

**IPPs FOR BIG PEOPLE:
ACCOUNTABILITY AND LEADERSHIP
FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

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A Project
Submitted to the Faculty of Education
of the University of Lethbridge
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Lethbridge, Alberta

March, 2003

Dedication

This project is dedicated to my sister Lesley, who has always been there for me, and to my sons Jeff and Andrew. You all continue to inspire me.

Abstract

The Alberta government's recently mandated Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy has given rise to much discussion of accountability, professional development and supervision of teachers. The purpose of this study is twofold: to determine teachers' understanding of and commitment to professional development and to determine what active role a school administrator can play in the process of teacher growth and supervision. This study addresses the following question: In what way does more frequent consultation between elementary school teachers and a school administrator influence professional growth? Eighteen teachers were surveyed to determine their perceptions of and attitudes towards the writing of Professional Growth Plans. Four teachers participated in monthly meetings with a school administrator and were also interviewed on several occasions. The results clearly indicate that teachers prefer to set their own goals for professional growth and development. They also prefer to develop their own strategies for accountability and evaluation of their teaching. Recommendations for administrators include engaging in frequent process consultation with teachers; making time for teachers to meet, discuss, and collaborate on professional development; and creating meaningful evaluation methods and tools.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the following people for their contributions to this research project:

Dr. David Townsend, Pamela Adams, and Dr. Keith Acheson for their guidance, encouragement, and passion for what they do.

The teachers with whom I have the privilege of working with in my school, specifically the four teachers who participated in this study.

My colleagues in the Summer Leadership Institutes, who are an inspiration to the teaching profession.

Judy, for her patience and encouragement in putting the finishing touches on this document.

My family for their support, encouragement and patience. I think Mum and Dad would have been proud.

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Background and Rationale

Personal

During one of our Professional Development days at school in spring 1999, we had a workshop on Professional Growth and Development Plans. No one had any idea what they were or why we were having a workshop on them, but my curiosity was piqued. I enjoy professional development activities and welcome the opportunity to shift the focus from the classroom to my own learning. When the words "government legislation," "mandated," and "next year" came up, I reacted. I could not believe we were now required by law to do more work. Were year plans not enough for what we had to teach? Now we had even more accountability.

Sadly, my reaction was typical of most teachers when new mandates are thrust upon them. They feel powerless and put upon, and their enthusiasm for learning is diminished. I decided I would do these Teacher Growth and Development Plans because I was supposed to, but I had no intention of doing much with them.

In accordance with policy (Alberta Learning 1998), I had my first meeting with administration soon after school began in fall 1999, and we talked one-on-one about my particular growth and development plans. The conversation focused mainly on how I had written my goals and on the fact that I needed to indicate how I would measure or evaluate the success or achievement of those goals. I went away and refined how I would measure goal outcomes, then resubmitted my Personal Growth and Development Plans. They were subsequently approved and handed back to me, and I tossed them into my filing cabinet.

Sometime the next spring, we received an email from administration informing us that it was time to go over the Teacher Professional Growth Plans. I pulled mine out and looked at them for the first time since the previous fall. To my surprise, I realized I had actually achieved five of the six goals I had set for myself. I determined to achieve the sixth goal the next year.

When I was again interviewed about my growth plans, I had to admit that I had found them to be useful because the plans were my own. I began to realize that this idea of accountability was not so threatening, mainly because I had been given the freedom to choose the focus for my learning. I had come to appreciate the fact that the responsibility I had resented at first had actually empowered me to think as a learner and had led me to focus on my own professional development.

I began to consider this new direction in accountability. The growth plan I had written was really a living document that would guide my professional development for the year. It was very much like the Individual Program Plans we teachers write each year for our students who have been identified as having special learning needs.

The Individual Program Plan (IPP) is a required individual education plan that must be developed and implemented for each child identified as having special learning needs. It includes developmentally appropriate goals and objectives to meet the individual learning requirements of these students for each school year. The plans are referred to three times during the school year, with an annual review at the end of the school year, to determine if learning goals have been met and to provide direction for further growth and development. To me, this was a framework already proven successful

for the writing of my Teacher Professional Growth Plans. Thus, the notion of IPPs for Big People was born.

Official

On February 26, 1998, the Government of Alberta passed Policy 2.1.5, entitled Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation (see Appendix A). On or before September 1, 1999, each school authority and early childhood services program operator was required to implement a policy consistent with Policy 2.1.5.

Under the policy, each teacher is required to develop a Professional Growth Plan every year. The policy further states that:

3. A teacher employed by a school authority or ECS operator: (a) under a probationary contract or continuing contract, or (b) under other provisions of the *School Act* is required by the policy of the school authority or ECS operator, is responsible for completing during each school year an annual teacher professional growth plan that:
 - (i) reflects goals and objectives based on an assessment of learning needs by the individual teacher
 - (ii) shows a demonstrable relationship to the teaching quality standard, and
 - (iii) takes into consideration the education plans of the school, the school authority and the Government, or the program statement of an ECS operator;
- (c) must submit for review or approval at a time specified in the policy that annual teacher professional growth plan to:
 - (i) the principal, or

(ii) a group of teachers delegated by the principal, if such delegation is provided for in the policy.

4. An annual teacher professional growth plan: (a) may be a component of a long-term, multi-year plan; and (b) may consist of a planned program of supervising a student teacher or mentoring a teacher.

5. At a time specified in the policy, a teacher must provide a completed annual teacher professional growth plan to the principal or to the persons referred to in procedure 3(c) for review and the person or persons conducting the review, in consultation with the teacher, must make a finding whether the teacher has completed an annual teacher professional growth plan that complies with procedure 3.

Also included in the policy is the stipulation that, if a teacher has not completed an annual teacher professional growth plan as required, the teacher may be subject to disciplinary action. Equally important to the teacher, the policy also states that an administrator may not use an annual teacher professional growth plan as part of an evaluation process, unless the teacher has given written permission. This situation might arise if the teacher is seeking permanent certification, if an administrator is gathering information related to a specific employment decision, or if an administrator has concerns about the teacher not meeting the teaching quality standard. (Alberta Learning, 1998)

The role of the administrator, then, is to guide and direct, but not to evaluate unless certain situations warrant an evaluation. This policy is a positive move in the effort to make the concept of supervision and evaluation less threatening and more meaningful to teachers.

Creating a supportive, collaborative atmosphere in which teachers can pursue professional development is incumbent upon leaders and paramount to teacher growth. As early as 1950, the U. S. Association For Supervision and Curriculum Development recognized the need for reform in teacher evaluation in observing that, "The term 'evaluation' [should be] used specifically to imply that process by which individuals or groups, through active and mutual participation by all persons concerned, are enabled to make choices and come to decisions in planning for growth" (Bahn, Binda, Denecke, Saylor, & Willey, p. 9).

Literature Review

Quite simply, leadership is about helping people to liberate the fullness of their talents while they pursue a vision you have helped them understand is a worthy and meaningful one. (Sharma, 1998, p. 47)

Sharma aptly describes the role of leadership in guiding teachers in their professional development. Alberta Learning's Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation policy (1998) is timely in that it addresses the encouragement and development of professional growth in teachers, as well as providing a framework for accountability to the Teaching Quality Standards. Under section (2), Descriptors of Knowledge, Skills and Attributes of the Teaching Quality Standard, the policy states the following:

[Teachers understand] the importance of career-long learning. They know how to assess their own teaching and how to work with others responsible for supervising and evaluating teachers. They know how to use the findings of assessments, supervision and evaluations to select, develop and implement their own professional development activities. (p. 3)

Researchers and designers of teacher evaluation systems have long proposed the move from an evaluative model of teacher performance to one of supervision of teacher growth. McGreal (1983) discusses the fact that problems with evaluation arise not so much from the idea of evaluation, but rather from the way in which evaluation is carried out. When there is high supervisor-low teacher involvement, the supervisor has to "do something to the teacher" (p. v). Visits, reports and final evaluations are all determined

by the supervisor, leaving the teacher to play a small, passive role in the process. The teacher is judged on a preconceived set of criteria rather than through the context of his or her teaching. Stufflebeam (1995) explains the problem:

The topic of evaluation makes many people nervous. Often they don't understand what is involved, view the process as highly subjective, secretive, and potentially corrupt, and/or see it as only a ritual with little or no value. Even the most rigorously designed and carefully executed evaluation system can engender such concerns if the stakeholders are not involved in setting up and periodically improving the evaluation system and if they are not kept informed about its purpose, structure, operations, findings, impacts and quality. (p. 191)

Teachers involve students in the process of their learning. Why, then, can teachers not be involved in the process of their learning as well?

McGreal (as cited in Brandt, 1996) summarizes the problem this way: "There's got to be a better way to do this. Evaluation of teachers must fit better with what we're asking teachers to do with kids. We ought to be treating the adults in the school at least as well as we treat the kids" (p. 30). Conley (1987) concurs: "The evaluation process holds great potential as a means to push toward improvement of pedagogical skills and instruction in our schools. Its potential as a positive, growth-inducing process has long been overlooked" (p. 64). Foster (1986) expresses similar concerns:

The craft of teaching has become susceptible to the Taylorization of instruction, the increasing tendency to divorce instructional knowledge from its source in the instructor. This deskilling of the profession occurs through the development of standardized curricula with little or no relevance for the tapestry of local

conditions; through mandated competencies that disregard the professional knowledge of the teacher; through behaviorally oriented objectives that reduce teacher autonomy; and through countless other devices designed to somehow scientize the profession. (p. 191)

Teacher performance evaluations based on prescribed outcomes do little to motivate teachers to develop professionally. If they are not somehow engaged in the process of their growth, and perceived as competent by their administrators, teachers will see little value in engaging in professional development. Most teachers are responsible professionals who, given support and encouragement, will strive to better themselves. Administrators play a key role in this process, as Lieberman and Miller (1984) describe:

When teachers view a principal as critical or punishing, they are less likely to take risks and try a new approach. When teachers view a principal as supporting and rewarding, they are more able to approach the principal for support in trying something new, in securing resources, in gaining permission for special understandings. (p. 12)

The role of the principal, then, is to support and encourage teachers in all aspects of their professional lives. Teachers need positive feedback on what they are doing. They need to be listened to and encouraged to develop and grow as teachers. Administrators need to understand and to model professional development.

