process of enculturation, in which they learned about one of the key suppositions of the school's culture.

The other four goals listed above refer to: 1) helping students with emotional and learning problems, 2) developing a homework book procedure, 3) assessing students on the basis of school-based curricula and 4) the inclusion of subjective teacher assessments in placement and programming decisions. Each of these goals is congruent with the beliefs and values included in the themes *Entering the World of the Child*, and *Cooperation and Communication*. Goal 5 is indicative of an empathic concern for students with emotional and learning difficulties. Goal 8 reflects a wish to help students keep track of their homework assignments and, at the same time, establish communication links with the home. Implicit in Goal 11 is a recognition of between school variance in students' backgrounds. Goal 12 calls for the use of "subjective" teacher assessment as a way of balancing information from standardized tests. The use of the word "balance" in the goal implies that standardized tests do not tell the full story. The belief here is that teachers, with their intimate and "subjective" knowledge about students are able to supplement information from standardized tests. Teachers argued that by sharing such subjective information they were better able to make informed judgements about the proper placement of students for the upcoming academic year.

Thus far, it has been argued that the choice of Factor 4 - Focus on Instruction, and six of the school improvement goals within that factor, was influenced by the key supposition of *Active Involvement of Students*. Part of the above discussion focused on the inclusion of the Elements of Instruction as one of CKF's goals for
school improvement. Some of the staff saw CKF's involvement in *The School is the Key* as a logical outgrowth of their involvement with the Elements of Instruction. The following interview segment with one of the school's intermediate teachers illustrates this view.

Linda: It [*The School is the Key*] seemed a logical step for us to move into. We started with Elements of Instruction the year before. People expressed interest in *The School is the Key*, so as a school, it was decided to be done. A number of people went off to workshops, which became the guiding committee for the rest of us with our professional development after school.

Researcher: You say that it was a logical step for you to go into. Why do you say that?

Linda: Well, when we looked at what was available for professional development, (and the staff was very much interested in professional development), of the new programs coming available, we were already using the Elements of Instruction. *The School is the Key*, looking at how to improve the functioning of the school, seemed to be a complementary process, a good following-up step that would complement the Elements of Instruction and move us ahead. So many of the other professional development areas many of us had done, and we're looking for, as a whole, moving the school along, and getting some unity and progression through it.

Don, one of the core committee members, felt that having experience with the Elements gave the group an advantage when they first went to *The School is the Key* institute. He also described how *The School is the Key*, in combination with the Elements, helped the staff to put things in perspective.

I know when we attended that particular workshop [*The School is the Key*] we felt that we had a big advantage because we were involved in the Elements of Instruction. Most of us had attended those workshops so we felt that we already had been nicely involved so that we knew where we were going. We started to see the way things were working out and what was the plan further down the road. I think it opened our eyes a bit and made things more clear that way. (Interview, Don)
Component Two: Active Administrative Leadership and The School is the Key

A number of the teachers at CKF expressed the belief that, of all the factors that go together to make up an effective school, the leadership of the principal was the most important. Nicole, one of the core committee expressed it this way:

When we met originally with the group of six, and we sat down, we talked about every one of the different factors. We all, all of us seemed to agree that the most important difference in any school is the principal. And then things go from there. (Interview, Nicole)

Other teachers expressed similar views as listed below.

I think that strong leadership is what makes the difference. Because after all, that's where all the decision's are made. You go along coasting and if you don't have a strong leader, you're not going to make any progress. That's true in business or anywhere. (Interview, Barbara)

The principal probably plays a dominant role in how the school functions, and the atmosphere. I would say that the principal probably has an eighty percent influence over the school as a whole. I think the principal has the prime role in setting the climate, of getting things to happen. (Interview, Teresa).

I think the principal has a big place in an effective school. You can have wonderful teachers but if you don't have a principal who is effective, then the school won't be effective. (Interview, Lorraine.)

These comments stress the importance of the leadership of the principal. However, it is interesting to note that, of the five factors the staff of CKF wanted to work on, "Educational Leadership" was ranked the lowest in the results of the needs assessment and factor ranking. A possible explanation for this is that the staff at CKF were satisfied with the leadership provided by Christine and that there were other areas that the staff believed were more in need of improvement. Other possible explanations are that staff wanted a broader focus to their improvement efforts. To focus on the leadership in a single principal elementary school would constitute focusing only on the work of one person. Not wanting to focus on a single
person and her role is another possible reason for the low ranking of Educational Leadership in the needs assessment. The potential for conflict and hard feelings that may have arisen from such a focused analysis may have been tactically recognized by the staff, and taken into account when they prioritized their school improvement interests. This explanation is corroborated by Shelly Redding, the district consultant. In her work with a number of schools she noticed that many staffs avoided discussing leadership issues.

In the Institute itself, leadership tended to be an issue that the staff groups steered away from. There were a lot of issues, personal issues and concerns that people didn't want to deal with. (Interview, Shelly)

As described in Chapter Six, in her role as principal of CKF, Christine made a number of decisions that had a direct impact on The School is the Key. One of these was her decision to change the meeting format of the program. In shifting from a format that used monthly core committee meetings to one in which The School is the Key was a part of weekly staff meetings, Christine increased the intensity of the staff's involvement in the school improvement program. Using the new format, school improvement discussions took place weekly, whereas originally they had taken place less often, and had not involved the whole staff.

Another way that Christine influenced the course of school improvement in CKF was through her decision to link some of her principal's goals to The School is the Key. Christine described this decision, and the factors that influenced it.

Christine: I know that for me, when that [The School is the Key] came along, it was right for me, to zero in and put more things in writing and finish off this year, thinking it may be my last year. That's how I felt.

Researcher: So you feel that this being your last year has had some impact on how you've structured it? How you've gone about it?
Christine: Yes. Yes I do. It was a nice package for me to sit down with the assistant superintendent, with my goals, and have it all in place so that whoever comes here, can see what's going on. The staff have ownership, they know. (Interview, Christine)

It is clear from this interview segment that Christine was thinking of the future of CKF at a time when she would no longer be there. For her, one of the purposes of The School is the Key was to help bring the staff together into an organized and ongoing program of staff development. Having a set of school goals, having things "in writing" that a new principal could refer to, and having a school improvement program that the staff have "ownership" in, allowed Christine to bring a logical closure to her principalship at the school.

There were times, however, when this wish to have a program "in place" for whoever takes over, led to tension between the principal and some of the teachers. Several staff believed that at times, Christine was overly concerned with getting through the list of goals and "ticking things off". Several of the staff believed that some of the items from the list required ongoing work and discussion, and that dealing with them was not as simple as discussing them and then crossing them off the list of goals.

Although the conflict was not a major source of disruption to the program, it is hypothesized that the general factors behind the conflict may have broader implications for school improvement beyond the site of CKF. The following paragraphs elaborate on this claim.

In Chapter Six, it was related how Anna, one of the core group, stated that it was difficult for the group to achieve consensus on the interpretation of attributes and their indicators. A similar view was expressed by other teachers. This difficulty in achieving a consensus of opinion continued when staff were trying to decide whether they had actually dealt with, or achieved a goal from the list. For some
staff, the decision to mark a particular goal as completed came too soon. For others, sufficient action had been taken so that they could say they had addressed the problem or issue, and were now ready to move on to another goal. It is apparent, then, that the issue of multiple interpretations of the "same" phenomenon (the problem of meaning), continued to be a difficulty for the staff during the school-based portion of The School is the Key.

Another factor that was relevant to conflict during the implementation of The School is the Key revolved around the differing levels and directions of accountability that existed for teachers and principal. In her role as principal, Christine was operating under a set of constraints that the rest of the staff did not have to worry about in their discussions of school improvement. Christine's intention to have a program in place before leaving at the end of the year gave an additional purpose to her actions regarding school improvement. For Christine, the passage of calendar time in relation to school improvement was a greater worry than it was for other staff. In addition, with the linking of The School is the Key with her principal's goals, an evaluative component crept into the situation. After having linked some of her principal's goals to those in The School is the Key, an additional impetus for accomplishing those goals was added to the situation. As a responsible and efficient principal, Christine wanted to ensure that she accomplished the goals she had developed in conjunction with her area superintendent. For Christine, then, two factors influenced her actions regarding The School is the Key - her superordinate's assessment of her job performance as principal, and her personal goal of wanting to have the program in place before leaving CKF. The rest of the staff did not have these factors as part of their personal agendas and the discrepancy sometimes led to conflict.
It is important to note here that the arrangement Christine made with the area superintendent (using the five factors from the school improvement program to orient her school improvement goals) is spreading throughout the district. In addition, at the district level there has been a move to use the five factors not only as a goal setting structure, but as a framework for principal evaluation. At the time of my withdrawal from the field, the Ocean City School Board was negotiating with the district principal's association about using the five factors as a framework for the evaluation of principals. This scenario holds a number of important implications and questions for school improvement in the district. These implications and questions will be addressed in Chapter Eight.

Component Three: Valuing Time and The School is the Key

In the above section it was mentioned how calendar time was a factor in some of Christine's actions regarding *The School is the Key*. Other evidence collected during the study also showed that a concern with the time press had an effect on CKF's school improvement efforts. Again, a review of the goals contained within the two factors selected for improvement (Focus on Instruction and School Organization) shows that of the twenty-four goals, seven of them contain a direct or indirect reference to time. These goals are listed below.

Factor 2 - School Organization

1. To review general expectations, set priorities (consider feelings of overload expressed by some staff.)

5. To provide more time for evaluating what is implemented.

6. To explore ways to provide more time for staff to communicate, fill out forms etc. (consider a modified day, more volunteers)

10. To consider ways to relieve teachers, especially the teacher-librarian, of routine clerical tasks.
Factor 4 - Focus on Instruction

1. To provide planning time for curriculum coordination.

3. To explore different ways of creating time for peer coaching (i.e. timetable adjustments).

7. To reduce interruptions to instructional time.

(Emphasis added)

As a scarce commodity, time had an impact on the operation of The School is the Key. When Christine changed the meeting format of the program to one in which school improvement became a part of the weekly staff meetings, she did so because of concerns about extra meetings taking up too much time. The time press, in this instance, had a direct effect on the way the program took shape in CKF. When worries about The Fire Song emerged in January of 1988, the focus of the worries was a concern about time. Some staff believed that all the meetings, of which school improvement was a part, were taking up valuable time that was needed for The Fire Song. Christine's decision to suspend meetings until after the production was, in some ways, a time management decision.

Summary of Assertion One

In the above sections it was claimed that three of the key suppositions of the culture of CKF had an effect on The School is the Key program. It was shown that there was a correspondence between the content of the key supposition of Active Involvement of Students and the content of some of the school improvement goals. It was also shown how the administrative actions of the principal, and a concern about time had an effect on the dynamics of the program's implementation.

In the instances described above, the direction of influence in the interaction between school culture and the school improvement project was that of school culture influencing the innovation. However, there is also evidence to support an
assertion that the school improvement program influenced the culture of the school. That assertion, and a discussion of the evidence in support of it, are presented below.

Assertion Two

As a program for school improvement, The School is the Key strengthened two of the key suppositions of the culture of CKF School. Those key suppositions were A Cooperative Ethos and Ongoing Professional Development.

As is the case for Assertion One, the above assertion has several component parts.

Component One: The School is the Key and A Cooperative Ethos.

The first component of Assertion Two is the claim that The School is the Key strengthened the key supposition of A Cooperative Ethos. Though observations during my participant observation at CKF showed the staff to work in a cooperative and collegial manner, several staff members claimed that it was much different in the past. This change in tone was mentioned in Chapter Five, under the theme The Tone of the School. Analysis of the goals listed under Factor 2 - School Organization indicate a possible concern with issues related to collegiality and cooperation. Three of the goals that the staff chose for school improvement directly address the issue of collegial decision-making:

4. To provide more involvement for staff in goal setting and to define goals more clearly.

6. To explore ways to provide more time for staff to communicate, fill out forms etc. (consider a modified day, more volunteers).

