THE PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS

OF STUDENT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES IN SELECTED

BRITISH COLUMBIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by

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THE PURPOSES AND FUNCTIONS OF STUDENT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES IN SELECTED

BRITISH COLUMBIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the following problems: (1) How many and which elementary schools located in the southwest corner of British Columbia have operational student governances? (2) What are the stated purposes of student governances as communicated by student leaders and staff sponsor/advisers; and how do the stated purposes of the two groups compare? (3) How do the functions of the student governances compare with the stated purposes of student leaders, their respective staff sponsor/adviser, and the literature?

The first phase of this study consisted of a questionnaire which was sent to 400 elementary schools within the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. The questionnaire was used to identify those schools which have student governance. In the second phase of this study, nine schools were randomly selected. This random sample possessed considerable diversity in terms of size, socio-economic status, and experience with student governance. Data for the study were gathered using structured interviews.

The findings to problem (1) showed that 45% of the responding schools have some form of student governance. In terms of problem (2) of

the study, eight different purposes of student governances surfaced. The most frequently stated purpose by students and sponsor/advisers was to provide students with an opportunity to plan and organize activities for the school. Agreement between students and sponsor/advisers of the remaining stated purposes was minimal with the exception of providing input pertaining to fund raising. A comparison of student governance functions with the stated purposes of students, sponsors, and the literature (problem 3), indicates a close correlation between the governance purposes stated by students and planned functions. Minimal alignment was evident with purposes stated by sponsor/advisers or purposes stated in the literature with the exception of providing students with an opportunity to plan school activities.

If any changes are to come about in student governance programs in British Columbia a more cohesive, interactive, unified approach needs to be considered. Current practice, rationalized by the school's legal responsibility and concern for routine and efficiency, is that administrators and staffs have been reserved about allowing elementary students into the circles of policy and decision making with respect to most real school-community issues.

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CHAPTER ONE

The Problem

Introduction

Sustaining a society that is committed to democratic ideals as a way

of solving problems requires a commitment from those who have found

success in using democratic patterns to function and solve problems. We

can not suddenly expect adolescents upon reaching the age of eighteen to

believe democratically or support democratic traditions without having

gained maturity through the developmental learning process of increased

responsible participation. Providing opportunities for growing children to

experience success in solving their problems and meeting their needs

through the democratic process provides practical lessons about democracy.

The American philosopher, Horace Mann, (1891) identified and

commented on this need a century ago.* (See page 2).

> In order that men may be prepared for self government, their
> apprenticeship must commence in childhood. The great moral
> attribute of self-government cannot be born in a day; and if school
> children are not trained to it, we only prepare ourselves for
> disappointment if we expect it from grown men (p.35).

Society seems to have increased its expectations of schools.

Politicians and many members of communities feel the school needs to

consider bearing a major responsibility for providing experiences that

foster the development of democratic citizenship. Some former traditional

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* Due to the limited amount of Canadian literature relevant to student
governance structures, the decades of experience American schools have
had with student governance structures, and some similarities between
American and Canadian educational practices, numerous references are
made to American writers and their studies within this thesis. At the
same time it is important to acknowledge some significant differences
between the historical, political and legal events which have shaped the
traditions and social institutions of the people within the two countries.
The United States was conceived in a spirit of revolution and their
Declaration of Independence affirmed life, liberty and the pursuit of
happiness. In contrast, Canada was formed as a result of a compromise
reached between 4 colonies, and developed the BNA Act of 1867 which
spoke to the right of peace, order and good government (Pitsula and
Manley-Casimir, 1990). Another difference stressed by Pitsula and
Manley-Casimir (1990) was that Americans demonstrate a greater
willingness to challenge traditional authority in a variety of ways
including litigation whereas Canadians tend to be more complacent and
permit the exercise of considerable power by leaders. Like Pitsula and
Manley-Casimir (1990), Lipset (1968) identified the major differences
between Canadians and Americans as stemming from the varying origins of
the political systems and national identities, varying religious traditions,
and different frontier experiences.
        Despite these differences, Lipset suggested that the people from
these two countries resemble each other more than any other two nations
on earth. One similarity identified by Naegele (1964) was that Canadians
and Americans share many similar values, but the convictions held by
Canadians are much more tentative and conservative.

functions of family, religion, and economic institutions, of preparing individuals for their role in society, have been transferred to educational institutions. Therefore, educators need to clarify their role in preparing students for responsible citizenship in our increasingly complex and rapidly changing world.

The student council program appears to be a response of the school community to provide a setting where students could practice and be involved in participatory government. This seems to be what Romulo Magsino (1977) had in mind when he called for "developmental" rights as a compromise between full adult rights and no rights at all. However, early in the history of the American student council movement students became involved in contrived situations which allowed only limited experiences in dealing with real and meaningful problems. Student councils were seldom permitted to infringe upon or influence the policy making prerogatives of administrators and teachers. It was not readily accepted in the adult world that children should experience actual citizenship with respect to most real school-community issues.

