University of San Diego

Digital USD

Dissertations

Theses and Dissertations

1996-11-01

The Role of the Principal when Parents are Increasingly Involved in Decision-Making

Inge Ellefson EdD
University of San Diego

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digital.sandiego.edu/dissertations>

Part of the [Leadership Studies Commons](#)

Digital USD Citation

Ellefson, Inge EdD, "The Role of the Principal when Parents are Increasingly Involved in Decision-Making" (1996). *Dissertations*. 612.

<https://digital.sandiego.edu/dissertations/612>

This Dissertation: Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses and Dissertations at Digital USD. It has been accepted for inclusion in Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Digital USD. For more information, please contact digital@sandiego.edu.

**THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL WHEN PARENTS
ARE INCREASINGLY INVOLVED
IN DECISION MAKING**

by

Inge Ellefson

**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education**

University of San Diego

November, 1996

Dissertation Committee

**Robert Infantino, Ed. D.
Mary Abascal-Hildebrand Ed.D.
Al Merino Ed.D.**

ABSTRACT

THE ROLE OF THE PRINCIPAL WHEN PARENTS ARE INCREASINGLY INVOLVED IN DECISION MAKING. Inge Ellefson, Ed.D., University of San Diego, 1996. Director: Robert Infantino, Ed.D.

The role of the principal has been changing in relation to the increasing parent involvement in decision making and the educational restructuring in Alberta, Canada. The purpose of this study is to describe and examine a selected principal in her role in a school, during the 1994 - 1995 year, where parents from the school council and staff from the school share some of the decision making.

The school chosen for this study had the principal working collaboratively with the parents and staff. A case study methodology is used to describe and examine interviews with the parents, teachers, superintendent's designate and the principal; on-site observations; and school and district documents.

This study uses Rost's (1993) definition of leadership, "an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend real changes that reflect the purposes mutually held by both leaders and collaborators," to examine the leadership role of the principal. Moreover, this study also uses the development of a moral community as described by Starratt (1996) to examine this school community.

The findings provide a description of the leadership role of the principal, how the principal accommodates parent and staff input, decision-making and the changes brought about by the principal and the school council in the areas of policy, program and budget as specified in the Alberta Education (1994) Roles and Responsibilities document. There is agreement found among the participants that the principal should practice leadership with parents, be a communicator with parents, and be a liaison between the school and the community. Further, there is support from some of the participants that the

principal must be a mediator between parents and teachers, nurturing of students, parents and teachers, and accountable for all school activities, student results and parent or community expectations. Issues surrounding increasing parent involvement in decision making are described. These include, hidden agendas, maintenance of confidentiality, varying expectations by parents and teachers, managing behavior disordered students, and parents wanting input on teacher evaluation.

Decision-making processes are discussed, including, autocratic, democratic, collaborative and consensus decision-making and these are compared with the differing levels of decisions made according to this study. Implications of the study include the need for parents, teachers and the principal to have an opportunity to receive support and training in collaborative decision-making. Principals, in conjunction with Alberta Education and the Alberta Teacher's Association, must work together in the development of supports through training and networking for principals - personally, professionally and technologically.

Copyright © Inge Ellefson

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

While the effort to complete this dissertation, the most difficult portion of the doctoral study, seemed at times to be very lonely, I have had the good fortune to have an incredible amount of support, both personally and professionally in the writing of this document. Without this support, I would not have been able to complete the task.

First, thanks to the parents, teachers and principal of "Clam" school for their insights, and cooperation for the duration of this study. It has been such a pleasure to become acquainted with such an interesting school community. I thank each of you for your time and thoughtfulness. A special thank you to "Mrs. James", you modelled leadership under trying circumstances. I learned so much from you. I will be forever indebted.

I would like to pay tribute to my chair and mentor, Dr. Robert Infantino, a former English teacher. I acknowledge the English teacher background because writing support has proven to be a special need. Special thanks to Dr. Mary Jo Abascal-Hildebrand for helping to drive out the fear and giving me the encouragement to find my writing voice. Thanks to Dr. Al Merino for the constant support, and for diminishing the fear.

It is especially important for me to recognize the Brooks School Board for their support in allowing me time and financial support to complete my doctoral studies. Along with their support has been the excellent support of our Superintendent, Duncan Gillespie. His good humour, and insistence that I would need his help in San Diego on my course work have been a constant source of amusement. I would also like to thank Dr. Arnold Preston, our Assistant Superintendent for his consistent encouragement. His constant

checking on my progress motivated me to keep going. He and his wife Barb and daughter Amanda managed to “pave the way” for my endeavors.

My friends also provided me with essential support for completion. Without their encouragement, patience and forbearance, this document would not have been completed. To Robert, my mentor in the cohort group, I thank you for your support. To the rest of the cohort members, thanks for enriching my thinking with your insights during our time together in San Diego. A special thanks to Debra, Sandra and Doug for their encouragement during my final writing efforts and stay in San Diego.

To Vicki, my best friend, and to Pat, thank you for your patience in putting all our travel plans on hold as I spent all my spare time working on this dissertation. I look forward to resuming our planning.

A special thanks to Jenny, my typist, who helped me during the final summer to put together this document. Without your editing, and knowledge about proper formatting, I would still be working.

Finally, thanks to my family. To my son Lyn, for his visits to San Diego from Phoenix. To my mother who has always shown me that she could do anything she set her mind to, no matter how big or how small the task. To both my parents for their financial and emotional support, and their willingness to allow me the opportunity to pursue my dreams and their uncomplaining accomplishment of all the farm work without me. And to my husband, Gavin, without whose forbearance and patience, and financial and emotional support and encouragement to finish the “thing” I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM	1
Background of the Problem	1
Purpose of the Study	4
Research Questions.	5
Significance	5
Assumptions	8
Background of the Researcher.	8
Summary	12
CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW	14
Introduction.	14
Leadership	17
Participatory Processes	24
School as a Community of Learners	27
Decision Making	28
Change	32
School Councils	35
International Perspective on School Councils	35
Canadian School Council	38
Alberta School Council	40
School-Based Management	47

Summary	48
CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY	51
Introduction	51
Research Design.	52
Methodological Overview	53
Qualitative Research	53
Case Study	54
Site Selection	56
Selection of Subjects	60
Protection of Human Subjects	60
Data Collection	61
Data Analysis	67
Limitations	69
Definition of Terms	69
Summary	70
CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS	72
Introduction	72
Case Study Profiles	74
Observations	74
Interviews	76
Data Analysis	80
Case Observation	81

Role of the Principal	84
Decision Making	108
Change.	114
An Expanded Case of the Principal	121
Summary	123
CHAPTER V: SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND	
CONCLUSIONS	127
Summary	127
Analysis of Data Categories	129
Decision Making	136
Change.	142
Stresses of the Principalship	144
Role and Responsibilities of the Principal	145
Process for Collaborative Decision Making	148
Matching Decision-Making Process with Level of Decision	150
Creating a Moral Community	152
Implications	153
Recommendations	155
General Recommendations.	155
Recommendations for Further Study.	157
Creating a Community of Learners	158

Conclusions	159
REFERENCES	164

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1:	Summary of Alberta Education School Council Role, June, 1995	7
Table 2:	Summary of the Literature Review on the Role of the Principal	16
Table 3:	Rost's Industrial and Postindustrial Views of Leadership	18
Table 4:	Focus of Governance: Educational Impact	29
Table 5:	The Role and Occupation of Participants and the Number of Years at School	76
Table 6:	Dates of Interviews and Whether or Not Feedback Obtained	79
Table 7:	Summary of Findings on Role of the Principal	85
Table 8:	Summary of Findings for Staff and Parent Input	100
Table 9:	Summary of Findings on Decision Making	109
Table 10:	Summary of Findings for Change	115
Table 11:	Summary of Findings of the Principal's Role When Parents are Increasingly Involved in Decision Making	126

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:	Summary of Perspectives of the Role of the Principal	130
Figure 2:	Decision Making Model Indicating Perceptions About Who Makes Decisions	140
Figure 3:	Collaborative Decision Making Model	149
Figure 3:	Type of Decisions Model	151

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Letter Requesting Permission to Conduct Study 172

Appendix B: Letter of Permission from Edmonton Public
Schools to Conduct Study 174

Appendix C: Consent to Act as Research Subject 175

Appendix D: First Set of Interview Questions 176

Appendix E: Second Set of Interview Questions 173

Appendix E: Clam School Budget 179

CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Background of the Problem

Major changes have occurred in education in the province of Alberta, Canada. These changes have had a major impact on the role of the principal. The changes brought about, in the 1994 - 1995 school year, include increasing parent ability to make decisions about what happens in schools in the context of school-based management. These changes occurred in an attempt by the province to cut education spending as requested by the taxpayers and to give parents and interested stakeholders more of an opportunity to influence what was happening in the local schools which participants requested during the provincial roundtable information gathering sessions. Both initiatives included a movement to decision making at the grassroots level. Details of the findings of the roundtable discussions and the response and changes by the department of Alberta Education are outlined in this chapter.

The intent of this study is to research how parents are being involved in decision making in Alberta and how their involvement is affecting the role of the principal. The need for parents to be increasingly involved in decision making is addressed by Lewington and Orpwood (1993). They suggest that for Canadian parents, students, taxpayers, and employers to have real input into the running of their schools, provincial ministries will have to decentralize political, as well as administrative authority from central school boards to the local school. As the new political entity, the elected community school council--not the school board--would make decisions about the budget allotted by the province (p. 67). The balance of power to make decisions needs to transfer from the existing central school boards to those in the local school.

In the fall of 1993 in an attempt to show fiscal responsibility and balance the books Alberta Education established a set of roundtable discussions through which the people of Alberta could discuss and inform the government about what they thought was important in education (Alberta Education, 1993). One of Alberta Education's areas of focus was the school council which existed for each school. A school council is a formally constituted group made up of parents of students attending the school, the principal, teachers, students (where level of maturity permits) and community members. Facilitators of the roundtable discussions found that the roles of most school councils were limited to fund-raising activities, finding parent volunteers to assist in the school, or providing supervision at social events. The facilitators also found that parents were now requesting a greater role than before in decisions made about the education of their children. Legislation allowed school boards to delegate authority to school councils in a number of areas, but to a large extent this had not happened. Legislation needed to be changed to ensure greater involvement of parents in the education of their children (Alberta Education, 1993, p. 34). The roundtable discussions were well received by the citizens of Alberta, and those citizens who participated in the discussions appreciated the opportunity to have input regarding school governance.

Alberta Education, through the roundtable discussions and follow-up initiatives, began making an effort to move in the direction Lewington and Orpwood (1993) suggested and prepared to shift some decision-making power to the schools. As such new key directions for Alberta restructuring included:

1. Giving schools more authority in deploying resources and determining how results are achieved, producing greater school-based decision-making, and

2. Increasing involvement of parents, the community and business in the delivery of education. (p. 2)

A Government of Alberta news release (1994, p. 3), suggested providing more choice of student programs, increasing parental and/or community involvement in education and enabling parents and teachers to have a meaningful role in decisions about policies, programs and budgets. This movement to grassroots decision making was the Alberta government's attempt to balance the budget by giving funds directly to the schools and eliminate some of the middle management at the school district level. At the same time Alberta Education was attempting to improve education for students by involving more immediate stakeholders.

In December of 1994, Alberta Education presented the document, Roles and Responsibilities in Education: A Position Paper, to the people of the province of Alberta for feedback (Alberta Education, 1994b). This document clearly outlined the role of the principal and role of the school council, as well as the roles of the students, parents, superintendent, school board, teachers, and support staff. The two major foci of this restructuring plan for education in Alberta were: school-based management, which permitted schools and their communities to make many major decisions about programs and policies and school councils, which gave a stronger voice to parents and community members (p. 2).

In its discussion of the role of the principal the document stated that the principal will no longer be able to make arbitrary decisions regarding education. "The principal shares the challenge of making wise decisions with one or more of these groups [i.e., the school board, the superintendent, teachers and other school staff, the school councils, students and their parents, and the community]" (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. 27).

Feedback from the participants in education, particularly principals, indicated that there was much concern, especially regarding the amount of accountability required by school councils. Parents on school councils responded that they did not have the time, expertise, or energy to take such a major role, and that they were content to allow school boards and principals to maintain the primary responsibility for the management of the education of their children. These findings were reported by the Alberta Minister of Education (Alberta Education, 1995a). Parents expressed the desire for an advisory role, particularly with their school principal. This resulted in a change in the wording of Bill 37 (Government of Alberta, 1995) which was originally written to have the principal of the school accountable to the school council.

The Minister of Education for Alberta introduced Bill 37 to the Legislature in April, 1995, as a School Amendment Act. The intent of Bill 37 is for school councils to remain advisory in nature and to work in consultation with the principal "so that the principal may ensure that students in the school have the opportunity to meet the standards of education set by the Minister" (p. 1). This is a change from the original intent to make the school councils responsible for student outcomes, and it significantly affects the role of the principal. To a large extent, the change maintains the status quo.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe how one principal in Alberta, Canada, accommodates increased parental involvement in decision-making as mandated by the Government of Alberta. The intention is to examine how this principal fulfils her role as parents and teachers share in making decisions about policies, programs and budgets.

The participants in this study include the parents, teachers, superintendent's designate, and the principal. This study focuses on the

leadership role of the principal and her interactions with the participants of the school. Of particular interest is the principal's role in making or sharing decisions with the participants and the changing roles which are affected as a result of the shared decisions. The description of involvement of the participants in decision making adds to current research data and gives this study its significance.

Research Questions

I developed a set of three research questions to guide the study:

1. What is the leadership role of the principal when there is increased parent participation in decision-making?
2. What processes or models reflect how decision making happens at a school where participants are engaged in collaboration?
3. What changes have been brought about by the principal and the school council in the areas of policy, program and budget as specified in the Alberta Education (1994b) Roles and Responsibilities document?

Significance

In recent years the growing trend to involve parents in schools as volunteers was expanded to include participation in the decision-making process (Government of Alberta, 1994). School principals need to develop new leadership skills and abilities to accommodate these changing roles. This study describes how one person models leadership with parents and teachers in her role as principal. The significance of this study rests on how one principal, who is typical of principals in Alberta, Canada, models leadership skills and the comparison to be drawn from the literature on leadership and the role of the principal. To further enhance the comparison, I included input from parents, teachers, the superintendent's designate and the principal. A brief overview follows, with a summary of the literature regarding the role of the principal.

According to Starratt (1996), "Educational administration requires a constant effort to introduce rationality into decisions" (p. 5), because schools must operate according to a reasonable set of guidelines driven by a shared vision for the long term. He contends that it is not only the principal who will make decisions but that there will be other participants as well. The intention must be to make the most reasonable decisions under the circumstances and that they be decisions for which others can take responsibility (p. 5).

The work of administrators is with teachers and students in the development of a learning community. The core processes which drive a learning community assure that: (a) learning takes place in a caring environment, (b) learning involves storytelling, (c) learning relates to home and neighborhood experiences, (d) learning leads to some product or performance, and (e) learning periodically explores the really big questions (Starratt, 1996, pp. 77-81). How the role of the principal evolves with increased involvement of parent and the school council in the decision-making process is of significant importance. This study focusses on that evolution.

During the 1994-95 school year, there was a major change in the intended power of school councils in Alberta. In December, 1994, the Roles and Responsibilities document was distributed to schools and school councils. This document gave school councils the choice to make decisions traditionally made by administration or to remain in an advisory role. The majority of the school councils chose to remain in an advisory role. The Minister of Education (Alberta Education, 1995c) indicated that school councils would retain their advisory role rather than a decision-making role as initially planned. Bill 37 reflects the advisory capacity of school councils. Alberta Education documents which referred to decision-making by school councils included the School Councils Handbook: Meaningful Involvement for the School Community, June 1995

(Alberta Education, 1995c). There was one suggestion that "school councils may want to refer to Robert's Rules of Order for the conduct of their meetings, sample by-laws for societies, or any other resource that deals with the structure and governance of committees or councils" (p. 5). This handbook indicated that school councils must reflect the priorities and attitudes of the school parents and the community at large. School councils do not make unilateral decisions about what happens in a local school. They are participants in the decision making process along with teachers, the principal and the school board. Ultimately the principal and the school board must ensure that decisions made are in the best educational interest of the students in the school. (p. 12)

Table 1 depicts a summary of Alberta Education perspectives on the role of the school council as of June, 1995.

Table 1

Summary of Alberta Education School Council Role, June 1995

Alberta Education Perspective

School councils do not make unilateral decisions about what happens in a local school.

School councils are participants in the decision-making process along with teachers, the principal, and the school board. Ultimately the principal and the school board must ensure that decisions made are in the best educational interest of the students in the school.

Only school boards hire and fire school staff, and individual teachers must be allowed to use their professional judgment to plan instruction for students.

The same Alberta Education document indicates the intent for the role for the school council is that:

school councils respect the roles of the school staff in their school.

School councils neither govern the school nor involve themselves directly in determining professional practices. For example, only school boards hire and fire school staff and individual teachers must be allowed to use their professional judgment to plan instruction for students. (p. 13)

Assumptions

It was assumed that there was at least one school in Alberta in which a principal was working with parents who were operating in a decision-making capacity and that the identification of this school would be possible. It was also assumed that the superintendent's permission would be granted to study the principal and the school.

It was assumed that the principal of the school where parents are involved in decision making will be typical of other principals. Thus the information in this case study would apply to other principals in Alberta, Canada and internationally.

It was assumed that when parents become involved in decision-making, it affects the balance of power among the principal, parents, staff, and superintendent. Therefore, this would change the role stakeholders play in the school. Parents would think that they would have more input regarding school matters. Some parents may wish to over-step the boundaries of these new decision-making powers.

Background of the Researcher

The journey which led to my final choice for a dissertation topic was both interesting and frustrating. I began the search with two topics of interest: school-based budgeting and parent decision-making. These areas were of interest

because of my work-related experience which consisted of 23 years as an educator, 17 years as a school-based administrator, and 3 years secondment to Central Office of our School District for an Education Quality Indicators project. I have had a long-term involvement with parents and school councils, and I believe that to really make a difference with students and to deliver a quality education, educators need to reach out and work with parents effectively. I was involved with both kindergarten councils (i.e., Local Advisory Councils in Alberta) and school councils (called School Advisory Councils) in our school district. I also believe in the concept of the school becoming a community of learners and that parents must be included in the school community.

Prior to coming to the University of San Diego, I researched potential provincial changes in education [with school councils] and was influenced by A Study of the Impact of the School Council Section in the 1988 School Act (Government of Alberta, 1988). This study ascertains the status of school councils 3 years following the 1988 School Act, which mandates the implementation of school councils for all schools in the province. I was particularly interested in researching the influence of school council governance on student achievement. My original plan was to link the successful establishment of school councils in schools throughout Alberta and higher student achievement in those schools.

During the course of the following year, I read some very interesting articles regarding the state of education and school councils in Alberta. The one article which was particularly intriguing included the effect of provincial government cuts on education, and what one principal was proposing in order to slash \$68,000 from a current operating budget of \$656,135, and the reaction of the parents to the elimination of teaching and support staff. The principal indicated that "so far, parents have been positive about efforts to try to ease the

effect of the cuts. We have a very strong parent advisory committee and we've talked about how to use volunteers more effectively" (Moysa, 1994, p. 2). I found I was very interested in learning about the process used to inform parents about the proposed changes in their involvement in the decision-making process.

In the spring of 1994, an Implementation Team held meetings throughout Alberta to gather comments regarding parent satisfaction with their present advisory role in schools (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. 5). The Roles and Responsibilities document for Alberta Education was developed by members of the Legislative Assembly Implementation Teams subsequent to these meetings. It recommended a more active role for school councils and established roles for various stakeholders in education in Alberta.

After I performed an initial literature review concerning the role of parents and school councils in schools, it was recommended by Janet Chrispeels, Assistant Professor of Education, University of California at Santa Barbara, that I contact Jean Norman in South Carolina and discuss her findings, regarding a just completed study which was similar to that which I wanted to conduct.

Norman's research involved site visits, interviews, and document reviews (Monrad & Norman, 1992). She sat in on school council meetings, perused bylaws, and had participants complete Self-Assessment Profiles. Her study included eight schools and compared the student achievement scores with the success of their school councils, called School Improvement Councils (SICs). The success of their schools refers to the school council having basic organizational structures, such as bylaws and minutes, and that their council was functioning effectively and has a positive impact on their school.

When I contacted her, she indicated that there was no correlation in her study between student achievement and an "active or successful" school council. Her reaction to my interest in researching the correlation between

school council governance and student achievement was to caution me regarding the difficulty in handling the large number of variables which would be involved in this type of study (e.g., class size, school demographics, numbers of special needs students, education and experience of the teacher). She also suggested that much of the literature already indicated that there was a strong correlation between student achievement and parent involvement, but not between student achievement and parent governance (J. Norman, personal communication, May, 1994). Her suggestions led me to question the direction of my dissertation proposal. She referred me to Dr. Ann Henderson since she had just published a book, A New Generation of Evidence: The Family Is Critical to Student Achievement (Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Contact was made with Henderson (Personal communication, May, 1994) who suggested that I look at the nature of decisions, how the school council is structured, how members are selected, if there is a competition for a position on the council, who participates, the extent of parent involvement, the relationship between parents and teachers, whether there is effective communication, the quality of the council, and if there are expanding opportunities for involvement. Thus, my journey to my final choice was complete. I followed Henderson's suggestion and made a decision to focus on one principal, school, and school council where parents were actively involved in decision-making.

As a school principal with more than 20 years of experience in education, I have some beliefs based on my own experience which influence my perceptions and interview analysis. I believe that parents have the primary responsibility for the education of their children, and schools share in that responsibility. Therefore, parents should be involved in the decision-making process for the best possible education for their children. As a school principal, I

am also responsible for a school council, and my experience with the parents on my school council may influence my thinking on the role of the principal. I have administrative colleagues whom I consult with regarding the changes in education and school councils. These colleagues are also long-term friends of up to 20 years and they also influence my thinking. I remained conscious of these biases and maintained openness and skepticism while in the process of the investigation.

The discussions with Norman and Henderson led me to the final choice for my dissertation topic. I decided that I wanted to determine how a principal learns to lead when parents have increased decision-making authority. I also decided that I would rather concentrate and develop an in-depth study, so I made a decision to incorporate a case study approach for my methodology in describing how one principal in Alberta, Canada, accommodated increased parental involvement in decision-making as mandated by the Government of Alberta. The study reports how a principal enabled parents and teachers to have a meaningful role in decisions about policies, program and budgets.

Summary

In this chapter I presented an overview of the problem, "What is the leadership role of the principal when parents are increasingly involved in decision making?". There were major changes which occurred in Alberta, Canada in 1994-1995 which gave parents the responsibility for decision making in schools. Restructuring efforts by the Alberta government to cut costs led to a series of government initiatives to discuss with Albertans as to what is important to maintain with far fewer education dollars. The first of these initiatives was a set of roundtable discussions throughout Alberta for all interested stakeholders. The results of these discussions led to a number of restructuring initiatives for education. A follow-up set of discussions was held

with parents regarding their ability to influence their children's education. The information gathered from these sessions led to the development of the document, Roles and Responsibilities in Education: A position paper (Alberta Education, 1994b). The latest government thrust has been the introduction of Bill 37 (Government of Alberta, 1995), a School Amendment Act, to the legislature. Bill 37 addresses an increase in power for parents to affect their children's education without giving them total control over the school. School boards will still be responsible for policy decisions, although school councils will have the ability to have additional advisory input into school decisions.

Three research questions were developed. These questions included the leadership role of the principal, decision-making processes and models, and the change which came about as a result of participant involvement in decision making. The significance of the study regarding the leadership role of the principal as it relates to the findings in the literature and assumptions about the principal's involvement of participants were introduced. The chapter concluded with an overview of the researcher's extensive experience as a school principal.

Chapter II presents the results of a literature search regarding leadership, decision making, and change. It also includes an overview of what has been occurring globally and provincially regarding the organization of school councils.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The intent of this study is to examine and describe how a principal enabled parents and teachers to have a meaningful role in making decisions about policies, program and budget. Three research questions formed the focus of the study. These research questions formed the basis for this literature review:

1. What is the leadership role of the principal when there is increased parent participation in decision-making?
2. What processes or models reflect how decision making happens at a school where participants are engaged in collaboration?
3. What changes have been brought about by the principal and the school council in the areas of policy, program and budget as specified in the Alberta Education (1994) Roles and Responsibilities document?

In answer to the first question a search was completed under the leadership title, with particular emphasis on participatory processes. A myriad of information was gathered, and several of the most distinguished were selected for this study. The first and foremost of these are Rost and Starratt. During the collection of information, the notion of the school as a community of learners was identified as important to the leadership role of the principal. Therefore it is included in this section.

The second question produced information on decision making and the models which have been developed to explain the decision-making theories, models and processes.

The third section on change is one of the most important, because managing successful change is one of the most difficult roles for the principal. This section looks at the barriers to change and the necessary attitudes and beliefs required in order for change to be successful.

The next section is a comprehensive overview of school councils and parent governance throughout the world. In many countries, the school councils have been given additional power and authority to make decisions.

A description of what has been occurring in Canada with school councils and parent governance follows. I was interested in finding out if Alberta was the only province making strides to involve parents in decision making and if Alberta's parents are unique in their interest in having a more active role in their children's schooling.

An overview of official Alberta Education documents and 1994-1995 legislation regarding the role of school councils follows. Since Alberta school councils are the key to this study, this section contains more detailed information on school councils in Alberta. Included is a description of what the Alberta Teachers' Association presents as the role of the principal. Governance will change significantly. The school board and superintendent will no longer be making decisions for the school and parents will have some of that authority. This will impact the role of the principal. These changes led to a search in the literature to support the decision-making role of the principal and possible descriptions or methods for coping and managing in this new environment. A summary of the literature review completes the chapter.

Table 2 presents a summary of the literature review regarding the role of the principal.

Table 2

Summary of the Literature Review on the Role of the Principal

Leadership	<p>Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes.</p> <p>Collaborative leadership must occur with and through others, rather than over others.</p> <p>The principal must have the ability to encourage all stakeholders to support the growth and learning of others, as they support their own growth and learning.</p>
Role of the Principal	<p>The principal must be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • willing to allow the parent to chair and direct meetings without interference and by providing school data to the council • areas of difficulty may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - confidentiality of student information - parent council elitism - resistance in the educational establishment to sharing decision making with parents
Community of Learners	<p>The development of the school as a family or community and the members of the family or school as learners.</p> <p>Parents should be considered part of this community of learners.</p> <p>The best results in parent education programs come when parents are involved in both learning and decision making roles.</p>
Parent perspective	<p>The principal needs to focus on improved communication and to facilitate improved home and school relationships.</p> <p>There must be parent, teacher and administrator reeducation. Everyone will need better skills in listening, communicating, and facilitating groups, because these are the talents that build strong relationships.</p>
Decision making	<p>Four types of decisions: zero-impact, minimal-impact, core impact and comprehensive-impact.</p> <p>Consensus-builders must be clear and creative thinkers. They should cultivate a school culture that makes sense and which honors the integrated goals and aspirations of students, parents, staff, the local community.</p>
Change	<p>In terms of change, education has to become the single most important investment that any person can make in their own destiny.</p> <p>The principal's role in change is to support the efforts of others as they express what is valued and encourage them to extend their thinking.</p> <p>Schools must learn how to collectively change the beliefs and values before change will naturally flow. If people want to change their world they have to start with themselves.</p>

Leadership

How the principal views leadership and the importance placed on leadership in his or her role as principal will be crucial to this study. Rost's (1994) postindustrial definition of leadership states: "Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend real changes that reflect the purposes mutually held by both leaders and collaborators" (p. 4). He elaborates on this definition by presenting four elements that distinguish leadership from other human relationships: (a) relationship is based on influence, (b) leadership and collaborators are the actors in this relationship, (c) leaders and collaborators intend real changes, and (d) changes the leaders and collaborators intend reflect their mutual purposes (pp. 4-5). The suggestion that Rost views his definition as postindustrial reflects the idea that the world is in the process of shifting from a traditional industrial paradigm of leadership with the emerging, postindustrial paradigm (p. 6).

According to Rost 12 skills are needed for postindustrial leadership. These skills include influence multidirectional relationships; build noncoercive relationships; focus on the process and not just on the content; include as many different people as possible; take risks; allow for conflict among collaborators; facilitate large groups; empower others in the organization; be political in your influence strategies; use ordinary power resources to influence; get comfortable with highly complex, messy, dynamic situations; and advocate for the commons (Rost, 1993b, p. 5). This comprehensive list is explained in further detail.