7. To develop a process for cooperative staff problem solving (i.e. use of committees, process for decision making at staff meetings, representation of teachers' views).

I have interpreted the inclusion of the above items in CKF's goals for school improvement as an indication of the staff's perceived need to improve their
discussion and decision-making processes. Comments made by several staff members during interviews corroborate this interpretation. In their comments, the teachers described a less cooperative past, and at the same time, credited *The School is the Key* with improving the situation.

When I came [to the school] there was a real need for it. When I went to that first [TSITK] meeting it was like something they really needed because they had all these issues. They broke down into tables, and the tables were just flying. I thought that it was a really, really good session. I think that people were really open and a lot of things were said that had been sort of not said for a long time. And I think that's really important in a staff. (Interview, Lorraine)

Having a chance to talk about how "you" perceive it and have everybody stop and listen to you [was beneficial]. Because traditionally around here, staff meetings have been horrendous....No one would listen. Someone would be speaking, everyone would interrupt, talking over each other....People weren't used to listening to each other....So that was very healthy, that people could say, "From my point of view, I think this..." and everybody else shut up and listened. Because it didn't happen at staff meetings. This was new, it was in a different place, it was a different time, a different format, and different teachers were leading it. (Interview, Sarah)

Our staff committee meetings were not working. There was so much tension and heartache when any concern was raised, and it just wasn't teamwork solving the problem....Some people felt that when people had areas of concern, that they had to feel defensive about it, and that there was blame being put on people when there really wasn't. I think it was just a matter that we didn't have training in how to work as a team, and how to do it in a nonthreatening way....I've seen a big change since we had that little workshop [TSITK] and we identified the needs and we made a commitment to solve them and work on them together. (Interview, Dana)

For these teachers *The School is the Key* had a positive effect on the staff's communication with one another. It is important to note, however, that one of the teachers believed the improved tone of the staff meetings may have been due to a Hawthorne effect stemming from my presence. That is, one teacher thought that my presence at the staff meetings had an effect on the way the staff interacted with one another. Dana expressed that viewpoint this way: "I think having you present at our
staff meetings really changed the nature of the staff meeting and made them more collegial, just because you were there" (Interview).

Dana's comment raises an important issue. The issue is that of researcher impact upon the ecological validity of this study. The issue of researcher "contamination" is one that must be addressed by all those who do interpretive research. Hammersley and Atkinson (1983) state that it is important not only to recognize the reflexive nature of social research, but, if possible, to use the information that subject reactivity provides.

That is, [we must] recognize that we are part of the social world we study. This is not a matter of methodological commitment, it is an existential fact. There is no way in which we can escape the social world in order to study; nor fortunately, is that necessary. We cannot avoid relying on "common-sense" knowledge, nor, often, can we avoid having an effect on the social phenomena we study....Instead of treating reactivity merely as a source of bias, we can exploit it. How people respond to the presence of the researcher may be as informative as how they react to other situations. (p. 14 - 15)

Participants' responses to ethnographers may nevertheless be an important source of information. Data in themselves cannot be valid or invalid; what is at issue are the inferences drawn from them. (p. 191)

What, then, are the inferences that can be drawn from Dana's claim about my presence influencing the staff's collegiality at staff meetings? Although one must admit, (by virtue of Dana having made the comment in the first place), that there must have been some researcher effect on staff interaction, her comment tells us nothing about the extent, or duration of that effect. In an attempt to assess the duration of my influence on the staff's collegiality at staff meetings, I watched for changes in collegiality over time. The rationale behind this approach is the assumption that the staff's initial perceptions of me as a stranger would lead them to act differently toward one another when in my presence. If that is the case, then presumably, as they became comfortable with my presence, there would be a return
to the kind of interaction that took place prior to my arrival. I believe that over
time I lost my "outsider" status among the staff; however, I did not notice a change
over time in the degree of collegiality at staff meetings. The kind of interactions
that took place at staff meetings during June were not noticeably different from
those that took place in November.

I have hypothesized two possible explanations for this. One explanation is that,
despite gaining acceptance by the staff, my presence at staff meetings continued to
influence their collegiality. Another explanation is that the change in collegiality
that Dana reported was due only in part to my presence, and there were other more
powerful factors that also affected the staff’s collegiality, and that those factors did
not diminish over time. Given the different claims made by Sarah and Lorraine,
that *The School is the Key* had a positive effect on staff collegiality, I would argue
that the second of the above two explanations is the stronger of the two. There is
more evidence to support the claim that *The School is the Key* affected staff
collegiality at staff meetings, than there is to support Dana’s lone claim about the
long-term mediating effects of my presence on the staff’s interactions.

**Component Two: The School is the Key and**

**Ongoing Professional Development**

The second component of Assertion Two is the claim that the *The School is the
Key* strengthened the existing key supposition of *Ongoing Professional
Development*. In Assertion One, it was claimed that the school-wide use of the
Elements of Instruction influenced the content of CKF’s school improvement
efforts. However, while the pre-existing use of the Elements had an effect on the
content of the school’s involvement with *The School is the Key*, the school
improvement program was, at the same time, used as a vehicle for the staff to
develop both their use of the Elements, and their commitment to ongoing staff development. This happened in several ways.

One way was through Goal 9 of Factor 4 - "To ensure that all staff members have training in Elements of Instruction". As was mentioned in the discussion of Assertion One, the inclusion of this statement in CKF's goals for school improvement elevated the status of the Elements of Instruction to the point where it became in essence a condition of working at CKF. From this perspective, The School is the Key became a vehicle through which the staff of CKF could ensure the continued existence of two of its key suppositions - Active Involvement of Students, and Ongoing Professional Development. By including in their school improvement plans a goal that ensured continued expertise with the Elements, CKF not only strengthened, but also ensured the continued reproduction of a particular part of its culture. In a sense, what happened with this component of The School is the Key was that an implicit cultural value became an established school goal so that it is now as much a policy as it is a value.

Another way that The School is the Key strengthened the key supposition of Ongoing Professional Development was through Goal 3 of Factor 4 - "To explore different ways of creating time for peer coaching." As was described in Chapter Six, the staff acted on this goal in several ways. Over time, through the regular use of peer coaching, a number of the staff mastered the technique of peer coaching to the point where they believed it was of limited benefit to them. By March of 1988, some staff were expressing frustration with the peer coaching format they were using. (Fieldnotes, p. 166) Those staff members believed that peer coaching had become a stagnant exercise and they were no longer getting any professional growth from the using the technique. As a result, a "second level" workshop on peer coaching was
arranged so that those staff members who felt confident enough to do so, could move to a more sophisticated form of peer coaching - a form that involved more constructive criticism and dialogue between partners.

The movement to a more sophisticated use of peer coaching represents a strengthening of the key supposition of *Ongoing Professional Development*. Continuing to develop their expertise with the techniques of peer coaching allowed the staff to explore with one another, their use of the Elements of Instruction. In this way, *The School is the Key* strengthened CKF's ongoing professional development.

A third way that the CKF's involvement with *The School is the Key* strengthened the key supposition of *Ongoing Professional Development* was through the staff's planning for the 1988 - 89 school year. Toward the end of the school year, during the months of May and June, 1988, Christine and the staff laid out the school's plan for professional development for the forthcoming school year. In bringing closure to her tenure at CKF, Christine stuck to her original plan of having everything "in place" for the principal who took over after she left. One of the things that allowed the principal and her staff to focus on what they wanted to do for the upcoming year, was their list of goals for school improvement. Items that had been put on "hold" for the current year were set up for the next year, as were goals that had not been accomplished despite having worked on them. Workshops were planned for the 1988 - 89 school year, using the list of school improvement goals as a guide. Nearly all of CKF's school-wide professional development for the upcoming year was planned around items stemming from the school's involvement with *The School is the Key*. 
Summary of Assertion Two

In this assertion it was claimed CKF's involvement with The School is the Key resulted in a strengthening of two of the key suppositions of the culture of the school. Part of this claim was made on the basis of teachers' statements that the school improvement workshops had a positive effect on both the collegiality and cooperative decision making in the school. Another part of the claim was made on the basis of my observations regarding the institutionalization of The Elements of Instruction, the continued development of expertise in peer coaching, and the staff's long term planning for the upcoming school year.

Teachers' Conceptions of Improvement and Effectiveness

One of the questions guiding this study was "What are the conceptions of "improvement" and "effectiveness" that are held by teachers who are involved in a program of school improvement?" Before proceeding with the discussion of this question in relation to the data from the research, it is first necessary to make clear what is meant by the term "conception". This study makes use of the distinction between concept and conception described by Daniels and Coombs (1982). Daniels and Coombs make the distinction between a concept and a conception within the context of a discussion about curriculum:

The concept of curriculum is embodied in our ordinary use of the word and can be explicated by conceptual analysis. A conception, on the other hand, is deliberately shaped to play a particular role in theory, research or practice. It must be developed and argued for rather than discovered. (p. 252)

Though this study makes a similar distinction between concept and conception, the term conception, as it is used here, does not imply a construct that has been developed for use in a formal argument or theory. Rather, conception refers to the understandings that teachers have developed from the interplay of lived experience.
with existing understandings. The view taken for this study is that teachers' conceptions of improvement and effectiveness have been developed through what Heidegger refers to as the historicality of consciousness. (Palmer, 1969) Conception, then, is used here to refer to an understanding that is both experientially based and rooted in past understandings. In this way a conception is a more complex cognitive structure than a simple concept, but is not as elaborate as a deliberately shaped entity designed for use in a formal argument or theory. The following sections discuss teachers' conceptions of improvement.

**Conceptions of School Improvement**

The teachers' conceptions of improvement that are discussed in this section are derived from their experiences with their school's involvement with a program of school improvement. Two views were predominant among the staff's conceptions of the improvement experience. The first of these was the view that *The School is the Key* was a useful experience because it had provided the staff with a forum for discussion. This effect of the school improvement program on the culture of CKF was described in the above section, *The School is the Key and Ongoing Professional Development*. The second view predominant in the staff's conceptions of improvement was the idea that there had been no radical change in CKF as a result of *The School is the Key*. Staff members believed that what had happened instead, was that existing professional development activities were both validated and brought into focus by the school improvement program. In their interviews, teachers described the program as a kind of "framework" and as an "umbrella". The following interview excerpts illustrate this view of the program.

The more we looked at it, the more we found that we were already doing a lot of these things because we felt the need to do it. And all this did was kind of say, "Hey! We're not the only ones who think we should do this, look at *The School is the Key*. Research says "This, this, and this." It just...
kind of gave us, I think we've always said, an umbrella, for a lot of things we were already doing. It was really nothing new to us. (Interview, Anna)

The academic areas we had already started looking at, and they fit very nicely into some of the subsections of *The School is the Key* when we used that framework to pull it together at our final workshop....The framework of *The School is the Key* fit very nicely. And also, having the framework made you clearly identify what else was happening in what you were doing, and what else you needed to work on, because it was so clear in identification of the elements of improved schools. (Interview, Linda).

That was a very worthwhile day [the Country Club Session]....Everyone felt really good about that and that's when we started to break it down. Which ones do we want to concentrate on? Which ones do we think probably needed the most emphasis? I think that's when we realized we were obviously doing a really good job. And this made us feel good, because we could see where we were going, and we could see that the school is the key, and these factors were there. (Interview, Don).