Valli and Hawley (2002) present a useful series of design principles from their research on professional development. They found that professional development is more likely to result in substantive and lasting changes in the knowledge, skills, and behaviors of educators when it follows the following principles:

1. The content of professional development focuses on what students are to learn.
2. Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn and, when possible, in the development of the learning opportunity or process to be used.
3. Professional development should be primarily school based and integral to school operations.
4. Professional development should provide learning opportunities that relate to individual needs but are, for the most part, organized around collaborative problem solving.
5. Professional development should be continuous and ongoing, involving follow-up and support for further learning-including support from sources external to the school that can provide necessary resources and an outside perspective.
6. Professional development should incorporate evaluation of multiple sources of information on (a) outcomes for students, and (b) processes that are involved in implementing the lessons learned through professional development.
7. Professional development should provide opportunities to engage in developing a theoretical understanding of the knowledge and skills to be learned.
8. Professional development should be integrated with a comprehensive change process that deals with impediments to and facilitators of student learning.

(pp. 87-90)

Fullan (1997); Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999); Lieberman and Miller (1984); Little (1982); and Newmann (1996) express similar notions about professional communication, collaboration, and commitment to learning communities. As Lieberman (2002) points out, "The need for continuous professional development of teachers may be one of the few things that policymakers, researchers, professional associations, the public and school personnel agree on" (p. 74).

Leithwood, Jantzi & Steinbach (1999) look specifically at the role leaders play in successful school restructuring, finding that empowering teachers through individual support helps to create an environment of intellectual stimulation. Establishing a climate of mutual respect and openness allows a leader to encourage staff members to look at established practices and to evaluate their effectiveness from both a personal and a collective standpoint. Often people lose sight of the fact that the people in an organization are capable of creating change. Having a vested interest in change and believing that they matter in the process encourages teachers to commit to move in a new direction.

Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach's (1999) five-year study of a large school district in Ontario provides information on the development of teacher leadership. The interview data collected describes teacher leadership as an essential ingredient in restructuring schools. In this study, teachers' perceptions of teacher leadership were most influenced by the opportunities to work with the leader on projects of significance to the school, and also to see the concrete value of this work to the school. Again, creating training opportunities, providing support, building a culture of collaboration and modeling "best practices" helped to foster among teachers a sense of belonging and a commitment to professional growth.

Alberta Learning's Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AIS) program (1999) has helped to foster collaboration among teachers in school settings (see Appendix B). Staff members are involved in creating a collaborative project or plan of action to improve their professional practice and result in student improvement. The AIS initiatives have a positive influence on professional growth plans, since teachers' professional growth plan goals are often tied in with the school's AIS goals for the year. The AIS framework (1999) includes statements that support collaboration and professional development. Under the Clarifications heading, the document states the following:

It is recognized that school improvement is not a "quick fix" activity, but rather an ongoing process that requires collaboration, commitment, and sustained support. AIS's requirements of budgeting, reporting and accountability are an attempt to promote long-term efficiency and effectiveness, not short-term changes. (p. 5)

The document further recognizes collaboration as an essential element for school improvement, and encourages proposals to "reflect insights from research and literature on improvement" (p. ii). Implied here is that teachers will engage in professional growth while collaborating on projects for school improvement.

Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach (1999) identify three categories of practice for fostering professional growth: providing individual support of teachers, creating intellectual stimulation, and modeling important school values and practices. Feeling some kind of connection on a personal level is vital to the development of trust between people. Teachers are very wary of being paid lip service with no follow-up.

Administrators should listen and talk to their teachers individually in a genuine exchange

of feelings, ideas and information. As Barth (1991) points out, " A key to improving schools from within, then, lies in improving the interactions among teachers and between teachers and principals" (p. 28).

While fostering a climate of sincere collegiality sets the foundation for professional growth, it also helps to develop self-esteem in teachers (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992). The administrator's role is important here. Greenleaf (1977) points out that, if the administrator is committed to the growth of the staff, then he or she must provide the time to create, enact, reflect and share. Time must be arranged within the timetable to allow educators to pursue effective professional development related to their personal goals. School leaders must recognize when creating their budgets that the ongoing improvement of professional practice and promoting maximum growth is directly related to available resources.

Consideration of these factors by the administrator can help to foster an atmosphere of trust and collaboration among teachers and administrators. As teachers follow the process of developing, carrying out and reflecting on their growth plans, they must have personal time with the administrator. Involving the administrator makes the document more purposeful for the teacher. In discussing the implementation of a model of teacher evaluation in Medicine Hat School District No. 76, Townsend (1987) states that leadership was the most vital factor in determining the success or failure of this model.

Haughey, Townsend, O'Reilly, and Ratsoy (1993) also investigated the importance of the administrator's role in professional growth and supervision. Their study indicated that, when administrators believed teachers were competent and

transferred this belief to all interactions with them, teachers indicated that they felt supported. They felt in control of their own learning as they developed individual plans for their professional growth. A spirit of collaboration developed as teachers worked and learned together. From this a learner-centered culture developed in the school and the staff modeled learning for the students. However, it is also interesting to note that in most schools, professional development was not school focused, but was largely left to individual teachers. Obviously, this study played a role in the development of the Teacher Growth policy and in the AISI initiatives, as both documents specifically focus on school-wide collaboration for professional development (see Appendices A, C).

How can administrators foster professional development among their teachers in the school setting? Matlin and Short (1991) discuss the value of study groups for teachers: “For teachers, the study group is an opportunity to think through their own beliefs, share ideas, challenge current instructional practices, blend theory and practice, identify professional and personal needs as well as develop literacy innovations for their classroom” (p. 68).

Just as the students they teach need to gather together to learn in an atmosphere that promotes learning, so do teachers. They are enthusiastic, they know they want to learn, but sometimes they need direction. Providing them with resources, best practices modeling, and time to meet in collaborative groups can do much to foster professional development.

DuFour and Eaker (1998) introduce the notion of learning communities, taking the notions of collaboration and empowerment from theory to practice. Teachers in schools that function as professional learning communities share these characteristics:

“[They are] guided by a clear, commonly held, shared purpose for student learning; feel a sense of collective responsibility for student learning; and collaborate with one another to promote student learning” (p. 74).

If teachers feel supported in their efforts and are given the opportunity to meet and plan during the school day, the empowerment they experience in being a part of building school community can be phenomenal. Taylor (2002) discusses the results of a case study on supporting schools as professional learning communities:

While focusing on instruction and assessment of student learning, it also became important to reflect on our own leadership efforts to assure that they were aligned with our beliefs about school improvement. Our continuing challenge is to assure that the culture of collaborative decision-making, school improvement, results-orientation and professional conversation at all levels has the opportunity to continue. The beliefs and practices that make up our culture must be lived and talked about if they are to be sustained and improved upon by the leaders who will follow us. (p. 172)

As the research indicates, accountability, professional development, and leadership are undergoing a necessary and profound change (Burger, Aitken, Brandon, Klinck, McKinnon, & Mutch, 2001; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1996; Leithwood, Jantzi, & Steinbach 1999; Lieberman, 1995; Little, Gerritz, Stern, Guthrie, Kirst, & Marsh, 1987; McGrath, 1997; McGreal, 1983; Newmann 1996; Townsend, 1987). The common themes that emerge are the need for meaningful communication, collaboration, shared goals and vision, and support on the part of leaders. Implied is a change in attitude and practice for the teacher through involvement and personal reflection. As Leithwood (2002) states,

“Change is to be considered an ordinary activity rather than an extraordinary event” (p. 97). Appendix C lists a selection of additional resources on the topic of teacher professional development.

In 1997, McGrath (1997) asked the following question:

What if we redefined accountability as an opportunity to learn from the natural outcome of shared vision, values and commitment to the group's goals, considering the group to be an integrated, whole, dynamic organism? What if we deeply grounded our behaviors in principles and ethics that enhanced relatedness while calling for growth and excellence? Could excellence in education become a reality for all? (p. 286)

I believe it can.

Methodology

Acknowledging that people construct reality implies that there are actually many possible 'realities' and that we negotiate these on an ongoing basis. As Palys (1997) explains, "Understanding... involves being able to explain unique behavior in context, after investigating the ways in which reality is constructed and negotiated" (pp. 35-36).

Social science research methods were used in conducting the research for this project. I employed both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Anderson (1997) argues that "Qualitative data often supplement quantitative findings by exposing information that might otherwise remain a mystery" (p. 182). I employed both types of research in order to broaden the usefulness of the results.

Qualitative data collection was chosen for the project for various reasons. Glesne and Peshkin (1992) explain:

Lived experience emphasizes that experience is not just cognitive, but also includes emotions. Interpretive scholars consider that every human situation is novel, emergent, and filled with multiple, often conflicting meanings and interpretations. The interpretivist attempts to capture the core of these meanings and contradictions. (p.19)

Quantitative data collection was chosen as a means to display and/or analyze themes in the findings and discussion components of the project in order to give the reader a clearer picture of the data collected.

The methods used for gathering and analyzing data in this study included the following: survey, case study, interview, thematic coding, and narrative inquiry.

Survey

A survey was employed to gather information and attitudes on a specific topic. The technique used was the Likert scale. According to Anderson (1998), "The Likert scale...will serve most needs and achieve reliable and valid responses. It is an excellent means of gathering opinions and attitudes" (p. 174). The Likert scale presents a statement rather than asking a question. The respondent is asked to respond to a scale containing response points. These can vary from three to seven points. Anderson argues that "A 5-point scale is the most practical for most common purposes. It is easy to respond to, straightforward to analyze, and sufficient for most needs" (p. 174).

In an effort to determine teachers' understanding of and commitment to the Professional Growth Plan process in the fourth year of its existence, a survey was designed (see Appendix D) and administered to all teachers in the study school in Fall 2002. Statements were formulated based on themes presented in the literature on professional development and were designed to determine the extent to which teachers develop and use their growth plans. Included in the instrument were instructions describing how to complete the scale (Anderson, 1998).

The survey was distributed during the first professional development day of the new school year when all teaching staff, including myself, were present. Palys (1997) discusses the advantages of the researcher being present during the survey presentation:

" If [the] researcher is there, [he, she] can respond to questions and clarify ambiguities" (p. 148). Sixteen responses were received, representing 89% of the teachers in the school.

Case Study

Case studies include "the process of learning about and researching the specific phenomenon or phenomena under investigation and about the product of that learning and research" (Jarvis, 1999, p. 77). Cresswell (1998) adds that in case study research, "One works with a smaller unit such as a program, an event, an activity, or individuals" (p. 66). Four teachers who volunteered to meet regularly over four months formed the study group.

Interview

As the face-to-face interview is an accepted source of primary data gathering for qualitative research, I used this technique in my study with the four teachers. I wanted to know about teachers' perceptions and interests regarding professional growth plans. I wanted to determine their interest in action research and professional development, and their level of commitment to professional growth plans (see Appendix E). I felt that the in-depth interview was the best method of achieving this. The personal interview allows direct communication between both parties. The respondents are able to request clarification of questions, and the interviewer is able to encourage feedback or probe for certain attitudes or opinions (Neuman, 1997).