Table 3 illustrates Rost's industrial and postindustrial views of leadership. These five points of comparison shows how different the emerging view of leadership is from the traditional view of the industrial era.

Table 3

Rost's Industrial and Postindustrial Views of Leadership¹

Traditional	Emerging
Good management	Process distinct from management, good or bad
Leader behaviors/traits	Leaders and followers interacting in a relationship
Do the leader's wishes	Do what both leaders and followers wish
Pursue any organizational goals	Pursue purposes that intend real changes
Use any legitimate behaviors	Use influence behaviors only

Influence in multidirectional relationships goes every which way, not just top-down. In building noncoercive relationships people are able to respond yes or no to the influence. To build noncoercive relationships there must be a sense of purpose. Leadership in a particular kind of change process must be nurtured, developed, and assisted. It is important to make certain that the outcomes of the process are mutual. The basic point to keep in mind when including as many people as possible is that the diversity and numbers help to strengthen the cause and maximize the organization's impact on the leadership relationship. It

¹ From: J. C. Rost. (1994). Moving from individual to relationship: A postindustrial paradigm of leadership. Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

is also important to be inclusive and to avoid the perception of being an elitist group. Collaboration does not rule out conflict. Allow for conflict among leaders and collaborators and among different leaders and various collaborators. To empower other leaders and associates in a leadership relationship it is important for the development of a sense of community. Ordinary power resources people can use to influence are: be on time, do your homework, be actively involved, help to set agendas, talk to people, be positive and productive, communicate your ideas, and cooperate to achieve consensus. Individualism had its day, give communitarianism a chance and advocate for the commons (Rost, 1993b).

According to Starratt (1993), administration is autobiography and authentic relations (pp. 19-20). Although Starratt uses the name "administration," and for the purposes of this study I refer to the principal, they are considered the same. A principal is also an administrator; therefore, if administration is autobiography, so too is the principal. The principal is the person who brings to the task of administration a special background of knowledge and experiences which are played out at school. The principal's role is also about relationships. The work of the principal requires working with and through others. In genuine working relationships this includes trust, openness, inclusion, flexibility, patience, compassion, caring, and lots of laughter. It is human work.

In human work, Starratt (1993) says that "action is shaped by structure but at the same time action produces and reproduces structure" (p. 26). The actions of the participants, including the principal, within the structure of the school and the educational system will produce actions which will reproduce the structure as it exists or they will change it. For example, the school council is the vehicle through which parents have the ability to suggest changes in their

advisory role on the council to one of decision making. This study is about the role the principal plays when parents are increasingly involved in decision making on school councils. One assumption is that parents want to become more than an advisory body; they want a structure that will initiate positive changes for the school.

Regarding relationship, it is important to explain that for the purpose of this study relationship is considered growth-fostering leading to an increase in "zest" (or vitality), empowerment, knowledge, worth, and sense of connection with others. An examination of the interactions in growth-fostering relationships suggests that an essential feature is the interplay of mutual empathy created by both (or all) participants (Miller, 1986, p. i). The notion that relationships need to be encouraged is supported by Wheatley (1992). She writes that "we will need to become savvy about how to build relationships, how to nurture growing, evolving things. All of us will need better skills in listening, communicating, and facilitating groups, because these are the talents that build strong relationships" (p. 38). For the purpose of this study it will be necessary to note the listening, communicating, and facilitating skills of the principal.

Growth-fostering relationships need to occur within the school community. It is important that these relationships occur within a moral school community. Starratt (1993) discusses the building of a moral community. He recognizes the need for an ethic of justice where participants are treated fairly and reasonably, and he also recognizes the need for the ethic of care. The ethic of care addresses the need to treat individuals according to who they are and their individual needs. Gilligan (1982) initiated the notion of an ethic of care. Rost agrees with Starratt regarding the necessity for building an ethical community. While his definition of leadership does not include the idea of a moral community, he writes,

Our organizations and communities need a way out of the materialistic, individualistic, self-interested, short-term, pragmatic, cost-benefit driven, male-dominated, rational, management-oriented culture that is the primary cause of our present malaise. They need a sense of moral responsibility, a collective purpose to be virtuous in pursuing the higher moral ground, a new understanding of and care for the commons, and the ability to regenerate themselves through the exercise of leadership. (Rost, 1993c, p. 13)

Gilligan (1982) writes:

To understand how the tension between responsibilities and rights sustains the dialectic of human development is to see the integrity of two disparate modes of experience that are in the end connected. While an ethic of justice proceeds from the premise of equality--that everyone should be treated the same--an ethic of care rests on the premise of nonviolence--that no one should be hurt. (p. 174)

The ethic of justice and an ethic of care are represented by the participants in a community. These participants must help to build a community of learners within the school. Sergiovanni (1992) supports the idea of moral leadership and the development of a community of learners within schools.

According to Noddings (1984), "[an] attitude of warm acceptance and trust is important in all caring relationships" (p. 65). She supports the notion of the development of a school based on caring relationships.

Sergiovanni (1992) defines community as the collection of individuals who are bonded together by natural will and who are together bonded to a set of shared ideas and ideals. He writes that "when describing community it is helpful to speak of community by kinship, of mind, of place, and of memory" (p. xvi). This community will exist for all stakeholders and differ between and

among the individual participants. Therefore, when attempting to describe the role of the principal, it will be important to reflect on the perspective of each of the participants. Their perspectives will be influenced by their values; the values necessary for effective leadership need to be considered.

Watson and Fristrom (1990) write that values critical for effective leadership in school include a willing attitude, openness, moving beyond the participative management, risk taking, and seeking outside assistance (p. 361). These notions are contrary to those of the traditional leadership notions, where the leader works alone and makes all the decisions based on his or her own perceptions. Working with and among others in collaborative and consensus building activities will become necessary leadership skills.

Astin (1989) posits that you earn leadership by being able to put together the right combination of things so that people are doing what they want to do. There is no longer any need for the principal or leader to motivate others or to find ways to make them do something other than what is important to them.

Blackmore (1989) similarly indicates that collaborative leadership must occur with and through others rather than over others. How people learn and what sparks their interest to learn is highly influenced by the time and experiences of the participants.

Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1986) studied the way in which women learn. They suggest that it is important to encourage collaboration over debate. Principals must accord respect and allow time for the knowledge that emerges from firsthand experience, and they must encourage students to evolve their own patterns of work based on the problems they are pursuing. The notions of leadership, relationship, and building a community of learners are inextricably linked. It is important to explore further the idea of the school as community.

The development of the school as a family or community and the members of the family or school as learners is a theoretically new concept. According to Sergiovanni (1992), "the idea of a school as a learning community suggests a kind of connectedness among members that resembles what is found in a family, a neighborhood, or some other closely knit group, where bonds tend to be familial or even sacred" (p. 47). Here, too, the principal plays a key role in the development of the school as a community of learners. Other authors also support the idea of learning organizations.

For example, Senge (1990) discusses the merits of a learning organization, which is similar to the notion of a community of learners. He maintains that learning schools invest in improving the quality of thinking, the capacity for reflection and team learning, and the ability to develop shared visions and shared understanding of complex issues. He proposes that learning schools are places where "people continually expend their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (p. 14). The learning organization Senge presents is similar to a learning community or school. This learning community includes all participants such as the principal, students, and parents.

Parents are considered part of this community of learners, since it will be their responsibility to learn about schools and gather information in order to make good decisions. The best results in parent education programs are achieved when parents are involved in both learning and decision-making roles (Henderson & Berla, 1994). If the principal is to promote parent learning and decision making, it will be important to note how he or she accomplishes this task.

Of ultimate importance to the leadership style of the principal will be her or his ability to encourage all stakeholders to support the growth and learning of others as they support their own growth and learning (Erikson, 1982). This sense of efficacy will serve to promote better schools and better education for everyone. It will be important to gather information about how the principal addresses the learning needs of others as well as her own learning needs.

To be a principal when parents are increasingly involved in decision making in schools requires education and training in the following areas: leadership, relationship, and the development of a community of learners. How the principal proposes to learn to accommodate and determine what is involved in each of the areas will become a personal responsibility. What is certain is that there will be change and that educators and parents must develop the ability to work together and to support each other's efforts.

While leadership is the most important aspect of the role of the principal, leadership does not occur in isolation. Many stakeholders share an interest in schools and schooling. Therefore, the next section deals with participatory processes which engage the principal. These include parents and school councils and the role of the principal with school councils.

Participatory Processes

Parents essentially want one thing, that is a good education for their children (Jennings, 1989). Jennings writes that in working with parents it is important to remember that "the solution is to work together, sharing problems and solutions while recognizing and supporting each other's best efforts and intentions" (p. 45).

According to Venciana-Suarez (1994), the principal needs to focus on improved communication and to facilitate improved home and school relationships. "One of the most important ingredients in a child's academic

success is a strong connection between teacher and parent, school and home. A good relationship with your kid's teacher is essential" (p. B4).

Prior to parent or school councils becoming effective in decision making, parents need to receive adequate information, support, and training. According to Lyons (cited in Henderson, Marburger, & Ooms, 1986) in a study of parent advisory roles in four federal education programs in the United States, many school councils have not lived up to their promise. "Another study of parent advisory roles in four feudal education programs concurred that many had not lived up to their promise, and identified parent training as critical to a successful partnership" (p. 112).

The importance of parent involvement and governance is stressed in the literature (Epstein, cited in Brandt, 1989). However, there is difficulty in determining the importance of parent governance over other factors affecting student achievement. In others words there is no proven correlation between improved student achievement and successful school councils.

Riley (1994) indicates the principal must be willing to share power with the staff and particularly with parents. Both teachers and administrators must work to provide parents with information necessary to make informed decisions, and in order to accomplish this there needs to be parent, teacher, and administrator re-education. Lindle (1989) suggested that the principal must be open and approachable.

Drury (1993) indicated that principals must be visible and proactive with parents, the school council, and the community. One principal stated that "the secret of a good council is the real interest and support a principal gives to it. I could easily make it a useless organization; but since I believe in it I don't" (Monrad & Norman, 1992, p. 36). Monrad and Norman suggested that the principal may support the council by allowing the parent to chair and direct

meetings without interference and by providing school data to the council. The principal may choose to involve the council in consensual decision making on school improvement issues requiring school or district level policy changes. The support of the teachers for the councils strengthened the council's ability to work on school improvement issues. At the same time it was important for the council to develop a sense of efficacy which was shared by council members (Monrad & Norman, 1992).

Wang and Lawton (1995) suggested the importance of more effective communication by the school about the core activities of the school, including what was taught, what was learned, and what was expected. A clear partnership between parents and teachers must exist. This means more consultation with parents about their children. Wang and Lawton conclude by indicating that each child needs a stimulating and supportive environment that goes beyond the chain-link fence of the school.

Murphy (1991) discussed the need for more politically active school leaders who were also politically astute, if they were to survive in a collaborative educational community. Thomas, Hart, and Smith (1989) were more specific and suggest that a principal must keep the level of participation up and generate enthusiasm, energy, and activity.

There are areas in which the principal may have difficulty: confidentiality of student information (Riley, 1994), and parents insisting on knowing the particular needs of children other than their own. I would also worry about the difficulty with parent council elitism when, as Decker and Decker (1988) suggested, consideration is given to changing the membership as a way that allows continuity in the group's efforts. The most obvious area of difficulty is the resistance in the educational establishment--school board, superintendent, principals, and teachers--to share decision making with parents (Riley, 1994).

The principal must always engage in a constant effort to make rational decisions and to share decision making with the participants within a school. The work of the administrator includes the development of a learning school community in which the participants can be themselves and develop authentic relationships.

School as a Community of Learners

The development of the school as a family or community and the members of the family or school as a community of learners is a theoretically new concept. According to Sergiovanni (1992):

The idea of a school as a learning community suggests a kind of connectedness among members that resembles what is found in a family, a neighborhood, or some other closely knit group, where bonds tend to be familial or even sacred. (p. 47)

Here, too, the principal plays a key role in the development of the school as a community of learners.

Senge (1990) discussed the merits of a learning organization, which is similar to the notion of a community of learners. He maintained that learning schools invest in improving the quality of thinking, the capacity for reflection and team learning, and the ability to develop shared visions and shared understanding of complex issues. He proposed that learning schools are places where "people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together" (p. 14).

Parents should be considered part of this community of learners, since it will be their responsibility to learn about schools and gather information in order to make good decisions. The best results in parent education programs come

when parents are involved in both learning and decision-making roles (Henderson & Berla, 1994).

Decision-making processes and models will be included in the data collected for this study. The decision-making skills and abilities of the principal and the role that she or he plays also will be a focus of this study. Therefore decision-making forms the next section of this literature review.

Decision Making

According to Alberta Education (1994b), a definition of decision making in education is:

the process used to determine a conclusion or judgement related to a subject and subsequent action related to a topic. Primary role--the group (or person) must answer for the results of their decision, and they have control over activities and resources that produce the result. Contributory role--the group (or person) provides advice, interpretations and other important support that others use in making decisions. In education, both "advice receiving" and "advice giving" are important roles. (p. 11)

Models for decision making include: authoritative, the principal makes the decisions; democratic, the staff or parents make a motion and vote on the motion; collaborative, working together to come to a common agreement that everyone can share; and consensus building, everyone agrees with the final decision (Alberta Education, 1995b, pp. D1-D2).

Glickman (1990) posited there are four types of decisions that are most helpful in the school that is striving to be a democratic, educative community.

1. Zero-impact decisions consumes the time of most schools and deals primarily with adult concerns.
2. Minimal-impact decisions are about issues that pertain to student learning but are of short duration and have less direct influence.

3. Core-impact decisions are those that reflect the core principles of teaching and learning. These are the long-term sustained decisions that a school makes.

4. Comprehensive-impact decisions involve broader issues than teaching and learning. They concern site-based management. (pp. 32-33)

Table 4 presents the focus of governance and educational impact.

Table 4

Focus of Governance: Educational Impact

<u>Zero-impact decisions</u>	<u>Minimal-impact decisions</u>
Parking spaces Lunchroom supervision Faculty lounge Sunshine fund Adult recreation Bus duties Refreshments	Textbook adoption Parent programs In-service days Small budgets Discipline policy
<u>Core-impact decisions</u>	<u>Comprehensive-impact decisions</u>
Curriculum Staff development Coaching Instructional programs Student assessment Instructional budget	School budget Hiring of personnel Deployment of personnel Personnel evaluation

Source: Glickman, 1990, p. 33.

Structured approaches were used with committees to come to a group decision (Davis & Newstrom, 1985). These included: brainstorming, which is a popular method of encouraging thinking and deferring judgment; nominal groups, where individuals work independently and then combine their ideas; and Delphi decision making, which is a survey of the experts. The most important by-product of meetings is that people who participate in making a decision feel motivated to accept it and carry it out.

Consensus was ideally the unanimous agreement of the committee members; in reality, unless the decision was of utmost personal importance to a dissenter, agreement of most of the members should be sufficient for consensus. One of the difficulties in attempting to reach consensus was the time it takes (Bohac-Clarke & Brownlee, 1995, p. 18).

Theories of decision making. Cohen, March, and Olsen (1972) liken decision making in an organization to a "garbage can". Various school problems and solutions are deposited in this can, though solutions are only loosely connected to the problem.

The authors compared decision making in organizations to "organized anarchies". They suggested that ambiguity accompanies each step of the decision-making process and that it is virtually impossible to determine whether any decision has any desired effect. Constraints included turnover in participants and limited time for decision-making results to become established (Cohen, March, & Olsen cited in Hoy & Miskel, 1991). Lindblom (1959) introduced "The Science of Muddling Through". He suggested rational-linear planning and deciding rather than what actually happens in administration, that is, accepting the first possible solution, even when it does not fit the problem.

The role of the principal in decision making, according to Fiedler's Contingency Theory of Decision Making, (cited in Sergiovanni, Burlingame,

Coombs, & Thurston, 1987), is that of leader according to his or her perception of the contingency factor. Decisions are made by the principal based on the character of the organization, the environment at that moment, and the task the organization seeks to accomplish at that time. The leader is the decision maker based on his or her leadership or management skills. It is expected that the organizational members will agree with the leader's decisions.

Suggestions for successful decision making. According to Kouzes and Posner (1993), it is important for the principal to inspire confidence in the people who will be making decisions. They suggested that it is important for principals to stop making decisions, to stop talking at staff meetings, to set up coaching opportunities, to invite people to assume responsibility, to have an open house, to share the big picture, to let parents be the teachers, and to use modelling to develop competencies. The authors felt that it is important in a school that teachers and parents learn to participate in decision making. They indicated that decision-making skills are learned through participation and that the participants will feel an ownership of the decisions and act on them (p. 78). Successful school-based decision making (Alberta Education, 1995b) has the potential for: (a) better use of resources, (b) shared responsibility, (c) flexibility in decision making, (d) enhanced school productivity, (e) improved morale, (f) increased student participation, (g) greater freedom to take risks, and (h) increased tolerance, support, and collaboration (p. A3).

Yates (1993) suggested that consensus-builders must be clear and creative thinkers. They consciously cultivate a school culture that makes sense and which honors the integrated goals and aspirations of students, parents, staff, the local community, and the broader communities of business and society. Successful administrators will work diligently to secure authentic consensus that restores a sense of purpose and well-being for their

constituents. Therefore, principals must be visionary and have a clear concept of what is important in education and also for their school (p. 19).

The literature identifies overcoming resistance to change as one of the biggest challenges a principal faces. Thus, the next section elaborates on change and the various views of the researchers.

Change

In order for education to meet the needs of students who face a new and different future, modifications to the present education system will be necessary. According to Handy (1989):

If changing is really learning, if effective organizations need more and more intelligent people, if careers are shorter and more changeable, above all, if more people need to be more self-sufficient for more of their lives, then education has to become the single most important investment that any person can make in their own destiny. (p. 211)

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) stated that a collaborative, communication filled culture is characterized:

not by formal organization, meetings or bureaucratic procedures. Nor are cultures of collaboration mounted for specific projects and events. Rather, they consist of pervasive qualities, attitudes, and behaviors that run through staff relationships on a moment-by-moment, day-by-day basis. Help, support, trust and openness are at the heart of these relationships. Beneath that, there is a commitment to valuing people as individuals and valuing the groups to which people belong. (p. 48)

The principal should be able to express during interactions with his or her staff, the parents, and the school council what is valued, enabling others to do the same, using team work and shared purpose which accepts both individualism and collectivism as essential to learning (Fullan, 1993). Therefore,

the principal's role in change is to support the efforts of others as they express what is valued and encourage them to extend their thinking. This should be accomplished on an individual and collective basis to explore and create new learning.

According to Dyer and Fontaine (1995), one of the most visible changes to the role of the principal is evident in the collective admission that principals do not know it all. In the last decade, a flurry of investigative activity recognized the professional capabilities of teachers to share decision making, to capitalize on personal knowledge, to trust the learning that comes with experience, and to understand that personal growth and development come from within. Personal professional growth is not defined, imposed, demanded, or actualized through external authority.

Senge (1990) said that one of the paradoxes of changing organizations is both collective and highly individual, but "learning organizations can only be built by individuals who put their life spirit into the task. It is our choices that focus the spirit" (p. 360). Fullan (1994) concurred when he said, "It's individuals working, first of all, despite the system, and secondly, connecting with other kindred spirits, who will begin to develop the critical mass that changes the system" (p. 2).

Covey (1989) believed that enduring change of individuals requires balancing the four dimensions of self: physical, social or emotional, mental, and spiritual. Quick and easy techniques work for the short term. The challenge is for schools to look to the long term and to help individuals choose behaviors that bring more than temporary success for themselves and their schools.

Individuals and schools need more than resiliency to work through the process of change (Fullan, 1991). They need to consider the relevance of the change, their readiness, and their resources. Fullan (1993) warned that change

is far more complex than we have perceived it to be in the past, and quick solutions are untenable, given the complexity of today's issues.

Adams (1994) believed that change requires shifting values. First and foremost, organizations must learn how to collectively change the beliefs and values before change will naturally flow. Change in schools requires transforming personal values and beliefs.

The vital role of the individual in school reform was apparent to Morgan (1993) who stated:

[Individuals] do make and shape their world and have the ability to do so anew. . . . I believe that change, though often difficult, begins with individuals; that, if people want to change their world, they have to start with themselves; and that individual change becomes social change when a critical mass of people begin to push in the same direction. (p. 275)

Barriers to change still exist, and the challenges facing educators who seek change include: (a) schools that have deeply ingrained norms and well-established unwritten rules, (b) schools that rarely provide a full range of critical resources, (c) school-based management plans which are often ambiguous, (d) parents reluctant to challenge the professional, (e) teachers who do not exert meaningful influence, (f) council membership that tends to be homogeneous, (g) limited autonomy, and (h) lack of major instructional school reform (National Coalition of Advocates for Students, 1991). These barriers to change must be overcome and, according to the literature, it is the teachers and parents working together for change which will improve the learning environment for students. Overcoming the barriers to change will take the individual and collective efforts of the principal, central office, parents, and teachers.

The next section deals with change and school councils internationally, nationally and provincially. Parents and school councils have been changing throughout the world.

School Councils

International Perspective on School Council

School councils have been increasing their decision-making powers in various countries throughout the world. Governments have chosen to give power to parents to decide on a more local basis how best to allocate the education funds and to make decisions about how best to educate their children. In many countries, the government mandate is to improve student achievement scores while reducing the cost of education to the taxpayer. Has the move to grassroots decision making made an improvement in student achievement scores? Have education costs been reduced? Are parents happier? What is happening to the role of the principal?

In 1988, Chicago legislated a systemic change from top-down to bottom-up with the Chicago School Reform Act (House, 1994). One reason for the legislation is the poor student achievement scores (Walberg & Niemiec, 1994). The legislators felt that school council governance would improve student achievement. The change was met with enthusiasm by parents, teachers and principals, and it is interesting to note that the people involved believed that they were making positive contributions. However, after four years of school council governance, there was no noted improvement in student achievement, student attendance, or graduation and dropout rates (Alberta Education, 1993).

Some school council difficulties in Chicago are due to power struggles among rival interest groups which includes parents, business, and community members on school councils. In an attempt to overcome some of their difficulties, an amendment was made in 1993 to allow only parents on school

councils because parents are the group most affected by educational decisions (Walberg & Niemiec, 1994).

Major change was also legislated in Kentucky. The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 requires the implementation of school-based decision making in all Kentucky schools (House, 1994). Budgetary authority is delegated to school sites (David, 1994). As with Chicago, the underlying premise in Kentucky is that those closest to the students should be given the authority to make school-level policy decisions in exchange for being held accountable for school improvement. There was a positive reaction, particularly by teachers who for example welcomed the opportunity to select their principal. Also, parents were glad to have an official voice in school policy making (David, 1994).

The difficulties encountered included the small number of parents running for council elections. The state legislature recommended that council members have 2-year terms that would be staggered. Training is a problem and it was recommended that in order for councils to operate effectively, members must develop skills in setting agendas, soliciting input from their larger constituencies, holding efficient meetings, delegating authority, and feeding back information to others. Also, effective decision making is hindered by those who bring personal agendas to the meetings. A frequent complaint from council members was that decisions they made were not implemented by the principal or teachers (David, 1994).

Of particular interest to this study is the information that the role of the principal is considered very important. Principals who are more authoritarian are likely to head councils whose teacher and parent members feel powerless. It should also be noted that change is stressful for everyone, including parents. According to David (1994), relationships are beginning to shift as people learn

to create shared goals and conditions that enable others. The transformation from the authoritarian or "telling" style of leadership by the principal to the "sharing" style of leadership is difficult for some principals (p. 709).

A more daunting challenge which school councils face is how to balance the varied needs of each individual unit with the overarching needs of the whole school. This is similar to a classroom where a teacher attempts to address the needs of each student while still managing the class as a whole. It relates to the question: What are the rights of the individual versus what are the rights of the group or classroom or community?

In the countries of Britain and Wales in 1988, school governors were established by the governments of England and Wales as part of a shift towards school-based management (Ontario Parent Council, 1994). These governors were elected by their representative group which included parents, teachers, and government representatives, depending upon the size of the school. The principal may sit on the governing body but is not mandated to do so. The governing body is implemented to give the community input into what is happening in the school. This was a move to force the schools to become more accountable for their performance.

In New Zealand, each school is to be self-managing, governed by an elected board of parents (Milne, 1994). The principal's role is expanded, not only in terms of managerial functions but also skill development in collaborative processes and shared decision making. Milne indicated that principals need time for training in critical reflection in order to examine the values which form the basis for current reform. At the same time they must keep the educational goals of students clearly in focus.

In summary, a number of countries are making changes to the structure of their educational governance systems. They are giving parents increasing

powers to make decisions about the education of their children (Milne, 1994, p. 25).

Canadian School Council

Education is a provincial responsibility and several provinces in Canada made changes to their School Act affecting the role of school councils. In 1988 the provincial governments of both Alberta and British Columbia mandated advisory school councils for all the schools within each province. In British Columbia the goal was to assist and improve existing school district governance and to increase the involvement of parents (Ministry of Education, 1989). According to Hind (1989), this was a shift from the "consultative" role commonly understood as "ask and do your own thing," to an "advisory" role, often understood to mean "listen, consider, decide, and be prepared to defend your decision." The intent is to have parents share power in running schools. However, advice is still considered by many principals as just that, and often it is paid little heed. In other words there is paltry change in the power structure of educational decision making. "The legislation is an affirmation of the value of parental participation with no intention to revise the power structure to give parents a say in educational decision making" (Martin, 1991, p. 68). Alberta has initiated additional changes to their legislation which will be addressed in the next section.

In Manitoba there are new directions which will affect the advisory councils in the province. As requested by parents there is a new requirement that schools establish Advisory Councils for School Leadership comprised of parents and community members. Schools must also include school councils in developing school plans and divisional or school budgets (Manitoba Education, 1995). The role of the principal is to involve the school council in school

planning, receive council recommendations as they relate to school leadership, and provide feedback to the school council on actions taken.

Attempts were made to restructure education governance to provide parents a more meaningful role in educational decision making in Ontario. A provincial parent advisory council was formed by the Ontario government (Galloway, 1993). Because parents are the first educators of their children, it is essential that the education system across Ontario allow parents to assume greater responsibility for their children's education through more meaningful involvement (Ontario Parent Council, 1994). In other words, parents want to be able to positively affect their children's education.

The Chair of the Ontario Parent Council (1994) indicated that:

One message has come across clearly--parents want to become more involved in the education of their children. They want to be informed about what is going on in the education system and they want to have a say when decisions are made. (p. 8)

This is the same message that politicians received in Alberta. A report on the establishment of school parent councils (Ontario Parent Council, 1994) sought to present a picture of parental involvement in Ontario and other jurisdictions to highlight the concerns of parents around this issue. The report also made recommendations to help increase parental involvement and access to decision making.

The Ontario government has developed parent advisory councils for schools in Ontario. In doing so, it is stipulated that the number of parents must equal or exceed the total number of other representatives. These councils were established to advise on the criteria for selection of principals and on how curriculum will be implemented. They have some authority to make decisions about local curriculum in addition to that prescribed by the province (Lewington,

1993). According to the literature, the schools in Ontario have implemented additional power to parents. The school parent councils are advisory with some authority (Ontario Parent Council, 1994).

The longest established bottom-up system in Canada is in Quebec, where there has been a role for parents in school-level decision making since the 1970s (House, 1994). This is true for both English and French instruction schools.

The province of Newfoundland is in the process of assigning school councils for all schools. These councils are to consist of the principal, a school board representative, two teachers, three parents, and two community members (House, 1994).

It is clear that parents are making gains in participation in educational decision-making structures in Canada. School councils with real power, rather than just an advisory role, deal most satisfactorily with the kind of problems that the less flexible structure of the top-down system cannot solve (House, 1994, p. 55). As each of the provinces moves to increasing parent participation in decision making in schools, the role of the principal in each of the provinces is affected.

Alberta School Council

School councils were first mandated in Alberta in the 1988 School Act. Since that time parents increasingly have been involved in the governance of schools on an advisory basis. Parents are, however, more interested in having the ability to make an impact on decision making in schools in order to have a positive effect on the education of their children (Alberta Education, 1993).