In the above quotations, the teachers expressed the view that as a school staff, they found they were already doing a number of the things that were identified in the research as characteristics of improved schools. This was not simply a matter of happenstance. As designed by the program developers, *The School is the Key* workshops were set up so that school staffs would begin their school improvement efforts by focussing on the positive. The rationale behind this approach was that schools would build from existing strengths, and through a discussion of those strengths, needs and weaknesses would also emerge.

For three of the staff, the discussions of the five factors were tedious and boring. As described in Chapter Six, Maria (as one of the core group) believed that a lot of her time was wasted at the early workshops, and she asked not to be included in presenting the after-school follow-up workshops. During interviews, two other teachers expressed frustration with parts of the program. For Barbara, the contrast of the Elements of Instruction to *The School is the Key* made the latter pale.

The workshop, the book, I think is incredibly boring, just incredibly, whereas the Elements is very exciting. But if you have an understanding of the Elements of Instruction, and you've got a staff that's working
together, *The School is the Key* seems to just fall into place. (Interview, Barbara)

It is interesting to note that though she found it boring, Barbara also expressed the view that *The School is the Key* could "just fall into place" around what the school was doing. Later in the interview, Barbara also referred to the program as a way of bringing existing ideas to a focus. There was, for Barbara, a utility to the improvement program, despite a less than satisfying experience with some of the process. A similar view of the program was expressed by Sarah in her descriptions of the after-school workshops. For Sarah, much of the tedium came from the detailed discussions of the attributes and indicators of each of the five factors. Failure to reach a consensus in some of the discussions, and the nature of the program's language frustrated Sarah. At the same time, however, she recognized the workshop's structure as necessary for productive discussion:

It was boring. It was really deadly, because in some ways we were just paying lip service. We were saying, "Well, do we do this? Well God! I mean do we do this?" It's so hard to really think do we or don't we. People were tired, and reading that educational jargon just turns me so off. And yet, I know they have to have some structure, because if it hadn't, it would have been chaos. So I imagine this was deliberately so incredibly structured and impersonal so that we could deal with it. Because you can't have twenty people sit around saying, "Well I think this...", because it wouldn't get anywhere. (Interview, Sarah)

School Improvement and the Potential for Conflict

Contained in Sarah's quotation is yet another reference to the difficulty the staff had in reaching a consensus about certain indicators and attributes of an effective school. It should not be a surprise that the staff of CKF had difficulty in arriving at a common interpretation of some of the indicators and attributes. Reflecting on school and classroom practice can, at a certain level, involve a critical reconstruction of past experience. Such reconstruction involves bringing a judgemental frame to the issue one is reflecting upon. Thus, when in the context of a
discussion of their school practices, Sarah asks, "I mean, do we do this?" or when Anna says, "Now just a minute. On the one hand you can say we are doing that, but....", these teachers are involved in making judgements about practice. Yet, because of the nature of teaching, judgements about practice and the standards upon which those judgements are based, are often individual and personal. The standards one uses in reflective judgements are often derived more from individual experience than any sort of collective action. Staff discussions of school improvement in which teachers focus on specific issues involve the interaction of a multiplicity of individual judgements, all of which are based on a wide range of personal standards.

Given such a situation of value pluralism, the potential for conflict in situations of school improvement is very high. Discussions of work-related practices and the philosophies that guide one's actions appear neutral only to the external and uninformed observer. For the teachers who are involved in such discussions, the presentation of an opinion is, in some ways, a baring of the self. In such a group setting, the presentation of an opinion can represent the announcement of a particular value stance; it is an uncovering of the standards upon which decisions about personal practice are made. Christine and Anna both recognized the potential for conflict that was contained in the school improvement program.

I think some of the staff have been threatened because certain areas have come up that they've had to deal with. Everybody could be, can be threatened and I think there have been one or two who have been. (Interview, Christine)

I had great hesitation last April when we went and we were going to look at two of them [the five factors] in great detail. Because, do we want to talk about them superficially, or do we want to get down to the nitty gritty? Because, no matter what, someone's feelings are going to get hurt. And they did, you know? (Interview, Anna)
If participation in school improvement involves an active reflection on teaching and schooling practices, and on the values that guide them, then involvement in a process of change involves a movement away from existing personal values and modes of existence into new and untried experiences. This movement away from established and comfortable practices toward things untried can be a painful experience for teachers. In her interview, Sarah spoke of the difficulties that change can present to teachers:

It's hard to make change. It is not an easy thing. It would be great if more people knew exactly how to effect change in a really positive way without resentment, without too much personal pain. It's like pride...because how can you make change in something like teaching, which is SO personal? So much of your ego is out on the line whenever you stand up in front of a group. It has to be done without damaging the fragile ego too radically. You have to think of the human being. You want a human being left at the end of it. It's not easy. (Interview, Sarah.)

For school improvement, then, there is a problem inherent in the conjoint influence of a natural resistance to change, and situations of value pluralism in discussions of school and classroom practices. This problem becomes all the more crucial in light of Fullan's claim that "the key to school improvement is to recognize that individual meaning is the central issue" (Fullan 1982, p. 295). What, then, is the solution to situations in which consensus is not always attainable, and there is a fear not only of change, but also of exposing one's self too deeply?

I would argue that, in the case of CKF, the solution was to retreat to the cultural "bedrock" of the school. As has been shown, much of the school's involvement with The School is the Key was influenced by three of the commonly held key suppositions. By drawing upon the cultural bedrock of the school, the staff were able to build upon previously developed, shared understandings. Potentially divisive issues resulting from a situation of value pluralism were set aside and not dealt with. In response to a question about how the staff dealt with controversial
and conflict laden issues during the improvement process, Anna described what was done.

We haven't tackled any of those. No, the change is that...[pauses]...you see, we have kind of picked and chosen exactly what things we want to deal with; what things we can deal with, what things we might be able to deal with effectively. And that's why we chose the ones we did. [Interview, Anna].

What I am claiming here is that the culture of CKF acted as a conserving mechanism during the process of school improvement. As a shared set of values and beliefs, the culture of CKF provided the staff with a common ground upon which to build their school improvement efforts. In a potentially conflict-laden situation, the shared assumptions that constitute the culture of CKF provided the staff with a safe foundation upon which to build their school improvement efforts. It will be remembered that, while the culture of CKF acted as both a stabilizing and an orienting device for CKF's improvement efforts, at the same time involvement in The School is the Key strengthened several of the elements of the culture of CKF - those being the key suppositions of A Cooperative Ethos, and Ongoing Professional Development. It is apparent, then, that the interaction between the culture of the school and the school improvement program had both a reciprocal and stabilizing nature.

Teacher's Conceptions of Effectiveness

Another of the research questions guiding this study was aimed at discovering teachers' conceptions of effectiveness. As part of the formal interview, teachers were asked about what "effectiveness" meant to them within the context of schooling and education. Teachers were asked, "What, for you, constitutes an effective school?". Although the teachers' responses to this question, were, like their discussions of improvement, also experientially based, unlike discussions of
school improvement, there was little linking of the term "effectiveness" to their experiences with *The School is the Key*.

To facilitate the analysis of the data on this topic, teachers' responses to the interview question were listed and then categorized. The various categories of teachers' responses were developed from the comments themselves. That is, similar statements were clustered together and assigned a category name which described the common sentiment of all the comments within each particular group. Using this method of categorization, thirty-three responses to the question were grouped into eight different categories. There were thirty-three responses because some of the teachers listed a number of considerations in their answers to the question. The response categories and the number of responses in each are listed below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Cooperative ethos among staff members.</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) The school having set goals and a common purpose.</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) School as a positive experience for students.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) School as a positive experience for teachers.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) High teacher expectations for students.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Student academic achievement.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Education as preparing students for participation in society.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) The principal as educational leader.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In order to arrive at a composite picture of the conception of an effective school held by the CKF staff, these eight categories have been further clustered into three broad groupings. Each of the above categories relates to one of the following groupings: 1) Existential concerns about school life, 2) Purposes of education, and 3) Focusing mechanisms. These three groups are discussed below.
Existential Concerns About School Life

Nearly one-half (14/33) of the teachers' responses were concerned with the kind of personal and social interactions that teachers and students experience as part of school life. Included in this group were categories 1, 3 and 4: (Cooperative ethos among school staff, School as a positive experience for students, and School as a positive experience for teachers). The importance of working together as a staff was the most commonly expressed sentiment. One teacher linked working with other teachers to a feeling of "belonging" to a school staff, and described how a lack of cooperation among staff members can lead to feelings of alienation.

I think one of the most important things for me is to be able to work with people around me. I can't operate when people are trying to stab me in the back, or people don't cooperate with me, or they don't let me cooperate with them. I think I can get along with almost anybody, and I like people. I like working with people and I find it very difficult if there were people on the staff....Like when I worked at ----- School I felt that I never belonged to that staff. I felt like a total stranger for the whole year I was there and I could hardly wait to get out of there. I have not been on many staffs, but I think the staffs I have been on have been the kinds of people I can get along with. You don't have to be crazy about everybody, but I really like working with different teachers. (Interview, Maria)

For some teachers, working together took the form of sharing materials, ideas and classroom activities. However, in addition to describing the importance of working together on curriculum, teachers also saw it as important to work cooperatively on less tangible elements of school life. The importance of working together to solve "problems", and working together to develop a common perspective toward the school's students were also expressed in the interviews. Anna described the importance of "openness" and the need for a shared vision of the school.

[An effective school is one where] there is an openness amongst the staff. Sharing - none of this behind closed doors stuff where I develop my thing and you develop yours. It's a lot of talking.....I've heard many people say "Those are my kids." No they're not! They're OUR kids. I just happen to have that group right now. But they're your kids just as much, so if you see them in the hall and they are doing something, please, you talk to
those kids because they are yours. They are not mine, they are OUR kids. I think unless we have that feeling of OUR kids at this school, or OUR kids at whatever school....as soon as you have that MY class, mine, you have the individual little boxes and the school is no longer effective. (Anna)

The above two quotations reflect a concern with overcoming what Lortie (1976) has called the isolation of teaching that derives from what Fetman-Nemser and Flodin (1986) refer to as the cellular structure of schools. For Ann, an effective school is one which is able to avoid the "individual little boxes" through openness and sharing among staff. For Maria, working cooperatively with other teachers provides a feeling of belonging and a feeling of being able to work comfortably as a part of a school's staff.

The other categories grouped under existential concerns about school life were those that described the importance of school as a positive experience. Teachers were concerned about the quality of school life for their students and themselves. The following interview segments indicate the way these ideas were expressed by several of the teachers.

[An effective school is] happy people within the school, both children and teachers. And positive thinking, not negativism, are effective schools. Where a kid is going to look back and say "I went to that school. That was a great place to be because it was positive, positive learning." Which is what my job is, trying to be positive and trying to produce something that the kids can look back on and say, "Boy, was that ever a neat experience". (Interview, Barbara)

The health of the school is so important....warm, happy, nice feeling tone. (Interview, Nicole)

The tone of the school being a place where students want to come. The feeling of the students that they're happy to get there. That they're excited about what they're learning about and that the parents are supportive of what's' going on in the school. (Interview, Linda)

Linda's comment includes the idea that it is important for parents to support what is going on in the school. The importance of supporting teachers in what they do was recognized and expressed by Christine Brown. She spoke of the importance of
having a staff who "feel good about themselves". "There has to be a good feeling, a positive feeling on the part of the staff that they are recognized as being good teachers....Lots of positive feedback from me and others."

It appears, then, that for many of the teachers at CKF an important component of an effective school is the quality of the lived experiences that constitute school life. As places of employment, elementary schools have a kind of structural isolation built into them. Lack of collegial interaction and a subsequent alienation can easily arise in such settings. As public servants, teachers occasionally face criticism from parents, elected officials and the mass media. The self-doubt that usually accompanies situations of confrontation and criticism can lead to a need for positive recognition of the importance of teachers' work. It should not be surprising, then, that, in their descriptions of effective schools, teachers include factors that mitigate the isolation, alienation, and insecurity that can sometimes characterize teaching. Effective schools, from this perspective, are schools that strengthen existing commonalities through the development of open and flexible working relationships, and instill positive feelings among students and staff.