Face-to-face interviews are also advantageous because they allow the interviewer to record unexpected answers. In addition, open-ended questions allow the respondent more freedom in answering and help reduce interviewer error or bias. By tape-recording each interview, I was able to concentrate fully on the conversation with each respondent and could later review the interview in detail. Although the interview is a time-consuming process, it provides valid and reliable data.

Neuman (1997) discusses interviewer bias as a weakness of in-depth interviewing. Obviously, tone of voice, body language, and specific question phrasing can influence a respondent's answer. Interviewers must consistently be aware of this potential problem. However, if the questions asked are open to the respondent's interpretation and the interviewer presents the questions in a controlled manner, there is less opportunity for error or bias.

Interviewers must also be aware of what they are asking teachers to give up when participating in interviews. As Palys (1997) states, "Respondents'...participation is a fragile gift of their time that can be withdrawn at any time" (p. 176). All interviewees were provided at the beginning of the study with an outline of the interview questions to be used (see Appendix E). They also received a letter explaining the purpose of the study and were asked to sign a letter of consent to participate in the interviews (see Appendix F). The interviews took place in an empty classroom or another vacant room in the school in order to ensure adequate privacy.

Project Goals. Because I was asking teachers to give up their time to meet at lunchtime and after school, I felt it was incumbent upon me to demonstrate that this study would be worthy of their commitment of time and effort. I explained to them that my goals for the project were the following:

- To establish a professional learning community in which teachers reflect on their professional growth plans and pursue professional development.
- To determine whether such a group might be valuable to teachers to the point that they would feel it was worth repeating.

- To determine whether teachers benefit from collaborating with an administrator on professional development.

I usually brought to the meetings an article to read or a few questions related to growth plans or action research. These provided a way of beginning the meeting and a focus for discussion.

Attendance. Although it was decided that the group would meet at least once a month, dates for each session were not decided in advance. I asked teachers at the beginning of a week if there would be a time during the week when we could get together. Sometimes teachers would ask when we were meeting again. In spite of this informal approach to setting meeting dates, everyone attended every meeting.

The same four people who were interviewed at the beginning of the project were interviewed again after the study group ended. All were provided with an outline of the interview questions to be used at the end of the study (see Appendix G). Teachers had the option of answering the questions on paper or in an interview setting where I would record their answers. Once again, privacy was assured. The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed by the interviewer.

Composition. The group was composed of four teachers, all full-time classroom teachers. The participants ranged from 5 years to 33 years of teaching experience. One was a lead teacher for Fine Arts, K-12 in the school division. Another teacher had been an administrator, a special education teacher, and a classroom teacher during 33 years of teaching. A third teacher in the group was working on a Master of Education degree. The fourth teacher in the group had taught all grade levels in an elementary school over a 31-year teaching career.

Participant Observation. Observations recorded during all of the study group sessions, together with data from the interviews, allowed for intensive documentation of each participant's views. Because I was a participant in all of the group meetings, I was able to use what Yin (1994) describes as "A special mode of observation in which [I was] not merely a passive observer. Instead, [I] assumed a variety of roles within a case study situation and...actually participate[d] in the events being studied" (p. 87). Because of my active involvement, the recorded observations allowed me to reflect on the meetings and on the significance of each event to the project.

Thematic Coding of Data

Information collected from interviews, meetings and participants' questions was incorporated into a document separate from the final product, in accordance with Yin's (1994, p. 98) suggestions. The document contained all of the raw data and observational information. The data were analyzed and coded into themes. As Neuman (1997) points out, "Open coding brings themes to the surface from deep inside the data" (p. 422).

The second level of coding was *axial coding*. In this second review of the data, I followed Neuman's (1997) process of beginning with the concept groups from the initial coding and relating raw data to those themes, since "[such analysis] stimulates thinking about linkages between concepts or themes, and it raises more questions" (p. 423).

The third component was *selective coding*, which included a final scanning of the data around core concepts and ideas in order to ensure thoroughness (Neuman, 1997). The results of the coding process are presented in the Findings section.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry results in discussion, "A written passage in a qualitative study in which authors summarize, in detail, the findings from their data analysis" (Creswell, 2002, p. 274). A review of the results of the study, comparisons to literature found in the research, limitations of the study, personal reflections and implications for future directions are also presented in the Discussion section.

Findings

Part 1. Survey Measuring Teachers' Understanding of and Level of Commitment to Professional Growth Plans

Survey instrument. The survey presented 10 statements designed to measure teachers' understanding of and level of commitment to Teacher Professional Growth plans. Statements 1 and 3 were designed to determine to what extent teachers refer to the growth plan throughout the year. Statements 2 and 5 attempted to determine if teachers use their long-range plans or school-based plans, such as AISI goals, to develop their growth plans. Statements 4 and 9 were designed to determine if teachers collaborate in any way with colleagues when writing their growth plans. Statement 6 asked whether teachers include strategies for measuring outcomes in their plans. Statements 8 and 10 addressed the teachers' awareness of the ongoing nature of professional growth plans and involvement in reflection and assessment of outcomes.

Survey results. A total of 16 teachers responded to the survey. Table 1, below, details the percentage response rate for each of the survey's 10 statements.

Table 1. Growth Plan Survey Results by Percentage Response

Statement	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Usually	Always
1. I look at my growth plans after I write them each fall.		6	75	13	6
2. I use my long range plans to help guide my professional growth plans.		19	19	43	19

Statement	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Usually	Always
3. I refer to or use my plans during the year to check to see if I am achieving my goals.	6	6	50	25	13
4. I collaborate with a colleague or colleagues to write my growth plans.	19	19	31	31	
5. I coordinate goals for my growth plans with those outlined in school initiatives.		6	19	43	32
6. In my plans, I write how I will measure outcomes for attaining goals.			38	19	43
7. I write new plans every year.				13	87
8. I write plans that are ongoing and are spread over several years.	6	13	50	6	25
9. I ask an administrator to help me with my plans.	19	38	43		
10. I review my plans at the end of the year and make comments or suggestions for the following year.			6	19	75

The results indicate that 75% of these teachers do look at their growth plans after writing them, and 50% refer to the plans over the course of the year.

These teachers use both their long-range plans and school initiatives to guide their growth plans, with 75% saying that they often or always coordinate plan goals with school initiatives. This result indicates that the teachers are aware of school initiatives and see linking their professional growth to them as advantageous.

The statement “I collaborate with a colleague in writing growth plans” elicited a broad range of responses. Of the respondents, 38% chose Never or Seldom. Similarly, 57% of the teachers responded Never or Seldom to the statement “I ask an administrator to help me with my plans.” Teachers coordinate their growth plan goals with school initiatives, but they collaborate very little with peers on plans.

However, 87% of these teachers indicate that they write new growth plans each year, and 75% review their plans at year’s end, evaluate, and make suggestions for future plans. These results suggest that teachers are developing a fairly strong understanding of and use for growth plans. They indicate how they will measure outcomes of goals, and they review their plans at the end of the year, making suggestions for further growth.

Part 2. Individual Interviews Before Study Group

Of the four teachers interviewed, two were very comfortable with the process. Two were initially uneasy, but the first question helped to establish their comfort level with the interview process and, as the interview progressed, they became more relaxed and supplied more detailed and personal answers to the questions. Several distinct themes emerged from the interviews at the beginning of the project.

Theme 1. Support for Teacher Growth and Development Plans as teacher empowerment. All of the subjects interviewed strongly support Teacher Growth and Development Plans. They appreciate the autonomy given them in writing the plans, as well as the freedom to choose their own focus for professional development. Some of the teachers' comments follow:

- I like how the growth plans help us to develop professionally without 'policing' by administration. The previous top-down model of evaluation made me feel undermined by someone else's agenda. I like that I am allowed to focus on what I need for my own growth. I feel less scrutinized and more empowered as a teacher.
- I see the growth plans as coming from a desire to move away from prescribed planning and evaluation to a more involved form of professional development. I often felt myself doing 'double-duty' when we had to do required professional development set by administrators, because I'd do that and then I'd do what I wanted to do.
- There is value in the reflection and interpretation of needs and wants. And having a written record of my goals allows me to refer to them during the year to see how I'm progressing and what I need to work on.

Theme 2. Awareness of and desire to engage in professional growth. All of the teachers enthusiastically shared their growth plans for the year, although they did not have their plans in front of them. They were all well aware of what they were going to work on during the year. Because the school's AISI project was focusing on Differentiated Instruction, all of the teachers had included a goal related to this. Because

three of the teachers had students who would write Provincial Achievement Tests at the end of the year, another of their goals focused on some aspect of developing students' skills. All of the teachers commented that coming up with goals was not a problem. The challenge was not to write too many goals and to make the goals they did set for themselves manageable and achievable. The following comments relate to this theme:

- Often I am so enthusiastic at the beginning of the year that I write too many goals that become difficult to achieve as the school year progresses because I just get too busy.
- You know, I think I've been instinctively doing differentiated instruction in my classroom over the years, but now I want to consciously develop and implement the related strategies in my classroom.

Theme 3. Value in working collaboratively for professional development. This theme evolved in a complicated way. All of the participants stated that they value collaboration and enjoy working with colleagues in all aspects of school life. However, they stated that they often write their growth plans themselves. Then, after their plans are written, they share them with colleagues to determine common goals for the year. All stated that one of their goals is always tied in with one of the school's goals for the current AISI project. Some of the comments follow:

- I love being able to develop and share my passion with others, and also to learn from others as they share their passion in the spirit of collaboration. Let's face it, all teachers ask themselves "What did I do last year? What am I interested in? What do the kids need?" I think we're all essentially on the same page.

- I would love to develop, [something] like a three-year plan with people at my grade level. We could each really get into one aspect and develop it really well. Of course we would revisit the plan yearly and update or revise as necessary, but it would be great.

Theme 4. Need for time for teachers to meet, plan, and learn. All of the participants mentioned the time element in many of their responses. They said they usually wrote growth plans on their own because they didn't have time to meet with colleagues to write plans. Also, having only two school-based professional development days a year did not provide enough time for professional development. The following comments are related to this theme:

- Unless time is set aside for dealing with our growth plans, they won't be completed or developed as they should be. Time is always an issue when it comes to collaboration or planning. We just never get enough of it.
- Of course, time is always an issue. What I'd like to do and what I can do are two different things. But we really do have to find a way to share our ideas because there is an incredible amount of talent in this building and collectively we can do so much for kids.