The advisory nature of the school council limited the power of the parents by law so that parents were unable fully to impact educational decisions. While it was clear that a school board may delegate any duty or function to a school

council in Alberta, the functions most commonly served include communication between staff and parents, help with or running school events, input into school fund raising, classroom assistance, and involvement with student-oriented programs (Alberta Education, 1991). One recommendation from the study was:

boards review their school council policies to ensure that school councils are encouraged to give advice on any topics within the legislated mandate of a school council. School councils themselves have the discretion to determine any limitations they wish to place on topics for giving advice. (Alberta Education, 1991, p. 18)

Few councils took the opportunity to determine limitations. There was conflict between what the parents and school board wanted in terms of making decisions and policy. School boards must realize that parents have to be involved in a meaningful way in important decisions about their children's education. The steps taken to ameliorate this conflict have been the roundtable discussions in 1993, the new Roles and Responsibilities document in 1994, and Bill 37, a School Amendment Act, 1995. A discussion of each of these follows.

Roundtable (education) discussions in Alberta, 1993. The province of Alberta, in an attempt to show fiscal responsibility and balance the books, established a set of roundtable discussions in 1993 through which the people of Alberta could discuss and inform the government what they thought was important in education. In an attempt to facilitate such discussions Alberta Education (1993) established a Meeting the Challenge: An Education Roundtable Workbook. This workbook addressed the need for strengthening parent choice and involvement:

To date, the roles of most school councils have been somewhat limited to fund-raising activities, finding parent volunteers to assist in the school, or providing supervision at social events. Parents are now requesting a

greater role than before in decisions made about the education of their children.

The present legislation allows school boards to delegate authority to school councils in a number of areas but to a large extent this has not happened. Legislation would have to be changed to ensure that greater involvement occurs in more significant areas. If changes were to be made, school boards would be required to develop policy to outline how the board would consult with and delegate authority to school councils. (pp. 34-36)

As a result of roundtable discussions in Calgary and Edmonton, the two largest urban centers in Alberta, the government recommended that decisions be made closest to the place where implementation occurs. This means that teachers, principals, students, and parents need to be involved in decision making and resource-allocation. Also, school councils need to be given more say in decisions that count (Alberta Education, 1993).

Byfield (1994) suggested that when schools are governed directly by parents, as they once were and as independent schools still are, schools worked. The moment they are handed over to armies of "professional educational experts, they stopped working, We should entrust schools once again to those in whose primary interest they exist, namely parents" (p. 2).

The restructuring efforts which led to fewer school districts meant fewer school boards and fewer school board members. The future in Alberta is slowly unfolding as Premier Ralph Klein was quoted as saying: "The next year could be the tough year. There will be wounded egos . . . when we start to break down . . . school boards" (Martin, 1993, p. B1).

Western Management Consultants were hired to gather information from parents and school councils regarding their role in decision making in

educational matters. The information the consulting firm gathered then generated the Roles and Responsibilities in Education document (Alberta Education, 1994b).

Background information on the role of the principal in Alberta. The role of the principal as described in the Government of Alberta (1988), School Act, Section 15, includes the promotion of cooperation between the school and the community. The principal is the key to successfully having the community become an integral part of the school (Drury, 1993; Henderson et al., 1986; Lindle, 1989; Murphy, 1991; Thomas et al., 1989). The principal's belief in the importance of parent and community involvement in the school determines the success of this involvement (Monrad & Norman, 1992). The importance of the role of the principal cannot be underestimated.

According to Henderson et al. (1986), the role of the principal includes sharing his or her daily and long-term decisions with parents, teachers, and the community. The more stakeholders are involved, the more effective the school will be and the greater the quality of the educational experience for all the students (p. 63).

The principal's role on the school council is outlined in the School Council Resource Manual (Alberta Education, 1995b). The general responsibilities include the following:

To promote a collaborative, collegial approach to decision making; to establish a school council; to be a member of the school council; to promote the activities and mandate of the council; to assist the council in its operation; and to promote the collaborative model of decision making. (p. C4)

Alberta Education attempted to meet the increasing demands from parents for greater participation and decision making in the education of their

children by legislating the School Act in 1988 (Alberta Education, 1991).

Section 17 of the Act gives parents the right to establish school councils while allowing for flexibility in the structure of the school council. While this section gives parents the right to form a school council, it also gives them the responsibility to be aware of that right and to be proactive in the formation of a school council. It is encouraging to know that most schools in Alberta took the initiative to form school councils (Alberta Education, 1991).

The role of the principal as established by the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA). Principals are an integral part of the teachers' association in Alberta. A specialist council, the Council on School Administration, has been organized to meet the needs of principals. Principals endeavor to balance their role as representatives of the ATA with their duties as administrators. They often take leadership roles within the organization. The ATA document, Trying to Teach: Necessary Conditions (Alberta Teachers' Association, 1994), addresses the expectations of the ATA regarding the role of the principal with the staff and the community. Administrators are encouraged to become facilitators to allow school staffs to make decisions and to support their work. It is up to the principal to ensure effective, ongoing involvement of staff in school decisions. Dean (1995) stated: "My job as principal is to lead the staff in building a school community that facilitates relationships among all individuals" (p. 36).

According to an ATA publication, A Framework for Educational Change in Alberta (Alberta Teachers' Association, 1995), the role of the principal is to enable teachers, support staff, the school council, and the community to have meaningful input into decisions concerning the operation of the school. The principal is to serve as the school's chief spokesperson in communications and support for professional development for teachers. Principals are to support the profession by maintaining high standards of professional practice and conduct.

New roles and responsibilities for principals in Alberta, 1994. According to this document, the role of the principal is to provide educational leadership and to administer the school in consultation with central office staff, teachers, parents, and the community. There are two major restructuring components accompanying the plan. One is school-based management and the other is to give a stronger voice to parents and community members through the school councils (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. 2). The government announced its major restructuring plan for education in 1994 and introduced amendments to the School Act which would support the plan. Directions for the future include reducing administrative expenditures, placing greater emphasis on decision making at the school level, and directing more resources to the students in the classroom. These directions are being carried out through a variety of initiatives: (a) deregulating: ensure a minimum of external controls (by the province on school boards and by the school board on schools); (b) implement school-based management; (c) give parents more choices and a stronger voice in the education community; (d) enable parents and teachers to have a meaningful role in decisions about policies, programs and budgets; (e) establish a more accountable education system where education partners report to the public on the achievement of predetermined performance measures and improvement targets, and selecting actions that result in improvements to the quality of education and its delivery (Alberta Education, 1995b, pp. C4-5).

The document, Roles and Responsibilities in Education: A Position Paper (Alberta Education, 1994b), also indicated that all roles and responsibilities in education are interrelated, and clarifying these roles and responsibilities will strengthen relationships and improve the quality of education. The document maintains that the principal will be hired by the school board, and the board in consultation with the school council will determine the principal's role and

duties. Further, the principal no longer will be able to make arbitrary decisions regarding education.

In summary, the newly clarified principal's role pertaining to the school council will be to (a) plan, (b) develop and deliver programs, (c) budget and allocate resources, and (d) communicate and develop community relations. The intent of the document, Roles and Responsibilities: A Position Paper (Alberta Education, 1994b), is to give parents a greater role in decision making for the education of their children. Many principals are overwhelmed with the responsibility this document recommends. In addition, the feedback to the government regarding this document is that school council members throughout Alberta neither have the time nor energy to commit to operating a school, and school council members are content to have school boards and administrators assume this responsibility (Alberta Education, 1995c).

Bill 37, School Amendment Act. The Minister of Education for Alberta introduced Bill 37 to the legislature as a School Amendment Act. This Act is in need of amendment to reflect the restructuring initiatives for education in Alberta. The intent of the first draft of Bill 37 gave school councils more than an advisory role; it gave them the power to make any changes they deemed necessary for the education of their children and accountability for the changes. This draft was modified based on the feedback Alberta Education (1994b) received on the Roles and Responsibilities: A Position Paper.

The wording of Bill 37 was changed from "a school council shall" in the original document to "a school council may" in the school Amendment Act (Government of Alberta, 1995, Chapter S-3.1). This allows the school council to maintain its advisory capacity if it so wishes, while it also allows those school councils who are willing to assume additional responsibility for decision making to take advantage of the opportunity to do so. It is also necessary for the school

council to consult with the principal on matters regarding the school rather than assume full responsibility and authority for changes as was indicated in the first draft.

The implications of Bill 37 on the role of the principal are crucial. It is obvious that principals will need the beliefs, knowledge, and skills to deal with increasing parent involvement in decision making, even though school councils may choose to remain entirely advisory at this time. It appears that over time parents will desire increasing ability to make decisions, particularly as they gain the confidence and knowledge that their input is valuable and that they can make a positive impact on schooling for their children.

School-Based Management

One of Alberta Education's initiatives (Alberta Education, 1994a) is a move to school-based management. Under school-based management, professional responsibility replaces bureaucratic regulation (David, 1989). A real shift in management responsibility from the district to the school requires everyone to change roles, routines, and relationships.

This change in responsibilities is facilitated through school-based management. School-based management is defined as the process by which decisions are made at the school level about instructional programs and services, and how funds are allocated to them. School-based management includes the whole school community. Members of the school community will jointly determine (within regulations and guidelines) the type of programs that will be offered at the school, how available funds will be allocated to meet educational requirements, and how the school's daily operations will be managed. (Alberta Education, 1994a, p. 7)

Parents have a right and a responsibility to make decisions regarding the education of their children. As well, parents have a responsibility to ensure that their children are ready to learn, and to support them in their learning. School councils are responsible to the parents and to the community they serve. The role of the principal is to provide educational leadership and administer the school in consultation with central office staff, teachers, parents, the school council and the community.

The principal enables teachers to achieve excellence in the classroom and to continue pursuing their own professional development programs. The principal determines staffing needs and budget priorities, in consultation with teachers in the school. And, the principal plays a key role in maintaining open communication between home and school, and being responsive to the community. (Alberta Education, 1994a, pp. 9-10)

These changes in responsibility clearly state that school councils are responsible not only to those who choose to attend their meetings but to the parents and community they serve. The role of the principal is clearly outlined to provide leadership and to administer the school, in consultation with other stakeholders. It is interesting that, at this time, the principal determines staffing needs and budget priorities in consultation with teachers in the school; however, parents are not mentioned as taking part in establishing staffing needs and budget priorities.

Summary

The principal must strive to make rational decisions and to share decision making with participants within a school. The work of the administrator also includes the development of a learning school community in which the participants themselves can develop authentic relationships (Starratt, 1996). The leadership role of the principal with school councils, as principals include

parents and the community in the decision-making process, is the focus of this study. The relationships which must develop and the skill for developing these will be the focus for administrators in the future. Sharing the power and supporting the learning efforts of all stakeholders in education will be crucial.

One of my objectives in researching the literature was to find and describe what is happening with school councils and parent governance internationally. The city of Chicago and the state of Kentucky are places where school councils have been given the power to make decisions. In both areas, there have been positive outcomes and difficulties in adapting to the change. England, Wales, and New Zealand experienced similar changes and results. In all of the literature, I find that the role of the principal is of paramount importance to the success or failure of the change.

Throughout Canada changes have been taking place so that parents may have an increasing ability to affect the education of their children. The provinces of Ontario and Quebec are leaders in the field; however, Alberta and British Columbia are also involved in changing the system to allow for increased parent input. Parents across Canada are interested in having more decision-making authority in education.

The restructuring efforts in Alberta involved taxpayers and parents in the formulation of Bill 37, an Amendment to the School Act. Ultimately, it will be up to the principal and other participants to accommodate the increasing involvement of parents in decision making for their school. The role of the principal will be as facilitator of staff and parental input to decision making. If and how that successfully may occur is the focus of this study. This case study provides a framework for data collection and analysis of one principal and one school community of participants. The next chapter presents the method for site

and subject selection and protection of human subjects. It describes the interviews, observations, and documentation which profile the collected data.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to describe how one principal in Alberta, Canada, accommodates increased parental involvement in decision-making as mandated by the Government of Alberta. The intent is to examine how this principal fulfils her role as parents and teachers shared in making decisions about policies, programs and budgets (Alberta Education, 1994b).

The participants in this study include the parents, teachers, superintendent's designate and the principal. I developed a set of three research questions to guide the study:

1. What is the leadership role of the principal when there is increased parent participation in decision-making?
2. What processes or models reflect how decision making happens at a school where participants are engaged in collaboration?
3. What changes have been brought about by the principal and the school council in the areas of policy, program and budget as specified in the Alberta Education (1994) Roles and Responsibilities document?

The focus of this study is the leadership role of the principal and her interactions with the participants of the school. Of particular interest is the principal's leadership role in making decisions or sharing decisions with the participants, and the changes which occur as a result of the decisions which are made. The description of the participants' involvement in decision making adds to current research data and gives this study its significance.

A qualitative descriptive case study approach, according to Strauss & Corbin (1990), can be used to uncover and understand what lies behind any phenomenon about which little is yet known. It can also be used to gain novel and fresh slants on things about which quite a bit is already known. For this study, interviews were conducted with a principal and others using semi-structured techniques in a qualitative process. I interviewed the principal, parents, teachers, and superintendent's designate to gain their perceptions of the principal's role when parents are increasingly involved in decision-making.

My intention was to elicit information about the role of the principal, staff and parent input, the method for decision making, and the changes incurred in the school as the various informants perceived it. This information helped me to understand the role of the principal, provided me with various perspectives on how fully parents can become involved in decision-making in the school, and gave me insight into the changes which were effected. I used the information gained in a first set of interviews to formulate questions for subsequent interviews in order to obtain a more complete picture of the role of the principal.

I observed a school council meeting to describe the interactions at the meeting level. The intent of the observation was to gather information regarding the relationship of the principal to the other participants and to observe their interactions. It was also used to gain information about how decisions were made in a meeting setting. Documents from the school and school district were gathered and analyzed.

Research Design

The research design for this qualitative case study includes the search for a school in which a school council was involved in decision making regarding school budget and school issues. A school district was chosen in which school based budgeting had been an integral method of operating for

thirty years. I requested a recommendation of three or four schools where the school council was very active and involved in decision making. Interviews were conducted with the principals of the recommended schools in order to locate the school most appropriate for this study.

One school and principal was selected, and the school was visited with interviews conducted several times with parents, teachers, the principal and the superintendent's designate. The subjects were selected with the assistance of the principal. The school council chairperson, the secretary and the treasurer of the school council were the parents interviewed. An interview request was made for a teacher who supported parent involvement on the school council, and in order to achieve some balance, a teacher who was reluctant to have parents involved in decision making at the school. A third teacher was requested at large. Stakeholders were observed at the school site during a school council meeting.

Triangulation of information from interviews, observation and communiques was used to corroborate information collected. The data was to be collected during the 1994 - 1995 school year. A further interview was requested with the principal in the following year. The data were analyzed according to the research questions and summarized in a case record. The summarizations were organized according to: the role of the principal, decision making and change. The limitations considered were researcher bias and those inherent in the study of one case or situation, and the applicability to other school principals and school councils.

Methodological Overview

Qualitative Research

The research questions lent themselves easily to qualitative research and, when considering the type of research methodology to employ, qualitative

methods had enormous appeal. I was interested in gaining insight into the role of the principal when parents are increasingly involved in decision making by exploring leadership, decision making, and changes in one school. I felt that being involved in one school would give me the opportunity to gain additional knowledge about the perceptions of many participants regarding the role of the principal. Thus, a case study method became the research design of choice.

Case Study

The case study method is the research design chosen for this investigation, because of its descriptive and evaluative strength in education settings, its qualitative character, and its flexibility. Yin (1984) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that "investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, . . . and in which multiple sources of evidence are used" (p. 23). The case study methodology allows for data collection through interviews, observation, collection of supporting documentation, and analyses of these data.

The case study approach is appropriate for this study because it enables me to describe and analyze a school in qualitative, complex, and comprehensive terms. Such an approach focuses on meaning in context and "requires a data collection instrument sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data" (Merriam, 1988, p. 3). As the instrument used for gathering and interpreting data I made use of the methods that are best suited to this task. These methods included interviewing, observing, and analyzing. Guba and Lincoln (1987) believe that researchers are a vital part of research because they are the data collection instrument. The researcher works in a natural setting, and uses a variety of data-gathering methods to observe normal occurrences to arrive at reasonable interpretations of these data. However, a case study method has the potential to oversimplify or exaggerate a

situation or lead readers to infer that the part discussed is reflective of the whole (Merriam, 1988). Therefore it is important to be aware of the potential for oversimplification or exaggeration of a situation.

The original research questions were not modified. They were: (1a) What is the leadership role of the principal when there is increased parent participation in decision-making? (1b) How does the principal accommodate requests from parents on the school council and from teachers on the staff? (2) What processes or models reflect how decision-making happens at this school? (3) What changes have been brought about by the principal and the school council in the areas of policy, program and budget? But the questions were rephrased (see p. 51) to make analysis easier and more clear.

Interview questions were based on the original research questions. The questions were about the role of the principal, decision making and change. They were directed to, the principal, the superintendent's designate, and parents and the teachers as appropriate. These questions can be found in Appendix D.

Additional questions for the participants were derived for the second set of interviews based on information initially collected. These questions were used to enable the participants to explain previously collected information and to probe more deeply into the participants' thoughts and recollections.

All the interview questions were based on finding answers to the research questions above. In addition to the questions which were used to guide the interviews, additional information was collected through more probing questions which were asked, for clarification, as the interview unfolded.

Regarding my concern with validity, according to Merriam (1988), "internal validity--the extent to which one's findings are congruent with reality--is addressed by using triangulation" (p. 183). The triangulation used for this study

included checking the accuracy of transcriptions with individuals, interviewing and observing on-site, and checking participant perceptions with each other. I involved the principal in all phases of the research and was conscious of controlling my own researcher biases and assumptions. I also maintained an awareness of the necessity of obtaining reliable information and consistency in my findings. I have attempted to describe in detail how the study was conducted.

Internal validity was accomplished through the use of triangulation by checking interpretations with individuals interviewed by having them review the transcription of their interviews. I was unable to stay on-site for a length of time, so I used the telephone to gather as much information as possible, particularly from the principal. My peers (e.g., personal friends who are also school administrators, and my own Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent) were continually requested to comment on the emerging findings. I attempted to involve the principal in all phases of the research. I did not know the other participants as well as I knew the principal. This was due to the distance involved between myself and the school chosen for study as well as the lack of time to spend with them. I continually attempted to clarify my own biases and assumptions throughout the course of the study.

In a case study, reliability is defined as the extent to which the findings can be replicated. This study does not match the definition in that if the study is repeated, it may not yield the same results. It is not possible to replicate the results from this study because human behavior is not static (Merriam, 1988, p. 170).

Site Selection

I was interested in conducting a case study of a principal where parents were very involved in the school and also where shared decision making was

taking place. In November, 1994, permission to conduct the study was granted by the Supervisor of Monitoring and Student Information of the District Office in the city of Edmonton. Four schools were recommended as possible study sites. Screening was used to establish willingness to participate in the study and to determine which school would be the best selection to meet the purpose of the study. Three principals were willing to participate in the study and one principal declined. Clam School [not its real name] was chosen based on the description of parent involvement in the decision-making process. In my discussion with the principal the school was described as a large elementary school with a population of between 550 and 600 students. The principal, who will be called Mrs. Sally James for the purpose of this study, indicated that parents had made several requests for changes in the time that she had been an administrator. The principal had worked at the school over two years.

I chose Edmonton, a large urban center in Alberta, for my study because school-based management has been in effect in Edmonton for the past 20 years and school councils have been very active. "The Edmonton, Alberta public school district was a pioneer in the [school-based management] area, but it has now been picked up by other Canadian and U.S. school districts" (Levin, 1992, pp. 30-31). It was gratifying to find that the Edmonton Public School District has been recognized in the literature as a pioneer in school-based management. The finding that Edmonton Public School District has been so recognized lends credibility to my study.

Although this dissertation was not specifically about school-based management, this concept did have a strong influence on my study because one of the areas in which parents would be making decisions was in the budgeting process. Therefore I was particularly interested in studying the

process of parent involvement and decision-making in budgeting for school management.

I sent a letter to the Superintendent of Edmonton Public Schools in Alberta (see Appendix A), requesting permission to conduct the study as well as requesting a recommendation of three or four principals for participation who meet the criteria mentioned; that is, the school had implemented school-based budgeting and parents were involved in decision-making. The reply letter from the superintendent's designate is in Appendix B. The letter gave approval for the research request subject to the following conditions:

1. The principal's participation in the study be voluntary;
2. The results of the study be provided to the principal;
3. Anonymity and the confidentiality of information obtained be assured;
and
4. The researcher provide a copy of the results to the office of the Supervisor Monitoring and Student Information of the Edmonton Public School District.

I located an appropriate school after the Edmonton Public School District recommended four schools which would meet the requirements I had specified for this study. The schools I chose were recommended to me by the superintendent's designate. Each of the principals named was contacted and information was requested as to their willingness to participate in the study, length of time working in the school, and the level of involvement of their school council. I then called each of the principals identified and interviewed them by telephone regarding the amount of parent involvement in their school, how active their school council was, and whether the council had been involved in making decisions and changes within the school. The principal of the school chosen said that she had many parents involved in the school and the school

council was involved in decision-making. The parents from the school had a role in making decisions about policies, programs and budgets and changes had occurred at the school site. One principal declined the opportunity to be involved in the study due to an already busy schedule. The other two principals had involved school councils. One was principal in a school located in the inner city, and explained that although the parents were involved, they were mostly single mothers who also worked, and they did not have the time nor the energy to be involved in decision making in the school. The final principal was also an excellent candidate, however, he was very guarded in his comments. He did not indicate a willingness to have parents involved in decisions. He did have the benefit of having been at his present school for eight years.

The principal chosen for the in-depth study had only two and a half years of experience in the school; however, according to the telephone description by the principal, the school council was the most active of the four schools suggested. The president of the school council had eight years experience as a school council member and other executive members had a minimum of two years experience in their position. They had reportedly raised \$63,000 for the school the previous year. The principal also indicated that parents were involved in making decisions. Thus I felt it would be interesting to investigate the impact parents had had on the school and the changes they had made. I made my final decision based on the willingness of the principal to have parents involved in decision making in their school.

The contact with the school district and the interviews of the principals requested a principal who modelled leadership with the parents of the school council. I did not request a principal who modelled leadership excellence. I assumed that if the principal was willing to involve parents in decision making

that the principal would be a typical principal and not necessarily an exemplary one.

Selection of Subjects

The superintendent's designate was selected at the District Office by the superintendent of the district chosen for this study. The principal had been chosen from four possible candidates. Selection of the parents and teachers were recommended by the principal. In order to get more than one viewpoint, I requested interviews with three different teachers—one who supported parent involvement in the school, one who was reluctant to be involved with parents, and a third teacher chosen at large. Three parents were interviewed—the chairperson, the secretary and the treasurer of the school council. Eight people were interviewed in total, for a period from thirty minutes to three hours per interview. Follow-up telephone calls were made for clarification of information obtained.

A second set of interviews was conducted based on the information elicited in the first interviews. I was seeking greater clarification and understanding following the second set of interviews. For example, Parent #2 was asked in the second interview: "You indicated [in the first interview] that you thought parents would have valuable information regarding teacher evaluation. Can you describe why you said this and how you would organize to gather input?"

Protection of Human Subjects

In order to adequately adhere to the protection of human subjects, I initially obtained approval from the Human Subjects committee at the University of San Diego through the expedited consent permission and approval procedure. This permission was officially granted. My first step in carrying out

this research was to obtain permission from the Superintendent of the Edmonton Public School District.

A consent form (see Appendix C), which the subjects signed, guaranteed confidentiality of the information received. I made it very clear to each participant what I was investigating and that their involvement in the project was voluntary. They could withdraw at any time without negative repercussions. This was indicated on the form they signed. At the same time, I informed them that they could pass any question they were uneasy about answering. In addition, they were made aware there was always the opportunity to erase comments they had made during the interview when they reviewed their transcript.

I also made it clear to all participants that the information given during the interviews was confidential. Parents and teachers were advised that they would not be identified by name in any use I may make of their responses. The principal was given a pseudonym, and the superintendent's designate is referred to by her title.

I was the only person who had access to the data collected. I had two typists transcribe the tapes who did not know the identity of the participants nor the location of the school. I was also conscious of the difficulty in collecting data at the school council meeting I attended. I chose not to tape record the meeting as I felt it would be intrusive and possibly disturb the natural flow of the meeting.

Data Collection

Prior to data collection, as per Spradley (1979), I reviewed the interview questions. I then conducted and recorded the interviews. The interviews were transcribed and organized along with the personal notes taken during the interview.

The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended to allow for individual responses because individual respondents define the world in unique ways. Merriam (1988) notes:

The purpose of the less structured interview is not to put things into someone else's mind (for example, the interviewer's perceived categories for organizing the world) but rather to access the perspective of the person being interviewed. . . . In the semi-structured interview, certain information is desired from all the respondents. [Some of the same open-ended questions are asked for all participants, and some time is spent in unstructured mode so that fresh insights and new information can emerge]. (pp. 73-74)

The interviews of all participants focused on three questions: 1) What is the leadership role of the principal when there is increased parent participation in decision-making? 2) What processes or models reflect how decision-making happens at this school? 3) What changes have been brought about by the principal and the school council in the areas of policy, program and budget (Alberta Education, 1994b)?

Following is a timeline of interviews, activities, conferences, professional development and Alberta Education document releases:

October, 1994	I requested permission to attend a conference on School-Based Decision Making, a workshop coordinated by the Alberta Teachers' Association in conjunction with the Council on School Administration, to learn more about collaborative decision making.
November, 1994	Letter of request faxed to Edmonton Public School Board; a follow-up telephone call was made on November 3.

Letter received from Edmonton Public School Board
November 10.

Phone interviews of the four potential school principals
were initiated, November 14.

One school was selected and arrangements were made for
interviews of principal, staff, parents, and superintendent's
designate, November 28 and 29, 1994.

December, 1994 Alberta Education released the Roles and Responsibilities
document.

Interview data were transcribed.

January, 1995 PAA of Clam School arranged to meet with their Member of
Legislative Assembly to discuss the Roles and
Responsibilities document. I attended the school council
meeting, January, 19.

Interview data were transcribed.

February, 1995 Meeting with the Southern Alberta Professional
Development Committee to discuss the professional
development needs of principals when working with
parents when they are increasingly involved in decision-
making, February 3.

Interview data were transcribed.

March, 1995 Follow-up interviews were arranged and carried out, March
9-10.

Transcriptions were delivered to the participants for review
and correction.

April, 1995 Alberta Education Minister, Halvar Jonson, speaks at the
Council on Administrators Conference in Alberta, April 27.

- May, 1995 A telephone interview was conducted with one teacher, May 24.
- April-June, 1995 Follow-up telephone contact with the principal on a bimonthly basis.
- March 8, 1996 Follow-up interview with the principal in her new school.

I was very fortunate to have the opportunity to interview the principal in her new school one year later. This added a new dimension to the study of the role of the principal, in that it gave her the opportunity to reflect on the previous year at her former school and her role as principal. She also had the opportunity to reflect on the reasons for her request to transfer to another school. This is pertinent in that it gives another perspective after the second interview.

Interviews. The informants for this study included the principal, three staff members, three parents on the school council, and the superintendent's designate. The purpose of the study was to gain their perceptions of the principal's role when parents are increasingly involved in decision making.

Informants among the staff and parents were recommended by the principal. In an effort to compensate the staff for the inconvenience I arranged to bring food to the staff room where I interviewed each of the participants for approximately one hour and longer when necessary. All but three interviews were conducted within the school. One of the parents indicated that her child was ill; therefore, I went to her home at her request and interviewed her there. It was one of the more successful interviews and I wonder if the setting might have been more relaxing for both of us. The superintendent's designate was interviewed at the School Board office. An interview with a teacher was conducted by telephone. I conducted at least one follow-up interview with five of the participants. One parent was unavailable for a follow-up interview, and the

superintendent's designate was too busy with the transition to a new superintendent and restructuring within the School Board office for a follow-up meeting. The teacher who was interviewed by telephone in May, 1995, was only interviewed that one time. Participants were seen at mutually convenient times. I informed them that they would not be identified by name in any use I make of what they say. Because of the nature of the roles the superintendent and principal have in the school, it was impossible not to refer to those administrative positions when discussing the leadership process. The school was given a fictitious name, Clam School, and I omitted the precise geographical area of the school. The school is a large elementary school with kindergarten to grade 6 students. The school was built within the past 15 years, and it was situated within a residential area.

The protocols for the interviews which were conducted with the principal, parents, teachers, and the superintendent's designate are included in Appendix D. The semi-structured interview questions are included in Appendix E.