The Purposes of Education

Factors grouped together under the label of The Purposes of Education consist of comments categorized as Category 6 (Student academic achievement), and Category 7 (Education as preparing students for participation in society). Though student achievement was a concern for those teachers who were interviewed, normative measures of student achievement were sometimes seen as being of limited value. Linda spoke of the need to recognize the individual starting points of students when talking about "effectiveness".
There is no one effectiveness. For some students effectiveness is they reach a very high academic level, and for others, they're just happier about themselves as a person and can maybe then start to make a small academic gain. Each of the students are individuals and they also have so many different starting points. There can't be one indication of effectiveness which will suit for all of them.

A common response to the recognition of individual pupil differences was the use of individualized programs in many of the classrooms. All of the primary teachers at the school used individualized programs of reading instruction rather than the more standard basal reader programs. Mathematics instruction was similarly modified to allow for individual differences in students. Achievement, then, was an important factor, but teachers also recognized the need to adapt curricula to the interests and abilities of the students, and to avoid "setting children up for failure" (Nicole).

In addition to the preparation of academically competent students, several teachers spoke about the purposes of education in a much broader context. Don, for example, believed that in an effective school, in addition to "making sure that what is learned is well learned, you want the school to be producing more independent people who have the work habits that allow them to handle whatever problem comes along."

Preparing students to deal with life outside the classroom was also a concern for Barbara, as illustrated in the following interview segment.

Barbara: Not only do you have to be academically well prepared, but I think you have to be socially well prepared.

Researcher: "Being socially well prepared." What does that encompass?

Barbara: Dealing with people on a one-to-one. The real world is not one to thirty-five. The real world is one-to-one, and I think people have to have confidence and that's all positive reinforcement. And if we can get to a sort of positive approach to everything we do in our goals, then you are going to develop little characters who are going to be positive people.
For Lesley, the purpose of her work as a teacher is to prepare students for lifelong learning. She describes the distinction she makes between education and teaching, and the kind of pedagogical relationship she believes parents and teachers should enter into with children.

Education is what I think the schools are trying to do. We are not trying to teach them all sorts of bits of information. We're trying to teach them how to find out that information for themselves; how to discover what their own abilities and talents are and give them the confidence, and the social skills, and the academic skills to get out there and really get on with it when we are not here to stand over them and help them along. It's like, Mother isn't there to pick up your clothes, but Mother is there to help you learn how to pick up your clothes. And that's what I think teachers are: to help you to learn to take care of yourself. Not to take care of them. I don't consider myself as being here to take care of the kids. I'm here to teach them to take care of their own self, and to have the confidence to do it.

For these teachers, then, schooling in basic skills is only part of the purposes they envisage for education. For these teachers, education should prepare students to function in society as confident individuals who are capable of taking care of themselves. From this perspective, an effective school is one that prepares students for a confident independence, and imparts in students the social skills necessary for successful interaction within our larger culture.

**Focusing Mechanisms**

Category 2 (The school having set goals and a common purpose), Category 5 (High teacher expectations for students) and Category 8 (The principal as educational leader) are grouped together under the label "Focusing Mechanisms". As the term implies, these factors encompass both direction (focus) and action (mechanism). These components of teachers' conceptions of an effective school describe the means that are used to bring about desired end states (i.e. academic achievement, cooperative ethos, positive atmosphere) that are also, for them, part of an effective
school. Used in this sense, focusing mechanisms are elements of an effective school that direct action toward particular ends.

In addition to directing action, focusing mechanisms also involve teacher judgements about expectations and standards. These may be shared standards and expectations, or they may be personal, individual ones. For example, when teachers spoke about expectations for students, there was considerable variation in the kind of expectations they held. Examples of teacher's comments about expectations for students ranged from "high expectations" (with "high" not being defined), to "the expectation that the student will sit down and actually complete the work". Teacher expectations, then, - expecting students to complete work, expecting work of a high calibre - act as a focusing mechanism to bring about academic achievement.

Just as there was a linkage between academic achievement and the expectations they hold for students, the expectations that some teachers held for the principal were linked to other elements of their conceptions of an effective school. That is, while teachers felt that a cooperative staff and a positive working atmosphere were important components of an effective school, at the same time, they saw the principal as being instrumental in ensuring that cooperation and positive tone existed. Here, the principal was regarded as a focusing mechanism.

The third "focusing mechanism" is a concern with the school having a common purpose and a set of goals. Teachers felt that to be effective, a school must have a set of goals that can serve as a guide when the staff is planning their educational program.

From this perspective then, an effective school is one that has in place, mechanisms that act to bring about desired end states. In this school, many of the teachers saw the leadership of the principal as very important in the creation of an
effective school. Another important factor as expressed by teachers was the establishment of a common set of goals and priorities for the school. And finally, teacher expectations for students were also seen as important in bringing about an effective school.

Conceptions of Effectiveness as a Reflection of School Culture

Viewed together, there is considerable overlap between the components of teachers' conceptions of an effective school and what I have identified as the five key suppositions of the culture of CKF. For the sake of comparison, the two lists are presented below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component's of Teachers' Conceptions of Effectiveness</th>
<th>Key Suppositions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Cooperative ethos among staff members.</td>
<td>Cooperative ethos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) The school having set goals and a common purpose.</td>
<td>Ongoing professional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) School as a positive experience for students.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4) High teacher expectations for students.</td>
<td>Active involvement of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Education as preparing students for participation in society.</td>
<td>Valuing time.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6) Student academic achievement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7) School as a positive experience for teachers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) The principal as educational leader.</td>
<td>Active administrative leadership.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This overlap between elements of the culture of CKF and elements of the teachers' conceptions of an effective school is understandable. "Culture", for the purposes of this study, has been defined as a commonly held set of shared beliefs and values.
Values have been defined as basic ideals for which people consider it worthwhile to strive. When teachers describe an effective school, they are also expressing their version of some form of an idealized state of affairs. That the same ideals (values) contained in my description of the culture of CKF, are also contained in teachers' conceptions of an effective school, is evidence of a kind of triangulation. This data-source triangulation indicates that there is a consistency between the values that teachers' express verbally, and the values they display in their teaching practices and actions within the school.

Conceptions of Effectiveness as a Reflection of School Improvement

Earlier in this chapter I discussed the interaction of the culture of CKF and *The School is the Key*. In those sections the claim was made that there was a noticeable interaction between the culture of the school and the school improvement program. It was argued that the culture of CKF not only influenced the content of the staff's school improvement initiatives, but that the culture also acted as a stabilizing influence in a change situation that held the potential for conflict. It was also noted, however, that through its interaction with the school improvement program, elements of the culture of CKF were strengthened. The elements that were strengthened were the key suppositions of *Ongoing Professional Development* and *A Cooperative Ethos*.

In consideration of the overlap between some of the key suppositions of the culture of the school and elements of teachers' conceptions of an effective school, it is important to consider whether there was also an interplay between teachers' conceptions of effectiveness and *The School is the Key*. In this regard, two questions may be asked. The first is "Has an exposure to the school effectiveness materials contained in *The School is the Key* influenced teachers' conceptions of an effective
school?". The second question is logically dependent on the answer to the first one. If the answer to the first question is "yes", the second question must be "In what ways has The School is the Key influenced teachers' conceptions of an effective school?"

There is not enough evidence in the data itself to support the claim that the school improvement experience influenced teachers' conceptions of effectiveness to the same extent that it influenced the culture of the school. However, on the basis of argument by analogy, I would argue that The School is the Key did influence two components of teachers' conceptions of an effective school. Those two components were 1) a valuing of a cooperative ethos among the staff, and 2) a belief in the importance of having set goals and a common purpose. Earlier, it was claimed that the improvement experience had strengthened the key suppositions of A Cooperative Ethos and Ongoing Professional Development. It is possible that the belief in the importance of cooperation that the staff spoke of in their descriptions of an effective school could have developed as a result of their experiences with The School is the Key. The need for cooperative interaction could have been highlighted by the difficulties the staff had in achieving consensus in their school improvement discussions.

The second component of teachers' conceptions of an effective school that may have been influenced by The School is the Key is the belief that it is important for a school to have set goals and a common purpose. Having set goals and a common purpose is in some ways analogous to the key supposition of Ongoing Professional Development that was strengthened through its interaction with The School is the Key. The reinforcement and institutionalization of the school-wide use of the Elements and the development of a scope and sequence for several subjects are
examples of the school having set goals and a common purpose. In addition, it will be remembered that the staff referred to the ranked results from the school's needs assessment as the school's "goals" for school improvement.

It is possible then, that these two components of teachers' conceptions of an effective school - the valuing of a cooperative ethos, and the belief in the importance of having set goals and a common purpose - have been influenced by the school's involvement with *The School is the Key*. The word "influenced" is meant to imply only a possible strengthening of already existing components. It is not meant to imply that these two components of teachers' conceptions of effectiveness emerged solely as a result of the school's involvement with a school improvement program.

**Summary of Chapter Seven**

This chapter presented a discussion of the interaction between the culture of CKF School and *The School is the Key*. Two assertions were made about the nature of that interaction. In Assertion One it was claimed that the form and content of the school improvement program was affected by three of the key suppositions of CKF. The key suppositions affecting the school improvement program were *Active Involvement of Students, Active Administrative Leadership,* and *Valuing Time*. In Assertion Two it was claimed that *The School is the Key* strengthened two of the key suppositions of the culture of CKF. Those were *A Cooperative Ethos* and *Ongoing Professional Development*.

In a discussion of teachers' conceptions of improvement, the improvement process was variously described as worthwhile, boring, and containing the potential for conflict. It was argued that within a potentially conflict-laden situation, the culture of CKF acted as a stabilizing force that provided the staff with common ground upon which to build their discussions of school improvement.
Finally, in a discussion of teachers' conceptions of an effective school, it was postulated that two components of teachers' conceptions of effectiveness could have been influenced by the staff's involvement with *The School is the Key*. Those components were the valuing of a cooperative ethos and a belief in the importance of having set goals and a common purpose.
CHAPTER EIGHT

Implications of the Findings

Researchers who conduct case study or ethnographic research in education are faced with an important challenge. Good research must do more than recount the events that took place during the period of investigation. To be useful, the significance of the research findings must be made explicit. In addition, the findings must be linked to the larger genre of which the research topic is a part. In short, as part of the research report, the implications of the findings must be discussed. Failure to discuss the implications of the findings severely limits the usefulness of the research. Goetz and LeCompte (1984) describe the significance of reporting the implications of a study.

The implications of a study indicate how the research is useful beyond an intriguing analysis of a unique case....It is difficult to respond to the question "So what?". However, any study is weakened if the researcher cannot answer that question. (p. 195, 197)

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the implications of the findings of this study and highlight the significance they hold for further work in the area of school improvement. This chapter is organized around four sections. They are: 1) Factors influencing school improvement, 2) The influence of school improvement on the school, 3) The improvement experience, and 4) Beyond the site of the study. Within each section, the findings of the study are discussed in terms of the broader literature on school improvement, and where applicable, suggestions for further research are presented.

Factors Influencing School Improvement

The findings of this study indicate that during the school's involvement with a school improvement program, the form and operation of the program were influenced by several of the key suppositions of the culture of the school. The
significance of this finding is that it can contribute to the ongoing debate of fidelity vs. mutual adaptation. The findings of the study indicate that aspects of both forms of implementation were present in the school's interaction with the school improvement program. The influence of the culture of the school on *The School is the Key* is evidence of a form of mutual adaptation. However, in the school's prior involvement with The Elements of Instruction, most of the use of that program could be characterized as fidelity implementation.