Adolescents and younger children are no longer sheltered from the

realities of the world. The media, their peers, and their own family situations have forced children to come to grips with actual problems. While children have become "adultified" in many respects outside the school, one wonders if educators have been slow to recognize them as such? Although students have gained exposure to adult realities and issues could it be that student leaders are still only tinkering with the more mundane social and fund raising activities of former years?

Although student leadership organizations were commonly known as student councils in the past, they may be operating under different names such as student associations, leadership clubs, or student governments today. The central issue of this study is not to look at the different labels ascribed to the student leadership group, but rather to consider the amount of authority and the degree of openness and commitment that school personnel choose to invest in the student representative group. Are administrators and staff members allowing elementary students into the circles of policy and decision making? What are the student responsibilities? Are they aware of their responsibilities? Are any restrictions or limitations being placed upon them?

Statement of the Problem

This study was designed to address three significant problems

relating to student governance organizations.

Problem 1

How many and which of the elementary schools located in the southwest

corner of British Columbia have operational student governance structures?

Problem 2

What are the purposes of student governance structures as stated by

student leaders and staff sponsor/advisers in randomly selected

elementary schools within the stated region; and how do the statements of

the two groups compare?

Problem 3

How do the functions of the student governance structures compare with

the stated purposes of student leaders, their respective staff

sponsor/adviser, and the literature?

In order to attain this information, separate interviews with staff

sponsor/advisers and student leaders needed to be arranged. The major

questions posed to these individuals were:

1. What is the purpose of your student governance structure?

2. How do you organize your governance structure?

3. How are your student council meetings conducted?

4. What types of activities, projects, or decisions does the council

   get involved with or address?

5. What are the key ingredients for ensuring a successful governance

   structure?

6. What problems or deterrents have affected the success of your

   student governance structure?

Importance of the Study

Before one can assess the value of student governance organizations,

increase their effectiveness within schools, or determine if they are

necessary or beneficial to the future preparation of British Columbia's

elementary students, one must know their purpose(s). Secondly, it is

necessary to compare the purpose statements of the major stake holders -

administrators, staff members, and students. If administrators and staff

members are to make appropriate accomodations, a clear assessment must be made of the alignments and discrepencies between the existing perceived purposes and what ought to exist. Furthermore, it is important to assess if student leaders see their role as the staff does.

If the stated purposes of elementary students and their respective staffs were compared, any discrepencies between their perceived purposes and expectations should become apparent. Only when the scope and magnitude of the differences between staff and student perceptions of student governance purposes, and a reflection on previous functions is known to the administration, staff, and students of local schools, can the necessary communication, instruction, or adjustments be made. Once the need for change is clear and the direction that change should take becomes apparent, the choice to implement change can be made with increased confidence of success. The effective results of student governance structures who have clearly stated objectives shared by all stake holders and an ongoing evaluation process could have several effects. First of all, positive results would likely be shared informally with other schools and challenge other school leaders to assess their student governance organizations. Once staff members and administrators place a greater

commitment on the value of student governance organizations, more effective student leadership teams will become evident. Secondly, positive models of effective student leadership teams can challenge other schools to involve students in the leadership of their schools.

Definitions

For clarity and understanding of terminology and concepts used in this study, the following operational definitions are in order.

1. Purpose--pertains to the goals, objectives and fundamental reasons for which the student governance structure was organized.

2. Function--pertains to the activity and work performed by the student governance structure to reach or fulfill its goals and objectives.

3. Student governance or student council--an organization whose membership consists of boys and girls elected by their fellow students to represent them in certain areas of school administration.

4. Class representatives--students who are elected by and represent an entire class.

5. <u>Student council sponsor/adviser</u>--the person to whom has been

delegated the responsibility of meeting and working with the

council.

Overview of the Thesis

Chapter One introduces the thesis, states the problems, defines

terminology, and discusses its importance. Chapter Two contains a review

of the literature focusing on the purposes and effects of student

governance structures at the high school and elementary level. The

research methodology, a description of the research instruments and

treatment of the data are included in Chapter Three. Chapter Four presents

the research findings which are pertinent to the three problems, and

includes a validated description of the nine schools involved in the study.