These findings from the individual interviews at the beginning of the project indicate that Professional Growth Plans are a welcomed change for teachers in terms of autonomy. Teachers appreciate and are capable of determining their own professional growth. In writing their annual growth plans, teachers tend to include goals related to those of school-based projects. Teachers value collaboration highly but engage in it only

moderately due to time constraints. Teachers enjoy the opportunity to work with their colleagues on both individual and school goals.

Part 3. Study Group

At the first meeting, after I had explained about interviewing each of the participants separately, the group were eager to learn what we would be working on. I informed them that the focus would be on growth plans and professional development but that they could bring anything they wanted to the group discussion.

Three people started to talk at once. They said they were happy to be talking about growth plans and really excited about things they wanted to do. After that they began to discuss what they wanted to do in terms of professional development for the year. Two teachers discovered that they wanted to focus on the same aspect of writing in their classrooms, so they agreed to meet and discuss their plans. They felt they could collaborate on strategies that would help them to meet their goals. They also discussed collaborating on measurement tools to determine if goals were met. This first meeting clearly indicated that the teachers were very interested and motivated to engage in professional development.

During subsequent meetings, the teachers' discussion focused on the following questions:

- How can we find a good chunk of time to meet as teachers and really get into discussing professional development ideas?
- How can we evaluate our own growth?
- What are some classroom management ideas for a difficult class?
- What can we do for the kids whose home life is really awful?

- How can we devise strategies for teaching kids to improve their abilities to read charts, graphs and maps, in order to improve our PAT scores?
- How can we de-stress?
- How can we plan for retirement (two group members are preparing to retire)?
- How should we write AISI goals and why are they needed when we've already written our Growth Plans?
- How can we get anything done in forty-five minute POD meetings?
- How can we share strategies for teaching writing?

Although teachers were encouraged to come to the meetings prepared to talk about any aspect of professional development or their growth plans, this proved difficult at times. Most of our meetings occurred at the end of the school day when teachers were tired and not particularly focused. I felt it was very important just to let them talk and learned as much from the digressions as from discussions focused on agenda items.

Several distinct themes emerged from the study group discussions.

Theme 1. Need to engage in or to receive feedback. At every session, the teachers spent the first few minutes talking to each other about their day and using each other or the group as sounding boards for ideas and situations. Whether it comes from peers, their own reflection, or from administrators, teachers need feedback. Every session we had involved someone throwing out an idea or asking a question and then eagerly awaiting a response. The group was very focused when this happened and worked collectively to respond, to question further, or to solve a problem. It is important to note that, although I participated as a group member, people tended to look to me for feedback first, possibly because of my position as a school administrator. When I specifically asked group

members whether they appreciated feedback from administrators, they responded with a definite “Yes.” They encouraged not only feedback on their teaching or growth plans, but also generally on what they do in the school.

Theme 2. Enjoyment of professional development. Teachers enthusiastically discussed many of the professional development activities in which they were engaged. The lead teacher of Fine Arts for her school district shared her excitement at finding an excellent resource for art education for each grade level in an elementary school. The teacher enrolled in the Master of Education program discussed how much she enjoys her studies and the spirited discussions that sometimes take place in class. A veteran teacher who has taught for 33 years talked excitedly about a new writing method she is learning about and discussed how much she is looking forward to implementing it in her classroom. Another veteran teacher shared a list of Internet sites he had created for teachers to use in their classrooms. At one of the group's meetings, they decided they wanted to create a professional portfolio (see Theme 4. Critical Events, below).

Theme 3. Difficulties with assessment. The teachers' difficulty with assessment, as expressed in the study group, was twofold. First, they wrestled with the difficulty of providing valid assessment of student work as well as valid assessment of their own achievement of certain growth plan goals. The assessment of student work centered mainly in the area of composition. Teachers frequently discussed the difficulty of getting a pure writing sample from their students.

Second, teachers said it was sometimes difficult to determine if they had met some of their growth plan goals. For example, the teacher who created and supplied the Internet list wanted to find a way to learn if people found his list useful and were working

with it. He said he knew he could design a survey, but it would be difficult to chase down people to complete and return it. One teacher quipped that having a personal goal of losing weight was very easy because anyone could decide if she was successful or not just by looking at her.

Theme 4. Critical events. At our second meeting, I asked the group how their long-range plans were coming. All teachers are required to write long-range plans for the courses they will be teaching throughout the year, and our school requires that these plans be handed in to administration by the end of October. Professional Growth Plans are due by September 15. The teachers said the plans were fine but asked if I could help them with the AISI goals that they had to write (see Appendix I for sample AISI Differentiated Instruction Professional Development Proposal).

Some explanation is needed here. This year, our school's AISI project focuses on differentiated instruction: how better to teach a classroom full of students with varying degrees of academic ability. Teachers have found that there are always students in a class who do not qualify for extra academic help under the school district's coding procedures but who struggle academically nonetheless. The teachers wanted to find a way to support these children by giving them extra help or more specific instruction.

The school came up with its own code for these children and a plan to give them the extra help they need. Under the AISI plan, a part-time teacher would be hired to create time for classroom teachers to work with students having difficulty, while the rest of the class was taught by another teacher. In this way, students get extra help from the teacher with whom they spend their school day, the teacher who is best able to assess their academic needs. The rest of the AISI funds would be used to buy substitute teacher

time, allowing each teacher five mornings and five afternoons in which to learn more about differentiated instruction and to work on strategies to improve student learning.

Administration wanted to know what teachers were going to work on during their professional development time and when they would use this time. At a staff meeting, administration shared a template designed for writing down AISI goals (see Appendix H) so that teachers could collaborate at a grade level and perhaps meet to develop resources. They asked teachers to write and submit a plan for use of their AISI time. Plans could be written by a group or individually. These were the plans that my teacher group asked me to help with.

We set up an after-school meeting. I brought a copy of my AISI plan and goals to show my group. One member of the group asked me why we had to do these things. I answered that, when given time to work on professional development, teachers often get so busy that they forget to take the time to book a substitute teacher for the day. Writing down what will be done, and when, can help the teacher to focus on what needs to be done and provides a record of accountability as well. I said that I would help the teacher to write everything down in half an hour. He liked that idea.

We continued the meeting. I asked what the teachers wanted to do in terms of differentiated instruction and if they wanted to collaborate or to work on their own. Most wanted a combination of some time to work alone and some time to collaborate with colleagues. Within the promised half-hour, everyone had written their AISI goals and decided when they would take the time to work on them. I made sure that they thought about evaluation tools to show how goals were achieved and that they allowed themselves time near year's end to study their results.

At the next month's meeting, I brought treats to the group to celebrate their success in writing their AISI goals, growth plans, and long-range plans. The group thanked me for encouraging and helping them with their goals.

The discussion then centered around how useful making the AISI plan and goals was and how much the teachers appreciated being able to choose their own goals. They saw the value in growth plans. I asked if there was something else they'd like to discuss related to professional development. One teacher asked if I had done a professional portfolio. I said that I had and that the experience had been very enjoyable. Another said she had done a portfolio some years before but that it needed updating. The group then decided that they'd like a portfolio session. They wanted to see the other teacher's and my portfolio and to know how to start one. We agreed to meet for a 'portfolio' evening at my home.

One teacher wasn't enthusiastic about this idea, saying he really hadn't saved much material over the years and couldn't see himself doing a portfolio a couple of years before he retired. I responded that he certainly wasn't bound to do one, but I was certain he would have some incredible stories to tell. I suggested he just talk into a tape about some of the things he's done, and he would be surprised at what he could come up with. He said he'd think about it.

The next day, that teacher gave me a copy of a proposal he and two other teachers had written in 1986 for an automated library system in his school. They had visited a Calgary school that had an automated library and had come away enthralled with the idea. The proposal was very well written, but the Associate Superintendent of schools at the time turned it down. I said, "This is professional development at its best. This is what

I've been talking about. I bet you have all sorts of other stories to tell." He smiled and said that he did. We are still working on them.

Part 4. Individual Interviews After Study Group

The four months spent working with the group went by quickly and it was time for the final interview (see Appendix G for final interview questions). I decided to give the teachers the option of answering the questions on paper or in an interview setting where I would record their answers. We often had to meet at noon hour or after school, when people were somewhat rushed. I wanted the group members to have time to think about what we had done and to think about what they wanted to say. Some people like to write things down and others are very comfortable talking spontaneously. Everyone chose to write the answers to the interview questions. And write they did!

The following themes emerged from the answers given to the final interview questions.

Theme 1. Changes in attitude. All participants noted a marked change in their understanding of Teacher Growth and Development Plans. Some mentioned realizing that the plans really were for them and them alone, that they were not written to impress administration. One commented in this way:

- I feel like I have a lot more personal dedication and can see how the plans can clearly help me to become a better teacher. It has direct application to my daily teaching.

Two participants stated that they saw the value in checking on the plans frequently throughout the year rather than completing them and just forgetting them. One made this comment:

- I like structure, and I have come to realize that the structure of the plans makes it easy for me to see what I'm doing and how I'm doing it.

The group discussions helped the teachers to realize that writing two or three well considered goals and concentrating more fully on them led to less frustration and probably to more success. One teacher commented:

- The way it has changed for me is to reduce the number of goals selected and then concentrate more fully on the few.

Participants also stated that they had a better understanding of accountability. Their understanding seemed to shift from the idea of being accountable to someone else to a sense of being accountable to themselves, a realization that it really was about doing what they said they would do and feeling good about following through. One teacher explained:

- Accountability means that I have the obligation to follow through with my growth plan and report on its success.

Theme 2. The value of collegiality. All participants commented on how beneficial the group meetings and discussions were in showing that others were facing the same frustrations and successes. They felt supported by the group in their daily endeavours and ideas for professional growth. Their comments included the following:

- It is so good to hear about what others are doing. The sounding board that the group provides is invaluable.
- The easy, open-ended manner in which we met left everybody totally comfortable -- and the more open we are, the more we can accomplish.

- I can't believe the different ideas and plans of action we generate. There has to be a way to pool all of our talents towards a focused research or project. Oh, I guess that's what AISI is.
- Collaboration is one of the ways in which I grow professionally.

Theme 3. Administration's role in growth plans and professional development.

Respondents were specifically asked if they felt that administration had a role to play in growth plans and professional development. All agreed that administration should play a supportive and guiding role in the growth plans. Some of their comments follow:

- The support role the administrator has is to reinforce that many of the things we are doing already fit into many of our growth plans. And in a guidance role, the administrator should assist those who become bogged down or lost in their planning or implementation.
- The administrator's role is to guide and encourage, I think, but to also help those who are having difficulty. The beauty of growth plans is that they imply competence, so they could maybe be rewritten to help someone who's in trouble.
- Yes! Administration's involvement in a collegial format [such] as we've shared gently forces us to be accountable and to stay on schedule, with concrete plans for each AISI day.