Each interview was transcribed, and the interviewees had an opportunity to read the transcriptions and to make corrections to the data collected. They returned these to me in addressed and stamped envelopes. They each had a follow-up telephone call to remind them. I also had regular follow-up phone contact with the principal regarding her perceived accuracy of my perceptions. I attempted to "know" the school and the participants in the study, primarily by building a strong relationship with the principal through phone contact. Guba and Lincoln (1987) believe that researchers are a vital part of research because they are the data collection instrument. Guba and Lincoln see the researcher working in a natural setting, using a variety of data gathering methods to observe normal occurrences and arriving at reasonable interpretations of those data.

Conference information. I was fortunate to be able to attend a conference on school-based management, a conference on school councils, and convention sessions on school councils. The conferences offered a "Collaborative Decision-Making Inservice Program" for school administrators. Convention sessions were presented by Alberta Education and introduced the parents as new partners in education. Principals and teachers were invited to respond to this new direction for education in Alberta.

Documentation. I gathered additional data by examining the documents and records held by the school and the school council. These included school council minutes, school council policy statements, school handbooks, memos, school board newsletters, school newsletters, and material that had been distributed to teachers and parents, particularly that which involved the school council.

These documents were reviewed and used as supportive background evidence for information received during the interviews. For example, the principal indicated that the district's goal-setting initiative involved the key communicators. This information was supported in the documents received from the District Office.

School council meeting attendance. I attended a school council meeting on January 19, 1995, and used a preconceived frame (Appendix D) to record executive, parent, and teacher interactions. I also had a lengthy follow-up phone conversation with the principal to check the accuracy of my perceptions of the meeting, including the interactions of the parents and teachers. The observations and notes taken at this meeting formed an important part of this study. It clearly indicated how decisions were made at a PAA meeting at Clam School.

Data Analysis

When I began the study, I formulated the research questions found at the beginning of this chapter. I collected data through interviews, observations, and documents. The data collected were analyzed through clusters of information relevant to the three research questions regarding the role of the principal, staff and parent input, decision-making and change within the school. I used the results of the analysis to frame new questions to use in subsequent interviews and to focus my observations.

According to Marshall & Rossman (1989), analytic procedures can be described in four modes: organizing the data; generating categories, themes, and patterns; searching for alternative explanations of the data; and writing the report. Each phase of data analysis entails data reduction as the reams of collected data are brought into manageable chunks, as well as data interpretation as the researcher brings meaning and insight to the words and acts of the participants in the study.

The aim of the analysis was to bring order, structure, and meaning to the mass of collected data. This was done through a careful consideration of the data to discover significant causes of things and events and the characteristics of these. My intent was to describe and understand the role of the principal when parents are increasingly involved in decision-making. Through the process of identifying conspicuous themes, recurring ideas or use of language, and patterns of beliefs, I used the three research questions as a frame to be internally consistent (Guba, 1978). I linked interviews together as I saw connections and recognized patterns emerging. I was conscious that raw data have no inherent meaning, and my task was to bring meaning to the data and then write a coherent and illuminating report.

One of the dangers in doing such an analysis is that one can become lost in the details. Stake (1978) advised researchers to keep in mind the purpose of such analysis, namely to bring together a myriad of related details to produce a complex, holistic description of the case. He underscored the importance of keeping in mind this principle: the themes and hypotheses that arise from the study are secondary to an understanding of the case (p. 6). Hence, the description should allow the reader to recognize the essential characteristics and so make generalizations to other cases a possibility. I was mindful of this principle as I completed the analysis.

Analysis was carried out using the research questions as a guide. In reading through the information gathered, I color coded the three research questions and searched for information addressing the questions throughout the interviews and documentation. This documentation was also color coded. Color-coded dots were used to identify each of the questions in the transcriptions. The information was then summarized in a case record which was a summary of the color-coded information located throughout the transcriptions and documents collected for this study. The information from the case record was organized to represent the findings according to the three research questions.

Document Analysis. Information concerning the role of the principal when parents are increasingly involved in decision making was located in a variety of sources. Documentation was collected at the school and the School Board office. These documents included parent newsletters, the school handbook, staff handbook, parent information directory, volunteer handbook, minutes of the Parent Advisory Association for the previous year, school budgeting manual, school educational plan, and other information about the school.

The District Office supplied copies of communication packages developed for the district such as monthly district reports for the past three months (October and November 1994 and February 1995), staff updates, school budgeting manual, district priorities, framework for planning student programs, budget planning involvement, Key Notes, Partners Newsletter, program opportunities for students with learning disabilities, Parent Advisory Councils, Planning for Community Involvement, the Volunteer Team, Edmonton Public Schools Profile, 1994-95, Student Behavior and Conduct Policy, and 1994-95 Map of Edmonton Schools. There were 136 elementary schools in Edmonton in 1994-95, the year of this study.

Limitations

The limitation of studying one case or one principal will naturally raise the question of the validity of the information and its applicability to other principals and other schools. I was aware of this difficulty prior to conducting the study and was willing to take the risk since I was interested in conducting an in depth study.

I was aware that one of the limitations of this study was potential researcher bias. There were times during the interviews when I felt inclined to lead the interviewees toward my biases. However, being aware of my biases, I resisted any attempt to influence the participants in order that the study would truly reflect their perceptions.

Definition of Terms

Decision making in education is the process used to determine a conclusion or judgment related to a subject and subsequent action related to a topic (Alberta Education, 1994a, p. 11). Models for decision making include: *authoritative*, where the principal makes the decisions; *democratic*, where the staff or parents make a motion and vote on the motion. *Collaborative* decisions

are those which are made when participants work together to come to a common agreement that everyone can share. *Consensus* building is a process in which everyone can agree with the final decision (Alberta Education, 1995c, pp. D1-D2).

Leadership is an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend real changes that reflect the purposes mutually held by both leaders and collaborators (Rost, 1993a, p. 102). A school council is a formally constituted group made up of parents of students attending the school, the principal, teachers, students (where level of maturity permits) and community members. This group makes decisions about and advises on educational matters at the school level (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. 11).

This study also addresses the implementation of school-based management, the process by which decisions are made at the school level regarding instructional programs and services and how funds are allocated to them. School-based management includes the whole school community (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. 12). These definitions of decision making, leadership, school council, and school-based management form the foundation necessary for the more accurate development of the purpose of this study follows.

Summary

I explain my data collection methods, including how the school is selected and how subjects are selected and protected. The interview questions are made explicit as is information from other sources, such as conferences, documents and records from the school council, the school, and the district. Strategies for data analysis are documented, and a timeline of my efforts is also included. Participants' perceptions and the accuracy of their perceptions are assessed by comparing their perceptions with those of other participants.

The participants assisted in improving the accuracy of the transcriptions by reviewing them for errors and omissions. The principal was given Chapter IV, the summary of the findings, to check for accuracy of information. Evaluation according to Guba and Lincoln (1989) creates reality. The reality which is created can be located in the next chapter.

Chapter IV describes the participants interviewed and presents the findings of the interviews, documents, and observation data. The three research questions are answered based on participation input, and an additional interview is presented after the principal relocates to another school. An interesting account of the Parent Advisory Association (PAA) meeting is included.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to describe how one principal in Alberta, Canada, accommodates increased parental involvement in decision-making as mandated by the Government of Alberta. The intent is to examine how this principal fulfils her role as parents and teachers share in making decisions about policies, programs and budgets.

The participants in this study include the parents, teachers, superintendent's designate, and the principal. I developed a set of three research questions to guide the study:

1. What is the leadership role of the principal when there is increased parent participation in decision-making?
2. What processes or models reflect how decision making happens at a school where participants are engaged in collaboration?
3. What changes have been brought about by the principal and the school council in the areas of policy, program and budget as specified in the Alberta Education (1994) Roles and Responsibilities document?

The methodology used for this study is a descriptive case study. I conducted interviews with the principal and seven others, using semi-structured techniques in a qualitative process. The first set of interview questions (Appendix D), was faxed in advance to the participants. The questions were based on the three research questions. For example, the principal was asked: Describe your role and the school council operations. Are decisions made by the school council? Are the decisions made collaboratively?

The second set of interview questions (Appendix E) were based on information elicited in the first interview. I was seeking greater clarification as a follow up to the first set of interviews. For example, Parent #2 was asked in the second interview: You indicated [in the first interview] that you thought parents would have valuable information regarding teacher evaluation. Can you describe why you said this and how you would organize to gather parent input? How would confidentiality be preserved? Should principal evaluation occur? If so, how?

All interviews, with the exception of three, were conducted at a school which will be referred to as Clam School for the purpose of this study. One parent was interviewed in her home due to the illness of her daughter. The superintendent's designate was interviewed at the District Office. A teacher was added to the interview list because I felt that the size of the staff warranted further teacher input. She was interviewed by telephone. This third teacher interview gave balance to this study with input from three parents and three teachers.

The interviews were tape recorded, transcribed verbatim, and analyzed, using the three research questions as a guide. Color dots were used to identify responses to each of the questions in the transcriptions. Red was used for Question #1a, "What is the leadership role of the principal when there is increased parent participation in decision making?", blue was used for Question #1b, "How does the principal accommodate requests from parents on the school council and from teachers on the staff?", green was used for Question #2 "What processes or models reflect how decision making happens at this school?" and yellow was used for Question #3 "What changes have been brought about by the principal and the school council in the areas of policy, program and budget?". Data were then compiled in a case record which

summarized the color-coded information collected from the transcriptions and documents used for this study. Each of the summary statements was cross-referenced to the original transcripts. The information from the case record was organized to present the findings according to the three research questions.

Case Study Profiles

Since I had had no previous acquaintance with the school district or the school I took the time to tour the community. The school and community were relatively new. The area was socioeconomically middle and upper class with easy access to many amenities. The school itself was of modern design. The exterior had a unique facade. As I entered the school I was greeted by a large open library. My first impression was very positive. I met with the principal and was impressed with her willingness to talk with me and her offer of assistance to schedule the interviews. Specific details related to the location have been omitted to protect the identity of the school.

I was glad that I had taken the time to find my way to the school the night before. Having previously located the school made it easy to locate the next morning and I entered the building with much trepidation. I came bearing gifts of food in appreciation of the participants' willingness to give of their time to contribute to my study.

Observations

As a researcher, I made several interesting observations regarding the role of the principal, who will be referred to as Mrs. Sally James for the purpose of this study. Following our initial meeting and welcome to Clam School, Mrs. James took me to the staff room and invited me to make myself at home. She quickly ushered me to the interview room, the office of the assistant principal who was away for the day. She mentioned that I might have interruptions because I was in a room used by teachers to make private calls to parents. She

had advised the staff of my visit and I was not interrupted by phone calls. However, several children were sent to sit in the room while interviews were carried out. No child was in the room for more than 10 minutes.

The principal was not in evidence during the parent and teacher interviews but during the interview in her office there were many interruptions (e.g., phone calls of an urgent nature or students knocking on the door). At one point there were so many interruptions she decided to disregard the knocking and said that students would have to see her later.

It was interesting that at one point, as principal, she had to go to the playground to ensure student safety. Considering that the temperature was well below zero this was admirable. It was also interesting that she did not "trade" her supervision with another teacher or that someone did not offer to cover for her since she was busy. This leads me to believe that she considered student supervision an important duty.

As I managed to stay and socialize with the staff during the lunch hour, the principal was curious as to my impressions of the staff and the staff room. I told her that everyone was very friendly and they thanked me for the wonderful treat I brought to the staff room when I arrived. She mentioned that she recently had the staff room painted white much to the dismay of some of the teachers who felt the money could have been better spent for educational supplies.

During my second set of interviews I was placed in a more remote room to prevent so many interruptions. However it turned out to be the room where parents prepared snacks for the students so it was necessary to move my interviews into the nurse's room. It appeared that all space, other than the classrooms, was fully utilized by students, staff, and parents.

The staff and parents were very friendly and open in their discussions. They shared their interesting backgrounds and some of their most recent

readings regarding education and the direction it should be taking. Particularly noteworthy was Parent #2. She and her husband had been debating whether education should take place in school or whether other venues and timetables might be more conducive to student learning.

Interviews

The interview times and locations were organized by the principal, Mrs. Sally James. She was helpful in establishing an "interview room" within the school for the participants. Table 5 presents the role and occupation of participants interviewed, and the number of years at school.

Table 5
The Role and Occupation of Participants Interviewed and the Number of Years at Clam School

<u>Participants interviewed</u>			
#	Role	Years at school	Education/occupation
1	Principal (Mrs. James)	2.5	Bachelor of Science
2	Superintendent/designate	0	Bachelor of education
3	President of PAA, parent #1	7	Real estate paralegal
4	Secretary of PAA, parent #2	4	Speech pathologist
5	Treasurer of PAA, parent #3	7	Former health nurse
6	Teacher #1	9	Bachelor of education
7	Teacher #2	3	Bachelor of physical education
8	Teacher #3	4	Bachelor of education

During the principal's interview she indicated that her educational background included a bachelor of science and a year of education with a fifth

year of elementary education. Her experience began at the secondary level, followed by a variety of teaching positions at the elementary level in three provinces over the past 14 years. She had experience as an assistant principal and also worked in Central Office and previously had been a successful principal of a small elementary school. Her husband was a banker and they have two adult sons.

The superintendent's designate was a teacher who chose to stay home to raise her children and became very active as a parent in her children's school. Prior to her position in Central Office she had organized the first Parent Advisory Council for their school. This led to her present position as a consultant.

In order to protect those interviewed, other than the principal, their names have been omitted and, as necessary, have been replaced by categorical numerical coded numbers.

The first person interviewed, Parent #1, was the president of the Parent Advisory Association (PAA). She was very involved with her children, and had spent a lot of time at the school over the years. She was completing 7 years as a member of the school council. She indicated that the PAA organized casinos for school fund raising and collected over \$60,000 the past year. She worked part time as a real estate paralegal and enjoyed the time she spent at the school (Personal interview, November 28, 1994).

Parent #2 held the school council position of a key communicator, one of the more important executive positions on the Parent Advisory Association (PAA); she was also secretary of the organization. Her position as key communicator requires her to be the link between the parent body and the Central Office on matters such as goal setting and policymaking. When asked about her position, she indicated that it is an effective way to obtain input to

know how things change or if you want them to stay the way they are. She said she felt it was important to be involved and to be in a position to make reflective comments. She stated Mrs. James always gave them a lot of information that helped them to give feedback to the school. She has a master's degree in psycholinguistics and saw her involvement in the school as that of a "learner". She had an understanding and interest in her dual role as facilitator for the school (Personal interview, November 28, 1994).

The treasurer of the Parent Advisory Association (PAA), was Parent #3, and has a bachelor's degree in nursing. She previously worked as a public health nurse and presently spends four half days each week at the school. She stated:

I really believe my being at school has made a difference in how my children act and how they behave. Staying at home with them is also important. My kids love having me here [at school]. They really enjoy it. (Personal interview, November 29, 1994)

It was interesting to note that prior to becoming involved with the PAA, two of the parents interviewed had jobs which required them to be at school. It was also noteworthy that the all of the parents interviewed had worked outside the home and two continue to do so. All of the parents interviewed were female, from "upwardly mobile" families, and hard working women determined to provide a prosperous future for themselves and their children.

Three teachers were requested for interviews. Teacher #1 has a bachelor's degree in education and 14 years of teaching experience. Teacher #2 has a bachelor's degree in physical education and has 1 year of education courses. He has 9 years of teaching experience and expertise with computers. Teacher #3 has a bachelor's degree in education and 4 years teaching experience. My original request was for one teacher who encouraged parent

involvement and another teacher who was more reluctant to involve parents in the school and in the classroom. The third teacher was recommended by the principal. The interviewees were contacted and time was scheduled on November 28 and 29, 1994, and March 9 and 10, 1995.

Table 6 summarizes the dates of the interviews and reviews of transcripts for feedback.

Table 6

Dates of Interviews and Whether or Not Feedback Obtained

Interviewee	Dates Interviewed	Feedback ¹
Principal	November 28, 1994	yes
	March 9-10, 1995	yes
	March 8, 1996	yes
Superintendent designate	November 29, 1994	yes
Teacher #1	November 29, 1994	yes
	March 9, 1995	no
Teacher #2	November 29, 1994	yes
	March 9, 1995	no
Teacher #3	May 26, 1995 ²	no
Parent #1	November 28, 1994	no
Parent #2	November 28, 1994	yes
	March 10, 1995	no
Parent #3	November 29, 1994	yes
	March 9, 1995	no

¹Transcriptions sent to the participants for review, correction and clarification and returned.

²Interview conducted by telephone.

Since I only had the opportunity to interview two teachers during their busy day at school, I requested a telephone interview with Teacher #3 which

took place on May 24, 1995. This teacher was recommended by the principal as an outstanding young teacher who has a global view of education and is not merely focused on what was happening in her classroom at Clam School.

Following the first set of interviews, transcriptions were sent to the participants for review, correction, and clarification. These transcriptions were returned and the information was verified for accuracy. The superintendent's designate was given the opportunity for feedback; however, she indicated she found the transcriptions too disjointed and requested a summarized version of the information. This request was accommodated.

I had the good fortune to be able to conduct a third interview with the principal the following year on March 8, 1996. At that time I asked her to reflect upon the previous year to determine what she had learned about her school from the parents and teachers. The principal reviewed, clarified and returned the transcriptions of her three interviews.

Data Analysis

In researching the role of the principal, questions dealt with three main areas: (a) the role of the principal, (b) decision making, and (c) change as a result of the activities of parents and the school council. The information from interviews, observations, and documentation form the data collected. These data have been summarized and the highlights are presented according to the questions which were asked at the interviews. There are four sets of findings presented in the order of the research questions. Question #1 on the role of the principal has two parts; therefore, the findings are presented as (1a) What is the leadership role of the principal when there is increased parent participation in decision making? (1b) How does the principal accommodate requests from parents on the school council and from teachers on the staff? (2) What processes or models reflect how decision making happens at this school?

(3) What changes have been brought about by the principal and the school council in the areas of policy, program and budget?

Case Observation

I attended a Parent Advisory Association (PAA) Meeting on Monday, January 16, 1995, at Clam School. My impressions following my arrival were as follows: the organizers of the meeting, the President and Secretary, were at the school making sure that coffee was available for the teachers and parents. Their mood appeared apprehensive. I was greeted cordially by several staff members and parents and an unidentified meeting participant explained to me that a trustee and a representative from the Liberal Party were going to be guests at the meeting. I was told that the participants were looking forward to hearing them speak. Sally was in her office with a parent. The door to her office was slightly ajar.

The meeting started at 7:00 p.m. I was introduced as a researcher and welcomed. I did not request permission to tape record the meeting as I felt that it would be intrusive and affect the natural flow of the meeting. Therefore, I tried to inconspicuously make copious notes. It was difficult not to attract the attention of those sitting next to me so I left most of the observational notes to be completed on the return trip.

The seating arrangement of the executive members was unusual. The President and Secretary sat at opposite sides of the room. The principal chose to sit beside me at a corner table. The room used for the meeting was an open area at the back of the library. The setting was informal with round tables and comfortable chairs set up for the participants. Some of the parents were hidden from direct view by a barrier of two computers and a table which was a permanent part of the library. They were seated in a soft seat area with several low couches. The walls surrounding the area were well decorated with student

work. The configuration of the room was informal with tables organized in one section. It seemed to be the way in which the meetings were always conducted, and the participants appeared to be at ease. Participation in the meeting moved only occasionally to the participants in the area behind the computers.

Agendas and the minutes from the previous meeting were distributed to the participants. Twenty-four parents had attended the previous meeting; there were 32 participants at this meeting. The PAA met once a month. The agenda items were: welcome and introductions, minutes of the last meeting, a report from the principal, track team, key communicator, guest speakers, and adjournment. There was a reminder that elections would be held on Monday, January 30, 1995. I was most interested in listening to the parent's response to the Roles and Responsibilities document which had been made available in December of 1994. Since their previous meeting had been on November 14, I hoped they would be addressing the contents of this document. I was not disappointed.

Following introductions Mrs. James reported on the school enrollment, the number of classes, and spoke about closed boundaries and the impact of each of these on the school budget. The role she chose on this occasion was to impart to the parents information about how financial cutbacks were affecting the school.

The parents were congenial with three of the parents opposed to one of the items on the agenda (money for the Track Club). They appeared to have discussed this matter previously as nonverbal clues were evident. A motion was made to support the Track Club with \$500. Notes were shared and looks were exchanged during this part of the meeting. The motion was carried despite three dissenting votes.

The key communicator spoke at length about the Roles and Responsibilities document. She thought that school councils should be advisory and stated, "We want an advisory voice that will be listened to. We don't want to change what we have now. If it isn't broken, don't fix it" (Parent #2, personal communication, January 16, 1995). The most frustrating part about the discussion was that only one person, the secretary who is also the key communicator, had access to and had read the document. Thus I could feel the tension increasing. This left her to interpret the Roles and Responsibilities document and comment on it at the same time. It was difficult to decipher which of her comments were an interpretation of the document and which were her own feelings about the document. Therefore, parents were left voicing their opinions to what may have been information, or her opinions. During the discussion an unidentified parent said that "power resides with the principal".

The School Board trustee spoke positively about the school. She indicated that she felt there were good teachers and a good staff at Clam School. She repeated several times how important it was for parents to be involved. She indicated that she felt most school councils already meet government guidelines regarding the Roles and Responsibilities document. Since, at this time, the PAA was advisory in nature and the intent was to give them decision-making powers, this would appear to be a contradictory statement.

The school trustee also indicated that there were funding cuts at the district level office, to the tune of 16%, and only 9% cutbacks at the school level. In other words, the trustees were committed to leaving money in the classrooms.

In summary, one of the most interesting parts of the meeting was the opportunity to discover firsthand how decisions were made and how the participants responded to the decisions made. The process was very traditional

with parents voting on one item, the expenditure of money. It was clear that not all the parents were in favor of supporting the request of \$500 by the Track and Field Club. Some of the parents at the meeting as well as other participants participated in interviews. The next section presents information regarding the role of the principal.

Role of the Principal

Research Question 1a: What is the leadership role of the principal when there is increased parent participation in decision making? All of the eight interviewed participants had similar yet differing views regarding the role of the principal. I will begin by describing what the principal thought her role should be and then elaborate on the similarities and differences in opinions among the other interviewed participants. The information gathered formed a partial picture of the role of the principal (see Table 7).

Principal's Perspective. During the interviews with the principal, I asked her to describe her role with the staff and school council. In response, Mrs. James stated that she saw herself in a nurturing role, of "encouraging and helping them [i.e., the staff and parents on school council] to grow" (Personal interview, November 28, 1994).

She sought to nurture staff members through documentation of their accomplishments with written notes, which teachers were encouraged to file as part of their personal professional portfolio. She found that having the teachers keep a portfolio made for a strong professional staff. She gave the teachers written feedback on their performance. Mrs. James encouraged the teachers to keep track of their own professional growth and required that they have personal growth plans. Examining these plans formed part of the teacher evaluation duties the principal conducted each year.

Table 7 presents a summary of the findings on the role of the principal.

Table 7

Summary of Findings on Role of the Principal

What is the leadership role of the principal when there is increased parent participation in decision making?

Principal's Perspective

The principal should be:

- nurturing of teachers and parents.
- responsible for teacher evaluation which should also be an occasion for personal growth.
- accountable for student evaluation.
- encouraging teachers to solve their own problems.
- accountable for decision making and confidentiality, and maintaining and respecting individual integrity.
- able to cope with change, isolation, and less support from the District Office.
- able to deal with more pressure and less time, and try to find a balance of personal and professional responsibilities.
- able to grapple with principal evaluation by teachers which is anonymous.
- able to arrange for an increasing number of students with special needs who often have nonsupportive parents.
- accountable for academic results on provincial achievement tests.

Superintendent's designate perspective

The principal should be:

- encouraging and supportive of parents.
- a provider of information and listen to parents.
- involved in planning and working together with parents.
- responsible for the attitude of staff toward students and parents, other staff, the school district, and its programs.
- responsible for the attitude of the parents and the community toward the school, the district, and its programs.
- responsible for the planning and control of the expenditure of all funds.
- responsible to implement the district targets for improvement of student achievement results and staff, student, and parent attitudes related to safety and student conduct as measured in the annual Satisfaction Surveys.

Parents' perspective

The principal should be:

- the communicator of the broad issues surrounding education.
- answerable to parent demands and teacher opposition.
- the one to ask the teachers what they want.
- the person who invites parent input on teacher evaluation.

Teachers' perspective

The principal should be:

- a support for teachers.
- a change agent.
- a liaison between the school and the community.

Mrs. James encouraged teachers to solve their own problems. However, she indicated that at times the teachers want her to give an opinion or make a decision for them. Her response was: "You know you're a professional, you solve the problem". She indicated that "my intent was to be there to support, advise, and provide information, but it is important to me that the staff think about solutions and think of the consequences and not just dump it on me" (Personal interview, November 28, 1994). She found it frustrating that at times there was an unwillingness on the part of the teachers to make decisions. She felt that it was important for them, for their own learning and growth, to take risks and make decisions.

Questioning during the interview particularly pertained to the principal's role with the staff and the school council. I was especially interested in knowing about conflicts between the two groups. This led to a discussion of teacher evaluation and parent participation. In response to the question about how she accommodates the staff and the school council, Mrs. James said that she did not believe that parents should be involved in teacher evaluation. She feared that the parents who might participate would be the negative ones, and that was not their role. One of the teachers expressed the same belief. Parent #3 felt that parents can have legitimate input when they have spent a lot of time in the classroom. "It's hard for principals to be in the classroom enough to really see all kinds of things that happen" (Personal interview, March 9, 1995). She suggested that since some parents spent more time in the classroom than principals, parents have valuable information to contribute to a teacher's evaluation.

Teachers are required each March to update their files and have a final evaluation in June. In terms of teacher evaluation, Mrs. James stated:

The evaluation process for the teacher is very much a self-growth process. The teacher identifies a goal and develops her personal growth plan. They [teachers] need to celebrate all the things that they have done and this is an opportunity for me to do that [i.e., through putting something on file]. (Personal interview, March 9, 1995)

Teacher evaluation discussions occur in several sections in this study. The parental discussion of evaluation occurs in Question 2. Regarding evaluation in more general terms, during the first set of interviews the principal stated that she "reads every student report card" (Personal interview, November 28, 1994). This allows her to see how well the teachers know the students and determine students' progress. In terms of education and student evaluation, she felt that what the teachers do is outstanding.

In the discussion of principal evaluation Mrs. James indicated that she had difficulty with principal evaluation as it is carried out in her district. She indicated that teachers annually fill out a "Teacher Attitude Survey" in which they evaluate the principal, and these surveys are submitted to the school district. However, the survey does not require teacher signatures and information from the surveys is used at the district level for principal growth or evaluation. No accountability is required on the part of the teachers for what is written on the survey. Teacher #1 indicated: "The reason I don't like it [the survey] is because I think you have to be accountable for what you say" (Personal interview, March 9, 1995).

During our interview, Mrs. James mentioned that one of the most difficult parts of her role is dealing with the hidden agendas teachers or parents may have. "I cannot fight shadows. Someone comes to me with a concern or if I hear something of concern, I've said, 'Please ask that individual to come in and see me'" (Personal interview, November 29, 1994).

Another issue identified by Mrs. James was that of confidentiality. She found it difficult to provide information on decisions she made when much of the information was confidential. She felt ethically bound to respect individual integrity regarding confidential information. For example, she described personal problems one teacher was having, although the teacher had taken time to recuperate from a serious accident, she had had an extremely difficult time returning to work and continued to have difficulties with student discipline. Mrs. James was very supportive, however, she was not willing to discuss the problem with other teachers or with parents. She stated, "The more information I get, the more I feel that her problems are based on her accident". According to Mrs. James, she indicated to others that "you have to trust me on this", or I simply say, "I have information that I cannot give you" (Personal interviews, November 29, 1994 and March 10, 1995). Mrs. James found decision making difficult. She stated that "there is always a story, or background information to consider" (Personal interview, March 9, 1995).

The interview with Sally also focused on the role played by the District Office and the impact their directives had on her role. She said that district operations had always interested her, particularly since she had worked at the district level. However, she indicated that she no longer has the energy to spend time on district interests and suggested that it is probably part of the balance she needs in her life. She was "finding it increasingly difficult to work with parents and staff" (Personal interview, March 9, 1995).