Finally, Chapter Five discusses the findings and presents some conclusions

and implications for British Columbia's student governance structures.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction - School Democracy

According to Butts (1973), the priority agenda for the profession of American education and for the general public must be to learn those things that people can only learn together: how to run a democratic society. Something as important as citizenship training and political virtues that are appropriate to constitutional self-government, and are required to achieve a society which stands for justice, equality and freedom in the modern world, needs to be cultivated and can not be left to chance according to Butts. He continues by elaborating that schools need to build social cohesion without coercion, and promote sentiments of civic morality as well as the knowledge required for informed public judgment and responsible political action. This entails not only intellectualizing about democracy, but providing opportunities for putting theories into practice.

One such opportunity may be student governance organizations within schools. However, student governance should not be equated with school

democracy. According to Mosher (1980), democracy defined as
"self-government" is a very narrow perspective. Instead he suggests that
self-government is but one aspect of a democratic school. In the truly
democratic school one finds a community providing the governance, social,
and educative conditions supportive of the full development of every
student. Staff members intimately know their students and treat them
with respect as individuals.

Mosher's comments pertaining to school democracy reflect the
earlier writings of John Dewey. Dewey (1968) also argued that democracy
is more than a form of government, and viewed it primarily as a way of
living together; a way of life. For Dewey, becoming a democratic citizen
required more than an abstract understanding of democratic principles and
practices. For him, it was a political process, which schools should not
only talk about, but must practice and be able to instruct through modeling.
The advantages of democracy should be exhibited within the school and not
only within textbooks. Students should not be asked to accept the claims
of democracy on faith, but rather they should be assisted to develop
commitments based on analysis, reason and effects within their school
experience.

Although democracy implies freedom, Dewey stressed a balance between freedom and responsibility. He advocated that acting democratically meant pursuing personal goals while remaining respectful of the goals of others, exercising one's rights without infringing upon the rights of others, and tempering one's actions through considering the consequences to society if all acted in the same manner.

Similar ideas, with different terminology is used by Gutmann (1987). She states that a strong democracy is supported by "principles of nonrepression and nondiscrimination" (p.97). If educators are interested in fostering democratic virtues, students require opportunities for critical and rational deliberation, based on systematic and sustained analysis.

Gutmann (1987) also makes it clear that a democratic school is not as democratic as an ideal democratic society. However, this should not disenchant educators with schooling or democracy, since

> democracies depend on schools to prepare students for citizenship. Were students ready for citizenship, compulsory schooling – along with many other educational practices that deny students the same rights as citizens – would be unjustifiable (p. 94).

Dewey (1916), Mosher (1980), and Gutmann (1987) all seem to advocate the importance of democratizing schools to the extent necessary

to cultivate the participatory along with the disciplinary virtues of democratic character. As students develop and mature in their democratic virtues, participation in more significant areas of decision making need to be considered.

Historical Perspective

The student council movement is of relatively recent origin in the United States when compared to precedents found in ancient Greece. Plato's Academy, founded in 388 B.C., and Aristotle's Lyceum, founded in 335 B.C., were based on the concept of student participation in school control. McKown (1944) describes the learning centers of Plato and Aristotle as being developed on the premise of education for cooperative living and student participation. Students elected their own leaders.

The Renaissance period in Europe brought a general revival in the importance of an academic education and with it, the importance of student participation. Examples include programs in da Feltra's school (1429), and Trotzendorf's school in Germany (1531), which required student organizers and leaders (Mckown, 1944).

During the 1800's isolated accounts are reported about American

schools planning for student participation in governance. An example of a secondary school that most resembled our present day student government was Hartford Public High School in the state of Connecticut in 1852. In this particular school "...the headmaster reserved the right of absolute veto" (Brogue and Jacobson, 1940, p.14).

The system of self-government among American students became stronger during the first two decades of the twentieth century and was a main topic of conversation among school administration leaders (Brogue and Jacobson, 1940). In 1925, C.R. Dustin made a survey of 35 American cities and found that of 81 student councils nearly half had been in existence more than five years. In 1939, the Brogue-Jacobson study indicated that 81% of the districts polled had some form of student participation in government. Shortly thereafter, a group of student leaders from Atlanta, Georgia, organized the National Association of Student Officers. Later, this group was renamed the National Association of Student Councils, and was officially sponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 1943 (McKown, 1944).

Van Pool (1955), the director of student activities for the Association of Secondary School Principals during the 1950's, expressed

his feelings about the National Association of Student Councils when he

said:

> The nation's schools have a right to feel proud of the National
> Association of Student Councils. It has grown because it has
> rendered service to individuals and to schools; it has enabled
> students to have some voice in the determination of their schools; it
> has provided youth with an opportunity to learn active, dynamic
> citizenship by doing now, while in school, that which they will be
> called upon to do later in life as good citizens (p. 87).

Student participation is found in many American elementary schools

and "is beyond the experimental stage" (McKown, 1952, p.84). Gaynor

(1956c) reported that:

> ...student councils in elementary schools are relatively new
> organizations. The majority of the schools...have councils which have
> been organized since 1947 (p. 249).