Theme 4. Conceptualization of time. Time was a recurring theme in the responses provided during the interviews and the study group. All respondents said they would welcome more time during the school day to meet and collaborate professionally. Three

commented that time is always a factor in many aspects of life and that it's almost impossible to find more time for teachers to meet. Other comments follow:

- Really, an effort must be made by the whole school community to find more time for professional development, because ultimately it helps kids and that's why we're here.
- We could do creative timetabling, twinning classes for certain activities, and school-based activity days as possible ways of creating time for teachers to meet during the school day.
- Our days seem so jam-packed with virtually no time to sincerely collaborate and reflect. I think any way to allow time in the day for teachers to meet would be so welcome.

These comments and suggestions about the use of time for professional development indicate that professional development has become a priority for these teachers. They demonstrate an internalization of the growth process and a change in these teachers' attitudes towards professional development.

Discussion

The findings of this study support much of the literature on leadership, professional growth plans, and professional learning communities, and at the same time introduce some new ideas.

Analysis of the interview data showed that the teachers in the study group firmly believed that professional development should involve teachers in identifying what they need to learn, how they will learn it, and how they will measure success. This finding supports Alberta Learning's *Teaching Quality Standard Applicable to the Provision of Basic Education in Alberta* (1997), specifically section (2) n), which includes the following statement:

[Teachers understand] the importance of career-long learning. They know how to assess their own teaching and how to work with others responsible for supervising and evaluating teachers. They know how to...develop and implement their own professional development activities. (p. 3)

Findings from interviews and monthly meetings provide evidence of high levels of agreement by the teachers in the study group that professional development should include school-based goals that focus on what students need to learn. This result supports the main goal of the *AISI Framework* (1999): "[The essence of the plan is] to improve student learning and performance by fostering initiatives which reflect the unique needs and circumstances within school jurisdictions" (p. ii).

The notion of professional development relating to school-based goals while continuing to focus on students' needs is supported by several authors: Barth (1991);

DuFour and Eaker (1998); Eaker, DuFour, and Burnette (2002); Leithwood (2002); Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1995, 1999); Lieberman (1995, 2002); Little (1982). Similarly, the respondents in this study indicated a belief that linking professional development to school-based goals was beneficial to both themselves and their students.

Self-esteem is a highly motivating factor for teachers. When given positive feedback from both peers and administrators, teachers in this study reported feeling worthy and encouraged in their tasks. They valued authentic feedback on their ideas about and participation in professional development as well as on their ideas for teaching. Research on the role of positive feedback in self-esteem has been reported by Brandt (1996); Conley (1987); Fullan, Galluzzo, Morris, and Watson (1998); Glickman (2002); Hargreaves and Fullan (1992); Haughey, Townsend, O'Reilly, and Ratsoy (1993); Lieberman (1995, 2002); Lieberman and Miller (1984); Little (1982); Little, Gerritz, Stern, Guthrie, Kirst and Marsh (1987); Newmann (1996); Townsend (1987). These authors all support the notion that giving teachers individual support and meaningful feedback communicates to them the feeling that they matter, and it empowers them to engage in their own professional development.

Through sharing ideas and problems with others, the teachers in this study got a better sense of what they wanted to do and were motivated to pursue professional development opportunities. This result supports the findings of Matlin and Short (1991) and the design principles for professional development described by Valli and Hawley (2002). Valli and Hawley's design principles include this statement:

Professional development should involve teachers in the identification of what they need to learn, and, when possible, in the development of the learning

opportunity or process to be used. Professional development should provide learning opportunities that relate to individual needs but are, for the most part, organized around collaborative problem solving. (pp. 87-90)

Teachers in the study saw professional growth plans as living documents for both teacher growth and accountability. This demonstrates their developing understanding of the Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation policy (1998), which states, "Teacher professional growth means the career-long learning process whereby a teacher annually develops and implements a plan to achieve professional learning objectives or goals that are consistent with the teaching quality standard" (p. 2). One teacher in the focus group commented in this way:

Having a say in my own professional development allows me to focus on what I feel is needed for my own growth while keeping in mind the school's focus on improvement. Making the goals manageable for me, I think, empowers me to see how I develop as a teacher from year to year.

These teachers consistently valued collaboration as an essential element of professional development. They reported that group discussion, dialogue, exchange of ideas and positive feedback created the most satisfying opportunities for professional growth. This finding supports the conclusions of DuFour and Eaker (1998); Eaker, Dufour and Burnette (2002); Fullan (1997); Kruse, Louis and Byrk (1995); Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999); Lieberman and Miller (1984); Little (1982), Newmann (1996); Townsend (1987); Valli and Hawley (2002).

Although the teachers in the study group lamented the lack of time available for professional development, they sought ways of creating more time to meet, discuss, and

reflect. This effort demonstrates the development of perspective in terms of professional development. For these participants it has become a necessary part of their growth as teachers. As Eaker, DuFour, and Burnette (2002) conclude, "Moving the professional learning community effort to the 'must do' list is the first step in transforming a school" (p.32). In addition, DuFour and Eaker state, "Time for collaboration must be built into the school day and year" (p.130). Study participants saw the lack of time as a challenge rather than as an insurmountable obstacle.

The study participants perceived the administrative role as one of support and encouragement for all aspects of school life, specifically in cases where a teacher is encountering difficulty. They appreciated my taking an active role in the collaborative process as well as my guidance in helping them write their professional development goals. They commented frequently that my involvement in discussing their plans with them, as well as providing feedback and suggestions, seemed to give their work more validity. One teacher commented in this way:

I appreciated the manner in which you worked with us. The easy, open-ended manner left everybody totally comfortable, and the more open we are, the more we accomplish. Because you showed you were accountable to us, we felt that we were listened to and appreciated and that what we were doing mattered.

The teachers' reaction supports the view that, if teachers see administrators as supportive and encouraging, they are more likely to take risks and learn new things. This supports much of the research on leadership by Barth (1991); Brandt (1996); Greenleaf (1997); Haughey, Townsend, O'Reilly, and Ratsoy (1999); Lieberman and Miller (1984);

Leithwood, Jantzi, and Steinbach (1999); Stufflebeam (1995); Townsend (1987); Valli and Hawley, (2002). In addition, DuFour and Eaker (1998) state the following:

There is no reason to believe that simply involving teachers in the decision-making process and providing high levels of individual autonomy will improve a school. Principals of learning communities certainly do more than delegate, empower, and then hope for the best. They provide staff members with relevant background information and research findings to help them arrive at informed opinions. They ensure that teachers receive the training to master skills that will help them more effectively achieve the school's goals. They provide time and create structures for staff reflection and discussion. They supply the data, information, and feedback that enable teams to make...improvements to achieve their objectives. (pp. 185-186)

What emerged as a recurring theme in interviews with teachers and in monthly meetings was their interest in, enjoyment of, and motivation for professional development. These teachers loved to learn. They loved to talk about both what they do and the children they teach. These teachers were very supportive of one another. And, for the most part, these teachers were unaware that much of what they do is professional development. For example, they engaged in action research without even knowing they were doing it.

Often when our group met after school and teachers were sharing their experiences and thoughts with one another, they would throw out questions or observations to one another. They displayed many of the characteristics of the critical friend in action research, as described in the Alberta Teachers' Association's Action

Research Guide for Alberta Teachers (2000). They acted as a trusted friend who asked proactive questions, provided another point of view, encouraged and supported reflection, and offered suggestions and advice when requested, being careful not to impose personal judgement or evaluation. The teachers also generated many questions that could easily be developed into an action research plan. Comments or anecdotes always provided the catalyst for a question, and sometimes the question became more focused or refined as the group continued to discuss the issue or situation. This very closely followed the notion described in the Action Research Guide for Alberta Teachers that action research is a "series of steps or action, propelled by reflection" (p. 12).

Study participants appreciated the shift from a top-down model of evaluation to one of supervision. They felt the opportunity to work with an administrator to guide their growth was more beneficial than having the administrator chart it for them. Alberta Learning's Policy 2.1.5, Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation (1998), defines supervision as "the on-going process by which a principal carries out duties in respect to teachers and teaching required under section 15 of the School Act, and exercises educational leadership" (p.2). The move to a more collaborative form of supervision is consistent with models and findings presented by researchers such as Brandt (1996); Conley (1987); Glickman (2002); Haughey, Townsend, O'Reilly, and Ratsoy (1993); Lewis, (1982); Lieberman and Miller (1984); Leithwood, 2002; McGreal, (1983); Stufflebeam (1995); Townsend (1987).

Helm (1997) summarizes a successful evaluation conference as follows:

The most successful evaluation conference is a dialogue between principal and teacher, not a monologue by the principal. That dialogue, in fact, should contain

much more teacher talk than principal talk. This conference is a more structured component of an ongoing supervisory system that approximates the coaching function with regular, immediate, and specific feedback. Both principal and teacher must spend time reviewing and reflecting on the previous evaluation period in order to maximize the time spent in conferencing. As such, the conference can also become an excellent forum for problem solving.... [It] should also include significant emphasis on the future and on any areas the teacher or principal has identified as new opportunities for professional growth or improvement. (p. 265)

Clearly, this is what happened for most of the teachers and the administrator in this study.

Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted over a four-month period. Although the teachers clearly demonstrated a change in attitude toward their understanding of growth plans and of professional development, the duration of the study was not sufficient for them to develop new behaviors from new beliefs. Alberta Learning's AISI Framework (1999) states the following:

It is recognized that school improvement is not a "quick fix" activity, but rather an ongoing process that requires collaboration, commitment, and sustained support. AISI's requirements of budgeting, reporting and accountability are an attempt to promote long-term efficiency and effectiveness, not short-term changes. (p. 5)

The teachers' ability to meet, discuss and engage in professional development was limited by the structure of the school day, by teachers' out of school commitments, and by

the culture of the school itself. Yet teachers' perceptions and attitudes did change. One teacher in the study group made these comments:

Collaboration is one of the ways in which I grow professionally. I am thankful for having professional growth as part of my government, district, school and personal plans. This encourages us all to commit to a better and better educational product. I feel fortunate to be able to hear world renowned speakers, participate in workshops in areas that I feel a need to grow, as well as being encouraged and sometimes pushed to grow.

This distinct change in perception and attitude by the study participants have very positive and powerful implications for the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement, school district goals, school-based goals and further refinement of Teacher Professional Growth Plans.

Personal Reflections

This case study had interesting beginnings. As a new administrator in a new school in the fall of 2002, I was full of enthusiasm yet filled with trepidation about my study. I wanted to know how teachers felt about their growth plans. I wanted to inspire them to set goals for themselves and to put their plans into practice. But what if no one was interested in what I was proposing? I didn't know the staff, and they didn't know me. No one knew what to expect. This situation added validity to the study, in my opinion. I was able to work with people as someone with no prior knowledge of their personalities or interests and no preconceived notions of their level of professional development. Under the circumstances, I was able to approach the participants in the process with a very open mind, and they were in the same position.