One of the principal's concerns was that different parts of the district received conflicting messages concerning processes and procedures. According to Mrs. James, "Administrators go to a meeting and everyone comes away with a different perception. We're using the same documents but filling them out totally differently" (Personal interview, March 9, 1995).

Another area of difficulty for the principal at this stage in her career was in the area of students with special needs. The number of special needs students at Clam School had increased to 7%. Six years ago, 2% of the school population had special needs. In spite of the increase in such students, the school is still mandated to show a 3% increase in student achievement results on the provincial achievement scores. She protested the mandated increase to the Assistant Superintendent; however, she was forced to accept the 3% increase as one of the school goals.

In the second interview with Mrs. James, I asked if it would be increasingly difficult to keep students with behavior problems in school as parents become increasingly involved on the school council? She had spent a lot of time in our first interview talking about students with behavior problems and the amount of time, effort, and money involved in programming for these students. Many times the students required special aide assistance to help maintain the safety of other students. The discipline problems created by these students was substantial. She stated:

With regard to student discipline issues, I'm feeling this is my school. I'm responsible, and yet, I'm not responsible. I've got nothing to do with [creating or diminishing] the disruptive behavior of a student, but he is a student in my school and, therefore, I must find a way in which to deal with him whether he is a regular student or a behavior disordered student. Parents have the right to choose the school for their child. As a principal, I can say this is what the school can and cannot do for your child. A district site can do much more. In the issue of the behavior disordered, I was asked to intervene outside the school regarding certain students' behavior. I can only do so much. If parents of behavior

disordered students choose not to support our work at the school, then it is very difficult. (Personal interview, March 9, 1995)

On a personal level Mrs. James indicated that she does not have colleagues or friends outside the teaching profession. "There is not time, given the demands of this school" (Personal interview, March 9, 1995). She realized that she needs to delegate more to the assistant principal, but this was difficult for her.

As principal, she had not been involved in any professional development this year. "It's the first time in my whole life that I have not been able to take time for personal development" (Personal interview, March 9, 1995). The school's goal is to budget for lower classroom sizes; therefore, there is little money for professional development. The little money that is available is allocated to professional development for teachers.

Mrs. James indicated in her first interview that she previously had been involved in a work situation where the "old boys club" made all the decisions. I asked her to elaborate on this in her second interview. She said that she did not feel that gender was an issue for the principalship, and she had been working at another level in education at the time. She said, "I wonder how decisions will be made by the new superintendent? He indicated in a speech to administrators that the nineties would be the decade of women in leadership" (Personal interview, March 9, 1995).

Regarding her feelings she indicated that "I would say this year I almost feel like I am losing the battle and yet, on the other side, I feel a lot more confident and I've seen some really positive changes in people coming to me and talking about issues" (Personal interview, March 9, 1995).

The next person interviewed regarding the role of the principal was the superintendent's designate. Her district perspective follows.

Superintendent's designate perspective. In this interview the superintendent's designate explained the role of the principal with the district and the described the expectations of the principal. The school district was involved in an educational quality indicator's movement which requires that observable measures be taken for improvement. According to Sally, "We are accountable for student results. However, we were not instrumental in the development of the district goals" (Personal interview, March 9, 1995). In fact, the district goals are developed by the School Board trustees and key communicators who are parent representatives from school councils throughout the district. It is interesting to note that it was parents and School Board members who sat together to establish school district goals for the year (Superintendent's designate, personal interview, November 29, 1994). This was a decided change from the previous method of goal development. The School Board previously had assumed responsibility for establishing the district goals. The superintendent's designate indicated she was very pleased that parents had an opportunity to be involved in establishing district goals.

In a discussion of the development and organization of a school council and the role of the principal, the superintendent's designate stated:

The role of the principal is to determine at the school level what it is that they're going to do for their school. We [i.e., school district office personnel] pretty much leave our parent councils to determine what they're going to do at their school level as well. Principals are responsible for creating and facilitating and encouraging the school council organization. . . . Principals are there to encourage and support and provide information and to listen to the [parents on the] school council. Parent and community involvement is a big priority with the school district. We want parents to be involved. We hope that principals

would look for ways to involve, plan, and work together with parents. The District Office intended for the principal to collaborate with the parents and the school staff in any major initiatives within the school.

(Superintendent's designate, personal interview, November 29, 1994)

The superintendent's designate went on to state that, if the principals are reluctant to work with parents, they can delegate the direct responsibility of working with parents on the school council to another staff member (e.g., a teacher or assistant principal). At some schools principals are less willing to actively involve parents in decision making within the school, especially at the secondary or grades 7-12 level, according to the superintendent's designate (Personal interview, November 29, 1994).

Along with the interviews I examined documents. They supported information described in the interviews. For example, documentation received from the District Office advised that two district targets are mandated. One target is an improvement of 3% in student achievement results. The second target is a 5% improvement in staff, student, and parent attitudes related to safety and student conduct as measured in the annual Satisfaction Survey.

The Edmonton Public School District's School Budgeting Manual, Role Responsibility Statement for the Principal (1988) makes a strong statement regarding the responsibilities of the principal:

For the school, in accordance with law, board policy, and administrative directives, the principal shall be responsible for: The attitude of staff toward the students and parents, toward other staff, the schools, the district, and its programs. The attitude of the parents and the community toward the school, the district, and its programs. The planning and control of the expenditure of all funds. (p. 14)

A report from the District Office included the question: How do last year's

results help set the direction for the future? (Edmonton Public School District, 1993). The results expected to be achieved in 1993-1994 were established within the direction provided by the district priorities which are developed by the Board of Trustees. The principal was expected to use the district goals as a basis for the development of the school goals. The district priorities were:

1. to improve student achievement in the core subjects with an emphasis on mathematics and science;
2. to increase the effectiveness of the partnership of the home and the school in the development of students;
3. to improve the quality and timeliness of services provided to students, staff, parents, and the community;
4. to increase staff satisfaction with their involvement in the decision-making process;
5. to increase community involvement and confidence in public education;
6. to increase the number of students successfully completing their courses of study; and
7. to promote the health and safety of students and staff. (p. 1)

In addition to information from the documentation interviewed parents responded to questions about the role of the principal.

Parents' perspective. When the president of the PAA was asked about her perception of the role of the principal with the school council, she felt that the principal was very supportive. She intimated that the principal was the person who governed the school, while she was the person who governed the PAA (Parent #1, personal interview, November 28, 1994).

During our interview, the president indicated that one of the issues that evolved recently with the PAA had to do with two or three parents elected to the

nomination committee who wanted to elect a new president. The current president remarked:

The parents didn't like Sally [the principal] and didn't like me as president of the PAA. They thought I was a "yes man" to the administration. They wanted to set their own agendas. They wanted to have their own meetings. They didn't think the principal should have any input. (Parent #1, personal interview, November 28, 1994)

The difficulty with having proportionately few parents very involved at the school and with the PAA is that over time parents not involved in the school view parents who are involved as part of the school milieu. Thus, parents who are involved lose credibility with the parents who do not take part in school activities. The principal calls on the parents who are involved to assist with decision making in the school and she listens to their concerns.

When asked about her perception of the role of the principal with the school council, the secretary of the PAA suggested the principal's role should be that of communicator of the broad issues. She said that she, the president, and the principal shared the responsibility of organizing items for the PAA meeting agendas. She also shared that, "Mrs. James presents the budget and gets people's feedback to it, so there is input sought from the parents" (Parent #2, personal interview, November 18, 1994). In other words, she considered the establishment of a school budget a shared responsibility between the school and the parents.

One issue discussed in many of the interviews dealt with a problem which had arisen two years ago when Mrs. James was hired as the principal of Clam School. The former principal had been very popular with teachers and parents, and upon retiring "left some very big shoes to fill". Prior to her retirement, three teachers had devised a plan to attempt multi graded or

combined classrooms. Three grade 1 and grade 2 teachers led this initiative. The teachers had not been able to adequately inform the parents regarding this reorganization of the classrooms. When Mrs. James was hired as principal one of the first issues she had to deal with was parent opposition to this change. Mrs. James dealt with the parent issue regarding multi-graded classrooms by listening to the parents and choosing to adhere to their wishes and not supporting this new staff initiative. According to one of the parents, "I think she's worked really hard to respect parents' views. Parents want straight grades [i.e., parents were opposed to multi-graded, combined or split grades]" (Parent #2, personal interview, November 28, 1994). The parents had threatened to take the issue to the school board if Mrs. James refused to listen to their demands. This was a very difficult time for Sally. Sally resolved the issue by making the decision to give the parents the straight grades they wanted.

Another issue which surfaced during the present interviews was that of communication between teachers and parents. Parent #2 felt that it was the principal's role to ask the teachers what they wanted; it was not the parents' job to ask the teachers what they wanted. It seemed a potential problem was created by some parents working with teachers through improper channels (Personal interview, November 28, 1994).

Teachers' perspective. If parents expect principal support, what do teachers expect of the principal? One of the teachers suggested he expected the principal to support him and to act as a mediator with parents of his classroom. He indicated this was particularly important when there were special needs students in his classroom. The parents met with the principal to discuss their concerns. The principal then acted as the mediator between the parents and the teacher. In the budgeting process, this teacher also suggested that ultimately, "it is the principal who makes the changes, and it is the principal who

takes the advice of the staff budget committee and the parent group" (Teacher #2, personal interview, November 28, 1994).

Teacher #1 stated that she liked the system of a decentralized budget, where the principal decides how finances are spent on supplies and staffing. She also suggested that the principal reported to the PAA and tried to accommodate them the best way possible (Personal interview, November 29, 1994). Then the teacher committee brought the budget back to the staff and implemented it. The principal indicated that the school-based, decision-making process is necessary when establishing the budget. There was general unhappiness due to the provincial government's cutbacks. She claimed that a teacher said, "I'm not going to be happy because we've got fewer dollars" (Principal, personal interview, March 9, 1995).

Teacher #3 said that her perception of the role of the principal was as a liaison between the school and the community. It was a role where decisions are made for the benefit of students and information was shared between the school and the community (Telephone interview, March 9, 1995).

Documents. Communiques from the school, the district, the Alberta Teachers' Association, Alberta Education, and other sources also contained information on the role of the principal. At the school level, the principal was expected to develop a School Educational Plan as a requirement by Alberta Education.

For Clam School Mrs. James adopted a process for input from all educational stakeholders. This process involved a review of the current plan, discussing and keeping what was going well, and suggesting new ideas or directions for Clam School. Stakeholders were invited to come to a meeting at the school. The people present were divided into small groups to brainstorm. Information was invited from individuals who were unable to attend the meeting.

Mrs. James used a "graffiti sheet" which contained the district priorities mandated for all staff. For efficiency, a committee made up of parents and teachers synthesized and recorded results, indicators and plans. These results were posted on a highly visible chalkboard prior to checking and recording the goal-planning measures. Students in small groups were asked their opinion about the needs of the school and what they liked.

Parent input was requested in a school newsletter which asked parents to phone or attend a session one evening to provide input. The school newsletter stated:

We invite you to participate in our educational planning process for 1995-1996. To provide more opportunities for feedback from parents and community members, we invite you to share with us your ideas in one or more of the following ways: questionnaire, attend our mini "roundtables", phone our answering machine, view our draft results in the library, or contact the school. (Clam School Educational Plan, 1995)

The newsletter invites parent participation into the planning process and gives them a variety of ways in which to have input in order that the school can establish goals for the coming year. With regard to staff performance and attitudes, Clam is a school which values and nurtures active learners. Here students and staff thrive and grow while celebrating each others' accomplishments (Profile: Clam School, 1994).

Regarding the goals for the 1994-1995 school year, Mrs. James suggested that, "We are working on student achievement, and we have thirteen school goals this year, but we should be focusing on two or three goals. Thirteen is too many (Principal, personal interview, November 28, 1994)." The organizational committee developed two or three goals for next year and discussed the pros and cons of each goal with the entire staff. The goal-setting

efforts impacted the 1995-1996 budget because teachers wanted smaller class sizes. This meant that there was very little money for supplies, professional development and other items which also require funding. Teachers' salaries are the most expensive item in the budget. Clam school allowed 79% of their budget in 1994-1995 for teacher expenses, 9% for non teacher expenses, and 12% for Student Equipment and Supplies (SES) (see Appendix F). One teacher commented on the goal-setting process.

The school board sets mandates. Then as a school, for each of those priorities we have to address it [the mandate] with a result for our school. We must establish indicators and plan the strategy to reach results we've set for the school for each of the school board priorities. It involves students, staff, and definitely, the parents in the community. (Teacher #2, personal interview, November 28, 1994)

The Council of School Administrators a Specialist Council with the Alberta Teachers' Association published a newsletter in which a principal was quoted as saying:

An orientation procedure should be in place for school council people, including the chairperson. Parent volunteers could also be trained by the school council. . . . Although the parents should have input into all policies, the buck stops on the principal's desk. Consequently, the principal, staff, and school council must ensure that policies and procedures are developed for the greater good of the greatest number of students. (Alberta Teachers' Association, 1995, p. 5)

The provincial government or Alberta Education document (1995c) indicated that the role of the principal was to consult, and that when consulting: the school council will provide ideas and opinions to assist the principal in making decisions. This exchange of ideas and opinions among the

partners is usually on an equal basis. If the principal does not use the advice provided by the school council, the principal should inform the school council on what basis the decision was made. (p. 3)

According to the Alberta Education document, Roles and Responsibilities in Education: A Position Paper (1994b):

1. The main role of the principal is to provide educational leadership and administer the school in consultation with the Board, central office, school staff, parents and the community.
2. The principal is accountable to the Board of Education.
3. The principal is accountable for all school activities, student results and parent/community expectations.
4. The principal is the key spokesperson for the school.
5. The principal shares decision making with everyone involved with the operation of a school.
6. The principal is the key communicator providing advice and receiving advice. (p.2)

Many of the perspectives articulated in the interviews and summarized in Table 7 on page 85 are similar to the role described in the Roles and Responsibilities document above. The table is not intended to be an all inclusive list; it is a reflection of the information gathered through interviews, observation, and documentation. Yet there are also differences. These similarities and differences will be discussed in Chapter V.

Role of the principal. Findings are presented on the role of the principal in Research Question 1b: How does the principal accommodate requests from parents on the school council and from teachers on the staff? Interview questions asked of the parents were: Do all the parents have an opportunity for

input? Specific interview questions regarding staff and parent input can be found in Appendices D and E. Table 8 presents a summary of findings for staff and parent input.

Table 8

Summary of Findings for Staff and Parent Input

How does the principal accommodate requests from parents on the school council and from teachers on the staff?

Principal's perspective

- In order to best meet the needs of our kids, we have input from staff and parents.
- Parents have hidden agendas.
- Staff do not always support parent decisions.
- Having parents involved creates ethical issues of student privacy and confidentiality.
- Parents had input into the budget for the 1994-95 school year.
- Parents involved in the school have shown an increasing intolerance of behavior disordered children.
- Parents have the opportunity to evaluate the principal in the principal's first year.
- A goal for this year is to provide more choice and increase parental involvement.

Superintendent's designate perspective

- We encourage taking a look at our district priorities and school priorities regarding parent involvement in school councils.

Parents' perspective

- Parents find that teachers can become their personal friends.
- Parents are frustrated by the perception that incompetent teachers cannot be fired.
- Parents need to learn about the school and how it operates.
- There is an impression that some parents form cliques.
- Parents would like to use their money for hiring staff.
- Parents would like an avenue that allows them to have input into teacher evaluation.
- The parents and the principal should evaluate the school council.

Teachers' perspective

- School councils are a source of money to support the school.
 - Parents have disagreements among themselves.
 - The principal makes the final decision, even after teacher input.
 - We need parent input in order to implement things that are of interest to their children.
 - We have to teach the curriculum as developed by Alberta Education.
-

Financial input. While it is relatively easy to identify the role of the principal under ideal circumstances, in reality this role is very complex. When input is requested from parents on the school council and from the teachers, difficult choices must be made. In the situation at Clam School several issues arose. According to Mrs. James it was her perception that "it's my job to see what best meets the needs of our kids, and to do this we have input from staff and input from parents". She went on to say however that, in reality, "the parents have a lot of hidden agendas, and they put a lot of strings on the money they allocate to teachers" (Principal's interview, March 9, 1995). The money she was referring to is the money raised by the parents of the PAA.

Each year about \$200 is allocated to each classroom teacher. However, the teachers must spend the money as dictated by the guidelines of the PAA. These guidelines usually involve spending the money on classroom expendable materials, for example, special crafts supplies, particular games, or special supplies to support a particular science unit. Also, "there isn't 100% staff support for parent decisions about how money should be allocated" (Principal, personal interview, November 28, 1994). For example, this year parents decided to spend money on computers, while some staff were opposed to this. Another difficulty, according to Mrs. James, was the ethical issue of student privacy and confidentiality. She feels that it is inappropriate for teachers to come to the staff room and talk about their students when parents are present.

Teachers #1 and #2 (Personal interviews, November 29) indicated that their perception of the function of the Parent Advisory Association (PAA) is to provide a source of money to support the school. They also confirmed the difficulty in reaching a consensus regarding how the money raised by parents should be spent, and indicated that they thought the principal made the final decision. Parent #3 also said that she felt there was "a lot of controversy on

where to spend the money among parents and teachers” (Personal interview, November 29, 1994). Teacher #1 further stated:

Some school council members have a vested interest in decision making. The squeaky wheel gets the grease. I've been at PAA meetings where nothing gets solved. The parents have fights amongst themselves. However, this school would not be the school it is without our Parent Advisory Association because of the money and the time commitment these people put in. (Personal interview, November 29, 1994)

The principal said the parents have input into the budget. “Two parents, the secretary and the treasurer of the PAA, were included in the staff meetings when we drafted our results for the first time this year. Both parents had very high achieving kids and they're very supportive of the staff and the school. I also had more staff input this time” (Personal interview, March 9, 1995).

Teacher #2 remarked: “Financially the PAA is just an incredible group of people. Their commitment to raise funds for the school is outstanding” (Personal interview, November 28, 1994).

Mrs. James, in her interview of March 9, 1995, mentioned that parents who are the key players are not only involved for their own children, they are involved for the sake of other children as well. She spoke positively about the PAA executive members and their ability to work for the improvement of opportunities for the entire school population, not just for their own children.

Behavior disordered student concerns. Regarding behavior disordered students, Mrs. James indicated that there is an increasing intolerance of parents for why these [behavior disordered] children are in school. The concern regarding behavior disordered students was supported in the interview with the president of the PAA who remarked: “It's all confidential [i.e., student behavior]. I try to become tolerant or more compassionate, but I still think that you need a

strong discipline policy and these students should not be allowed to abuse other students" (Parent #1, personal interview, November 28, 1994). A similar frustration expressed by the principal included:

We need to find a way to make parents of students with behavior disorders commit to working with their children. There needs to be a contract. They need to show some accountability. At one point in time, the secretary of the PAA requested the unit cost for administration of behavior disordered students. The cost is very substantial. (Personal interview, March 10, 1995)

When parents spend more time in schools they become increasingly aware and concerned about the amount of time teachers spend on students with behavior disorders. The parents express their concerns at school council meetings and privately with the principal in her office. Parent #3 expressed this opinion:

I'm tired of the kids with behavior problems in school, and there seems to be more and more of them. I just think that a lot of parents [of kids with behavior problems] are both working, if they were made to miss a day of work to find a place for their child, other than at school, maybe they would try and get it together at home. There's always going to be some that won't. (Personal interview, March 10, 1995)

Superintendent's designate perspective. The superintendent's designate was very involved with the School Board trustees and key communicators in the development of the district goals for the year. She commented: "Our policy is to ensure that parents and the community are involved in what happens in this district. We encourage taking a look at our district priorities and school priorities for parents on the school councils" (Personal interview, November 29, 1994).

Parents' perspective. In parent interviews, the PAA president felt that she spent so much time with teachers of her children that they became her personal friends. This was substantiated by the secretary of the PAA who indicated that "[the president's] connection with some of the staff made it difficult for her to remain impartial and fair as a chairperson for the school council" (Parent #2, personal interview, November 28, 1994).

There was some dissatisfaction with the role of the Alberta Teachers' Association regarding the protection teachers have in terms of job security. The president felt that teachers are overly protected by the teachers' union or the Alberta Teachers' Association: "There is no way a teacher can be fired, even if he or she is incompetent" (Parent #1, personal interview, November 28, 1994).

In the first interview, the president also indicated that the last PAA elections were difficult. "We had some people who wanted to come in and overthrow this parent advisory where I am the president. It was awful" (Personal interview, November 28, 1994). This was substantiated by the other stakeholders, including the PAA secretary:

There is a real feeling in the community that there's a clique of people that run parent advisory. There are people who don't like the current president. Also, there has been a lot of hard feelings and a lot of friction. (Parent #2, personal interview, November 28, 1994)

The principal added that parents are very supportive, "but it also comes with a very high price, and at times I'm uncomfortable with it. Last year there was a very strong shift to get rid of what some parents perceived to be a parent clique" (Personal interview, March 9, 1995).

The secretary (Parent #2) suggested that one of the role's of the PAA is parent education, for example, the issue of combined classes which the teachers were proposing and the parents opposed. She remarked:

Teachers say that they really considered [combined classes] carefully but my experience has been different. It looks like they give change careful consideration, but parents felt that it was a monetary issue and combined classes would save money with fewer teachers required to adequately handle the number of students in the school. In fact, there was some talk this year that maybe parents should be putting money into [hiring] additional staff. (Personal interview, March 9, 1995)

An election held in January yielded a new PAA president. Mrs. James stated:

The fellow who is president this year is not around a lot. I think he has a lot of hidden agendas. I did clarify with him three times that, if there was any issue that I felt was contentious, I would go directly to him. Knowing what the community feels and being up front about the issues is important. I will talk to people and make sure that they know if there is strong opposition on the issues. (Personal interview, March 10, 1995)

Teacher evaluation. District policy does not allow the hiring of staff by school councils or the Parent Advisory Association. Regarding the issue of teacher evaluation, the secretary (Parent #2) remarked:

There's room for some level of evaluation of teachers by parents. Lots of times parents especially get to see teachers in ways that the principal doesn't get to see teachers. Last year there was a lot of damage done to a teacher which might have been avoided if parents were asked for legitimate input on teacher performance. (Personal interview, March 10, 1995)

Parent #2 indicated that parents could have meaningful information to contribute to teacher evaluation based on the amount of time spent in the classroom. She believed that:

A parent could evaluate their child's teacher only if they have been in the classroom. Also, parents need to have some mechanism by which they can input whether this teacher is effective in his or her job. If parents had a major issue, what did they do about it and how was it handled? Not just saying that they were mad at this teacher all year and never told anybody. (Personal interview, March 9, 1995)

She added that she felt parents had a major responsibility to inform the school regarding teacher performance. She also said,

There needs to be some recognition on the parent's part (that is, parents did nothing about this all year long, then they really don't have a right to say anything about it now either). Parents also have some responsibility to do and say something if they are unhappy. (Parent #2, personal interview, March 9, 1995).

This parent qualified her thinking to add, "I don't think that parents could judge the teacher's professional abilities or methodologies. We haven't had that background in education." However, she felt that "if people felt they had a mechanism by which they could really say something without having to make a big stink about it, they wouldn't feel so threatened. There's a real perception that teacher's can't ever get fired" (Parent #2, personal interview, March 9, 1995).

Parent #2 also indicated that the new chairperson for the school council felt that the parents really had no input at all. "He is just really seeing that in fact that there are no hidden agendas from the school as he had assumed" (Personal interview, March 9, 1995).

Regarding principal evaluation, parents evaluate the principal in their first year in a new school. One of Mrs. James' evaluations was low and she wondered who had evaluated her, since this information is forwarded to the District Office and becomes part of the school's results under principal

responsibility. She was also interested to learn what she had or had not done to warrant a low score; however, the surveys are anonymous (Personal interview, March 10, 1995).

According to Parent #2, "to become involved in school council has challenged the whole idea of parent involvement, to have us really look at the fact that if we're going to be involved we have a lot to learn about the school and how it operates" (Personal interview, March 10, 1995). She went on to indicate that parents should also be permitted to evaluate the PAA, and the principal should also give feedback on how the PAA is working. Parent #2 wants to know what is working well and what can be changed.

Teachers' perspective. Teacher #2 commented:

We need their [parents] input in order to implement things that are of interest for their children. They let us know what really interests them. They present another viewpoint to widen our focus. However, we are also responsible to the Alberta government, and we have to follow the curriculum. (Personal interview, March 9, 1995)

This teacher, who had half her parents volunteer in her classroom, suggested that "I have lots of parent volunteers. It is a challenge to juggle these people and keep them satisfied and give them meaningful work" (Personal interview, March 9, 1995).

Teacher #1 remarked in a personal interview (March 10, 1995) that "we always have parent representatives at staff meetings." This is another avenue open to parents in which they can gain further insight into school operation and can contribute to school-based decision making. The difficulty with this situation is that parents often are overwhelmed by the number of teachers at the meetings and their own lack of knowledge about education (Parent #3, personal interview, March 10, 1995).

Decision Making

Research Question 2: What are the processes or models currently influencing decision making? Interview questions can be found in Appendices D and E. The principal and teachers were asked: Are decisions made by your school council? Are these decisions made collaboratively? The superintendent's designate and parents were not asked specific questions about the decision-making process or models. The superintendent's designate was not directly involved with the school and had no knowledge regarding how decisions were made at Clam school. Parents were not asked specific questions regarding decision making processes or models, because it was felt that they would not feel they had enough background knowledge to know how decisions were being made. They did comment on their perceptions of who and how decisions were made. Parents did not feel that they made any decisions.

Only the principal and teachers answered specific questions regarding decision-making. Other participants commented through conversation on how decisions were made. It was evident in the interviews that the principal and teachers were not able to identify specific decision-making processes and models. Therefore, information regarding the decision-making was gathered through discussion, description and observation. Observation of a decision making process was collected during my attendance at the Parent Advisory Association (PAA) meeting on January 16, 1995. Therefore, I will not discuss models and decision-making processes in this chapter. In this chapter I am presenting the information collected regarding decision making in general terms. I will present decision-making processes and models in the summary and conclusions sections in Chapter V.

Table 9 presents a summary of the findings on decision making.

Table 9

Summary of Findings on Decision Making

What processes or models reflect how decision making happens at Clam school?

Principal's perspective

- She struggles with decision making, particularly with regards to difficult student behavior.
- She believes that the staff makes the decisions unless parents force a decision.

Superintendent's designate perspective

- Decisions are being made where they make the most sense, which is at the school level.

Parent's perspective

- Parents want teachers and staff willing to tell them the background for decisions.
- Parents wondered whether they should be making their own decisions, irrespective of what the principal said.
- Parents felt that they should have the final say where Parent Advisory Association fund raised money was spent.
- Parents made two significant decisions, one was to change the Christmas Concert to two nights, the other was to disallow combined classes.
- Parents said that they want an advisory role as a Parent Advisory Association.

Teachers' perspective

- One of the teachers indicated that the budget was presented to the parents.
 - Another teacher said that there was a decision-making process involving parents establishing the school budget and deciding what was important for the school.
 - Many decisions were being made due to financial cutbacks.
 - Parents and teachers collaborated on budget decisions.
-

Principal's perspective. Mrs. James stated that in her struggle with decision making and difficult student behavior, "I will make a decision with which you will not be comfortable, but it is in my best judgment given the information I have. Both my staff and the parents have an incredibly hard time with that." With regard to a student with behavior difficulties, she said:

My decision was, where do I put my Aides or support staff to work with special needs students, or where do I pull the student out of the academic part of his or her program? What kind of program will effectively make a difference for this student? (Personal interview, November 28, 1994)

Sally also stated, "I'm concerned when teachers say they don't have adequate influence over a school level decision, yet, our school is organized in a way that the staff makes the decision. Is that not adequate influence?" (Personal interview, November 28, 1994).

Superintendent's designate. The superintendent's designate said that, "there are schools that are involving parents at all levels from beginning decision making to how many staff, how many classrooms, and right through the process" (Personal interview, November 19, 1994). Her recommendation of Clam school for this study suggests that Clam School was one of the schools that involved parents at all levels of decision making. She indicated that decisions were being made where they made the most sense, which was at the school level. It was expected, however, that district priorities were to be used at the school level as a basis for establishing school goals.