Gaynor (1956a) further commented on student participation at the

elementary level by saying:

> ...the shift of emphasis from student "government" to that of
> student "participation" has assisted in the acceptance and the
> development of the movement more rapidly in our elementary
> schools. Participation provides motivation, insight, and interest to
> all other learning activities (p. 291).

Elementary Council Purposes

Before a student council can have any degree of success it must first

determine in which direction it is going. The purposes need to be

understood by the members, student body, staff members, administrator(s),

and the community. Although, specific goals of different schools will vary,

certain common elements will be present in most student councils. Reum

and Cummings (1973) suggest these basic objectives:

>   -To provide learning experiences for members of the school
> community.
>   -To establish student voice in appropriate procedures and
> practices within the building.
>   -To bring the student voice into full participation with
> administrative decisions.
>   -To develop attitudes toward good citizenship, leadership,
> scholarship, human values, and service.
>   -To assist in school management.
>   -To provide a training ground for developing student
> leadership, human values, and service.
>   -To further positive human relationships within the school
> community (p. 13).

In another article about elementary student councils, Greco (1961)

states the following purposes:

>   -To promote a democratic spirit by making it possible for all
> members of the student body to participate directly or indirectly,
> through their representatives, in the pupil activities of the school.
>   -To foster closer cooperation between the student body and
> staff through common activities of the school.
>   -To establish in the student body unity of spirit and high
> ideals of service, conduct, and scholarship.
>   -To carry out any activities which assist in promoting the
> general welfare of the students of the school.

-To learn to conduct meetings according to parliamentary procedure.

-To strengthen the respect for rules and laws and satisfaction in their obedience.

-To gain opportunities for independent thinking and self-expression (p. 8).

The primary purpose of elementary student councils in the United States as confirmed by school administrators in Gaynor's study (1956b, p.24) was "...to give pupils an opportunity for greater participation in the activities of the school and in helping to plan school affairs." Riley (1965, p.39) further suggests that "...children will be happier if they have a voice in operating an elementary school. The student council serves this purpose."

Probably one of the most important objectives of the student council, as identified by Van Pool (1964) is to teach habits of responsible citizenship.

> The student council provides a good training ground for a student to do those things at school which he will be called upon to do later when he leaves school. The council member will have the opportunity to exercise his responsibility now in preparation for his adult life (p. 43-44).

In a study about student councils. Gaynor (1956a) states that the most frequently mentioned reasons for organizing student councils are to:

> ...give the student responsibility, provide a means of practicing democratic living, develop student leadership and give the student an

opportunity to accept responsibility (p. 291-292).

In summing up the purpose for the elementary student council

program in their school, Butler (1970) explains:

> ...because the elementary school is responsible for initiating
> children's citizenship education, our council is basic to our school
> program as is democracy to the total society (p.59).

The comments of another teacher, Casebolt (1976) emphasized that:

> the involvement of students in school affairs is a goal which
> is extremely important as we attempt to develop a sense of pride and
> responsibility among students. Student council activities offer a
> good vehicle for achieving this goal (p. 36).

A composite set of elementary student council goals based upon the

research of Reum and Cummings (1973), Greco (1961), Gaynor (1956), Van

Pool (1964), and Casebolt (1976) include:

1. Elementary school student councils should permit students to

assume responsibilities and have experiences in democratic participation.

2. They should help develop good citizenship and democratic

leadership.

3. They should give students an opportunity to take part in the

activities of the school and help plan school affairs.

4. They should help in the determination of school policies and

practices.

    5. They should build school spirit and pride.

Desirable outcomes attributed

to student governance

Minimal research related to the desirable outcomes of student

governments at the elementary level has been conducted. In order to

demonstrate that this decision making avenue contributes to the

development of student responsibility, good citizenship, democratic

participation, leadership, a voice in school policies and practices, school

spirit, pride, a lower incidence of vandalism, and a closer relationship

between the school and community, liberty will be taken to consider the

findings involving students in elementary, middle and secondary schools.

Political socialization outcomes

In a major study of the political attitudes of elementary school

children in eight cities and four regions of the United States, Hess and

Torney (1967) determined that the school is "the most important and

effective instrument of political socialization in the United States" (p.

101). They found that early schooling reinforces the young child's attachment to the nation and trust in political authority figures. (This is clearly a mixed blessing according to this writer based upon the involvement of some political leaders in controversial scandals). Schools shape children's regard for law, law enforcement, and the conviction that citizens should participate by voting. Hess and Torney conclude,

> while the family shapes basic loyalties, the school plays the largest part in teaching attitudes, conceptions, and beliefs about the operation of the political system. The school provides content, information, and concepts, adding to early attitudes learned at home (p. 217).