The results of this study confirm that more frequent consultation between elementary school teachers and a building administrator can have a positive influence on professional growth. But the administrator is only part of the influence. It is a collaborative group of people sharing the same purpose who influence growth. The administrator is the facilitator for the group, but it is the group itself that effects change.

Leadership is a very important element of growth and change, and so is knowledge. When we began our study group, I was the most knowledgeable about teacher growth plans. I feel I was successful in guiding teachers to a better understanding of the value of growth plans for their professional development. I knew how to encourage them to set manageable goals for themselves. I knew how to give them positive feedback

on their teaching ideas and on what they do as professionals. They in turn became more knowledgeable about growth plans.

I now feel that any one of these teachers could be a leader for professional development in some way. This is a very positive outcome. As we consistently wrestle with issues of time, professional development, and accountability, the role of leadership becomes increasingly important. Teacher-leaders can play an important role in this process. Through collaboration and in the spirit of collegiality, teacher leaders can successfully guide professional development. This does not mean that administrators should abdicate their role; rather it means that they can encourage, help, and change from within.

Conclusions

The Teacher Professional Growth Plan is emerging as a valuable document for professional growth, accountability and supervision of teachers. Educators cite the opportunity to choose their own direction for professional development as the main reason for their support of the growth plan. They feel empowered as teachers when they are allowed to take ownership of and responsibility for their growth. This is an admirable start, but there is work to do.

Administrators must ensure that all teachers have a solid understanding of the function of teacher growth plans. A teacher growth plan is a living document authored by the teacher. It includes professional growth goals for the year, timelines for achieving those goals, and assessment strategies that will be used to evaluate if goals have been met. All educators are experienced in writing individual program plans for their students; therefore, they are aware of the framework for this document. It is incumbent upon site-based and district administrators to develop strategies to provide time, meaningful opportunities, and resources in order to encourage and develop professional growth among their teaching staff.

Collaboration is an essential element for effective professional development. Collaborative study groups or professional learning communities have proven to be successful in creating a supportive, collegial environment in which teachers can exchange ideas and engage in meaningful dialogue.

The concept of accountability is open to several interpretations. Most teachers interpret accountability as stating what they will do, carrying out the plan, and evaluating

results. There may be some weakness in the follow-up stage, with implications for both teachers and administrators. Growth plans are handed in to administrators at the beginning of the school year, discussed by an administrator and a teacher shortly after, and then discussed again in the spring. This arrangement is not sufficient. The results of this study show that frequent consultation between administrators and teachers throughout the year keeps the plan at the forefront. Both parties become equally involved in plans of action, progress, feedback and evaluation of outcomes. The teacher becomes more self-accountable for following through, and the administrator becomes more accountable to the teacher for guidance.

Supervision of teachers has replaced the former top-down model of evaluation. Teachers welcome and support this change, but administrators must do a better job of embracing it. Teachers want and need feedback. Frequent, meaningful communication is necessary between administrators and the teachers whose growth plans and performance they are supervising. Mutual guidelines should be established. Casual classroom visits, small group discussions and dialogue with individual teachers would do much to give administrators a clear picture of what their teachers are doing professionally, where they are headed, and how administrators can help them to get there.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Policy 2.1.5. Accountability in Education: Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation

BACKGROUND

The *Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy* aims to ensure that each teacher's actions, judgements and decisions are in the best educational interests of students and support optimum learning. School authorities, Early Childhood Services (ECS) operators, superintendents, principals and teachers are responsible for facilitating quality improvement through each teacher's career-long professional growth.

POLICY

School authorities, ECS operators, superintendents, principals and teachers must work together to achieve the teaching quality standard. All teachers are expected to practice consistently in keeping with the standard.

STATUTE

School Act:

- s.13 Teachers
- s.15 Principals
- s.17(4) School Council
- s.22(2) Private Schools
- s.24(1)(2) Early Childhood Services
- s.25(3) Teacher Evaluation
- s.75 Qualifications re supervisory position
- s.75.1 Certification of Teachers
- s.86 Suspension of teacher
- s.87 Termination of contract
- s.88 Termination by board
- s.89 Termination by teacher
- s.90 Notice of termination
- s.94(4) Superintendents of Schools

REGULATION

The Certification of Teachers Regulation, the Practice Review of Teachers Regulation, the Private Schools Regulation, and the Teaching Quality Standard (Ministerial Order 016/97) must be referred to in conjunction with this Policy. See Section 4, Ministerial Orders and Directives, and Section 5, School Act Regulations in this Manual.

DEFINITIONS In Policy 2.1.5

- (a) "ECS operator" means a board or person approved under section 24 of the *School Act* to provide an early childhood services program;
- (b) "evaluation" means the formal process of gathering and recording information or evidence over a period of time and the application of reasoned professional judgement by a principal in determining whether one or more aspects of the teaching of a teacher exceeds, meets or does not meet the teaching quality standard;
- (c) "notice of remediation" means the written statement issued by a principal to a teacher where the principal has determined that a teacher's teaching does not meet the teaching quality standard, and such a statement describes:
- (i) the behaviours or practices that do not meet the teaching quality standard and the changes required,
 - (ii) the remediation strategies the teacher is advised to pursue, and
 - (iii) how the determination will be made that the required changes in behaviour or practice have taken place, applicable timelines, and the consequences of not achieving the required changes including, but not limited to, termination of a teacher's contract of employment;
- (d) "Policy" means this Teacher Growth, Supervision and Evaluation Policy approved by the Minister;
- (e) "policy" means the policy implemented by a school authority or ECS operator under procedure 1.
- (f) "principal" means
- (i) a principal as defined in the School Act
 - (ii) a superintendent or designee in respect to fulfilling obligations under section 94 of the School Act or for purposes of making recommendations under the Certification of Teachers Regulation, or
 - (iii) the teacher of an accredited private school designated or a teacher named by a private ECS operator to carry out the duties of a principal in respect to teachers and teaching.
- (g) "school authority" means a school board, a person or society that operates a charter school or an accredited private school;
- (h) "supervision" means the on-going process by which a principal carries out duties in respect to teachers and teaching required under section 15 of the School Act, and exercises educational leadership;
- (i) "teacher" means

- (i) an individual who is required to hold a certificate of qualification as a teacher and who is responsible for the provision of instruction or supervision under section 13 of the *School Act*, or
- (ii) an individual whose qualifications are approved by the Minister and is employed to teach under section 22(2)(b)(iii) of the *School Act*

(j) "teacher professional growth" means the career- long learning process whereby a teacher annually develops and implements a plan to achieve professional learning objectives or goals that are consistent with the teaching quality standard;

(k) "teaching quality standard" means the authorized standard and descriptors of knowledge, skills and attributes and any additional standards or descriptors consistent with the *Teaching Quality Standard Ministerial Order* and the mission of the school authority or the program statement of the ECS operator.

PROCEDURES GENERAL

1 On or before September 1, 1999, each school authority and ECS operator shall implement a policy consistent with this Policy that:

- (a) applies to all teachers unless otherwise stipulated in this Policy,
- (b) provides a review mechanism,
- (c) is consistent with the teaching quality standard,
- (d) is readily available to the public, and
- (e) details when and how often information summarizing implementation of the policy will be reported to the public.

2 The policy referred to in procedure 1 shall be developed and implemented in consultation with the teachers of the school authority or ECS operator.

TEACHER GROWTH

3 A teacher employed by a school authority or ECS operator:

- (a) under a probationary contract or continuing contract, or
- (b) under other provisions of the *School Act* if required by the policy of the school authority or ECS operator , is responsible for completing during each school year an annual teacher professional growth plan that:
 - (i) reflects goals and objectives based on an assessment of learning needs by the individual teacher .
 - (ii) shows a demonstrable relationship to the teaching quality standard, and
 - (iii) takes into consideration the education plans of the school, the school authority and the Government, or the program statement of an ECS operator;
- (c) must submit for review or approval at a time specified in the policy that annual teacher professional growth plan to:

- (i) the principal, or
- (ii) a group of teachers delegated by the principal, if such delegation is provided for in the policy.

4 An annual teacher professional growth plan:

- (a) may be a component of a long-term, multi-year plan; and
- (b) may consist of a planned program of supervising a student teacher or mentoring a teacher.

5 At a time specified in the policy, a teacher must provide a completed annual teacher professional growth plan to the principal or to the persons referred to in procedure 3(c) for review and the person or persons conducting the review, in consultation with the teacher, must make a finding whether the teacher has completed an annual teacher professional growth plan that complies with procedure 3.

6 If a review under procedure 5 finds that a teacher has not completed an annual teacher professional growth plan as required, the teacher may be subject to disciplinary action as defined in the policy.

7 Unless a teacher agrees, the content of an annual teacher professional growth plan must not be part of the evaluation process of a teacher under procedures 9(c) and 10.

8 Despite procedure 7, a principal may identify behaviours or practices that may require an evaluation under procedure 9(c) provided that the information identified is based on a source other than the information in the annual teacher professional growth plan of the teacher.

SUPERVISION

9 A fundamental component of the policy must be ongoing supervision of teachers by the principal, including:

- (a) providing support and guidance to teachers; (b) observing and receiving information from any source about the quality of teaching a teacher provides to students; and
- (c) identifying the behaviours or practices of a teacher that for any reason may require an evaluation.

EVALUATION

10 (1) The evaluation of a teacher by a principal may be conducted:

- (a) upon the written request of the teacher;
- (b) for purposes of gathering information related to a specific employment decision;
- (c) for purposes of assessing the growth of the teacher in specific areas of practice,

(d) when, on the basis of information received through supervision, the principal has reason to believe that the teaching of the teacher may not meet the teaching quality standard.

(2) A recommendation by an authorized individual that a teacher be issued a permanent professional teaching certificate or be offered employment under a continuing contract must be supported by the findings of two or more evaluations of the teacher .

11 On initiating an evaluation, the principal must communicate explicitly to the teacher:

- (a) the reasons for and purposes of the evaluation;
- (b) the process, criteria and standards to be used;
- (c) the timelines to be applied; and
- (d) the possible outcomes of the evaluation.

12 Upon completion of an evaluation, the principal must provide the teacher with a copy of the completed evaluation report.

13 Where, as the result of an evaluation, a principal determines that a change in the behaviour or practice of a teacher is required, the principal must provide to the teacher a notice of remediation and may stipulate that the remediation strategies stated in that notice replace the obligation of the teacher to develop and implement an annual teacher professional growth plan.