The existence of both fidelity and mutual adaptation forms of implementation in the setting of this study provides support for Werner's assertion (personal communication, August 1987) that the nature of the innovation often determines the kind of implementation that occurs. Werner's claim is that open-ended, broadly defined change initiatives are usually implemented in a mutual-adaptation format, and that the more programmatic, practice-oriented kinds of innovations that have a proven track record of success, are usually implemented in a fidelity format. Fidelity implementation was certainly the case for The Elements of Instruction in which the majority of the teachers used the innovation in ways prescribed by the workshop presenters.

Grimmett (1987, p.110) has noted that despite some differences, both the fidelity and mutual adaptation approaches to school improvement share a number of features. Grimmett argues that the particular needs and context of a setting are important considerations in determining which approach will be more beneficial. I agree with Grimmett on this, and take his point further, arguing that an understanding of the culture of the school would allow change agents to preselect innovations on the basis of whether or not the innovation is likely to fit with existing cultural values. It will be remembered that in Chapter Five, I argued that
one of the reasons The Elements of Instruction was so widely accepted in CKF was that there was a "value-fit" between the innovation and existing values and beliefs about the importance of involving the child in the learning situation. Change agents who are aware of existing cultural values in a school are in a good position to determine the applicability of an innovation for the setting.

The existence of both fidelity and mutual adaptation forms of implementation in a single site has an important implication for those who manage change. Through careful analysis of the nature of the innovation, change agents can develop reasonable and realistic expectations for the implementation of change initiatives. Change initiatives that have a logical fit with the values of the school, and are characterized by past records of fidelity implementation are likely to be implemented more quickly than innovations that take root through a process of mutual adaptation. In light of this, change agents should consider using both types of approaches to school improvement. The "quick" results that teachers see from innovations that lend themselves to fidelity implementation can serve as the boost that staffs often need before embarking on adaptive change efforts that involve more prolonged and slow moving attempts at change.

Another finding of this study was that the actions of the principal had an influence on the way the school improvement program took shape within the school. This finding is not in itself new. In a recent review of school improvement research, Cohen (1987, p. 483) states that "There is near universal agreement among researchers and educators alike regarding the importance of instructional leadership for school effectiveness."

This study's findings support that view and, at the same time, point to several new directions for research in the area of leadership effects on school effectiveness and
school improvement. One of these is the impact that changes in leadership have on established programs of school improvement. In this study it was described how the principal's impending transfer brought a particular focus to her vision of what she wanted to accomplish before leaving the school. Through a concerted effort, the principal and the staff established an ongoing program of school improvement for CKF. It remains to be seen what directions that program will take when a new principal assumes the leadership of the school. Little research has been done on the issue of succession in school leadership as it relates to school improvement, and how visions of improvement are (or are not) transferred from one school principal to another. Given the pivotal status that principals play in much of the school's program, the issues of succession, and transfer of "visions for improvement" warrant further investigation.

The other new direction for research suggested by this study relates to the impact of external administrative forces on the actions of principals and school staffs who are involved in school improvement. Conventional wisdom in school reform advances the idea that the school is, or should be, the basic unit of educational change. (viz., Goodlad, 1984, p. 31) Although this is an often stated ideal, evidence from this study indicates that schools are not entirely autonomous when it comes to choosing directions for change. With its origins in 1986, The School is the Key drew upon the idea that the school is the basic unit of change. However, as was mentioned in Chapter Seven, by 1988, two years after the inception of The School is the Key, there appeared to be a movement toward linking the "five factors" of school improvement with the district's assessment framework for principals. One of the outcomes of such an arrangement would be more direct accountability of principals regarding their school's activities in the area of school improvement. Whether such
increased accountability would be an intended outcome of using the "five factors" is not clear. It remains to be seen whether elements of the school improvement framework will, in fact, be used in Ocean City School District's assessment framework for principals. However, if such an arrangement does come into being, it would be in keeping with Cohen's observation that much of the recent work in school reform has tended to end up centralizing authority, despite efforts to achieve the opposite.

It should be noted that while in principle it is widely agreed that the school is the key unit of reform, in practice much of the recent wave of educational reform policies appears further to centralize authority at the state or local district level and correspondingly to reduce latitude for educators in individual school buildings. (Cohen, 1987, p. 476)

The possible emergence of a shift from what was initially a school-based program of school improvement to a program that has district-wide impact through the assessment of principals, is a tentative confirmation of Cohen's claim. Further study of the dynamics of this impending policy shift in Ocean City School District would provide insights into the ways in which research findings about school effectiveness become translated and inscribed across an entire school district.

Time was another component of the culture of the school that had an influence on the school's interaction with the school improvement program. Teacher's concerns with the time press led them to focus on consideration of time-related issues as part of the substantive content of their goals for school improvement. The time press also had an impact on the way the school improvement program itself was organized within the school, and on the rate at which the improvement efforts took place. As a limited resource, time had a considerable impact on The School is the Key. This finding is not a new one. Sarason (1982), Fullan (1982) and Werner (1988) have all written about the problem of time and educational change. In the context of
such earlier work, the findings of this study represent support for their claim that
time is one of central issues of educational change.

The Influence of School Improvement on the Culture of the School

One of the findings of this study was that *The School is the Key* strengthened two
of the key suppositions of the culture of CKF. As described in Chapter Seven this
happened through a) the inclusion of items related to collegiality, cooperation and
professional development in the school's goals for school improvement and b) the
improvement process itself.

This finding is particularly important because it corroborates Little's (1981)
finding that programs of staff development often succeeded when norms of
"collegiality" and "continuous improvement" existed in the school. It suggests that
school improvement is more likely to occur in schools whose cultures consist of key
suppositions about ongoing professional development and cooperation. The
strengthening of the key suppositions of a cooperative ethos and ongoing
professional development can be interpreted as a positive outcome of CKF's
involvement with *The School is the Key*. That such a strengthening did occur is
significant. It is significant because it provides evidence that, through
participation in programs such as *The School is the Key*, schools can develop in key
areas already identified in the research literature as central to long term
improvement. That the change, in this case, took place in the areas of collegiality
and ongoing professional development is also particularly heartening in light of
Lortie's (1975, p. 96) and Goodlad's (1984, p. 187) claims that teacher isolation from
colleagues is a serious problem for schools.

It is important to note here, that a number of positive changes in the daily
operation of CKF School came about through the school's involvement with *The
Such things as the development of scope and sequence in content areas, the purchasing of new books for the library, the emergence of a policy on introducing new students to the school, and the further development of peer coaching skills all had an impact on the operation of the school. It is easy to lose sight of the dailiness of the school experience when one engages in broad theorizing from a cultural perspective. Yet, the substance of that dailiness is the very material upon which such theorizing is built. There was, then, in addition to an impact on the culture of the school, an impact at the level of concrete operations. That is, *The School is the Key* had an observable impact on the educational programs, policies, and practices of CKF School. Although this study indicated that school improvement is indeed possible, further research in this area is needed. Specifically, a study that looks at a school whose culture did not have embedded assumptions of ongoing professional development and cooperation and communication would yield insights into the variable effects that school culture can have on attempts at school improvement.

**The Improvement Experience**

In examining teacher's perceptions of the workshops that launched the school on their program of school improvement, several things became apparent. One was that for some of the teachers, the workshops were boring. Though this was not a view expressed by the majority of teachers, its existence does hold implications for programs of school improvement. For any change initiative (including school improvement programs) to have a significant and lasting impact, it must be seen as relevant by those who experience it. Providing material that will address the multiple, subjective realities of all the participants in a program presents a serious challenge to program developers. It is possible that those who found *The School is*
boring found little linkage between the elements of the program and their own everyday experiences as a teacher.

There was also a concern on the part of some teachers that the ideas expressed in the workshop materials relied too much on educational "jargon". That some teachers should use the word "jargon" to describe the language of the program, tells us several things. As a concept, "jargon" is used in everyday language to describe language that is overly technical and difficult to understand. As an analytic construct, "jargon" is used by social scientists as one of the criterial attributes of a subculture. (cf. Dacey, 1979; Brake, 1980; and Partridge 1973). The fact that teachers have described the language of The School is the Key as "jargon" may indicate that those teachers experienced the school improvement program as a temporary immersion into an educational subculture that was different from their own. If one considers the origins of the program - the research base upon which it draws, and the milieu in which it was developed - it is conceivable that The School is the Key could contain language and concepts that have imprecise or obscure meanings for those whose life-worlds revolve around the classroom.

The finding that some teachers were frustrated by the language of the school improvement program has an implication for developers of such programs. Language that teachers experience as "jargon" is not likely to carry much meaning for those teachers, nor is it likely to have an impact on changing their subjective realities. Therefore, it is important for developers of school improvement programs to be aware of the fact that language which is commonplace and perfectly clear in meaning to them, may not have a commonly held or universal meaning within broader educational realms. One way of dealing with this problem of meaning would be to "field test" the language that is to be used in the improvement
programs. In this way, terms, concepts, and ideas that appear problematic to the people who will be using the program could be re-stated in ways that make the intended meanings more clear.

It was also noted in Chapter Seven that the problem of meaning surfaced in staff discussions of the various attributes and indicators of an effective school. It was argued that difficulty in achieving consensus was the result of a situation of value pluralism that became apparent to the staff in their discussion of certain issues. It was also argued that the response to the emergence of such potentially conflict-filled situations was a retreat to the cultural bedrock of the school. That is, the staff focused their achievement efforts around factors about which there was already a consensus. There are several implications for school improvement programs that can be drawn from this finding regarding the problem of meaning.

The first implication is that as a process that involves discussion and dialogue about practice, school improvement holds the potential for conflict. When personal values and standards are expressed, they are also exposed. The personal nature of teaching practices requires that honest discussion of individual practices be built upon a willingness to share, and an acceptance of differences of opinion on the part of all those who engage in the discussion. School improvement programs should therefore include some component that would provide school staffs with a knowledge of how to deal with situations characterized by conflicting values and strong differences of opinion. School staffs that are able to work their way through such situations can then go beyond the safety net of core cultural values in their discussions of school improvement.

There is another, more positive implication for school improvement that can be drawn from the finding that there existed a problem of meaning. Though school
Improvement programs have the potential to bring about conflict, they also have the potential to bring about reflection on practice. Critical reflection, in the form of the reconstruction of experience is advocated by many researchers as an important means of professional growth for teachers. There is a large body of research literature that links reflection on practice with teacher's professional development. Evidence from this study indicates that a school improvement program can, through discussions, bring about a kind of reflection on practice both at the school and individual level. Further research in this area could examine the potential contributions that extant practices in school improvement and teacher reflection could make to one another.

Beyond the site of the study

Thus far, the discussion in this chapter has focused on specific implications and suggestions for research that stem directly from the findings of the study. This final section explores some of the more speculative aspects of the relationship between school improvement and the culture of the school. The purpose of this section is to look beyond the specific site of CKF School in order to place the findings of this study in the broader context of the relationship between school culture and school improvement.

As has been argued earlier, the nature of the evolving relationship between school culture and the school improvement program was characterized by a reciprocal interaction between the two. It follows from this that in any given situation of school improvement, the nature of both the school improvement program and the culture of the school will have an impact on the kind of improvement efforts that take hold in the school. In the case of CKF School and Ocean City school district,
school improvement efforts were, to a certain extent, already focused by the five areas that comprised the school improvement program.