Greenstein (1967), in a study of elementary students in New Haven, Connecticut, observed that many political orientations are learned by American children without deliberate instruction and that learning goes on unnoticed, especially in the early years, when students are less likely to question what they experience in school. The notion that schooling effectively interacts with family training to mold the political attitudes of primary students was further supported by Torney (1970). From interviews with both elementary and secondary students, she concluded that schooling influences the political attitudes of students by developing

expectations of the authority system which are then transferred to other

institutions, and by cognitive development which broadens students'

perspectives. Torney determined that the years immediately preceding high

school are crucial for attitude development.

In an international study of civic education in ten democratic

countries, Torney, Oppenheim, and Farnen (1975) concluded that in addition

to conscious, deliberate efforts in classes to teach democratic values and

basic political knowledge, many subtle unintentional processes (the hidden

curriculum) are at work in the schools which also transmit political

concepts and values.

Other reviews of political socialization provide similar findings that

schools and schooling are significant in the political education (involving

knowledge and attitudes) of young citizens. Curriculum, course work,

content, and the climate of the school are all influential factors (Ehman,

1980; Mullis, 1979).

Two studies investigating the relationship between participation in

high school activities and post secondary political and social behaviors

found that high school activity participation relates positively to

involvement in political activities two years after leaving high school

(Hanks, 1981), and had the strongest relationship to young adult social participation among the predictors used. Educational attainment and sociability were the next strongest predictors (Lindsay, 1984). Secondly, Hanks (1981) concluded that involvement in instrumental activities like student government or clubs increased young adult political involvement more than expressive activities like sports, debates, or music.

Decline in student offenses

Some interesting relationships between characteristics of the school climate, organization, and rates of school violence and crime are reported in the literature. McPartland and McDill (1977) suggest there is some evidence that school responsiveness through access involving governing decisions can increase student commitment to the school and reduce student offenses against the school and staff. In their study analyzing responses from 3,450 students in fourteen high schools, they found small but highly significant relationships for rates of truancy, attitudes toward vandalism, and protests. On the average, students who were most satisfied with participation in rule making and with existing rules reported less truancy and less propensity toward vandalism or

protests. The relationships were stronger for satisfaction with

participation than for satisfaction with the rules themselves. Schools

with some of the strictest rules, but most student participation, were

found to be some of the best schools in the sample in terms of few student

discipline problems.

Furtwengler (1985) states,

Clearly, the success of a school effectiveness program depends
heavily on the involvement of both formal and informal trained
student leaders recommended by teachers, students, administrators,
and parents (p.263).

The outcomes he shares in regards to suspensions, number of fights,

and daily attendance are impressive in the five high schools he observed.

In school A - (a high school enrolling 1000 students), 170
students were suspended during the 1978-79 school year.
Suspensions dropped to 150 in 1979-80 (the first year of the school
effectiveness program) and to 126 during the 1980-81 school year.
The total days of suspension, which stood at 2,068 in 1978-79,
dropped to 1,025 in 1979-80, and then to 542 in 1980-81. The
number of fights fell from 90 in 1979-80 to 66 in 1980-81.
Meanwhile, average daily attendance, which stood at 86% in
1978-79, rose to 91% in 1979-80 and to 94% in 1980-81.
In school B, an inner-city high school with a 97% black
enrollment and family income levels among the lowest in the city,
three-day suspensions fell from 323 in 1980-81 to 294 in 1981-82,
the first year of the school effectiveness program. Ten-day
suspensions dropped from 531 to 336 during the same interval, while
average daily attendance rose from 81% to 86%.
School C was a city high school serving a student population of

approximately 1,100 students, 55% of them white and 45% of them black, who came from families with moderate incomes. In that school, 2,258 students were referred to the office for disciplinary reasons in 1980-81, but only 543 were referred to the office in 1981-82, the first year of the school effectiveness program. During the same interval, the number of classes cut fell from 9,248 to 2,766, the number of three-day suspensions dropped from 337 to 61, and the number of 10-day suspensions fell from 124 to 36. Meanwhile, average daily attendance rose from 81% to 86%.

In School D - a city high school in an upper-income area with an enrollment of 1,700 students, about 20% of them minority - suspensions dropped from 928 in 1981-82 to 482 in 1982-83, the first year of the school effectiveness program. Over the same two years, truancies dropped from 594 to 261, and the number of fights fell from 87 to 68.

School E was a junior high school in a middle-income area that enrolled approximately 1,300 students, 35% of them minority. In that building, suspensions dropped from 336 in 1981-82 to 200 in 1982-83, the first year of the school effectiveness program.