OTHER

14 This Policy does not restrict:

- (a) a principal from taking disciplinary or other action, as appropriate, where the principal has reasonable grounds for believing that the actions or practices of a teacher endangers the safety of students, constitutes a neglect of duty , a breach of trust or a refusal to obey a lawful order of the school authority or ECS operator, or
- (b) a board, a charter school board or a superintendent from taking any action or exercising any right or power under the School Act.

15 Alberta Education shall not inquire into or report upon any disputes arising from the dissatisfaction of an individual teacher with the evaluation report of a school authority or ECS operator if its policy is consistent with this Policy.

References

Please refer to the following for additional information:

An Integrated Framework to Enhance the Quality of Teaching in Alberta School Authority Accountability Policy 2.2.1

Toward Teacher Growth, A Study of the Impact of Alberta's Teacher Evaluation Policy
Provincial Three -Year Plan for Education

Appendix B

Teaching Quality Standard Applicable to the Provision of Basic Education in Alberta

1. Pursuant to Section 25(1)(f) of the *School Act*, I approve the following as the Teaching Quality Standard which shall apply to teacher certification, professional development, supervision and evaluation, and which is supported by descriptors of selected knowledge, skills and attributes appropriate to teachers at different stages of their careers:

1) Teaching Quality Standard

Quality teaching occurs when the teacher's ongoing analysis of context, and the teacher's decisions about which pedagogical knowledge and abilities to apply result in optimum learning by students. All teachers are expected to meet the Teaching Quality Standard throughout their careers.

However, teaching practices will vary because each teaching situation is different and in constant change. Reasoned judgment must be used to determine whether the Teaching Quality Standard is being met in a given context.

2) Descriptors of Knowledge, Skills and Attributes Related to Interim Certification

Teachers who hold an Interim Professional Certificate must possess the Knowledge, Skills and Attributes Related to Interim Certification (Interim KSAs), and apply them appropriately toward student learning. During their first two years of teaching, teachers should use the Interim KSAs to guide their teaching, reflect on their practice, and direct their professional development in collaboration with their supervisors and evaluators.

As situations warrant, teachers who hold an Interim Professional Certificate are expected to demonstrate consistently that they understand:

- a. contextual variables affect teaching and learning. They know how to analyse many variables at one time, and how to respond by making reasoned decisions about their teaching practice and students' learning;
- b. the structure of the Alberta education system. They know the different roles in the system, and how responsibilities and accountabilities are determined, communicated and enforced, including the expectations held of them under the Certification of Teachers Regulation, A.R. 261/90 as amended and their school authority's teacher's evaluation policy;
- c. the purposes of the Guide to Education and programs of study germane to the specialization or subject disciplines they are prepared to teach. They know how to

use these documents to inform and direct their planning, instruction and assessment of student progress:

- d. the subject disciplines they teach. They have completed a structured program of studies through which they acquired the knowledge, concepts, methodologies and assumptions in one or more areas of specialization or subject disciplines taught in Alberta schools.
- e. all students can learn, albeit at different rates and in different ways. They know how (including when and how to engage others) to identify students' different learning styles and ways students learn. They understand the need to respond to differences by creating multiple paths to learning for individuals and groups of students, including students with special learning needs;
- f. the purposes of short, medium and long term range planning. They know how to translate curriculum and desired outcomes into reasoned, meaningful and incrementally progressive learning opportunities for students. They also understand the need to vary their plans to accommodate individuals and groups of students;
- g. students' needs for physical, social, cultural and psychological security. They know how to engage students in creating effective classroom routines. They know how and when to apply a variety of management strategies that are in keeping with the situation, and that provide for minimal disruptions to students' learning;
- h. the importance of respecting students' human dignity. They know how to establish, with different students, professional relationships that are characterized by mutual respect, trust and harmony;
- i. there are many approaches to teaching and learning. They know a broad range of instructional strategies appropriate to their area of specialization and the subject discipline they teach, and know which strategies are appropriate to help different students achieve different outcomes;
- j. the functions of traditional and electronic teaching/learning technologies. They know how to use and how to engage students in using these technologies to present and deliver content, communicate effectively with others, find and secure information, research, word process, manage information, and keep records;
- k. the purposes of student assessment. They know how to assess the range of learning objectives by selecting and developing a variety of classroom and large scale assessment techniques and instruments. They know how to analyse the results of classroom and large scale assessment instruments including provincial assessment instruments, and how to use the results for the ultimate benefit of students;

- l. the importance of engaging parents, purposefully and meaningfully, in all aspects of teaching and learning. They know how to develop and implement strategies that create and enhance partnerships among teachers, parents and students;
- m. student learning is enhanced through the use of home and community resources. They know how to identify resources relevant to teaching and learning objectives, and how to incorporate these resources into their teaching and students' learning;
- n. the importance of contributing, independently and collegially, to the quality of their school. They know the strategies whereby they can, independently and collegially, enhance and maintain the quality of their schools to the benefit of students, parents, community and colleagues;
- o. the importance of career-long learning. They know how to assess their own teaching and how to work with others responsible for supervising and evaluating teachers. They know how to use the findings of assessments, supervision and evaluations to select, develop and implement their own professional development activities;
- p. the importance of guiding their actions with a personal, overall vision of the purpose of teaching. They are able to communicate their vision, including how it has changed as a result of new knowledge, understanding and experience; and
- q. they are expected to achieve the Teaching Quality Standard.

3) Descriptors of Knowledge, Skills and Attributes Related to Permanent Certification

Teachers who hold a Permanent Professional Certificate must demonstrate, in their practice, professional repertoires that are expanded beyond the Interim KSAs.

The following descriptors comprise a repertoire of selected knowledge, skills and attributes from which teachers who hold a Permanent Professional Certificate should be able to draw, as situations warrant, in order to meet the Teaching Quality Standard. Teachers, staffs, supervisors and evaluators should use the descriptors to guide professional development, supervision, evaluation and remediation strategies in order that teachers can meet the Teaching Quality Standard consistently throughout their careers.

- a. Teachers' application of pedagogical knowledge, skills and attributes is based in their ongoing analysis of contextual variables.

Teachers' analysis of contextual variables underlies their reasoned judgments and decisions about which specific pedagogical skills and abilities to apply in order that students can achieve optimum learning. Selected variables are outlined below.

student variables

- demographic variables
- maturation
- abilities and talents
- relationships among students
- subject area of study
- prior learning
- socio-economic status
- cultural background
- linguistic variables
- mental/emotional conditions
-

regulatory variables

- Government Organization Act
- School Act and provincial
- regulations, policies and Ministerial Orders
- Child Welfare Act
- Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms
- school authority policies
- Guide to Education.
- programs of study .

school variables

- resource availability and allocation
- teaching assignment
- class size and composition
- collegial and administrator support
- physical plant
- physical plant

teacher variables

- teaching experience
- learning experiences
- parental support
- parental involvement in children's learning
- socio-economic variables
- community support for education
- multiculturalism
- cultural pluralism
- inter-agency collaboration
- provincial, national and global influences

- b. Teachers understand the legislated, moral and ethical frameworks within which they work.

Teachers function within a policy-based and results oriented education system authorized under the School Act and other legislation.

Teachers also function within policy frameworks established by school authorities. This includes policies which require: a commitment to teaching practices that meet their school authority's teaching quality standard(s); and that teachers engage in ongoing, individualized professional development.

Teachers recognize they are bound by standards of conduct expected of a caring, knowledgeable and reasonable adult who is entrusted with the custody, care or education of students or children. Teachers recognize their actions are bound in moral, ethical and legal considerations regarding their obligations to students, parents, administrators, school authorities, communities and society at large. Teachers acknowledge these obligations and act accordingly.

- c. Teachers understand the subject disciplines they teach.

Teachers understand the knowledge, concepts, methodologies and assumptions of the subject disciplines they teach. This includes an understanding of how knowledge in each discipline is created and organized, and that subject disciplines

are more than bodies of static facts and techniques -they are complex and evolving. Their understanding extends to relevant technologies, the linkages among subject disciplines, and their relevance and importance in everyday life at the personal, local, national and international levels.

Teachers understand that students typically bring preconceptions and understandings to a subject. They know strategies and materials that are of assistance in furthering students' understanding.

- d. Teachers know there are many approaches to teaching and learning.

Teachers appreciate individual differences and believe all students can learn, albeit at different rates and in different ways. They recognize students' different learning styles and the different ways they learn, and accommodate these differences in individuals and groups of students including students with special learning needs.

Teachers understand the fluidity of teaching and learning. They constantly monitor the effectiveness and appropriateness of their practices and students' activities, and change them as needed.

- e. Teachers engage in a range of planning activities.

Teachers' plans are founded in their understanding of contextual variables and are a record of their decisions on what teaching and learning strategies to apply.

Plans outline a reasoned and incremental progression toward the attainment of desired outcomes, for both teachers and students. Teachers monitor the context, their instruction, and monitor and assess students' learning on an ongoing basis, and modify their plans accordingly.

Teachers strive to establish candid, open and ongoing lines of communication with students, parents, colleagues and other professionals, and incorporate information gained into their planning.

- f. Teachers create and maintain environments that are conducive to student learning.

Teachers establish learning environments wherein students feel physically, psychologically, socially and culturally secure. They are respectful of students' human dignity, and seek to establish a positive professional relationship with students that is characterized by mutual respect, trust and harmony. They model the beliefs, principles, values, and intellectual characteristics outlined in the Guide to Education and programs of study, and guide students to do the same.

Teachers work, independently and cooperatively, to make their classrooms and schools stimulating learning environments. They maintain acceptable levels of student conduct, and use discipline strategies that result in a positive environment conducive to student learning. They work with students to establish classroom

routines that enhance and increase students' involvement in meaningful learning activities. They organize facilities, materials, equipment and space to provide students equitable opportunities to learn, and to provide for students' safety.

Where community members work with students either on-campus or off-campus and where students are engaged in school-sponsored off-campus activities, teachers strive to ensure these situations also are secure and positive environments conducive to students' learning.

- g. Teachers translate curriculum content and objectives into meaningful learning activities.

Teachers clearly communicate short and long range learning expectations to students, and how the expectations are to be achieved and assessed. They engage students in meaningful activities that motivate and challenge them to achieve those expectations. They integrate current learning with prior learning, and provide opportunities for students to relate their learning to the home, community and broader environment.

Teachers apply a broad range and variety of instructional and learning strategies. The strategies vary in keeping with contextual variables, subject content, desired objectives, and the learning needs of individuals and groups of students. The

strategies are selected and used to achieve desired outcomes, primarily the expectations outlined in the Guide to Education, programs of study and other approved programs.