Although some may argue that it is simply stating the obvious to claim that the structure and content of the school improvement program shapes the outcome of the schools' improvement efforts, it is nonetheless a point that needs to be made. If school districts implement programs of planned change that use predefined conceptions of improvement and effectiveness, by doing so, schools are operating under a set of constraints prior to even beginning the improvement process. My point here is not to argue for a complete relativism in which school improvement is reduced to a vision of change that incorporates anything that practitioners deem worthwhile. Rather, my intention is to argue for cautious and judicious use of the findings of educational research in the construction of programmatic definitions of school improvement and school effectiveness. Because it is these programmatic conceptions of improvement and effectiveness that interact with school culture to help shape the future direction of schools' programs, the conceptions must be chosen or developed with great care. The impact of such programs, and the programmatic definitions that they embody, are significant in that they can alter the cultural reality of the working world of teachers, and the processes and products of childrens' educational experiences.

The other side of the reciprocal relationship that exists between school improvement programs and school culture is the culture of the school. On the surface, there are many commonalities that unite schools across districts, and even across provinces and between countries. The physical structure of schools and classrooms varies remarkably little from site to site. What Lortie describes as "the egg crate structure" of schools can be found in almost any school one enters. So too
is there a remarkable consistency in the use of age-grade groupings for organizing student passage through the system. Yet, to a certain extent these features are illusory and misleading. As structural features of schooling, the egg crate structure of school architecture, and age-grade groupings of students represent an organizational response to the practicalities of educating large numbers of children in an efficient manner. Analyses of educational systems that focus too strongly on the organizational features of schooling can miss the richness of the human context upon which all schooling is built, and it is within this human context that the cultures of schools are to be found.

If the culture of schools are located largely within the human context of schooling, it follows then, that there will be a tremendous variety in the kinds of school cultures that exist. Although the study of school culture has some deep historical roots, there are many aspects of this field that have yet to be investigated in detail. For instance, there are no in-depth examinations of how the substantive and epistemological bases of university-based programs of preservice teacher education affect the development of school culture. Following this as a line of investigation, a researcher might look to see what kinds of school cultures have arisen among staffs whose teachers are representative of the dominant ideologies that characterize different historical periods of teacher education programs. That is, researchers should ask: Would the culture of a school in which staff were trained fifteen years ago, when the dominant mode of teacher education was a concern with behavioral objectives, be different from the culture of a school that employed staff who were recent graduates? Does a system of preservice education that focuses on reflective practice engender a particular kind of school culture, as compared to the kind of school culture engendered by preservice education that focuses on process-
product research as the route to effective teaching? The initial, speculative response to these questions is "Yes, there would be a difference in the cultures, and this difference could in turn affect the way school improvement initiatives unfold in the respective schools."

Another factor that has yet to be investigated as part of the study of school culture and school improvement is the effect that district-wide demographic and employment trends have on the nature of school culture. School districts that have a stable teaching population with little or no new hiring are likely to contain school cultures that are markedly different from districts in which there is high turnover or rapid growth of the teaching force. The existence of a high degree of homogeneity in a staffs' age, along with a shared experience in epistemologically similar preservice teacher education programs will probably yield a much different school culture compared to a school whose staff spans a broad range of ages and philosophies of education. Again, it follows that these differences in school culture will affect the way school improvement programs are interpreted and implemented in individual schools. At this point however, such ideas are speculation. What is needed are empirical studies that examine the impact of university-based preservice education on the development of school culture, along with studies that examine how demographic and employment trends impact upon school culture.

Another component of the relationship between school culture and school improvement that needs to be investigated is the extent to which school improvement can serve to entrench existing cultural norms. In this study, it was clearly indicated that existing values and beliefs within the culture of the school acted to shape the way the improvement project unfolded. Yet, the converse was also true. In the case of The Elements of Instruction the school improvement program
acted in such a way as to ultimately institutionalize an existing part of the school's culture.

Although, in this case, this institutionalization of the Elements was arguably a positive outcome, there could be a darker side to such an effect. Suppose, for the sake of argument, that in a different school, the school improvement program acts to institutionalize a part of the school's culture that is repressive and undemocratic in the way it treats students. Given the possibility of this scenario, it could happen then, that an attempt at improvement ends up as something far worse than the original situation. That is, in this hypothetical example, the mechanisms of the school improvement process act to institutionalize an element of the culture that is unsavoury, and should likely be done away with.

What this points to is the power of such processes that aim to bring about change. A recognition of this power needs to be coupled with the realization that change does not operate in a value-free vacuum. Change agents must recognize that every vision for change or improvement embodies a particular set of values. It follows then, that part of the improvement process should involve an examination of the values that underlay the vision for change. School improvement programs that neglect this important aspect of the change process run the risk of facilitating change that is ultimately negative in its effects on education.

**Summary of Chapter Eight**

The purpose of this chapter was to discuss the findings of this study in relation to what is already known about school improvement. The finding that there existed in the site of the study, examples of both fidelity and mutual adaptation forms of implementation, was discussed in terms of the ongoing debate about the two approaches to change. It was suggested that an analysis of a school's culture was a
potentially useful tool for understanding how change occurs. The actions of the principal as they relate to school improvement were also discussed. In view of the findings of this study, it was noted that the issues of leadership succession as it relates to school improvement, would be a useful area for further study. In addition, it was suggested that there was an apparent shift toward centralization of the school improvement initiative in the district that hosted this study, and that a study of that shift would be an interesting exploration of educational policy making.

It was noted that the strengthening of the key suppositions of a cooperative ethos and ongoing professional development was a positive outcome of the school's involvement with the school improvement program. Further research needs to be undertaken studying the interaction of school cultures in which a cooperative ethos and ongoing professional development do not represent strong, pervasive key suppositions.

It was also claimed that the improvement program had a number of observable, positive effects on the operation of the school. Staff perceptions of the workshops that comprised the school's introduction to the improvement experience were described, and several implications were drawn from those descriptions. The need for relevance and careful use of language was highlighted, as was the importance of recognizing school improvement as containing the potential for conflict. The relationship between school improvement processes and reflection on practice was noted, along with the suggestion that the manner in which these two areas may be used conjointly as a means of professional development in education, could be the focus of further investigation.

Regarding the broader context of the relationship between school culture and school improvement it was suggested that further studies are needed in several
It was argued that such things as the epistemological foundations of the preservice education of the members of the school cultures, along with the demographic mix of the teaching force within schools are relevant factors for further investigation. And finally, it was observed that there exists an unintended side effect of the school improvement process - that being the possibility that school improvement programs can act to entrench existing norms within the culture of the school.
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this investigation was to provide a detailed portrait of one school's experience with a school improvement program. Central to that investigation was a cultural perspective that examined the interaction between the culture of the school and the school improvement program. Part of the study involved an elaboration of the culture of the school. That "culture" was then used as an analytic construct in the examination of the school's experience with the school improvement program.

The findings of this study indicate that there was a reciprocal interaction between the culture of the school and the school improvement program. Values and beliefs that formed an important part of the culture of the school were reflected in the school improvement goals that were selected by the staff. It was argued that the reflection of key suppositions in the school's improvement goals was indicative of the culture of the school having influenced the improvement program.

It was also noted that the school improvement program strengthened two of the key suppositions of the culture of the school. Involvement in the school improvement program brought about an increase in the school's cooperative ethos, and it strengthened the school's commitment to ongoing professional development. Involvement with the school improvement program also brought about a number of substantive changes in the programs, policies, and practices in the school.

The dynamics of the school improvement process were shown to be complex and tied to a number of situational factors. These included the career stage of the school's principal, the staff's concerns with time as a scarce commodity, and the issue of multiple interpretations of the content of the school improvement program. It was argued that some of the processes associated with the improvement program held the potential for conflict, and that to avoid conflict, the staff may have built
their improvement efforts upon existing commonalities. Viewed from this perspective, the culture of the school acted as a stabilizing force in a situation that had the potential to create tension and disruption.

The reform and improvement of our schools are lofty goals, worthy of serious consideration and a strong effort. The findings of this study indicate that school improvement is indeed possible, particularly when the culture of the school is constituted by the kinds of orienting assumptions which both enable and focus such initiatives.
References Cited


Appendix A

Interview Schedule for Teachers

Preamble: As you know, I'm doing a study of your school's involvement with The School Is the Key (TSITK) program. As part of this study, I'm interested in what individual teachers have to say about the various aspects of the program, particularly The Elements of Instruction and peer coaching. I'd like to ask you some questions about your involvement with the program. Before we begin talking about the TSITK though, I'd like to ask you a few questions about yourself.

Question purpose: Background and demographic

How long have you been teaching?

Have long have you been at CKF?

Have you taught at the secondary level?

Question purpose: Description of school setting

If I asked you to describe the essential characteristics of CKF school, what words or phrases come to mind?

Comparing this school to others you have been in, is there anything unique about this one?

Question purpose: Reportorial

Perhaps we could move now to a discussion of TSITK. Let's begin with a description of your initial involvement with the School Is The Key (TSITK) Program. How did you first become involved in the program? Probes and clarifying questions:

-When did that occur?

-How were decisions about school involvement made?

Question purpose: Description

Could you describe to me how you see the TSITK program operating in the school? Probes and clarifying questions:

-What are some examples of things the staff have focused upon as a result of the TSITK.

-Why did the staff decide to focus on those particular issues and not others?

-What do you see as the benefits of the TSITK program?

-What do you see as the drawbacks or weaknesses of the TSITK?
-Are there any changes that could be made that you feel would improve the way the TSITK works?

**Question purpose:** Reportorial and Professional knowledge.

**Introduction** I would like to shift now and ask you a few questions about The Elements of Instruction (EOI). I understand that there are several workshops that the staff have attended. Can you describe to me your involvement in this regard?

In personal, professional terms, how has the EOI had an effect on what you do as a teacher?

Probes and clarifying questions:

-What do you do differently now, compared to how you used to teach before being exposed to EOI?
-What do you see as the positive effects of this?
-What do you see as the negative effects?
-Are there some elements of the EOI that you find more useful than others?
-What are they?
-Why are they more useful?
-Are there parts of the EOI that you would not use?
-(If yes) On what did you base your decision not to use that part? (Philosophical, moral, utilitarian?)
-Are there parts of the EOI that you have changed in order to suit your own teaching style or your particular classroom?
-(If yes) What parts did you change? How did you change them? Why did you change them?

**Question purpose:** Devil's advocate.

**Introduction** Some people have criticized programs like the Elements of Instruction as having a mechanical view of teaching and learning that can stifle creativity in teaching. On the basis of your experience with the program, what do you think of such criticisms?

**Question purpose:** Description

**Introduction** I'd like to ask you a few a questions about your experiences with the peer coaching process. Could you describe to me how the process works?
-Did you select your own coach?
- If not, how was the selection made?
- How many times have you been involved in the process?
- How is the observation/coaching schedule decided?
- For you, what have been the benefits of peer coaching?
- What do you see as the weaknesses?
- How could it be improved? (What changes you would make?)

**Question purpose:** Description

**Introduction**  One of the terms used to describe the TSITK is "school improvement" because it is supposedly designed to bring about some sort of improvement in the school.

What do you see as being "improved" as a result of CKF's involvement in TSITK?
What sort of indicators tell you that there has been improvement?

If I asked you to describe "effectiveness" as it relates to schools and schooling, what sort of things come to mind?
What, for you, constitutes an effective school?

**Closing**  Those are all the questions I have for now. Thanks very much for your time. Are there any questions you would like to ask me?
Appendix B

Sample Teacher Interview

R - Researcher
W - Teacher

R: What I do is start by asking you some questions about your background and then we'll get into your perception of the elements and The School is the Key. So how long have you been teaching then?

W: This is my twelfth year of teaching, all with the Ocean City School Board.

R: How long have you been at CKF?
W: This is my third year.

R: And all at the elementary level or have you taught secondary as well?