As the data shows, the level of socialized behavior at each school improved after the start of its school effectiveness program. Other measures (i.e., data from survey instruments and interviews) also shows that: 1)school climate improved, 2) academic achievement may have improved (though the evidence was not conclusive), 3) school culture improved, 4) involvement in school activities rose, and 5) independent learning increased among both teachers and students (p.264).

Another study reported by McPartland and McDill (1977) involving sixteen middle and high schools, suggests greater student access to consumer decisions can have a positive effect on their satisfaction with school, their commitment to class work, and especially their positive

relations with teachers.

Landers and Landers (1978) reported that participation in service activities like student government, is significantly related to a lower incidence of delinquent acts. Boesel's (1978) study also showed there is greater evidence of violence and crime in schools where students perceive they have no internal control and can not influence what happens to them. Conversely, Burbach's findings (1972) showed students who hold school offices feel more in control of events.

Transferability of outcomes

Ehman and Gillespie (1975) found that students gave the highest ratings to student government groups as the formal organizations which make decisions of most importance to them. Furthermore, student attitudes toward the school political system were highly related to societal political attitudes which suggests that political attitudes formed from school experiences are generalized outward to the larger society.

A similar theory of transferability was suggested by Wasserman (1980) after concluding that under a participant governance structure in schools, students develop skills in resolving issues of fairness, and in their

relationships with staff and other students feel more respect and trust.

Based on these findings it was theorized that a school atmosphere which

maximizes student opportunities to voice opinions and to make group

decisions would promote more growth and more responsible action which

would carry over to the larger society.

Fostering school spirit

Almost every student government is charged with the responsibility

of fostering school spirit. In most cases, the vehicles used to promote

school spirit are the financing and promotion of extracurricular activities,

and the organization and promotion of special events. Alexander and

Farrell's (1975) study determined that a greater percentage of students

from schools with effective student governments engage in extracurricular

activities - 82% from the schools rated most effective, as compared to

about 70% from all other schools. When considering student involvement in

intramural athletics, 48% of all students in schools with effective student

governments were involved while only 37% of the students participated in

other schools. Twice the percentage of students in schools with effective

student government reported feeling very involved in the school when

compared with other schools. These findings are significant if one accepts

the argument that there seems to be a positive relationship between

participation in school activities and feelings of being involved in the

school which is the essence of school spirit.

Other important findings by Alexander and Farrell (1975) were

students in schools with effective student governments felt:

> specific rules and policies in their schools were better, they were
> less likely to feel they were being treated like little children, more
> likely to find life in school exciting, moderately more satisfied with
> their general relationship with teachers, more likely to feel there is
> one or more teachers with whom they could discuss a personal
> problem, and most, or all of their teachers listen to their opinions
> with genuine interest (p. 74).

Feelings of alienation toward schools are expressed by students

when they perceive that teachers and administrators exert excessive

authority. Dillon and Grout's (1976) study involving seven middle schools,

showed that students from schools where administrators and teachers

determine all of the goals, express stronger feelings of powerlessness,

isolation, and alienation than students from schools where students have

some input into school and classroom goals.

Learning outcomes for council members

Alexander and Farrell (1975) found four learning outcomes that student council members mention as a result of their experience. These are: 62% of the student council members agreed that the longer they were involved in student government the more capable they were of making wise decisions, and most students in schools would learn how to make better decisions if they served on a student government. Addressing the issue of whether their experience in student government had increased their appreciation of the value of the democratic process, 80% agreed. Furthermore, 92% agreed that their experience in student government had made them more willing to accept responsibility and 72% agreed their experience in the student government had increased their feelings of control over their own lives. This response would support the claim that experience in decision-making increases a students' sense of efficacy.

Other benefits

In an earlier study involving grade five students, White and Lippett (1960), found that students who experience democratic leadership are more efficient and successful in accomplishing their goals. They are more

cohesive as a group, and express a sense of group accomplishment in the use of "we" to refer to their actions. They are less apathetic than groups in autocratic situations and more inclined to express their individual views in meetings. The democratic climate also stimulates more objective exchange of criticism. Overall, they demonstrate a greater sense of fairness and less concern over status than the other groups.

The results of other studies have indicated a positive relationship between student government participation and increased educational aspirations and attainment. Spady (1970, 1971) reports that participants in extracurricular activities, particularly service leadership activities, are likely to have college aspirations, whereas nonparticipants in any activities are less likely to have college aspirations. Secondly, students involved in service leadership have the highest goal fulfillment. Similar positive relationships between participation and aspirations are reported by Otto (1976).

The student voice

Canadian context

Student governance based on democratic principles which allow for

meaningful participation, appears to be a phenomenon gaining passive

acceptance in some North American educational communities since the

1940's. The purpose statements and claimed effects of student governance

organizations sound impressive, but one wonders if students exercise

major decision-making power. In the past, the old adage that "children

should be seen and not heard" was accepted as a general maxim by parents

and by the community at large (Royal Commission on Education, 1988, p.37).