Parents' perspective. According to Parent #1, parents were asked to assist in developing a more accurate report card system. The parents found the report cards difficult to interpret since the marks did not compare the students with each other. They reported according to each student's own progress. The

parents were involved in evaluating several report cards which were presented. This parent was also involved in other issues such as sexual assault, discipline, and self-esteem. Other areas of involvement included curricular subjects such as French and the organization of the Christmas Concert. The number of performances for the Christmas Concert was cut in half when the parents requested having the students perform over two nights, rather than having one very long concert. The decision to have two nights for the Christmas Concert was an example of a Parent Advisory Association (PAA) determined decision. She indicated that "at another school they find that their administration is very controlling of their PAA and that there are no decisions; it's the administration telling the PAA what to do and what kind of meetings to have" (Personal interview, November 28, 1994).

The same parent indicated:

There are a lot of parents who feel they should be demanding, "I want my kid in this class with that teacher," while I feel that the school and the teacher makes the decision in the best interests of all the children.

However, there are some parents who always believe that they should not have any limits on their educational demands. (Parent #1, personal interview, November 28, 1994)

Parents were involved in making a decision regarding combined classes. It was a very controversial issue. Parent #2, indicated that parents wanted straight grades. She said that "we have to have parents come out and teachers and staff willing to come out and tell us the background of these decisions. We need information." She also commented that "there was quite a discussion with the PAA at one of the meetings regarding whether we should be making our own decisions kind of irrespective of what the principal said and talk to the teachers ourselves" (Personal interview, November 28, 1994).

With respect to fund raising and where the money was spent, one parent indicated:

It's the people that come out to the meetings that vote on what the money is spent on. We do give money, a certain amount of money to each of the teachers each year. The teachers keep track of what they spend the money on. Not everybody agrees where the money should be allocated, and not all the teachers wanted new computers this year. It takes several months to decide how to spend the money. You just hear that and grumbings. It comes down to the fact that we live in a democratic society, so we vote. The teachers do know that it is the parent advisory who vote. The PAA tries to please the majority of the teachers and parents, and we try to make sure that all the money doesn't go to only one area within the school such as music or physical education or computers. (Parent #3, personal interview, November 29, 1994)

In this parent's second interview, she felt that parents should have the final say in where fund-raising money is spent:

The parents should have the final say, but they always try to work with the teachers. There's been disagreements among the parents too. They've always tried to please everybody, and spent a little bit of money in each different area so that the library and music have received funding, and teachers always get a certain amount of money just to use on their own for their classrooms. So if they have something special in mind, they have the opportunity to carry out the plan with their extra funds. (Parent #3, personal interview, March 9, 1995)

Teachers' perspective. Two of the teachers expressed differing opinions about how the parents were involved with decision making with regard to the school budget. According to one teacher, the school budget is presented to the

parents. In other words, the parents do not have an opportunity for input (Teacher #2, personal interview, March 10, 1995). The other teacher stated:

The process for decision making regarding establishing a school budget is for the committee to meet and go over the details. We then generate questions followed by round table discussions where we go over each question. This is for the whole staff including some parents. (Teacher #1, personal interview, March 10, 1995)

This teacher indicated that the parents were actively involved in the budgeting process.

There was a difference between these two stated perceptions. The first perception was that the parents are told of the final budget decision, while the second was that parents are actively involved in the establishment of the budget by being included in the process. Thus, the implication was that parents are not involved in decision making regarding the budget process, versus the perspective that they are actively involved. I believe that the discrepancy in their opinions related to the differing time in which they were involved in working with the budget committee. That is, one of the teachers had been previously involved when the budget was presented while the other is presently involved.

Another teacher suggested that many of the decisions for change are happening because of financial cutbacks (Teacher #3, telephone interview, May 24, 1995). In the 1994-95 school year, the parents and teachers collaborated on how best to balance the budget.

In responding to the Alberta Education request for feedback on the Roles and Responsibilities document regarding decision making, one of the parents indicated: "We felt very strongly that parents should have an advisory role not a decision making role in school operations." She said that "a number of people talked about concerns of a few people running the school council. We felt that

instead of giving power to the parents in general they were giving power to a select group of parents" (Parent #2, personal interview, March 10, 1995). One of the teachers wondered, "How do you pick and choose the parents that you want involved in educational decisions?" (Teacher #2, personal interview, March 10, 1995).

Change

Research Question 3: What changes have been brought about by the principal and the school council in the areas of policy, program and budgets?

All the participants interviewed were asked: What changes have been brought about by the Parent Advisory Association or school council at Clam School? Actual questions can be found in Appendices D and E. Table 10 presents the findings regarding change.

Change is almost always fraught with frustrations, and this was also true at Clam School. The frustrations became evident when the PAA was given an opportunity to influence what was happening at the school. The greatest change in the school, according to one of the parents, "is the lack of cooperation of parents who have the problem kids at the school who don't back up the principal or the teachers" (Parent #3, personal interview, November 29, 1994).

Principal's perspective. Mrs. James indicated that changes are going to come about with integration and inclusion as a response to the problems created by these children as they influence the regular kids. Many parents of regular kids will be saying, "it is not acceptable for my children to have to be subjected to students with behavior disorders. It puts my child's safety at risk." (Personal interview, March 9, 1995). Confidentiality surrounding students with behavior disorders is difficult because sometimes parents of regular kids think they know but they really don't know why something has happened with a particular child.

Table 10

Summary of Findings for Change

What changes* have been brought about by the principal and the school council in the areas of policy, program and budget?

Principal's perspective

- Parents of regular students are becoming increasingly concerned about the inclusion of behavior disordered students in regular classrooms.
- Parents would not support the change to combined classes.

Superintendent's designate perspective

- Key communicators are people who can assist in making effective changes.

Parents' perspective

- Would like to change the ideas that other parents have regarding the PAA and let parents know that they were being involved in decision making and change.
- The PAA has supplied the school with financial assistance which included the purchase of computers, library books, basketball courts, painted tarmac, kindergarten playground and music handbells.
- Parents have supported student-led conferencing.
- Parents put in a crosswalk and a parent parking patrol for student safety.
- Parents were very happy with the previous principal and did not want a change.
- Parents have been more involved in the key communicator program.
- Parents resent the lack of cooperation of parents with problem kids at school.

Teachers' perspective

- The Volunteer Program made a positive change.
 - Educational cutbacks have created financial constraints, large class sizes, home schooling, and charter schools.
 - Teachers at Clam school have been able to keep their class sizes down.
 - Parents opposed combined classes and long Christmas concert, and changed both initiatives.
-

*1994-1995 Clam School Changes

Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - goals developed at the district and school level - supported student-led conferencing - Key communicator involvement in district goal setting
Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - improvements in computer programs - improvement in safety program
Budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - parent and staff collaborate on goal and budget setting

Sally further stated:

I am beginning to feel that if my own children had to deal with the students with behavior problems at Clam School, I would pull them out of the public school system and put them in a private school. I see that something will have to change. Also, I worry how having students with behavior disorders impacts on overall student achievement on the provincial achievement exams. (Personal interview, March 9, 1995)

With regard to systemic authority and the hiring of a new superintendent, Mrs. James indicated that she felt a sense of isolation during the change. The system was required by the Alberta Government to restructure, and down-size the number of positions at the assistant superintendent level. Therefore, questions from the principals were to be directed to the superintendent rather than the associate superintendent. The fact that principals were to report to the Superintendent was supported by a district staff update (Edmonton Public School District, 1995), which indicated that "200 principals will report directly to the superintendent of schools" (p. 2). Sally felt that with fewer associate superintendents it seemed to be the same administrators who always controlled the meetings. She had developed a close relationship with her former associate superintendent. Sally said:

We were sort of both learning [i.e., they started new jobs at the same time]. I felt that she was my mentor. She [associate superintendent] put in my performance appraisal that I took too much to heart and I took too much home. She asked me what I was doing personally for myself, instead of spending my whole life at the school. She asked me to write out goals for myself and my goals were always in relationship to the school. They were never personal goals. (Personal interview, March 9, 1994)

Provincial changes created through educational cutbacks include financial constraints, large class sizes, home schooling, and charter schools. At Clam school, teacher #1 said, "We have been able to keep our class sizes down. But there is very little money for supplies" (Personal interview, November 29, 1994).

The school budget was an important part of the discussions; therefore, it was important to describe the composition of the budget (see sample in Appendix F). The budget for Clam School was titled "Distribution of Resources." The categories are teacher (full-time equivalent), teacher costs (including supply or substitute teachers), non teacher (full-time equivalent), non teacher costs (including supply or substitute personnel), and Services Equipment and Supplies (SES). SES included consulting services, maintenance services, staff development, amortized equipment and supplies, as well as other services and equipment.

Superintendent's designate perspective. The superintendent's designate stated that for the first time she had been responsible for organizing goal setting for the 1994-95 school year, which involved school board members and parents interacting in one large session of over 300 people. Each school council elected two key communicators who participated in the goal-setting meeting with school board members. In this setting, it is possible for parents who are key communicators to influence the goals which are established for the entire school district. She indicated:

The goal-setting process gives key communicators an opportunity to talk to school board trustees and vice versa. These are all people who can make effective changes. Also, the key communicators are also (PAA) members, and this is another way for us to involve the school council parents at the district level. It's been a very big change for our school

district. Our key communicator program has 320 key communicators who are involved in setting goals for our district. (Personal interview, November 29, 1994)

Parents' perspective. Change was coming by way of the school board according to one of the parents. "The school board is changing so much in how much say parents have in what's happening in the school. They are involving parents more through the key communicator program in areas such as curriculum or discipline" (Parent #2, personal interview, November 28, 1994).

A change in the principalship can affect how parents perceive the school. Parents were very happy with the previous principal of the school, according to the parents interviewed. The principal retired, and "everybody wanted to compare her [new principal] to the previous principal and nobody wanted change" (Parent #1, personal interview, November 28, 1994).

The PAA president would like to change the ideas that other parents have regarding the PAA and what it is about. She said:

I would like to change the idea of what other parents think our parent advisory is about. It isn't just to have a little coffee party and talking about who's volunteering. It is parents being involved in decision making in the school. (Parent #1, personal interview, November 28, 1994)

One of the changes initiated by the PAA was the purchase of computers. This prompted some questions by parents. According to Sally, computers have been a big issue with the parents wondering, "Why isn't my child on the computer yet, since we decided the computers should be purchased months ago?" (Personal interview, November 29, 1994).

At the same time, contributions by parents to the computer programs have been a distinct advantage to the school. One of the parents specified:

We've just put in nine or twelve Macs with CD Roms and we bought all the computers in the library, books in the library, basketball courts, painted the tarmac, built the kindergarten playground, musical handbells. We have control [of where the money is spent]. (Parent #1, personal interview, November 28, 1994)

Another parent agreed with this. "The school council has supplied a lot of financial assistance to the school" (Parent #2, personal interview, November 28, 1994). Parent #3 indicated that, "We have 11 new computers that do the neatest things, it's just incredible." She went on to say that they "spent money on tether balls and basketballs. There's something for each grade in this school for the kids to use. We have contributed books to our wonderful library" (Personal interview, November 28, 1994). One of the teachers commented: "We get \$200 a year from the PAA to supply our classrooms with various things, games, etc." (Teacher #1, personal interview, November 29, 1994).

Other changes have been parents' support for student-led conferencing, declared mandatory at Clam School. Student-led conferencing is an activity that involves students, parents, and teachers who share together the accomplishments of individual students. In their efforts to more accurately report to parents, teachers have developed a process which directly involves students in reporting their accomplishments. Students tell their parents what they have learned and share the results of their efforts.

Parents have been concerned about the safety of their children, because the school faces a busy street. Therefore, they initiated a change to improve student safety. According to one parent, "We just put in a crosswalk" (Parent #1, personal interview, November 28, 1994). One teacher also indicated that "they [PAA] have organized a parent parking patrol" (Teacher #1, personal interview, November 29, 1994).

Opposition to change by the PAA came in the form of parents not wanting combined classes, according to Mrs. James. "There was tremendous support from three strong teachers on staff to have combined classes. Parents wouldn't support the change" (Principal, personal interview, March 9, 1995). Therefore, a decision was made by the principal to listen to the parents and disallow combined classes.

Teachers' perspective. The PAA has created change through opposition to some school initiatives and through support of others. One teacher indicated that her perception was that the PAA both supported and opposed decisions made by the staff. They opposed the Christmas Concert and the combined classes. They supported the computer lab, the track club, the art club, and the beautification project in front of the school. The teacher supports the PAA; however, she felt that parents and teachers had different values and thus came to different conclusions. The parents had a superficial understanding of education and often related best to the way in which they were educated. She said that "if parents were to have more say in the education of their children, that education of parents regarding schooling was of utmost importance" (Teacher #3, telephone interview, May 24, 1995).

One teacher indicated that the parent Volunteer Program, which operates independently of the PAA, had made a positive change. The parent Volunteer Program had their own Coordinator (Teacher #2, personal interview, November 28, 1994).

With respect to teacher evaluation, one of the teachers worried about a change to have parent input to teacher evaluation. "It looks inviting on one side of the railroad tracks, on the other side it's a little scary to me. It depends on whether the parents perceive their children are doing well in school. We have to educate the parents as well, as to what we're all about, what's going on in the

rooms, and what their child is learning" (Teacher #2, personal interview, November 28, 1994).

The findings regarding changes that have been brought about by the principal and the school council in the areas of policy, program and budgets follow. The PAA or school council were involved in several changes in these areas. District policy changes occurred through Key Communicator input in district goal setting. Another policy change at the school level was the student-led conferencing which was implemented for the whole school. The program changes included improvements in the computer programs available to students, and an improved safety program for students with the addition of a parent parking patrol. Parents were invited to collaborate on the Clam School goal and budget-setting activities with the staff therefore they were able to influence school policy and budget.

An Expanded Case of the Principal

When I made telephone contact with Sally in May, 1995 (Principal, telephone interview, May 24, 1995), she indicated that she had decided to apply for the principalship of a smaller school. She said she did this in order to reduce her stress level, and she was pleased to report that she had been given a transfer to a different and smaller school in the fall and was quite excited. I asked her if she would mind if I interviewed her in her new school if the possibility arose. She agreed. Thus, I had the potential to bring a new dimension to my findings, as Mrs. James would be able to reflect on her work at Clam School and give greater insight into the information which had been collected.

I interviewed Mrs. James in her new school on Friday, March 8, 1996. She stated that she continued to spend much of her time teaching parents about schools, about the principalship and the power she has and does not

have. For example, she said that the parents wanted a teacher "let go." She told the parents, "I will try to do what I can, but I may not do what you want me to do.' Parents think that they have every right to take a teacher out." She found that the parents at her former Clam School were much better informed about education than were the parents at her new school (Personal interview, March 8, 1994).

Sally continued to encourage teachers to communicate to parents about the curriculum. She found the quality of the teachers better and more progressive at Clam School, compared to her new school. The teachers at Clam School were very supportive of curricular and teaching innovations.

Regarding parent input, Sally used the same planning process as she used at Clam School in her new school. She invited input from parents to the school education plan and school budget. She changed the process slightly by requesting input from families as a written "family homework" assignment rather than a brainstorming session. Her reason for establishing the homework assignment was based on the great distance most of her students had to the school. It was very difficult for most parents to come and discuss goal setting at the school itself. She requested information from parents and students for the budget process. Sally felt the quality of the feedback was excellent and plans to continue the use of the "family homework" process.

Sally missed Clam School and the feeling that the staff and parents were better, brighter and more advanced or as she referred to it, as "elitism," and the quality of the teachers and parents. Sally had referred to the teachers at Clam School as "prima donnas" in the first set of interviews. I was confused by this term and requested that she explain this further. She said that the teachers are better than average teachers and they know it; thus, she called them "prima donnas."

Mrs. James finds the need to always give positive strokes to others very wearing. She said that she feels she never gets positive feedback in return. She posited:

I was led to believe that I would have more autonomy with the change due to administration cutbacks. This has not happened. The deadlines for completion of reports, etc., are horrific, and my hands are tied with expectations. The administrative load has more than doubled as a result of the change of the superintendent. Also, associate superintendent's positions were eliminated. I find the directives unclear, and timeframes too short. What was told in terms of expectations hasn't happened.

Change has been too fast, although I realize through my reading lately that change should be fast. (Principal, personal interview, March 8, 1996)

It is evident that the role of the principal was stressful for Mrs. James both in the large and small schools. In her quest to lessen the stress of her position, Sally did not feel she had succeeded. One year later, her story about her role as a school principal was much the same. The change to a less stressful environment she sought was illusive. I would encourage her to continue her efforts to provide a learning community within her school, and to continue to nurture all the stakeholders within the school. I would also encourage her to seek more assistance with behavior disordered students.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented the findings related to the interviews conducted regarding the role of the principal at a school where parents were increasingly involved in decision making. Perspectives by the participants were summarized and presented in answer to the three research questions: the leadership role of the principal, staff and parent input, decision making and change.

According to the interview with the principal regarding the role of the principal, I found that she felt the principal should be nurturing with parents and staff and an evaluator of teachers and students. Issues surrounding the role of the principal included hidden agendas, confidentiality and respect for personal integrity, varying expectations, student discipline, special needs students, improved student achievement, and lack of adequate time and need to manage her own feelings. The role of the principal, according to the superintendent's designate included, leadership with parents, nurturing of parents, being responsible for parent attitudes, the expenditure of the school budget, and implementation of district targets. Parents suggested that the role of the principal included being the leader of the school, a communicator of the global picture to parents, and respecting parent views. The teacher's perspective saw the principal as the mediator with the parents and a liaison between the school and the community. Finally, Alberta Education stated that the principal is an education leader. As such, he or she is; responsible for the development of a School Educational Plan, accountable to the district for all school activities, student results, and parent or community expectations and the key spokesperson for the school.

Regarding staff and parent input, the principal's perspective was that the school needs input from parents and staff. Issues include difficulty with school council elections, parent cliques on the school council, lack of staff support for parent decisions, and lack of parent support for staff decisions. The superintendent's designate suggested that parents must be encouraged to get involved in school. The parents felt that the Alberta Teachers' Association protected the teachers too much, and teachers did not wish parents to be involved in teacher evaluation. They were worried that only the parents with complaints would take the time to evaluate their efforts.

The principal's perspective on decision making was that it is difficult to make decisions when the staff and parents do not agree on an issue. The superintendent's designate indicated that decisions should be made at the school level. The parents want input into decisions and the PAA or school council to be advisory. The teachers interviewed had differing opinions on who should be involved in decision making and how decisions should be made. Alberta Education's perspective is that the principal should share decision making with everyone.

Some of the changes which were brought about by the Parent Advisory Association (PAA) or school council at Clam School were not always supported by teachers. The fact that the parents and teachers did not agree made decision making difficult. The principal was the person who was required to solve the conflict between the teachers and the parents. The parents assisted in making changes at the school and at the district level, but they wanted increased ability to influence change. Teachers welcomed some of the changes brought about by the school council and disagreed with others. This indicates that collaborative decision making can cause conflict. Table 11 presents a summary of findings of the role of the principal when parents are increasingly involved in decision making.

Chapter V will draw together the findings from Chapter IV and research as outlined in Chapter II. The leadership notions of Rost and Starratt form the conceptual framework for examining the leadership style of the principal in this case study. The chapter also presents the implications, recommendations, and conclusions regarding the challenging role of the principal as parents become increasingly involved in decision making.

Table 11

Summary of Findings of the Role of the Principal When Parents Are Increasingly Involved in Decision Making

Participants	Findings	Staff and Parent Input	Decision making	Change
	Role of the Principal The principal should be:			
Principal perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • nurturing with parents and staff • evaluator of teachers and students • issues included - hidden agendas, confidentiality, varying expectations, student discipline, behavior disordered students, improved student achievement, time, coping with feelings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • school needs input from parents and staff • issues included - school council elections, no staff support for parent decisions, no parent support for staff decisions, cliques on council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • difficult time making decisions - who makes final decision? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents and teachers did not support the same changes
Superintendent's Designate perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leadership with parents • nurturing with parents • responsible for parent attitudes • responsible for expenditure of school budget • responsible for implementation of district targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • encourage parents to be involved in school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • decisions should be made at the school level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents on school councils assist on making changes
Parent perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • communicator of global picture to parents • respecting of parent views • leader of the school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ATA protects teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wanted input to decisions • wanted to be advisory 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wanted increased ability to affect change
Teacher perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mediator with parents • liaison between the school and the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • parents not involved in teacher evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who and how parents were involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • welcomed some of the changes brought about
Alberta Education perspective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responsible for the development of a School Educational Plan • educational leader • accountable to the district • accountable for all school activities, student results and parent or community expectations • key spokesperson for the school 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • principal shares decision making with everyone 	

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS,
AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

The purpose of this study is to describe how one principal in Alberta, Canada, accommodates increased parental involvement in decision-making as mandated by the Government of Alberta. The intent is to examine how this principal fulfils her role as parents and teachers share in making decisions about policies, programs and budgets.

The participants in this study include the parents, teachers, superintendent's designate, and the principal. I developed a set of three research questions to guide the study:

1. What is the leadership role of the principal when there is increased parent participation in decision-making?
2. What processes or models reflect how decision making happens at a school where participants are engaged in collaboration?
3. What changes have been brought about by the principal and the school council in the areas of policy, program and budget as specified in the Alberta Education (1994) Roles and Responsibilities document?

A case study was the methodology which explored the three research questions. Interviews, observation, and documentation were collected for the 1994-95 school year at a school where parents were previously involved in decision making. In addition, I attended a school council meeting and completed a follow-up interview with the principal.

Rost (1994) defines leadership as an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend real change that reflect their mutual

purposes. I describe in the findings how the role of the principal is affected when parents have increased input into decision making, and the changes that result in policies, program and budgets from such collaborations.

The findings are organized and reported from the perspectives of the participants regarding the role of the principal. The perspectives, as described in the findings, form a picture of how the leadership role of the principal is different when parents are involved in decision making. Following this discussion are summary descriptions in which I consider some of the broader issues that emerged. Some conclusions about the nature of the leadership processes arise out of that discussion. The chapter concludes with reflections on the implications and suggestions for further research following this study. I will show that further study is needed in schools where parents are increasingly involved in decision making.

This study took place during 1994-1995, the time when the government in Alberta, Canada, was making drastic cutbacks to its education budget. One change that occurred due to the cutbacks was a more active role for parents and school councils in Alberta (Alberta Education, 1994b). The principal no longer would be able to make arbitrary decisions regarding education. "The principal shares the challenge of making wise decisions with one or more of these groups [i.e., the school board, the superintendent, the teachers and other school staff, the school councils, the students and their parents, and the community]" (p. 27).

In response to the Roles and Responsibilities, (1994b), document the parents on school councils in Alberta maintained that, although they wanted more input into decision making, they also wanted to keep their advisory role. Upon receiving this feedback, the government passed Bill 37 which legislates

that school councils are to remain advisory in nature, and school councils are to work in consultation with the principal under the guidance of the School Board.

Analysis of Data Categories

A summary of the participant perspectives in this study is presented here. I incorporate the views of two leadership theorists--first, Rost's (1993a) leadership definition and, second, Starratt's (1996) theory of educational administration, community of learners and the development of a moral community.

Role of the principal. The role of the principal is viewed in two parts. First, the leadership role of the principal and, second, how the principal accommodates input from parents and from staff.

Leadership. In terms of leadership, I considered the role of the principal as an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes (Rost, 1994). The role of the principal under study reflected several aspects of this leadership definition. I investigated the perceptions of the participants to determine which leadership processes were present. The participants interviewed were asked, "What is the role of the principal on the school council?" The influencing relationship she had was reflected throughout the interviews. The following paragraphs describe how that influence was employed.

The principal in this study indicated that she feels her role with parents and staff is to be nurturing. The influence relationship she enjoys with the participants results from her care and dedication to the parents and the staff. She listens carefully to their concerns and, as observed, dedicates much of her time to this endeavor.

Figure 1 presents a summary of perspectives of the role of the principal.

The Role of the Principal

Circle number:

1. - Combined perspectives of principal and superintendent's designate
2. - Combined perspectives of principal and parents
3. - Combined perspectives of parents and teachers
4. - Combined perspectives of superintendent's designate and teachers
5. - Combined perspectives of all stakeholders

Figure 1. Summary of the perspectives of the role of the principal. (Ellefson, 1996).

She also feels that it is her role, not that of parents, to be very involved with the evaluation of students and staff. Despite the pressure from parents to have a say regarding the evaluation and dismissal of “incompetent” teachers, and the placement of their children in the favored teacher’s classroom, she maintains that it is her responsibility to formally evaluate teachers and to maintain the autonomy of student placement. The principal has to use her influence with parents as a barrier to their wishes and to convince them that the parents, teachers, and principal do have a mutual purpose to do the best for all children under given circumstances.

Coping with the myriad of expectations of the participants (Rost, 1993a; Wheatley, 1992) is an issue for her, as is student discipline, particularly when there are an increasing number of behavior disordered students within the school. This is coupled with an increasing number of parents of such students who are unwilling or unable to cope with their children. Other pressures include the expectation by the district and the provincial government that the student achievement scores improve each year.

On a more personal level, the principal experienced difficulties finding time to adequately meet the needs of her position and having time to pursue personal interests. A balance between personal and private life is often forsaken when increased responsibilities are required of the principal. The final issue identified through the interviews was the difficulty the principal had in coping with her own feelings. She identified the exhaustion she feels at times when she is always required to be positive and supportive and her own need to be encouraged and supported. The need for a principal to keep up the level of participation and to generate enthusiasm, energy, and activity is supported in the literature by Thomas et al. (1989).

The district perspective on the principal's role with the school council involves the necessity for the principal to model leadership support. She is given responsibility for parent attitudes, expenditure of the school budget, and implementing district targets. Leadership with parents will be necessary for the principal prior to the principal being able to accept responsibility for parent attitudes. The principal needs to develop an influence relationship with parents in order to accomplish this district expectation.

The parents expected the principal to respect parent views and to be the leader of the school. They expected the principal to develop an understanding and respect for their opinions and to act according to their wishes.

The teachers felt that the principal should be a mediator with parents and a liaison between the school and the community. The role of the principal as mediator is not directly reflected in either Rost or Starratt in their definition or theory of leadership. It is indirectly reflected in the notion of a community of learners, described by both Rost and Starratt.

Alberta Education views the role of the principal as being responsible and accountable for a variety of activities, including leadership. The expectation is that the principal will be responsible for student results and will respond to parent and community expectations. In other words, the notion of leadership remains popular at the provincial level, and the expectation of leadership as an influencing relationship is inherent in the expectations of government.

I considered the development of a community of learners and the development of a moral community as the work of the educational administrator (Starratt, 1996). The development of community in schools is also a common idea among researchers (Sergiovanni, 1992; Noddings, 1984).

The principal indicated that she struggles with decision making, particularly when parents and staff do not support the same changes supported

by the teachers. There were two instances where this was evidenced in the interviews. The first was the issue of the combined classes. Three teachers at Clam school wanted to try to combine classes in order to maximize the students' ability to learn. The teachers had proposed to have three combined grade 1 and 2 classes and had organized the change amongst themselves. When the parents learned about it they were adamantly opposed to not having straight grades. The second issue was the overly long Christmas Concert. The parents proposed two concerts on differing nights so that the concerts would be shorter. In spite of the struggles, the principal was willing to share decision making with the teachers and the parents. In this way she acts collaboratively with the participants, allowing all participants to have input into the decision-making process which results in real change.

The principal feels that it is incumbent for her to educate parents adequately regarding the structure of schooling as well as the educational viability of teaching methodologies. For example, while combined classes were frowned upon years ago when the parents of students attended school, there is a growing trend for children of various ages to be grouped together. This trend is based on the knowledge that children learn from each other and that multi-aged classrooms can form viable learning situations. Therefore, it is important for the principal to share the educational viability of teaching methodologies with parents. It is equally important for parents to be ready and willing to listen.

The principal inherently supports collaborative leadership (Blackmore, 1989; Belenky et al, 1986) and at the same time she has difficulty with issues that surround the involvement of parents and teachers in decision making. These issues include hidden agendas of the participants and the moral obligation in terms of an ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982) to protect the

confidentiality and personal integrity of students, parents, and teachers when they are unacceptably criticized.

The parents indicated that they thought the role of the principal was to be a communicator to parents of the global picture so that they could develop their sense of efficacy (Monrad & Norman, 1992). I identify this with Starratt's (1996) notion of the development of a community of learners where the principal, as lead learner, develops the ability to share information with the rest of the learning community. Similarly, in the Alberta Education perspective, the principal is also considered the key spokesperson for the school and is responsible for the development of a school educational plan.