W: I've only taught at the elementary level. I originally had training at the secondary level back in 1971. I didn't start teaching then. I was a Social Worker instead for a few years and then I went back and got the diploma program in learning and behaviour disorders, and then started with the Vancouver School Board at the elementary level with a special class and that was for three years and then I moved into a regular class. This is my ninth year with a regular class.

R: And do you have any desire to go back to the special class?

W: No, there's enough special children in the regular classes, they keep me busy.

R: If I asked you to describe CKF, are there any particular words or phrases that come to mind that describe the school itself or the students or the staff?

W: More than the physical structure?
R: Right.

W: I like very much the community of students at this school, in comparison to especially the other three schools I was at, because they're not as...they're not yet as street-wise as the some of the other populations I've run into. They're still children in that sense that they're almost using their elementary school years to go through a normal sort of childhood stages. I like the support that we get from a lot of the parents, there's active parent involvement. We're not a community school, but the next best thing to it because of the number of parents who get involved with the school. And the staff very much has a lot of positives and there are some very, very talented people on staff and they do pool their knowledge and resources readily, constantly.

R: More so than other schools that you have been in?

W: Other schools there were always people who that pooled talents and resources as well, and you know, some of them I learned a lot from a lot of them. But this school seems to have almost all areas covered with outstanding people. Arts, music, the fine arts, the academic areas, there's so many things that I learn from people here, it's been very useful.

R: So you see there's expertise in each of the subject areas?


R: Now, I have to look back at these questions now and again because sometimes when I ask you one you answer the next two ahead. (laughter) OK, if we could move to The School is the Key now. How did you first become involved in the program?

W: Now, to get all my times straight... Last year was the year the school first became involved in the Schools Is the Key. It was a program that was just I believe started last year. I don't think it was started the year before. It seemed a logical step for us
to move into. We started with Elements of Instruction the year before and all of us... As I remember it was right at the beginning of the year in September. People expressed interest in it so as a School it was decided to be done and a number of people went off to workshops which became the guiding committee for the rest of us with our professional development after school.

R: When you say that it was a logical step for you to go into; why do you say that?
W: Well when we looked at what was available for professional development, the staff was very much interested in professional development, XY was our liaison member in our professional development and of the new programs coming available, we were already using elements of instruction, The School is the Key - looking at how to improve the functioning of the school seemed to be a complementary process, a good following-up step that would compliment the Elements of Instruction and move us ahead because so many of the other professional development areas or perhaps an individual course or individual subject which many of us had already done, and we're looking for as a whole, moving the school along and getting some unity and some progression through it.
R: Now you talk about moving the school along and moving it to some sort of improvement, the Elements is one,...
W: UmHum.
R: ...we can all look at and say this is...we're focusing on our instruction and we're doing Elements, are there other things that come to mind that you've done as part of that program? What other things do you see taking place.
W: Well, as a staff we sort of have been looking at all the areas of school, as almost each subject area comes up for review with this School Board, of course we're looking at it and we've also identified the needs that we want to look at. Last year
for example, all the teachers were involved in looking at their reading programs and sharing with each other what they did in each Grade level and each class for developing their reading skills. It was really quite informative for both intermediate and the primaries to share the other half with the other group of teachers.

R: And that was part of what came under The School is the Key?

W: That was almost before the physical School Is the Key Program. Our committee was attending the official workshops, they started giving us mini-workshops after school...I forget the month last year, it could have been March, it could have been February for a series of about six weeks. We did the reading program in December and January as among ourselves deciding we wanted to look at what was happening in reading right from K to 7 and looking at whether or not there was a good continuing follow through for all of our information. Science was the next one that we wanted to put on the list and that we've been working on this year. The arts and music, drama had been almost established before I got here and I've seen the results by the performances and the art productions that have been ongoing. The sports program has not been looked at from K to 7 formally, but informally there has been a lot of sharing in looking at the whole school doing activities as, for example, trestle tree aparatuses looked at for the whole school and we all do it at a certain time. So we're trying to look at school-based programs from K to 7. Before School Is the Key we were looking, for example, at study skills (K to 7) and moving into working teacher-librarian cooperative planning (K to 7). So these academic areas we had already started looking at and fit very nicely into some of the subsections of The School is the Key when we used that framework to pull it together at our final workshop, day workshop on The School is the Key last year, June I think it was.
R: That's interesting because what I hear you saying is that it's like a continuum of what you were already doing.

W: Umhum. The framework fit very nicely of School Is the Key and also that having the framework it also made you clearly identify what else was happening in what you were doing and what else you needed to work on, because it was so clear in identification of the elements of improved schools.

R: Do you see any drawbacks or weaknesses of The School is the Key?

W: I haven't become aware of any yet.

R: One I've seen is (this is just watching) is the time that it seems to take, that people resent this once a week take out your...you've got your black folder, and your gray folder, but then that was sort of put on hold while the Dragon Tale was going on.

W: So it was flexible. Well we always had a weekly staff meeting anyhow. It was just we gave a different kind of organization to it and it was flexible and it got worked into place. So that wasn't extra time because the meeting was there anyhow. No I haven't yet seen it come into... School Is the Key itself isn't taking extra time, this year.

R: When you're working on these different areas, whether it's scope and sequence or whether it's instruction or whether it's any of the other things that you've talked about, what do you see sort of as being ... I have to think how to phrase this...The goal is to improve, obviously, it's to be in some way more effective or more efficient or whatever, but how, I'm interested in what you use as a benchmark or how do you tell if you are...

W: If we reached it?

R: Yes, how do you tell if you are improving?
W: I suppose it'll be you'll start noticing more of a continuum in the students that you received. In that, for example, I could use problem solving for example. This year, which is sort of the second year where we've all tried to use problem solving scope and sequence, I notice the students that carried over the skills that they picked up last year which is easier to move on with them this year, so you can see that kind of awareness that it's working. I don't know if you ever attain the end result, you work towards it, you assess it, you see whether or not it's doing what you thought it would and evaluate the process again.

R: So you see that in some of it anyway, it's at the classroom level. It's in what the students have learned, what they're able to do?

W: Definitely. And I think you might, we'll probably start seeing it as, for example, we get more into our science scope and sequence. The materials that everyone needs will be there, there will be a continuum of programming so that you will have a group of students come up and you know that if you're approaching say a unit on light, they haven't had it for three years. Which wasn't assured before because it was more an independent program of science, and so now it's been streamlined so that we don't have the conflict year after year and that they're getting a variety. So that, that hopefully we will start to see that kind of continuum.

R: So it's brought people together at least in the planning and the sequencing.

W: Yes, Yeah.

R: OK. I'd like to shift now and ask a few questions about Elements. I understand that there are several workshops that you or that the staff have attended. How about yourself? Have you finished that last one or where would you put yourself in that?

W: I'm at one of the beginning groups. The whole school as a start, (time frame), about two years ago now, Christine and I believe Anna, but I'm not certain....a few
staff went to the Schools Is the Key workshop as a preliminary. They found out that Ernie Stakowsky was going to be coming to Ocean City and we were so impressed by the program that it was brought to the staff and we decided that we would all attend the day and one-half workshop on a Friday and Saturday. That was two years ago February. I attended that, but that was the only one I was able to attend. I was on the list to go to the session this spring, but unfortunately about five of us were and that was cancelled because of demands from other schools and as we have other people on staff who have attended many workshops (I don't know if that was a factor in the fact that we couldn't get into it?); so our next professional day is going to look specifically at areas of Elements of Instruction that those of us who haven't had the same number of others would like to look at. But we also have Anna H. on staff who is a liaison person for Elements of Instruction, so I have gone to her and gotten materials from her that I would have been able to get in the second workshop independently. So I got some extra material from her to fill in a few holes that I felt I missed. And...it's a very good staff for sharing, a lot of discussion of what's going on and what's happening, so I've been able to pick the brains of people who have had more workshops than I have had.

R: So you've been to one workshop and you've come back and...

W: We only had one and one-half day workshop two years ago. We did have another full day with Elements of Instruction, I forgot, that came into our school and I can't remember exactly when that was. I think it was just last fall, it could have been last year though. But there was another day now I remember that was in the school followed through the Elements.

R: So what do you do now that's different after having been through the workshop. What do you do differently in your teaching and...
W: The one that's been easiest to, or the most constant to integrate has been the idea of active participation. When I'm teaching any lesson, even if I haven't written it out beforehand in the lesson plan, it's constantly going through my head, "How can I get more students giving feedback on this question, on this discussion?" The little techniques; the blackboards, discussing it with a partner, the pooling of information on a small list and then making larger class lists, the thumbs up, thumbs down agreement with whatever's being said. Sometimes group oral responses, all of these are more overt active participation examples which I find I'm using much much more than I did two years ago. It's almost becoming second nature.

R: And what do you see as the positive effect of that active participation?

W: Simply, one; I get a lot of immediate feedback of who's doing, understanding what's going on, and then I can adjust at that point. The students get immediate feedback of how they're doing and also I can see them being more interested in the lesson if they're having a chance to participate in it. That's an easy one to see how it sort of effected the teaching. All of the other pieces are affecting it in that it's almost as though we have a framework now to look at how we're teaching and the terms are so easy now that we have them to see, to plan a lesson in advance and to look afterwards at lesson that didn't go as well as we hoped, where the problem was. Such as clearly setting your objectives, thinking how you're going to give this set, introduce it to them, having them actively participate, monitoring what they're doing, adjusting it if necessary and modeling, having the independent practise and the congruency - making certain that you're on task. All of these things now that, they're things that we found at the workshops, "Oh, yes I remember that, oh yes that's right." They made such sense, but having terminology to label them and to
know made it easier to analyse what you were doing and to see if there was one area above another that needed improvement, or that was stronger. And the same idea with the peer coaching is useful because they are able to point out examples of all of the Elements of Instruction that you're using. I'm glad we're going to start using level B of peer coaching so that we can be more constructive and look at what areas to work on.

R: Right. If I can back up just about 30 seconds ago, you said, "at the workshops, "Oh, yes, I remember that, I can see that now." Are you talking about experiences within the classroom or remembering from when you....

W: Well a lot of the examples that are Ernie Stakowsky gave were obvious and yet made such perfect sense that they worked. I mean the things you learned in teacher training and the things use in successful lessons and the things that if you were always aware of the labels of them you would realize "Well that was missing from my lesson." Such as congruency- knowing that you're congruent, staying on task with what you're objectives are. It's very easy to see for example, why this didn't work because you got off track over here and you followed off an idea and lost the train of, you know the objectives that you were teaching to. The motivation techniques, all of them which we've all used at one time or another, but having them down in specific forms were a good review, reminder, regrouping of all these motivation techniques.

R: Well I'm finding this really interesting because it's as I read through the Elements material, it's not new, there's nothing really new there. It's a redirecting, it's a reminding and I'm wondering what is it or what happens to us as we learn all this in teacher's college and then we go out and then we become teachers and somehow in the process it fades away or we forget it...
W: Uhmm, umum

R: ...and then it takes something like this Elements workshop, ten or fifteen years later to get it all, to pull it back on track and it's, now that's a question that's just arisen as a result of being here. I hadn't had that as a question in my mind before I started.

W: Well it's very interesting that through teacher training or whatever it is, way back when what you learn from it. After a while you go out and you're in teaching in the grade and the focus can very easily shift to "Have I covered the Grade 5 math course, the text book, the science course, the novels". That was an example that Ernest Stachowski pointed out that hit home. You say "What are your objectives for teaching reading right now?", and you say "I'm teaching the novel" Well what are you teaching? You can't just teach the novel! It sort of pulls your focus back not on so much the content, but on the processes. It was easier to pull you back onto that track. It wasn't the content. It IS the content, but it's not so much THE TEXTBOOK as it is the skills, the processes.

R: So it's what you are wanting them to learn..............

W: To learn in order to carry on because there are so many approved textbooks but that doesn't make the difference.