- h. Teachers apply a variety of technologies to meet students' learning needs.

Teachers use teaching/learning resources such as the chalkboard, texts, computers and other auditory, print and visual media, and maintain an awareness of emerging technological resources. They keep abreast of advances in teaching/learning technologies and how they can be incorporated into instruction and learning. As new technologies prove useful and become available in schools, teachers develop their own and their students' proficiencies in using the technologies purposefully, which may include content presentation, delivery and research applications, as well as word processing, information management and record keeping.

Teachers use electronic networks and other telecommunication media to enhance their own knowledge and abilities, and to communicate more effectively with others.

- i. Teachers gather and use information about students' learning needs and progress.

Teachers monitor students' actions on an ongoing basis to determine and respond to their learning needs. They use a variety of diagnostic methods that include observing students' activities, analysing students' learning difficulties and strengths, and interpreting the results of assessments and information provided by students, their parents, colleagues and other professionals.

Teachers select and develop a variety of classroom assessment strategies and instruments to assess the full range of learning objectives. They differentiate between classroom and large-scale instruments such as provincial achievement tests, administer both and use the results for the ultimate benefit of students. They record, interpret and use the results of their assessments to modify their teaching practices and students' learning activities.

Teachers help students, parents and other educators interpret and understand the results of diagnoses and assessments, and the implications for students. They also help students develop the ability to diagnose their own learning needs and to assess their progress toward learning goals.

Teachers use their interpretations of diagnoses and assessments as well as students' work and results to guide their own professional growth. They assist school councils and members of the community to understand the purposes, meanings, outcomes and implications of assessments.

- j. Teachers establish and maintain partnerships among school, home and community, and within their own schools.

Teachers engage in activities that contribute to the quality of the school as a learning environment. They work with others to develop, coordinate and implement programs and activities that characterize effective schools. They also work cooperatively with school councils.

Teachers strive to involve parents in their children's schooling. Partnerships with the home are characterized by the candid sharing of information and ideas to influence how teachers and parents, independently and cooperatively, contribute to students' learning.

Teachers seek out and incorporate community resources into their instruction, and encourage students to use home and community resources in their learning. Teachers make connections between school, home and community in order to enhance the relevance and meaning of learning. Home and community resources are utilized to make learning meaningful and relevant, and so students can gain an increased understanding of the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to participate in and contribute positively to society.

k. Teachers are career-long learners.

Teachers engage in ongoing professional development to enhance their: understanding of and ability to analyze the context of teaching; ability to make reasoned judgments and decisions; and, pedagogical knowledge and abilities. They recognize their own professional needs and work with others to meet those needs. They share their professional expertise to the benefit of others in their schools, communities and profession.

Teachers guide their actions by their overall visions of the purpose of teaching. They actively refine and redefine their visions in light of the ever-changing context, new knowledge and understandings, and their experiences. While these visions are dynamic and grow in depth and breadth over teachers' careers, the visions maintain at their core a commitment to teaching practices through which students can achieve optimum learning.

Approved: May 14, 1997

Appendix C

Additional Resources Related to Teacher Professional Development

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Appendix D

Survey for Growth and Development Plans

Instructions: Please put a check in the one box that best answers each question.

	Never	Seldom	Sometimes	Often	Always
1. I look at my growth plans after I write them each fall.					
2. I use my long range plans to help guide my professional growth plans.					
3. I refer to or use my plans during the year to check to see if I am achieving my					
4. I collaborate with a colleague or colleagues to write my growth plans.					
5. I coordinate goals for my growth plans with those outlined in school initiatives.					
6. In my plans, I write how I will measure outcomes for attaining goals.					
7. I write new plans every year.					
8. I write plans that are ongoing and are spread over several years.					
9. I ask an administrator to help me with my plans.					
10. I review my plans at the end of the year and make comments or suggestions for the following year.					

Appendix E

Pre-Project Interview Questions

Interview Questions	Theoretical Issue	Relevance
1. Tell me about your responsibilities in this school district.		Establish comfort level
2. Tell me what you know about teacher professional growth plans.	Awareness of purpose of plans	Determine perception of growth plans
3. How do you prepare your plans?	Awareness of process of growth plans	Determine interest in growth plan
4. Do you prefer to collaborate with colleagues in writing plans, or do you prefer to work alone?	Awareness of collaboration	Determine interest in action research
5. What are some of the goals you've set for yourself in your growth plans?	Awareness of commitment to plans	Determine internalization of process
6. Is there anything you'd like to add?		Determine level of commitment

Appendix F

Introductory Letter and Consent Form

Dear

I am conducting an interview with teachers in an elementary school setting about their understanding of Teacher Professional Growth Plans. The purpose of this interview is to determine your knowledge of the Growth Plans and to determine your level of interest and support for the Plans.

You are being asked to participate in an interview. Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop the interview at any time. Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. When responses are released, they will be reported in summary form only. Further, all names, locations, and any other identifying information will NOT be included in any discussion of the results.

I would very much appreciate your participation in the interview. If you have any questions, please contact me at 328-2157/327-3653. Also feel free to contact the supervisor of my study, David Townsend, and/or the chair of the Faculty of Education Human Subject Research Committee, if you wish additional information.

Sincerely,

Brenda Stendebach

Galbraith Elementary School

CONSENT FORM

I have read the letter of consent and agree to be interviewed.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date _____

Appendix G

Post-Project Interview Questions

1. Have our group meetings and discussions been beneficial to you and if so, how?
2. Has your understanding of Teacher Growth and Development Plans changed in any way?
3. Do you feel administration has a role to play in Teacher Growth and Development Plans and professional development?
4. What does accountability mean to you in terms of professional development?
5. Would you welcome more time during the school day to meet and collaborate?
6. Is there anything you'd like to add?

Thank you so much for your willingness to participate in the group and the time you have given to the meetings. You have taught me so much. I hope something positive has come out of this for you as well.

Appendix H

Framework for the Alberta Initiative for School Improvement (AISI)

Executive Summary

AISI is an extension of Alberta's accountability framework that has been in place since the early 1990s. Since November 1996, school boards have been required to report to their publics how well their students are performing on the provincial assessments and a variety of other measures outlined in their three-year education plans. AISI provides funding to school jurisdictions for specific local initiatives and research to improve student learning and performance that is in addition to the basic school grants.

AISI funding is \$38M in the 2000/2001 fiscal year and \$66M in the 2001/2002 fiscal year, which translates into \$66M for each of the 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 school years. School jurisdictions will receive AISI program details in late December 1999 for implementation in the 2000/2001 school year, with proposals being submitted by school jurisdictions commencing in March 2000. The essence of the plan follows.

Goal

To improve student learning and performance by fostering initiatives which reflect the unique needs and circumstances within school jurisdictions.

Principles

- 1) Funding will flow to school jurisdictions and charter schools based upon approved proposals for improving student learning and performance.
- 2) Proposals can be multi-year (maximum of 3 years) but must have interim (at least annual) progress measurement targets. Continued funding depends upon evidence of success.

- 3) Funding consisting of an equal amount per registered FTE (Full Time Equivalent) student will be based upon the previous year's September 30th count.
- 4) The jurisdiction proposal needs to be linked to and become part of the current three-year planning and reporting process for purposes of the school jurisdiction's annual planning, reporting and accountability processes.
- 5) There will be an appropriate balance of local and provincial measures of performance that includes approved quantitative and/or qualitative measures.
- 6) Project results will be shared with Alberta school jurisdictions and others while Alberta Learning will act as the "clearinghouse" on behalf of all partners.

Key Considerations

- 1) Given that collaboration is an essential element for school improvement, proposals should reflect support of those who will implement the projects and include meaningful involvement of the school community.
- 2) Proposals should reflect insights from research and literature on improvement.
- 3) Each project proposal must include a budget. The sum of the school jurisdiction's projects cannot exceed the total school jurisdiction funding entitlement.
- 4) School jurisdictions may phase out projects and submit new proposals with provincial approval.
- 5) Funding shall not be paid as bonuses.

- 6) With reference to "measures", the appropriate balance is 60% locally determined and 40% provincially determined.

Clarifications

- 1) School Community. In addition to students, staff and families, school community includes school councils and agencies providing school services that affect the ability of children to be successful learners.
- 2) Nature of School Improvement. It is recognized that school improvement is not a "quick fix" activity, but rather an ongoing process that requires collaboration, commitment, and sustained support. AISI's requirements of budgeting, reporting and accountability are an attempt to promote long-term efficiency and effectiveness, not short-term changes.
- 3) Funding. Boards need a high degree of autonomy and flexibility in allocating resources in order to foster school improvement which meets local needs, subject to the following considerations:
 - (a) funding will not be paid as staff bonuses,
 - (b) per-capita allocations to schools are discouraged,
 - (c) administrative costs are legitimate, and
 - (d) professional development costs are appropriate.
- 4) Professional Development/Staff Training. School jurisdictions should recognize the importance of professional development in the school improvement process.

- 5) **School Improvement Research and Literature.** The requirement to reflect research insights is not meant to discourage innovation but rather to ensure that there is a strong possibility for success.
- 6) **Jurisdiction and School Improvement** There is an apparent tension between the need for "bottom-up" and "top- down" processes including consultation and commitment, and the need for overall jurisdiction planning and decisions on priorities. But these are not necessarily contradictory. In order to be successful, projects must be based on support at the school and community level. At the same time, the school jurisdiction must make the final decision about the overall direction and allocation of resources, in light of the situation and needs which prevail in its school system.

December 1999.

Appendix I

AISI Differentiated Instruction Professional Development Proposal Form

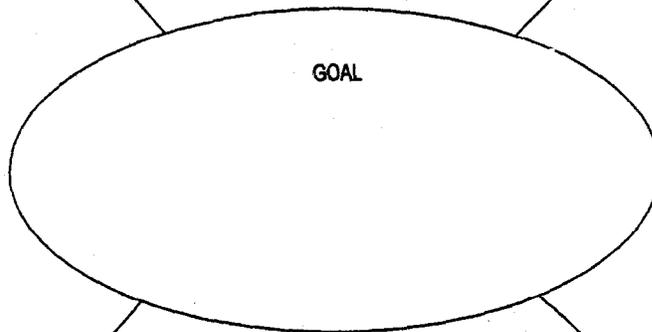
**AISI DIFFERENTIATED INSTRUCTION
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL**

NAME: _____

SCHOOL YEAR: _____

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOCUS
1. IPP Development
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.

TIMELINES
1. Div II Oct. 8 th and Div I Oct. 15 th
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.



COLLEAGUES/MENTORS

INDICATORS & MEASURES OF ACHIEVEMENT
GATES
SURVEYS
OTHER