Input from parents and teachers. I was also interested in how the principal accommodates requests from parents on the school council and from teachers on the staff. In order to investigate the question, I asked the parents who were interviewed, "Do all the parents have an opportunity for input?" and "Does the staff also have input regarding recommendations?" During the interviews, the parents indicated that the principal accommodated input from parents, but that parents were responsible for making many of their own decisions.

The principal accommodated input from parents but had difficulty handling questions about teacher incompetence. She was not willing to fire a teacher based on parent pressure to do so. The principal articulated very clearly that teacher evaluation was not within the realm of parent responsibility. The parents were very critical of this protection and the protection the teachers had from the Alberta Teachers' Association. They indicated that teachers have very secure jobs and they couldn't be fired, even if they were incompetent. So the dilemma remains regarding parent input in teacher evaluation. The principal in

this case chose to ignore parent requests and strongly maintains that teacher evaluation is solely her responsibility.

Teachers did not wish parents to be involved in teacher evaluation; they felt that their jobs could be compromised if parents were permitted to evaluate teachers. Even though some of the teachers encouraged parent involvement in their classrooms, input in evaluation was considered the principal's responsibility.

The principal dealt with several issues surrounding staff and parent input. The PAA elections proved to be difficult in that the current president was perceived by many of the parents as a "yes man" to the administration. In other words, parents who spent some time at the school and with the teachers and principal, became "insiders" associated with the school, while other parents considered themselves apart from the school. When interviewed, two of the parents and the principal articulated that there are perceived cliques on the school council, parents who had become friends and who had developed a sense of belonging. Decker and Decker (1988) talks about council elitism, which suggests that as parents become more familiar with the school and its operations they view the school differently, and other parents view them as part of the school.

The principal was required to accommodate and find solutions to other issues as well. For example, when staff did not support parent decisions and when parents did not support staff decisions. Both of these scenarios were articulated by the participants as having occurred. It was also difficult to have all parents or all staff personnel reach an agreement.

The leadership role of the principal expands and becomes increasingly complex when it includes parents as well as teachers. The influence relationship the principal develops with the parents on the school council will

place more demands upon her and her leadership abilities. The issues of confidentiality and varying expectations will escalate, and she will have to develop the skills and support to deal with the additional pressures.

All participants expected the role of the principal to be a leadership role. They also expected the principal to nurture them, to listen to their viewpoint, and to be a link between themselves and other participants in the school. At the same time there is increasing pressure from Alberta Education and the District Office for the principal to be accountable and responsible for student achievement, school budget, parent and community expectations, to name a few.

Decision Making

According to Starratt (1996), the principal must make the most reasonable decisions under the circumstances, and they should be decisions for which others can take responsibility because they have been involved in making them. The principal and teachers interviewed were asked, "Are decisions made by your school council?" and "Are the decisions made collaboratively?" The directive of Alberta Education is that shared decision making should occur with everyone, and that the principal is responsible for facilitating this decision-making process.

According to the principal at Clam school, she has an increasingly difficult time with decision making particularly when the collaborators (parents and teachers) do not agree on the final outcome. This situation left it up to the principal to make the final decision and it was an uncomfortable position; no matter which decision she made, half the participants would not be satisfied. For example, if she sided with the parents, the teachers would not be happy; if she sided with the teachers, the parents were not satisfied. Yet, she preferred to share decision making with others even though it caused dissension between

teachers and parents. She thought it was important for them to be involved, to take ownership of the issues and become problem solvers. She did indicate that some decisions would be made only by her. That is, those decisions which involved confidential information about a parent or teacher. She would not compromise the personal integrity of another member of the staff or the parent community. Thus, Starratt's (1996) notion that everyone should have input into the most rational decisions is theoretically sound, but it is difficult to implement. The teachers are concerned that decisions will be made which are contrary to sound educational pedagogy. The parents worry that teachers may not always consider what is best for their children.

The superintendent's designate reported that the district perspective is that decisions should be made at the school level. This gives more autonomy to the participants at the school level to affect education for their students. With the increase in autonomy and responsibility, there is also the probability of additional decisions to be made by the school-based participants. At the same time it adds increased pressure on the role of the principal because the more decisions there are to make, the more pressure there is to deal with.

Parents are interested in having input into decisions but they want the school council to remain advisory. They do not want the responsibility of making all the decisions about education for their children, especially for the children of other parents. They claim that they do not have either the time nor the expertise for such an undertaking.

Teachers have differing opinions about parent participation in decision making. They are concerned that parents will force them to use antiquated methodology, such as teaching spelling from spelling lists. They are also concerned about the amount of time and effort it will take to adequately inform parents about educational issues.

Alberta Education indicates that it is the role of the principal to share decision making with everyone. That is, decisions can no longer be made by one person. Thus, it becomes incumbent upon all principals to be willing to engage in collaborative decision making and to become skilled at the process of collaborative decision making with school parents and teachers.

The third research question under investigation was: What processes or models reflect how decision making happens at a school where participants are engaged in collaboration? Various processes and models became evident through the interview process and several decisions were made during my visit to the Parent Advisory Association (PAA) meeting at Clam school. The processes evidenced include authoritative decision making, where the principal makes the decisions; democratic decision making, where a majority in favor of the motion will pass the motion; collaborative decision making, where participants work together to come to a common agreement that everyone can share; and consensus building, where everyone agrees or "can live with" with the final decision (Alberta Education, 1995c).

I observed decision making taking place at the PAA meeting that was strictly democratic. There were two motions made and passed, although only one of the motions received unanimous approval. Three parents attended the meeting who were not supporters of the Track Club and voted against the motion to spend \$500 to support the club's travel expenses.

Decision making at the school level, when the school council or PAA members were invited to participate, followed the collaborative model, quite successfully according to all the participants interviewed. The process for setting goals involved students, parents, teachers, support staff, and other interested community members. Both Rost (1993b) and Starratt (1996) would

support the collaborative process for decision making. Rost lists twelve skills necessary for postindustrial leaders, including the notion of being inclusive and avoiding exclusivity. Rost also supports the development of community when he says,

To empower other leaders and associates in a leadership relationship it is important to develop a sense of community. Ordinary power resources people can use to influence are; being on time, doing your homework, being actively involved, helping to set the agenda, talking to people, being positive and productive, communicating your ideas, and cooperating to achieve consensus. Individualism had its day, give communitarianism a chance and advocate for the commons. (1993b, p. 5)

Starratt (1996) writes about the pursuit of meaning in a learning community. He states that "a learning community implies roles for teachers and administrators, who must consider themselves as involved in continuous learning about the work of the school and the relation of schooling to society" (p. 70). The process the principal used for goal setting is similar to the idea of the development of a learning community in that the community must be accountable to various participants, and the participants must have input into how the learning community functions. Starratt also states that "communities are unique realities. They are embedded in specific contexts of place and history and made up of a unique mix of people with various interests, abilities, talents, and limitations" (p. 87). The learning community at Clam School involved the unique mix of staff, parents, and principal, all of whom embodied various interests, abilities, talents, and limitations.

In reflecting upon the various expectations of the role of the principal, it becomes clear that there are conflicting ideas about what that role should be. In

this study, conflicting expectations include the idea of parents wanting to have input on teacher evaluation and teachers being opposed to this idea. Also, parents and teachers who desire input into decision making may not have access to all the information required to make good decisions, due to the issue of confidentiality.

A decision-making model exemplifying information from the participant interviews is illustrated in Figure 2. This model indicates that during the interviews the principal suggested that the teachers, and sometimes the parents, were the decision makers in the school. The teachers said that the principal, and sometimes the parents, were the decision makers. The parents indicated that the principal and the teachers made the decisions about educational matters.

Figure 2. Decision making model indicating perceptions about who makes decisions. (Ellefson, 1996).

According to Glickman (1990), there are several levels of decision making which concern school-based management: zero-impact decisions, minimal-impact decisions, core-impact decisions, and comprehensive-impact decisions. Parents often made decisions that were minimal-impact decisions, for example, the PAA funds which were spent on a variety of school-related items, for example, books for the library, hand bells for the music program. Parents were also involved in other levels of decision making including comprehensive-impact decisions which concerned school based budgeting. For example, the meetings they attended which involved goal setting also set the parameters for the entire school-based budget of several hundred thousand dollars. Therefore, parents had direct input to comprehensive-impact decisions.

The school district involved parents in comprehensive-impact decisions when they invited parents who were Key Communicator from each school council to attend goal-setting meetings with the school board. It will be interesting to know whether educators, such as principals and teachers, also gain an avenue for input into these district goals.

Decision making becomes more difficult when both teachers and parents have input into decisions. At the same time, the participants view the principal as the person who makes the final decision, and yet her perception is that the teachers and parents are the ones who influence the final decision. The ultimate expectation by Alberta Education is that the principal will share decision making with everyone. Therefore, the role of the principal will include the necessity of planning to include all participants in making decisions, and letting them know that they had an impact on the decisions which are made. The principal must accurately communicate the basis for decision making.

Change

The principal encouraged parents to look for ways to support and improve the quality of experience the students were having in school. One interview question asked, "Has your school council supported the school in terms of initiating any changes?" All participants interviewed indicated that the school council had made changes.

The majority of the changes the school council or the PAA had initiated were school equipment, playground equipment, and library support for the school. The Parent Advisory Association (PAA) is viewed as a source of funding for the extras which the school budget cannot finance. I was interested to learn if there were other changes which had occurred as a result of PAA initiatives. I was particularly interested in changes brought about by the school council in the areas of policy, program and budget as specified in the Roles and Responsibilities document (Alberta Education, 1994b). Therefore, the changes which occurred at Clam School are reported in these three categories.

Policy changes were affected at the district level by the school council key communicator spokesperson from the Clam School PAA. She was able to attend district goal-setting meetings and impact the goals set for the district. Policy changes at the school level were directly impacted by parents of the school council if they chose to attend the goal-setting meeting at Clam school. All parents were invited to attend, just as all school council meetings are open to all parents. Parents also had direct input into the student discipline policy for the school. Parents supported the school initiated activity regarding the establishment of new report cards and student-led conferencing. Student-led conferencing brings parents and teachers together to share the accomplishments of individual students. Students lead the discussion and share their learning and accomplishments with their parents. Teachers are also

involved in the conference. This allows students to share the results of their work with their parents, as well as, assuming responsibility for their work.

There were also program changes. These included improvements in the computer programs available to students and an improved safety program for students with the addition of a parent parking patrol.

The change to combined classes is a comprehensive-impact decision in which the parents became involved. This involvement was very difficult for the principal to manage. It is interesting that she decided to "bow to the parents' wishes." I am assuming that the parents formed a "critical mass" who began to push in the same direction (Morgan, 1993). I will discuss the implications of this further in this chapter in terms of the development of a community of learners. Fullan (1993) suggests that it is the role of the principal to support the change efforts of others and to encourage them in their thinking to facilitate parent learning so that they will continue to support and improve the learning climate in the school.

A parent initiated change to a program not supported by teachers was the move to have the Christmas Concert on two nights rather than one night. The change in the Christmas Concert would be a minimum-impact decision which would not affect student learning significantly.

The change efforts by parents on the school council at Clam school have affected each of the areas of policy, program and budget as specified in the Roles and Responsibilities document (Alberta Education, 1994b). The principal's role is that of collaborator with parents in the establishment of policy. She has been challenged by parent input particularly when parents do not support teacher changes. Changes have also been brought about by the efforts of the participants on the school council in the areas of program and budget.

Stresses of Principalship

The major issue which has not been addressed at this point is the move the principal made to a smaller school. Her decision was based on her perception that working at Clam School was extremely stressful. Therefore, in seeking to find a more manageable situation, she applied for and received a placement as principal in a smaller school. After her move she thought the stress would diminish; however, she indicated the stress did not diminish. This leads me to conclude that working in a collaborative environment of any size school can be extremely stressful, particularly for the principal. In the final interview with the principal a year later, she indicated that while she was seeking to reduce her stress level by working in a small school, she found the smaller school working conditions equally stressful. Compounding this issue is the move by Alberta Education and the District Office to allocate additional autonomy to the school and the community to affect the education for their students. This activates the possibility of additional decisions being made by the school-based participants and more stress for the principal.

One reason for the level of stress which impacted the principal may be related to her initiation to Clam School. She made the decision to listen to the parents and stop three teachers from organizing combined classes. This decision could have prejudiced many of the teachers against her, in that it made them cautious about how she made decisions thus it would be very difficult for her to build a trust relationship with staff members.

Support for the view that the role of the principal is challenging is found in the Roles and Responsibilities document. It states that public input regarding the difficulty of the role of the principal is "the tension the principal experiences in being ultimately responsible for the school's success and yet needing to use a consultative decision-making approach" (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. 27).

There is also concern by the citizens of Alberta that the principal's role is too demanding. For instance, the principal is expected to: manage staff, money, and facilities; maintain a vision for the school and a positive climate; communicate with teachers, students, parents, the school council, and the community (not to mention the superintendent and the school board); provide leadership and promote a high quality of instruction; evaluate, monitor, and discipline.

This study reinforces the concern expressed by the citizens of Alberta that the role of the principal may becoming too stressful. In an attempt to balance the pressures of the teachers, parents, and community expectations with those of Alberta Education and the District Office; it is no surprise that the principal in this study is stressed.

Role and Responsibilities of the Principal

What is different about the role of the principal when parents are increasingly involved in decision making? When more stakeholders are involved in decision making the role of the principal becomes more stressful, more complex and more complicated. Expectations are changed as each of the stakeholders has a differing viewpoint. In order to accommodate all the expectations the process must allow for stakeholders to share their viewpoints, and to hear or read about the views of others. This is very different from the way it used to be, where the principal made the decision and informed parents, staff and the superintendent. The principal needs skills to communicate and organize many different participants—students and their parents, interested community members, and staff. The skills need to be applied both individually and in a variety of groupings, such as parents and teachers, students and parents, or other combinations.

How does the role of the principal, as it exists in this case study, resemble the role of the principal in the Roles and Responsibilities (Alberta

Education, 1994b)? In other words, how close is the principal's role in this case study to the ideal as expected by Alberta Education?

In the government's position, the principal shares the challenge of making wise decisions with one or more of the following: the school board, the superintendent, teachers and other school staff, the school council, students and their parents, and the community (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. 27). In this case study, the principal shared decision making indirectly with the school board and directly with the teachers, the school council, the students and their parents in the collaborative goal-setting activity which she organized to establish the School Educational Plans. The school board impacted the goal setting by involving the two key communicators from each school council with the school board in setting district goals. These district goals guided the development of the school plans.

In the area of planning, Alberta Education's expectation is that the principal will develop the school's philosophy, policies, rules, and objectives in concert with all school staff and the school council (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. 27). In the case study, while the school's philosophy, policies, rules, and objectives had been previously developed, they were changed through the collaborative efforts of parents and staff in goal setting of indicators and outcomes for the School Educational Plans required by Alberta Education.

In the developing and delivering of programs, the principal will provide educational leadership in the school according to official documents. The principal plays a key role in encouraging and supporting the teachers in the school who are responsible for helping students to learn (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. 27). The findings in this case study indicated that teachers felt that the role of the principal was to support them in dealing with parents and in other school matters. Therefore, I believe that the principal was able to support the

teachers in helping students to learn. Many of the difficulties in doing so had to do with the increasing numbers of behavior disordered students.

It is expected that the principal will ensure that students in the school have opportunities to meet provincial standards and will determine student program placements (with students, teachers, the school council and parents) (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. 28). The principal spent much time explaining to me, as researcher, the impact of the student achievement exam results and the district expectations that a school goal be established which would reflect a 3% increase in student achievement scores. She was very concerned about this district expectation because she felt that over the years the student population had changed; that is, there were more students with special needs and these students would lower the scores, and this change in student population was not being considered by the central office personnel responsible for student achievement for the district. This was a concern shared by teachers. The student achievement results from previous years in grades 3 and 6 were outstanding. There has been no decrease in student achievement scores so Sally and the staff's concerns are unfounded at this point in time. This may change in the future. The concern that the staff and principal shared surrounded the increase in the number of special needs students by 7% and that this increase in special needs students would bring down the student achievement marks for the school. I make the assumption that students in the school have ample opportunities to meet provincial standards given the amount of concern shown regarding student achievement scores.

In the area of budgeting and allocation of resources Alberta Education expected the principal to develop guidelines and principles for the school budget, as well as goals and objectives that drive budget priorities in conjunction with all school staff and the school council (Alberta Education,

1994b, p. 28). Participants had every opportunity for input into the development of the goals and objectives which drive budget priorities.

The communication and community relations expectation by Alberta Education states that the principal will report school provincial student achievement results to the community. This was not a requirement of the principal in this study. The results of the schools in the district are published by the school district rather than by individual schools.

Process for Collaborative Decision Making

The collaborative decision-making process developed and improved by the principal is included in this dissertation. Initially she used a variety of methods for communicating with parents and the community, inviting them to give feedback to the school regarding anything they felt should change. She used the school newsletter, an invitation to come to the school during an evening, and the opportunity to leave a message on the telephone answering machine. In spite of all her efforts, the only parents who gave input were those who came to a "mini roundtable" meeting.

During this noon meeting at Clam School, staff and parents were spread throughout the room at various tables and asked to address the question: What is going well at Clam School? What would you like to see changed? Input was collected and summarized by the principal. A decision-making committee made up of two school council parents, three staff members, and the principal translated the findings to reflect the suggestions. The committee also collaborated regarding the school budget and presented a budget proposal to the staff and to the school council. This budget reflected the goals as collaboratively established by all the participants at the initial goal-setting meeting.

Figure 3. A Clam school collaborative decision-making model (Ellefson, 1996).

Following the move to her new school, the principal modified this process slightly. Rather than invite participation at the school, she had the students take the goal-setting assignment home as a homework assignment to be completed with their parents. The principal indicated that she had received much more thoughtful information from students and parents using this new and more refined method to collect information.

The Clam school collaborative decision-making model (Figure 3) begins with the principal inviting input from participants in order to gain information. This input is then summarized by the school decision-making committee who

use the summarized information to establish goals and to prepare a potential budget which supports those goals. The tentative goals and budget are then presented to the participants for their approval. The cycle may need to be repeated more than once before all participants accept the revisions to the goals and the budget.

A school decision making committee must be made up of the principal, staff members, including teachers and support staff, parents, and students, if age appropriate. The exact make-up of the committee will depend upon the size of the school. In a large school, the decision making committee may be made up of chairpersons of existing committees who help to run the school. In a middle-sized school, such as Clam School, the number of staff and parents should be equal so that there is a balance of input with the principal or her designate responsible for the committee. In a small school, the school council, in collaboration with the staff, can form the decision-making committee.

Matching Decision-Making Process with Level of Decision

Glickman's (1990) development of the four levels of decisions also need to be considered when discussing decision making. According to this study, the zero-impact decisions such as parking spaces, lunchroom supervision, and staff room are often made by one or a few individuals. An example of this was when the principal chose to have the staff room painted. Minimal-impact decisions such as textbook adoption, parent programs, and in-service days can be made through the democratic process. For example, in this study when the request was made for additional funds for the Track Club a vote was taken and passed. This was true for financial requests which were brought to the Parent Advisory Association (PAA). Core-impact decisions regarding curriculum, staff development, and coaching were addressed in this study through the involvement of the PAA at Clam School in the rejection of combined classes.

This decision was made by the principal with teacher and parent input.

Comprehensive-impact decisions such as the school budget involved all the participants in a collaborative decision-making process.

Based on this information I would like to propose a model for decision making which would consider Glickman's four levels of decision making. I would caution that this is only a guide, dependent upon stakeholder input. For example, if the staff and parents all want input into how to redevelop the playground, a zero to minimal-impact decision, then they should all be involved.

A model of possible decision-making processes and the impact level of decision as evidenced in the study of the principal at Clam school is illustrated in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Type of decisions model (Ellefson, 1996).

In this study, decisions were basically made according to the level of decision and the decision-making impact on student learning. For example, zero-impact decisions, such as painting the staff room, were made autocratically by the principal. Minimal-impact decisions, such as financial support for the Track Club, were made democratically in voting by the school council. Core-impact decisions, such as whether to adopt combined classrooms, were made by the principal with teacher and parent involvement. Comprehensive impact decisions, such as establishing the school goals and school budget, were made collaboratively with all participants involved. The amount of time needed for decisions increases dramatically from the autocratic decision to the collaborative decision.

Creating a Moral Community

It is important to address the ethical issues that emerge in a portion of the findings. These issues include the responsibility to maintain confidentiality and personal integrity, hidden agendas, and cliques on the school council. One of the challenges of principals and participants is the development of a moral community. According to Starratt (1996), the administrator should bring a vision of a moral community and engage the whole school community in conversation about how they might more intentionally and programmatically create a moral learning environment (p. 165).

Starratt (1996) suggests that one way administrators can build a moral community is to encourage participants to communicate the large ethical framework of justice and care. The ethical framework of justice is understood to be individual choices to act fairly; justice is the community's choice to direct or govern its actions reasonably. A school community committed to an ethic of caring will be grounded in the belief that the integrity of human relationships should be held sacred, and that the school as an organization should hold the

good of human beings within it as sacred. Noddings (1984) supports the idea of building a moral community and suggests that it refers to “education which is moral in the sense that those planning and conducting education will strive to meet all those involved morally” (p. 171). Thus, the participants must be encouraged to view the school as a place where persons are treated with justice while at the same time individual integrity is recognized and persons are treated with care. Thus, a moral community would not be a community where there is any breach of confidentiality, individual integrity is maintained, hidden agendas do not exist, and the perception of cliques would disappear from the school council. In this study, there is a need for the development of a moral community for parents, teachers, and the principal. This has definite implications for the role of this principal.

Implications

In spite of the fact that, according to Bill 37, school councils will remain advisory, an expectation has been set throughout the province of Alberta that parents will have more input into how schools operate (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. 29). Therefore, one implication for the role of the principal, based on this study, is the importance of all principals possessing excellent communication skills and the ability to facilitate small and large group decision making. Some principals will need more opportunities to upgrade their skills in these areas. Such opportunities are presently available through the Alberta Teachers' Association workshops on “Collaborative Decision Making.”

As the role of the principal becomes increasingly difficult and complex, persons in the role of principal will need to develop a support network to assist in working through uncharted territory. In order to be adequate, this network should consist of personal and family support, as well as, formal support from the district. Principals must start the collaborative decision-making process with

parents and informal or networking support with other professionals.

Technological support will be useful by making Internet or e-mail connections.

Training for other participants working in a collaborative environment will also be important, as indicated in this study. Teachers, other staff, and students and their parents will need to develop the skills to work in small and large groups which involve collaborative decision making. Everyone the principal works with—including school boards, superintendents, school staff, school councils, parents, and others—will need to offer their support as the principal strives to establish collaborative decision-making models (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. 29). For instance, workshops at the school site could meet this training need.

To facilitate an active parental role in educational decision making, schools and the school board should consider establishing mechanisms to involve parents in the decision-making process. For example, schools and school boards can seek out strategies and systems of organization that effectively promote communication between home and school and help parents and school staff to work together. They can also make information more accessible and available to parents so that parents are well informed about issues in education. According to Alberta Education, the following specific activities may help to promote parental participation in education: opinion surveys, workshops, information networks, and information packages for parents (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. 17).

School boards will need to develop local policies on such things as the formation of school councils and the membership, mandate, and operations of school councils within provincial legislation and regulations; appeal and dispute resolution mechanisms relating to school councils; and mechanisms for the in-service training of school councils. Boards will need to provide orientation

sessions for everyone in the school and community who wants to understand the role and function of a school council and ensure that timelines for budget preparation allow for input from school councils. Having the principal provide information to parents will, as always, be an important factor in the success of any school council. First, school councils must have access to the information they need to make good decisions. Second, the school council will need to ensure that their deliberations are published in the community and, when necessary, the community has an opportunity to provide feedback before final decisions are made (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. 22). School boards should also consider what structures are needed to facilitate communication between the board and school councils (Alberta Education, 1994b, p. 25).

According to Alberta Education (1994b), restructuring of education in Alberta will have a substantial impact on the role of superintendents. Superintendents will continue to provide educational leadership, but school principals and their teaching staff will begin making some of the decisions about program delivery that were made by superintendents in the past (p. 26).

Thus, the implications for the role of the principal are many. The most important will be the need for support structures which will meet the needs of principals as collaborative decision making becomes the norm.

Recommendations

General Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, I recommend that Alberta Education support in-service activities related to the change in roles of the participants in education. Funding should continue to be provided through the Initiatives Grant for all educational participants.

Since principals are members of the Councils on School Administration (CSA), a Specialist Council of the Alberta Teachers' Association (ATA), I would

recommend that individually and collectively the CSA search for ways to support the principal as parents become increasingly involved in decision making. Support networks will be essential for the principal to be able to provide adequate leadership during these transition periods. Technological support for principals should also be organized. The CSA, through the ATA should continue their workshops on "Collaborative Decision Making" for principals, and extend invitations to teachers, parents, and other interested participants so that all persons involved in collaborative decision making will have the opportunity to develop the skills to appropriately exert their own influence.

I recommend the Alberta Teachers' Association explore methods for appropriately involving parents in teacher evaluation. Parents in this study make excellent arguments for thoughtful feedback regarding teacher performance.

The issue of the growing number of behavior disordered students and special needs integration of students needs to be supported financially by Alberta Education in order to ensure the safety of all students. The principal will need the financial support to hire sufficient support staff to handle these students in public schools, to ensure the safety and well being of all students. The development of an envelop for Special Education is strongly recommended.

Principals will need to develop collaborative decision making committees, processes, and models for their schools, all of which must involve teachers and other staff, students and their parents, and other interested community members. Decisions will need to be made regarding which educational matters should be brought to the decision-making committee.

According to Rost (1993b) there are twelve skills needed for postindustrial leadership, the kind of leadership necessary for the principal in Alberta, Canada. These skills include the following: influencing multidirectional relationships; building noncoercive relationships; focusing on the process and not just on the content, including as many different people as possible; taking risks; allowing for conflict among collaborators; facilitating large groups; empowering others in the organization; being political in influence strategies; using ordinary power resources to influence; getting comfortable with highly complex, messy, dynamic situations; and advocating for the commons. These skills are explained in Chapter II, p. 18. In summary they mean that it will be important for the principal to lead the development of a sense of community among the participants involved in schools. This includes parents.

I recommend that the findings of this study be used in training sessions for future administrators. The changes for the role of the principal should be supported by information from the literature and the experiences of the principal at Clam School.

Recommendations for Further Study

We live in exciting times as education shows potential for positive change and tremendous improvement. Recommendations for further study include duplicating this study in another country where parents are also increasingly involved in decision making. New Zealand and Denmark would be two possible alternate locations. A comparison of the findings would be interesting.

A longitudinal study of a principal for at least three years would add to this study. It would be interesting to compare the role of the principal three years from now with that of the principal at Clam school in 1994 - 1995.

A study of a secondary school principal where teachers and parents play different roles from those of elementary school teachers and parents would also add to information regarding the role of the principal. Again, it would be interesting to compare the results of findings from a secondary school principal with the results of the findings of the Clam school principal.

The educational changes adopted by Alberta Education also suggest the importance of undertaking a study of the changes which are occurring to the role of the superintendent. As well, the roles of the parents and teachers are recommended for investigation and further study.

Creating a Community of Learners

I feel that Mrs. Sally James wants to develop a community of learners, and that she has taken the first steps in doing so. She involved as many parents, teachers and community members as possible in the evaluation of the school and invited them to become decision-makers within the school in setting school goals. I encourage her to continue her efforts in this direction.

I would also invite Sally to continue to nurture the staff, and to pay particular attention to the students, and to seek outside assistance with students who are behaviorally disordered. I would especially encourage her to nurture herself. It is important that she view nurturing of herself as essential to her performance, and not as a selfish act. She needs to share the burden of the principalship, while maintaining her role in being accountable. She needs to let some things go in order to attain a better balance. The most difficult part of nurturing is in letting go, and not feeling the need to control all aspects of a school.

I also believe that when the role of the principal is caring and nurturing, decision making becomes more difficult in that more factors are considered. Sally needs to keep this in mind, and to collaborate only on decisions which are

very important. She needs to develop some reasonable methods for handling decisions which will not have a major impact on student learning, without feeling pressured to being unduly influenced by the negative opinions of others.

Sally's drive for perfection, while admirable, needs to be tempered with some special joy in her professional and her personal life. I would encourage her again to be sure her own needs are met prior to attempting to meet the needs of others.