Children's rights were unknown. Children themselves, were commonly

viewed as family property or belonging to the community. The question to

be addressed is have things changed for students; particularly elementary

students?

According to Magsino (1977-78), significant student rights have been

acknowledged by the courts for American students but not Canadian

students. He states that,

> while in both countries the drive for the establishment of student
> rights has been strong during the last decade, the cause of student
> rights in the United States seems to have succeeded; in Canada, it
> seems to have failed (p. 52).

Even with the passage of several years since the introduction of the

Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1982, lawyers claim it is still

too early to tell whether the Charter will significantly alter the legal

conditions for students. However, MacKay's view (1986) appears to be less

optimistic. He states:

> Canada is a deferential society and the Charter will not change that
> fact quickly if, indeed, it will change it at all. Education is one of
> the areas where the courts have shown great deference and educators
> themselves are not accustomed to litigation. Much attention has
> been paid to U.S. cases but this is Canada, and legal and social
> traditions here will condition the application of the Charter (p. 40).

Until more victories in the courts address the issue of autonomy for

students, significant changes will only happen in schools with front line

educators who are sincerely concerned about the best interests of all, and

view schools as having a major responsibility for preparing citizens who

are knowledgeable about, and practice democracy. Questions of student

participation in educational policy, or the scope of their role in running the

public schools, cannot be evolved solely by reference to law. Some other

way must be found.

By reviewing another consideration stated in the literature, we will

move closer to the immediate experiences of young children and see how

often their voice is being heard, their ownership recognized.

Current practice review of the student voice

Students are mainly ignored when discussions of change and school improvement take place. Fullan's (1982) research states:

> only 41% of elementary students think that teachers understand their point of view, 19% report that teachers ask for the opinions and ideas of students in deciding what or how to teach, and principals and vice-principals are not seen as listening to or being influenced by students (p. 148).

Typical comments, made by 3,593 grade 5 through 13 students, in response to an open-ended question about what they thought of the questionnaire which revealed the preceding information included:

> "I think this project is very interesting in many ways. It asks many questions that I have never been asked before." (elementary)

> "I think its great that grown-ups want our opinion. I feel that they treat us like babies." (elementary)

> "It brought me to thinking about things I had never thought much about, and is giving you at the institution, knowledge of what we students think about the school." (junior high)

> "No comment. Only that this may help the teachers or planning board realize what lousy classes and subjects we are taking." (high school)

> "I think this is an excellent project. It gives the man at the bottom of the ladder a chance to unleash his feelings and say something about this damn school." (high school) (Fullan, 1982, p.149.)

Another study, conducted by Lee et. al., (1983) involving students in

grades 2, 4, and 6 concludes that:

> students perceive themselves as having little to say about decisions
> made in areas where they think they ought to be more involved; there
> is a grade-related decrease in congruence between children's
> perceptions of the actual and ideal decision making process in
> schools; and there is an escalating assertion of ideal prerogatives in
> children as they get older (p.845).

Specific data with respect to the political themes of custodial,

governance, and instructional decision making, reflects elementary

children reporting themselves as experiencing a rather low degree of actual

prerogatives (30.4%, 39.0% and 9.6%) in contrast with their preferred level

of ideal prerogatives (68.7%, 67.5% and 51.9%). (Lee et al., 1983).

These results are consistent with the earlier findings of Wolfson and

Nash (1968) who found that children see themselves as relatively inactive

decision makers, teachers as making the vast majority of decisions, and

themselves as having fewer decision making prerogatives than teachers see

them as having.

Goodlad's findings (1984) support the previously stated research as

well. According to his studies involving elementary students,

approximately fifty-five per cent of them reported not participating at all

in choosing what they did in class. All decisions were made by their

teachers.

Cato (1990) states: Students are being managed today in the
same way they have always been managed for centuries-by a method
based on the ancient, commonsensical theory of how we function that
is best known as stimulus/response theory.

But stimulus/response theory is mistaken. When used to
manage people, it leads to a traditional management method called
boss-management. Boss-management is ineffective because it relies
on coercion and always turns workers and managers into adversaries.
Bossing rarely leads to consistent hard work-and almost never to
high-quality work.

Boss management fails because it relies on external
motivating forces. A boss manager always responds to the quality of
a worker's work with a coercive message-be it reward or
punishment-because bosses think that this is the best way to
motivate workers.

However, all motivation comes from inside the individual and
external forces only supply information on which individuals base
their behavioral choices. Truly effective lead-managers understand
this and base their strategies to motivate workers on the contention
of control theory that all human beings are born with five basic
needs: survival, love, power, fun and freedom. All human beings try
to control their own behavior so that their choices are the most
need-satisfying at the time (pp. 1-2).