R: So you are saying that if you are not careful, the textbook can become the curriculum.

W: Yes.

R: And then everything else becomes secondary to getting through the text?

W: Right! In the last couple of years of course, the focus has been on ignoring that and looking at what kinds of skills and processes should be evaluated for the grade level. The new math scope and sequence that has come up has been very useful.
That comes from a government level with a lot of teacher input which then is helpful because now you can realign the new texts that we are just using. There are things for example in all of the texts that match the scope and sequence, so you are always aware of what the continuum is that you should be teaching in math for example, and the skills, which doesn't necessarily mean "textbook".

R: That's interesting. I work in the area of curriculum as well and there is always that question "How the material get translated into what happens in the classroom?" and it sounds from what you are saying, that it is often just a literal translation and we have forgotten that not only are we to be "covering" it but that we are to be teaching something through covering it.

W: Yes, it's as though the object becomes the process, which isn't what it should be. And ideally, you are not doing that but in the day to day preparation, some subjects can slip into that if you are not aware of what your objectives are at the beginning. Because after ten, twelve, or more years of teaching, you have objectives in mind of what you want learned but....it would be interesting to look at daybooks around the city, to see if during their reading period they have the objectives being taught or whether they just the stories listed in the daybook.

R: Do you find that you have made a shift towards doing that, and that instead of writing down the story, you list the objectives?

W: Not for me. I'm doing it with myself, I have my objectives but I don't write my objectives down in my daybook or I would need ten pages for each day, but I do that more often if I have to prepare for a substitute or if I am making a weekly or a monthly plan. This then also opens the door to things you wanted to do but now it's so much more easy to do such as; reading skills can be taught through Social Studies texts. You don't have to worry about what the new materials are so that the
Integration in materials from one subject area to another can be done very easily and you're aware of the processes you're addressing in each skill level, in each time period subject.

R: Have you found that you've had to modify parts of the Elements to suit your particular class or you're particular style of teaching or is it flexible enough?

W: I think it's very flexible. There's so many options that were given to us of methods of using things. I've felt I've had a lot of choice and I keep looking for other choices.

R: I want to play Devil's advocate here. Some people, as you're probably aware, have criticized programs like the Elements or like Madeline Hunter's ITIP as having really a mechanical view of teaching and learning, that is if you do this, this and this, and that in the process it can stifle creativity in teaching and learning. On the basis of your experience with this program, what do you think of such criticism?

W: I suppose if the teacher were looking for a diagram or a blueprint of how to teach and totally accepted someone else's system, it could lead to problems. But I feel that the benefit of programs like Elements and Madeline Hunter's, all of them are to take the ones that fit best with your style and integrate them into what you're doing rather than grabbing a whole system and rejecting what you've done before. It's like reinventing the wheel with a new fad. You have to pick and choose and choose what works best for your class. With some classes, for example with the class this year, I walk in more often with behavioural objectives than I do with academic objectives. There are always academic objectives there, but for a lot of it, it is having to get them into a positive frame so that they can handle some of the academics. I've always felt it easier just to take pieces of this and pieces of that. I'm sort of a more eclectic style in teaching. I've borrowed many ideas from lots of people along the years and I've
adjusted them. I don't think I've ever felt that these programs had to be integrated and sort of implemented without omission. I always felt we had the choice to use the pieces.

R: That's what I hear many people saying. Yes, if you did use it every day it would be deadly--- but, if it's done as you say with an eclectic approach.... Okay, I want to leave the Elements now and then switch onto (it's just about lunch time) peer coaching, you've started talking about before. You said something about you're glad you're moving on to the next level, why is that?

W: So far we've mainly just identified what the other teacher has done and identified, "When you said 'this', you were stating your objectives there, you were congruent here, here are examples of your active participation etc., etc.". Which really just diagrammed the lesson and with the partners that I've had, we've always felt comfortable enough to talk about methods of "What would you suggest in this that you think something else could work as well?" We sort of moved unofficially beyond just diagraming what happened in the lesson. But, technically all we're really supposed to do was diagram what happened in the lesson, be non-judgemental, to say what each teacher did etcetera. So I was pleased that we are officially moving on to the next stage because we've sort of been making steps that way anyhow.

R: So just the technical diagramming of what went on, the labelling of the different parts you feel wasn't, is not, is no longer of benefit?

W: It has its uses, but, after a while you can point out exactly yourself how many times they were actively participating and how many times you were congruent and not congruent in what you said. So after a while when the Elements become more
Integrated and you're more comfortable with them, pointing them out doesn't serve as much of a purpose.

R: So what are you hoping for in the next level then. What kinds of issues do you think will be or hope will be addressed in the peer coaching.

W: More of a sharing of suggestions for; me, I like to look at improving objectives, bringing closure in (laughs) that's what I'd like to look on more, bringing things to close more. Just having another person's point of view. And also it would be nice; which I have done with a few partners already, we have asked: "Can you notice if I am doing this, I'm wondering for example am I missing any students, if I am choosing an individual for an answer and it's not everyone participating, am I missing pockets, do I have a pattern that I'm not aware of? So, I remember last year the teacher I was peer coaching with we did this once or twice, we observed the patterns. We also tried to observe the ones who were wanting to respond so we had another check on our students, and also who was on task and off task, to help with behaviour. It's not really elements, but it is trained eyes in another position in the room that is useful sometimes. So, it maybe just opens up having another teacher there.

R: How many, you say you were doing it last year and you've done some this year, how many times have you been through the process, do you recall?

W: I wouldn't say more than half a dozen. Probably not more than half a dozen.

R: What for you have been the benefits of the whole process?

W: I really find benefits from sharing from other teachers view of the lessons, of what's happening in the lesson and their observation of what's going on. I was in a team situation a couple years ago which I really enjoyed, and this is almost, it's not really a team situation, but it is a type of team situation.
R: So it's that chance to get some feedback then?

W: UmHum. Some feedback from another adult who knows what's happening in the classroom.

R: Does that mean that then there's some, do you see: I got into an argument with someone at the University the other day about teaching has been characterized in the past as an activity or a profession in which professionals are relatively isolated. You work in isolation. There's you and your thirty-three kids. You don't often see other adults when you're in the midst of your teaching, and this person said, "No! That's been really overstated." And I said, "It is an isolated kind..." and as I say we got into an argument and I would be interested to know, do you feel isolated at times as a teacher or is it something that..."

W: No. I don't feel isolated. If I went back to identify it, I would have said I was much more isolated six years ago. Much more. Six years ago, I shared a little bit with teachers for materials and occasionally we talked about what we were doing, but there was very little sharing of planning between the Grades going on at that point. It could have been different in the school, but that's the situation I was in. Then I moved into a team situation which was just wonderful for opening my eyes about team planning and we were always able to juggle. There were three of us in this situation, so there could be two people with one group and the rest could be covered by someone else. We were always aware of each other so you saw other techniques, you had other people's input and planning was a team situation. So it became a very much a learning situation just from three different people putting their heads together brainstorming, four different people--our teacher librarian was actively involved most of the time, putting their heads together finding the best methods of getting the concepts and lessons across. I moved from that to another closed class,
but I found some teachers in that school with great ideas for behaviour and
discipline that was shared not in the classroom because they weren't there, but
outside of the classroom. And moving into this school, there is so much
opportunity for sharing outside of the classroom with other teachers with
materials, and ideas, and what works in the classroom, with the teacher librarian,
with your peer coaching partner, with the music teacher, art teacher, so there’s lots
of sharing going on.

R: That’s basically what this other person was arguing and interestingly enough she
was looking at people who were in team-teaching settings.

W: Well I know I have because of various cutbacks, I’ve been sort of low seniority so
I’ve moved to a few schools in the last six years, so I remember going to interviews
where I had the feeling that people could be very isolated in the school. I remember
asking the principal questions such as, "Well do you have a program of outdoor
education going from K to 7?" And they said, "Well no, but someone in the Grade 3
does it once in a while and somebody else over there in Grade 5 did it once." And this
was sort of the response with that and science and a few other things and you did
have the feeling that anything that went on it went on independently of the rest and
I tended to look for a school that was looking at their goals and trying to make them
K to 7. Thats’ what I wanted to find.

R: So school’s goals then are important for you?

W: Definitely.

R: We've already talked about this idea of School Improvement indicators and I had
those with my last question and we got into that over here, but maybe I'll return one
more time and I'll ask you, what for you constitutes effectiveness if you're going to
describe an effective school or an effective classroom.
W: Well there is no one effectiveness. For some students effectiveness is they reach a very high academic level, and for others they're just happier about themselves as a person and can maybe start then to make a small academic gain. The tone of the school being a place where the students want to come. The feeling of the students that they're happy to get there. That they're excited about what they're learning about and that the parents are supportive of what's going on in the school. These are all indicators and I'm feeling that more and more at this school.

R: So it's goes far beyond that grade or that mark on a report card?

W: Oh it has to. Because each of the students are individuals and they also have so many different starting points. There can't be one indication of effectiveness which will suit for all of them.

R: Yes. Well that's great I'm finished. Do you have any questions that you want to ask me?

W: No, I'm just curious, did you have any idea when you came of what you were getting into and what you were going to wind up with?

R: No. I knew that there was this thing called the School Improvement and I had some idea of how it was to work, but that was it basically it. And these kinds of studies take on a life of their own and this one certainly has. And what I'm going to end up I don't know. I'm just going to have arbitrarily say this is the cutoff date, because I have a deadline and I have to get writing soon.

W: Well you mean you're not going to be with us forever?

R: Well no, you'll see me through to the end of the year, but you won't see me Monday, Wednesday, Friday, although even that, that's sometimes just been Monday or Wednesday. And what I will come up with in a sense is a snapshot in time, because here's what was happening in October and I was there for November, December,
January, March, part of April and sadly enough the story has to end there because to go beyond would be fiction, so it will be interesting trying to put it all together.

W: Well good luck.

- Elements in Use → observations of lessons V.
  - interview teachers → to do. done
  - get program materials → to do. done.

* * *

* From V. - Preferred. St. Staff: Dev. Calendar:
  p. 72 description of TSD/TAD.

Note the change in school leadership team will include: principal, 3-5 teaching, the Professors Dev. vision: teachers and
staff: champions.

* - check PD catalog for contacts etc. re: TSD/TAD and
  peer coaching.

11:20 C. - class Problem Solving:
  → main at work: designing the cafe: "Classifying
  Animals": collections of different animals; Reptiles
  Birds: Mammals: Amphibians. Fish reflect science,
  lesson.

→ began by asking students to get out cards, review
  who did and didn't come to see what math
  problems finished up:
  Reviewed past week with a problem written on the
  board: "Find two numbers whose difference is
  35 and whose sum is 137.
  "Lunch time - C. - talked to his parents in
  a car accident on Saturday. Patient & the
  unit. 1:00 - listened to kids read. DuEvanglies 1-2.
leadership.

Find out about the structure of the city. J and C joined later than the rest. C was interested in working with a small group of teachers.

Observation: teachers are linked today due to their need to present their ideas. There is much informal, off-topic discussion. See if teachers are sharing, to encourage shared materials and resources from the last few days. 

Prescribed how she must move herself, needed an area in order to develop her plans.

11/01/14

K: "Being idea about the times." P: "What a beautiful example of problem solving.

Spoke with C... and asked her, referring to the morning's activities, "Well? Were it worth it?"

I got a long response that covered various topics. As I remember it, there were the salient points of what she said:

- After hours of teaching, certain workshops didn't present anything new.
- Kept four disciplines separate.
- Belief in social studies and science and keeps a distinct time slot for them during the week (less apparent to students with other time slots).
- Try for the most successful slot in the area. For example, the elements of what.

24/11: Came to interview her on PI: Clueless...