One of my suggestions is to develop a community of learners within the school. According to Starratt (1996), principals must first develop a new understanding or vision of education. By building a collective vision, educational administrators engage in the initial stages of administering meaning concerning education and learning. In this work they initiate a conversation among participants about the basic meanings behind what is learned in school. A learning community implies roles for students and their parents as well as teachers and the support staff. Principals must be involved in continuous learning about the function of the school and the relation of schooling to society. The core processes of the learning community are working in a caring environment, involving lots of storytelling. The processes of how the school relates to home and neighborhood experiences and learning leading to some product or performance. The core processes of the learning community also include exploring the really big questions: What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be a community? (Starratt, 1996, pp. 69-81). In answer to these questions, Sally will have to encourage the creation of a community of learners among the participants involved in a school.

Conclusions

When this study began I assumed I would find a principal who was managing her role with very little difficulty and that those principals who were

discussing the difficulty of collaborative decision making were merely complainers. Now that the study is completed, I have a totally different sense of the difficulty of working with teachers, parents, and school councils. The interview process uncovered the vastly different personalities of parents who become part of the school through their interest in doing the best job for their children and others. Therefore, the leadership role of the principal when parents are increasingly involved in decision making is a complex, messy, and complicated one. I will no longer underestimate the complexity of working with a variety of individuals who bring vastly different experiences and assumptions to their tasks on a school council.

First and foremost I believe that a nurturing principal, such as Sally, is one who recognizes the importance of caring for herself prior to being able to effectively nurture others. This is not to be confused with acting selfishly in her own interests. It is important that the principal be allowed to lead a balanced life in which personal needs are met. These include emotional, spiritual, intellectual, social and physical needs. The importance of this must be recognized and encouraged by the superintendent, teachers, other staff and parents. A moral learning community can only be developed when all the stakeholders recognize the importance for everyone to be encouraged to lead a healthy well balanced life. The cliché, "Work smarter, not harder" comes to mind.

At the same time, there needs to be accountability by principals as their role changes. This accountability must be addressed through personal growth plans and principal portfolios which contain the personal growth the principal is pursuing, and also, a map of the decisions which are made, particularly those decisions made by the school council, as well as the changes they are requesting. The school in conjunction with the staff and school council should

also develop a collaborative school portfolio in which the mission and philosophy statements and school educational goals are recorded. Teacher portfolios containing personal growth plans and the process for their attainment would round out the requirement for accountability for all stakeholders.

I firmly believe that, because the stress of working collaboratively will be true for Mrs. Sally James as well as other principals, there must be different support networks in place to assist principals, teachers, and parents as they work at becoming proficient in collaborative decision making. These support networks must be developed by all of the participants and financially supported by Alberta Education, the Council on School Administration (a specialist council of the Alberta Teachers' Association), and local School Boards.

It is important that the principal and others remember that not every decision should be collaborative and that there are levels of decision making including zero-impact decisions, minimal-impact decisions, core-impact decision and comprehensive-impact decisions (Glickman, 1990). The stakeholders must reach agreement as to the level each decision warrants based on the time and energy stakeholders are willing and able to spend on any one issue.

Second, the roles of the students and teachers will also be different as parents are increasingly involved in decision making. I still believe that, even though education will change significantly in the future with the impact of parents and their concern for the education of their children, education will improve. I anticipate that schools must have the ability to become moral learning communities rather than the bureaucratic structures which presently exist. According the Starratt (1996), there is no one way to build a learning community and each principal must develop her school as a learning community based on local circumstances. These circumstances include the

chemistry among the staff and students and willingness of parents to investigate other possibilities in shaping the school. The active involvement of interested participants will enhance the learning process and will improve education for children in the future. I also believe that the stakeholder involvement should lead to important changes to the present process of teaching and learning.

Third, leadership skills will need to be encouraged and supported on the part of the principal, parents, and teachers to accommodate these changes. Skills to work in small and large groups to be effective in the collaborative process will develop with training and experience. The frustration of initially becoming involved in collaborative decision making will have to be endured as all participants become more proficient. Professionalism must be maintained, and humor can be a powerful tool for initiating any important changes. Finally, there must be celebrations of achievements as change occurs. All the professional organizations mentioned above must develop methods of support for the efforts of principals, teachers, and parents as they work to acquire collaborative decision-making skills. This support must be financial as well as moral. In other words, members of Alberta Education, Alberta Teachers' Association, local School Boards and Central Offices must be actively involved in the process.

Fourth, policies and guidelines must be in place to foster the development of increased parent participation in decision making, particularly in the area of teacher evaluation. Policies and guidelines must be developed by superintendents and school boards in conjunction with school councils to develop effective working relationships which give legitimate power to parents and community members on school councils.

Fifth, in order to ensure leadership continuity of the school councils, principals must advocate for the commons and involve as many participants as

possible in collaborative decision making (Rost, 1993b; Starratt, 1996). Based on my personal experience and that of the information gathered in this study, often times stakeholders develop skills which need to be shared in order for continuity of process. For example, a strong group of parents will organize and develop a supportive school council. However, when their children leave the school, a vacuum is created and a new group of parents must again start from scratch. Therefore, in order to develop the skills of working with others, many parents and teachers must have the opportunity to develop leadership skills which will continue to promote the best learning communities possible. The focus of the principal must be on today as well as tomorrow.

REFERENCES

Adams, J. (1994). *Catching the wave: Changing minds in the changing world*. In John Renesch (Ed.), Leadership in a new era (pp. 223-236). San Francisco: New Leaders Press.

Alberta Education. (1991). A study of the impact of the school council section in the 1988 school act. Edmonton, AB: Policy and Evaluation Branch Planning and Information Services, Government of Alberta.

Alberta Education. (1993). Meeting the challenge: What we heard. Paper presented at a meeting in Calgary, Canada, on October 15-16, and Edmonton, Canada, on October 22-23. Edmonton, AB: Government of Alberta.

Alberta Education. (1994a). Backgrounder: Key directions for education in Alberta. Edmonton, AB: Government of Alberta.

Alberta Education. (1994b, December). Roles and responsibilities in education: A position paper. Edmonton, AB: Government of Alberta.

Alberta Education. (1995a, April 27). Speech presented by Halvar Jonson, Minister of Education, at the Council on School Administration Conference, Banff, Alberta.

Alberta Education. (1995b). School council resource manual. Edmonton, AB: Government of Alberta.

Alberta Education. (1995c). School councils handbook: Meaningful involvement for the school community. Edmonton, AB: Government of Alberta.

Alberta Teachers' Association. (1994). Trying to teach: Necessary conditions. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Teachers' Association Publishers.

Alberta Teachers' Association. (1995). A framework for education change in Alberta. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Teachers' Association Publishers.

Astin, H. S. (1989, November). Women and power: Collective and empowering leadership. Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association, San Diego, CA.

Belenky, M. F., Clinchy, B. M., Goldberger, N. R., & Tarule, J. M. (1986). Women's ways of knowing: The development of self, voice, and mind. New York: Basic Books.

Blackmore, J. (1989). Changing from within: Feminist educators and administrative leadership. Peabody Journal of Education, 66(3), 19-40.

Bohac-Clarke, V., & Brownlee, B. (1995, December). A conceptual framework for shared decision making. Unpublished manuscript.

Brandt, R. (1989). On parents and schools: A conversation with Joyce Epstein. Educational Leadership, 47(2), 24-27.

Byfield, L. (1994, November 14). Here's one way parents could get control of their children's public school. Alberta report: The weekly newsmagazine [Alberta, Canada].

Clam School. (1994). Profile: Clam School Educational Plan, 1994-95. Edmonton, AB: Clam School Newsletter.

Clam School. (1995). Clam School educational plan 1995-96. Alberta, AB: Clam School Newsletter.

Cohen, D. M., March, J. G., & Olsen, J. P. (1972). A garbage can model of organization choice. Administrative Science Quarterly, 17(1).

Covey, S. (1989). The seven habits of highly effective people. New York: Simon & Schuster.

David, J. L. (1989). Synthesis of research on school-based management. Educational Leadership, 47(2), 45-53.

David, J. L. (1994). School-based decision making; Kentucky's test of decentralisation. Phi Delta Kappan, 75(9), 706-712.

Davis, K., & Newstrom, J. W. (1985). Human behavior at work: Organizational behavior. Toronto, ON: McGraw-Hill.

Dean, B. (1995). Fear has no place in the classroom. ATA Magazine, 75(3), 36.

Decker, L. E., & Decker, V. A. (1988). Home/school/community involvement. Arlington, VA: American Association of School Administrators.

Drury, W. R. (1993). The principal's role in site-based management. Principal, 67(1), 16-19.

Dyer, J., & Fontaine, O. (1995). Can a zebra change its spots? Some reflections on cognitive coaching. Education Canada, 35(1), 28-32.

Edmonton Public School District. (1988). School budgeting manual: Role responsibility statement from the principal. Edmonton, AB: Edmonton Public School District.

Edmonton Public School District. (1993). District priorities: 1993-1996. Edmonton, AB: Edmonton Public School District.

Edmonton Public School District. (1995). District staff update. Edmonton, AB: Edmonton Public School District.

Erikson, E. H. (1982). The life cycle completed: A review. New York: W. W. Norton.

Fullan, M. (1991). The meaning of educational change. New York: Teachers College Press.

Fullan, M. (1993). Changeforces. Toronto, ON: The Falmer Press.

Fullan, M. (1994). Change starts with the individual. In ASCD Update, 36(4).

Fullan, M., & Hargreaves, A. (1991). What's worth fighting for? Working together for your school. Toronto: Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation.

Galloway, G. (1993, September 8). Critics fear advisory council could be ministry rubber stamp: The council will have its own staff and a budget of about \$600,000. The London Free Press [Ontario].

Gilligan, C. (1982). In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Glickman, C. D. (1990). Renewing America's schools: A guide for school-based action. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Government of Alberta. (1988). Chapter S-3.1 School act. Edmonton, AB: Queen's Printer for Alberta.

Government of Alberta. (1994, January 18). News release: Restructuring education, pp. 1-2. Edmonton, AB: Government of Alberta.

Government of Alberta. (1994c, September). Report to parents: Ministry of education and training, Ontario. Queen's Printer for Ontario.

Government of Alberta. (1995). Bill 37, school amendment act. Edmonton, AB: Queen's Printer for Alberta.

Guba, E. G. (1978). Toward a methodology of naturalistic inquiry in educational evaluation (Monograph No. 8). Los Angeles: UCLA Center for the Study of Evaluation.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1987). Epistemological and methodological bases of naturalistic inquiry. In G. Madaus, M. Scriven, & D. Stufflebeam (Eds.), Evaluation models: Viewpoints on education and human services evaluation. Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff.

Guba, E. G., & Lincoln, Y. S. (1989). Fourth generation evaluation. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Handy, C. (1989). The age of unreason. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Henderson, A. T., & Berla, N. (Eds.). (1994). A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement. Springfield, VA: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Henderson, A. T., Marburger, C. L., & Ooms, T. (1986). Beyond the bake sale: An educator's guide to working with parents. Columbia, MD: National Committee for Citizens in Education.

Hind, N. (1989). Parents as partners: School Act shifts the ground. Teacher: Newsmagazine of the BC Teachers' Federation, 2(3), 12.

House, J. (1994). Parent power: Participation in education decision-making. Education & Law Journal, 6(1).

Hoy, W. K., & Miskel, C. G. (1991). Educational administration: Theory, research, and practice. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Jennings, W. B. (1989). How to organize successful parent advisory committees. Educational Leadership, 47(2), 42-45.

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (1993). Credibility: How leaders gain and lose it, why people demand it. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Levin, B. (1992, March). School-based management. Canadian School Executive, 30-32.

Lewington, J. (1993, September 8). Ontario solicits parents' advice on schooling. The Toronto Globe and Mail, p. A6.

Lewington, J., & Orpwood, G. (1993). Overdue assignment: Taking responsibility for Canada's schools. Toronto, ON: John Wiley & Sons.

Lindblom, C. E. (1959). The science of muddling through. Public Administration Review, 19, 79-88.

Lindle, J. C. (1989). What do parents want from principals and teachers? Educational Leadership, 47(2), 12-14.

Manitoba Education and Training. (1995). Renewing education, New Directions; Guidelines: Advisory councils for school leadership. Winnipeg, MN: Government of Manitoba.

Martin, D. (1993, December 5). Baptism by fire. Calgary Herald. B1.

Martin, Y. M. (1991). A comparative legislative analysis of parental participation policy in British Columbia, Alberta and Quebec. Education and the Law, 4(1), 61-85.

Merriam, S. B. (1988). Case study research in education: A qualitative approach. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Miller, J. (1986). What do we mean by relationships? Unpublished manuscript, Boston University, School of Medicine, Boston.

Milne, B. M. (1994). Political decentralisation of education in New Zealand: Principals' perspectives. Unpublished masters thesis, University of Alberta, Edmonton, AB.

Ministry of Education. (1989). Enabling learners: Working plan #1 1989-1999. Government of British Columbia.

Monrad, D. M., & Norman, J. M. (1992). A descriptive study of eight school improvement councils in South Carolina. Columbia: University of South Carolina, School Improvement Council Assistance, College of Education.

Morgan, G. (1993). Imaginization. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Moysa, M. (1994, February 3). Teacher Mary Michalilides with students Trevor Stewart, Shawna Smith and Richard Hemphill. Edmonton Journal, p. 2.

Murphy, P. J. (1991). Collaborative school management: Implications for school leaders. National Association of Secondary School Principals Bulletin, 75(537), 63-66.

National Coalition of Advocates for Students. (1991). The good common school: Making the vision work for all children. Boston: Author.

Noddings, N. (1984). Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Ontario Parent Council. (1994, July 15). Report on the establishment of school parent councils in Ontario. Government of Ontario: Author.

Riley, A. (1994). Parent empowerment: An idea for the nineties? Education Canada, 34(3) 14 - 23.

Rost, J. C. (1993a). Leadership: For the twenty-first century (rev. ed.). Westport, CT: Praeger.

Rost, J. C. (1993b). Skills needed for postindustrial leadership. Unpublished manuscript.

Rost, J. C. (1993c, September). Leadership: A discussion about ethics. Unpublished manuscript.

Rost, J. C. (1994, April 6). Moving from individual to relationship: A postindustrial paradigm of leadership. Paper presented at the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Senge, P. (1990). The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (1992). Moral leadership: Getting to the heart of school improvement. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Sergiovanni, T. J., Burlingame, M., Coombs, F. S., & Thurston, P. W. (1987). Educational governance and administration. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Spradley, J. P. (1979). The ethnographic interview. San Diego, CA: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich College Publishers.

Stake, R. (1978, February). The case study method in social inquiry. Educational Researcher, 5-8.

Starratt, R. J. (1993). The drama of leadership. London: The Falmer Press.

Starratt, R. J. (1996). Transforming educational administration: Meaning, community, and excellence. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Thomas, J., Hart, T. E., & Smith, S. C. (1989). Building coalitions. School leadership: Handbook for excellence, (pp. 272-290). Eugene: University of Oregon, College of Education.

Venciana-Suarez, A. (1994, October 9). Take an active role in your child's education, teachers urge: Homework for parents. Calgary Herald.

Walberg, H. J., & Niemiec, R. P. (1994). Is Chicago school reform working? Phi Delta Kappa, 75(9), 713-5.

Wang, S., & Lawton, S. (1995). What's wrong with parent-school relationships? ATA Magazine, 75(2), 19-22.

Watson, D., & Fristrom, P. (1990). Empowerment and the Collaborative Leader. Clearing House, 63(8), 361-2.

Wheatley, M. J. (1992). Leadership and the new science: Learning about organization from an orderly universe. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Yates, S. L. (1993). Consensus an Essential Skill for the 21st Century. Thrust for Educational Leadership, February/March, 24(6), 15-22.

Yin, R. K. (1984). Case study research: Design and methods. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

APPENDIX A

LETTER REQUESTING PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY

November 3, 1994

Mr. Angus McBeath
Acting Superintendent Edmonton Public
Centre for Education
One Kingsway
Edmonton, AB T5H 4G9

Dear Mr. McBeath,

Re: Permission to study a principal, school and Parent Advisory Council in your district for my doctoral dissertation.

I am seeking permission to study a principal of a school and a Parent Advisory Council (PAC) with the Edmonton Public School District. This study requires locating a principal who involves the PAC in decision-making in the school budget process and possibly also policy, programs or other activities. I would appreciate your cooperation in naming two or three principals from whom I could make my final selection. For the purpose of this study it is important that these principals have a minimum of three years experience in their present school. It is my intention that the identity of the principal and school be kept strictly confidential. I will assign the school and district fictitious names in my final dissertation document. I will make a copy of the final dissertation document available to your district.

The purpose of my study is to describe how one principal in Alberta accommodates parents having increased decision-making power as mandated by the Government of Alberta. The study will describe how a principal enables parents and teachers to have a meaningful role in decisions about policies, programs, budgets and activities.

My plan is to use interviews with the principal, selected staff and PAC members for data collection. I am also seeking permission to attend two Parent Advisory Council meetings and would appreciate an interview with yourself, or your designate.

The questions to be addressed through this dissertation case study include:

1. What is the role of the principal when there is increased parent participation in decision making?
2. What is the principal's role with the staff, that is, how does the principal accommodate requests from both parents on the school council and teacher?
3. What is the role of the principal with the school council; is there collaboration and consensus building among all the stakeholders with decisions being made?
4. What changes have been brought about by the school council in the areas of policy, program, budget and activities?

If you have any questions regarding this request, please don't hesitate to contact me. You can do so, by phoning 362-2660 (work) or 362-7168 (home) or in writing to: Box 446, Brooks, AB, T1R 1B4.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Inge Ellefson
Doctoral Candidate
University of San Diego

APPENDIX B
LETTER OF PERMISSION FROM EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS
TO CONDUCT STUDY

EDMONTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Dick Mather
Chairman
George Nicholson
Vice-Chairman
John Nicoll
Rose Rosenberger
Esther Starkman
Terry Sulyma
Doug Tupper
Donald L. Williams
Jean Woodrow

ACTING
SUPERINTENDENT
OF SCHOOLS
Angus McBeath

EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT
Merle Audette

ASSOCIATE
SUPERINTENDENTS
Bruce Coggies

Mae Demaine

Pat Hogaboom

Shirley Keir

Ruth LeBlanc

Bruce Mcintosh

Usha Prorosey

November 10, 1994

(File #027.94)

Inge Ellefson
Central Elementary School
Bag 257
Brooks, Alberta
T1R 0G0

Dear Mrs. Ellefson:

Re: Research Request: Principal's Role in School

The above research request has been approved on a permissive basis following examination by our department. The approval is subject to the following conditions.

1. Principals participation in the study to be voluntary;
2. The results of the study will be provided to the principal;
3. Anonymity and the confidentiality of information obtained is assured; and
4. The researcher provides a copy of the results to this office.

You should now contact the undernoted principals to obtain approval and to make the necessary arrangements for conducting the study. Addresses and phone numbers are attached.

I wish you success with the project and look forward to receiving a copy of the results.
(PLEASE QUOTE FILE # ABOVE)

Yours sincerely,

Simon van der Valk
Supervisor Monitoring and
Student Information

SVV/MG/mh

cc: Art Robinson, principal, Kensington School
Jacie Bond, principal, La Perle School
Bob Holmes, principal, Minchau School
Lorraine Boggs, principal, Earl Buxton School

CENTRE FOR EDUCATION

One Kingsway

Edmonton, Alberta T5H 4G9

Tel: (403) 429-8000 Fax: (403) 429-8318 24 Hour Infoline (403) 429-8560

APPENDIX C

CONSENT TO ACT AS A RESEARCH SUBJECT

Inge Ellefson is a doctoral candidate at the University of San Diego. She is conducting a research case study of school leadership when parents are involved in decision-making. Since I have been selected to participate in this study, I understand that I will be involved in a tape-recorded interview twice. I further understand that I will be contacted, up to three times, by telephone for follow-up clarification of the transcribed information gathered during the first interview.

This data collection will take approximately one hour, once in the fall of 1994, and once in the spring of 1995. Follow-up clarification will occur by telephone within one month of the original interview. Participation in the study should not involve any added risks or discomforts to me except for the possible minor fatigue.

My participation in this study is entirely voluntary. I understand I may refuse to participate or withdraw at any time without jeopardy to myself.

I understand my research records will be kept completely confidential. My identity will not be disclosed without consent required by law. I further understand that to preserve my anonymity only group data will be used in any publication of the results of this study.

Inge Ellefson has explained this study to me and answered my questions. If I have other questions or research-related problems, I can reach the principal/superintendent at his/her office.

There are no other agreements, written or verbal, related to this study beyond that expressed on this consent form. I have received a copy of this consent document.

I, the undersigned, understand the above explanations and, on that basis, I give consent to my voluntary participation in this research.

Signature of Subject

Date

Location

Signature of Witness

Date

Signature of Researcher

Date

APPENDIX D FIRST SET OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Welcome and thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview.
Question guide for interviews with the *principal*:

1. Background questions:

"What was your educational background?"*

"What was your administrative experience?"

2. Principal's role with school council questions:

"Describe your role and the school council operations."

"Describe the role of the staff and the superintendent in terms of your school council."

"Are decisions made by your school council?"

"Are the decisions made collaboratively?"

3. Questions regarding changes brought about by the school council:

"Has your school council supported the school in terms of initiating any changes?"

Questions for interviews with the *superintendent's designate*:

1. Background questions:

"What is your educational background?"*

"What is your background in terms of administrative experience?"

"What is your view of school-based budgeting and parent governance?"

2. Questions regarding school council:

"Describe the policy for school councils for schools in your district."

"Describe the role of the staff and the principal in terms of school councils."

*Actual questions to be asked are written in quotation marks. More probing questions will be asked as the interview unfolds.

3. Questions regarding the role of the staff and the principal in terms of school councils:

"Does district policy promote the school council support for the school in terms of initiating any changes?"

Question guide for interviews with the *parents*:

1. Background questions:

"How many children do you have attending this school?"*

"What prompted your interest in working on the school council?"

2. Questions regarding participation on school council:

"What is the role of the principal on the school council?"

"What happens to your recommendations?"

"Do all the parents have the opportunity for input?"

"Does the staff also have input regarding recommendations?"

3. Questions regarding changes which have been made:

"What changes have been brought about by the school council?"

Question guide for interviews with the *teachers*:

1. Background questions:

"What is your educational background?"*

"What is your teaching experience?"

2. Questions regarding participation on school council:

"Are you involved with the school council?"

"What is the principal's role on school council?"

"Are decisions made on school council which affect the school?"

"Are decisions made collaboratively?"

3. Questions regarding changes brought about by the school council:

“Has your school council supported the school in terms of initiating any changes?”

“Do you foster positive relations with your school council?”

Thank you very much for participating in this interview.

School council meeting observation framework.

Thank you very much for allowing me to attend your school council meeting.

Observations will be documented regarding:

- setting of the meeting
- participants
- items on the agenda
- discussion flow
- interaction of participants
- length of time parents, teacher, and principal spend talking
- decision initiated, and motions put to the floor
- items of agreement or dissension
- style of the meeting, i.e., informal versus formal
- any other items of interest

APPENDIX E

SECOND SET OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Thank you for agreeing to this second interview.

Questions for the Principal:

1. What is your personal reaction to the Roles and Responsibilities document issued by Alberta Education?
2. You indicated that you have been involved in a work situation where the "old boys club" ruled. Can you elaborate in how it is harder and easier to be a female principal?
3. One of the difficulties you indicated which gives you a lot of trouble is the issue of confidentiality for students, parents, and staff. How do you decide what teachers and parents have a right to know, and how do you decide what to keep personal and private?
4. Should parents participate in teacher evaluation? in principal evaluation? Why or why not?
5. How do you maintain a handle on communication with parents and teachers when one parent and one teacher get together and assert their own private agenda?
6. Will it be increasingly difficult for you to keep students with behavior problems in school as parents become increasingly involved in decision making?

Questions for Parent #2:

1. What was your PAA response to the Roles and Responsibilities document introduced by Alberta Education?
2. Can you describe your relationship with the president?
3. You talk about being able to individualize student learning in your field of work. Should schools also individualize student learning? If so, how can this be achieved?
4. Can you describe your relationship with Sally?
5. You indicated that you thought parents should be more involved on the

PAA. What are you doing this year to improve parent participation on the PAA? How will you be able to continue to convince parents that it is important for them to be learners as PAA members, not "dictators"?

6. You indicated that you thought parents would have valuable information regarding teacher evaluation. How would confidentiality be preserved? How about principal evaluation?
7. How did your PAA elections go this year?

Questions for Parent #3:

1. What is your opinion of the Roles and Responsibilities document issued by Alberta Education?
2. Why do you attend PAA meetings? What do you think is the reason that parents don't come to PAA meetings? What would encourage parents to participate in PAA meetings?
3. You said that you thought parents should have the final say about where the money they raised is spent. What if the majority of parents choose an area which is important to the staff or the students?
4. How should controversy between staff and parents be handled? Who is responsible?
5. What should happen to children with behavior problems when their parents won't cooperate with the school?

Questions for Teacher #1:

1. What is your personal opinion on the Roles and Responsibilities document issued by Alberta Education?
2. Can you describe your role on staff and your relationship with the principal, parents, and other staff members?
3. Can you describe the process for establishing the school budget?
4. What is your teacher evaluation process? principal evaluation process? Should parents be involved in this process, if so, how?

Questions for Teacher #2:

- 1. What is your personal opinion of the Roles and Responsibilities document issued by Alberta Education?**
- 2. Can you describe your role on staff and your relationship with the principal, parents, and other staff members?**
- 3. Can you describe the process for establishing the school budget?**
- 4. What is your teacher evaluation process? principal evaluation process? Should parents be involved in this process, if so, how?**

APPENDIX F

CLAM SCHOOL BUDGET

DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES			
SCHOOL : PRINCIPAL:			
RESOURCES	1994-95 APPROVED (JUNE '94)	REVISED (SEPT.30 '94)	1995-96 PROPOSED
ENROLMENT	557 (PROJ)	574 (ACT)	550 (PROJ)
1. TEACHER F.T.E.:			
- Classroom	23.411	23.439	22.696
- Principal - Assistant	1.500	1.457	1.500
- Counselling	0.214	0.257	0.214
- Learning Resources	0.643	0.643	0.579
- Dept. Head - Curr. Coordinator	0.000	0.000	0.000
- Work Experience	0.000	0.000	0.000
- Program Needs	0.000	0.000	0.000
TOTAL TEACHER F.T.E.	25.768	25.796	24.989
2. TEACHER COSTS:			
- Teacher (total #1)	\$ 1,411,680	\$ 1,413,571	\$ 1,355,134
- Supply Teachers	\$ 24,181	\$ 20,000	\$ 15,875
- Supply Teachers (Staff Development)	\$ 6,732	\$ 7,308	\$ 6,350
TOTAL TEACHER COSTS	\$ 1,442,593 (79%)	\$ 1,440,879 (78%)	\$ 1,377,359 (79%)
3. NON-TEACHER F.T.E.:			
- Custodial	2.625	2.625	2.625
- Exempt	0.000	0.000	0.000
- Exempt (Intern)	0.000	0.000	0.000
- Support	3.600	4.800	3.500
TOTAL NON-TEACHER F.T.E.	6.225	7.425	6.125
4. NON-TEACHER COSTS:			
- Non-Teacher (total #3)	\$ 161,927	\$ 184,856	\$ 157,113
- Supply (non-teacher)	\$ 3,500	\$ 3,500	\$ 4,000
TOTAL NON-TEACHER COSTS	\$ 165,427 (9%)	\$ 188,356 (10%)	\$ 161,113 (9%)
5. TOTAL STAFF COSTS:	\$ 1,608,020 (88%)	\$ 1,629,235 (88%)	\$ 1,538,472 (88%)
6. S.E.S.:			
- Consulting Services Proj.	\$ 41,621	\$ 37,149	\$ 36,810
- Maintenance Services Proj.	0	0	0
- Staff Development	1,000	1,000	1,000
- Utilities	40,202	40,202	43,041
- Collected and Retained	50,000	50,000	0
- Amortized Equipment	8,900	8,900	50,000
- Supplies and Other Services & Equip.	71,987	78,765	78,857
TOTAL S.E.S.	\$ 213,710 (12%)	\$ 216,016 (12%)	\$ 209,708 (12%)
7. TOTAL AMOUNT BUDGETED	\$ 1,821,730 (100%)	\$ 1,845,251 (100%)	\$ 1,748,180 (100%)