Statistics from Cawood's study (1984) indicate that the majority of

pupils (77.8%) would like to fulfill leadership responsibilities.

Unfortunately, 47% of these students felt that they had been given very

little opportunity in school to do so.

Sarason's study (1982) of elementary students becomes more specific, and shows that rules in most schools are determined by teachers with the following assumptions:

(1) teachers know best;
(2) children cannot participate constructively in the development of rules;
(3) children are not interested in such discussions;
(4) rules are for children, and not for teachers (p. 175-176).

In an extensive study involving 6,700 junior and senior high school students, Richards and DeCecco (1975) determined that students perceive schools as authoritarian institutions when conflict is customarily resolved by the use of force. In 55 percent of the incidents, conflict was resolved by the authority, and in nearly 82 percent, no alternative means of resolving the conflict was offered by students. Only 17 percent mentioned "negotiation" as a means of settling an issue. The researchers conclude that school experiences teach students that problems should be solved by the unilateral decision of authorities rather than by more democratic means which could provide students with opportunities for studying due process, making decisions, and taking responsibility for those decisions.

The potential of hearing the student voice

Unfortunately, the preceding studies reflecting current practice

contradict the theories of researchers like Kurth-Schai, Shelkun, Callan,

Townsend, Florey, and Dorf. Kurth-Schai (1988, p.53) states, "children's

thoughts represent a valuable resource," and Shelkun et. al (1987, p.14)

comment that, "teachers are continually surprised at children's wisdom,

reasonableness, and ability to find appropriate solutions more suitable for

their peer norms than those the teacher had considered if given some

leadership training." Callan (1988, p.123) argues that there is good reason

to give authority to students because they will likely use it competently.

Townsend (1988, p.5) states, "students are willing to look at the world

anew and they have the energy, the talent and the will to make our school

communities a better place," whereas Florey and Dorf (1986, p.9) maintain

that "decision making is a right of all society's citizens."

Holland et. al., (1987, p.8) stress the function of schools is to

"provide experiences that further the total development of individual

students." The message for educators is being more than a "dispenser of

professional services paid for by taxpayers" (Seeley, 1983, p.81), and

allowing students to become partners with a voice in the educational

process.

> Partners share an enterprise, though their mutuality does not imply
> or require equality or similarity. Participants in effective
> partnerships may be strikingly different, each contributing to the
> common enterprise particular talents, experiences, and perspectives
> and sometimes having different status within the relationship and
> control over aspects of the work to be done (Seeley, 1983, p.81)

Implications

It would be beneficial to identify leadership potential as early as

possible so that all potential can be nurtured to its fullest at an age when a

child is impressionable and eager to co-operate. Secondly, it is important

to channel a child's social giftedness and leadership potential in a positive

direction for the present and the future.

Furthermore, identification of leadership potential should be a

continuous process. As the child develops, hidden social potential emerges.

Unfortunately, we expect students to be leaders in high school, but give

them very few opportunities for practical leadership and very little

attention is given to leadership development in the preceding elementary

years. Students must realize that they count in the scheme of things and

that they can make a difference. By giving students a chance to feel that

they belong and do make a difference, and by promoting the self-worth of

students, student governments with clearly understood purposes can play a

critical role in the quest for excellence in education.

Surely, we now know enough about the minimal impact of top-down

linear efforts and the problems associated with quick fixes. Research

shows students can and do make a significant difference in the life of

schools when they are given the opportunity to exercise their talent and

energy. Commitment to a vision in which student leadership can change the

world and make it a better place to live for the present and for future

generations is not an idle dream, but a reality that gives hope for the future.

Schoening and Keane (1989) stated,

> No one program in the entire school environment generates more
> interest or concern than does student government. However, the
> operation of a student government can be a vital, relevant learning
> experience, if the school allows a framework for self-governance
> where students can and do make relevant decisions concerning their
> own destiny (p.11).

Naturally, this involves a change in attitude for some administrators

and teachers. Trusting students enough to let them make decisions and

experience success and failure will reflect the change in attitude, as all

stake holders become increasingly comfortable with each other.

The findings of the above studies provide valuable reference points and indicators of what we may find in our local area and whether or not our administrators, staff members, and students see things in this way. What is needed now is a study that will sample elementary student and staff attitudes concerning the purposes, and functions of student councils and place these comparisons in juxtaposition to each other for analysis. Such an input of information collected from our own students and teachers can be generalized to this area and is required as a first step toward improvement of student governance programs.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Method

Introduction

Student government structures in American elementary schools

appear to be prevalent (McKown, 1952; Gaynor, 1956c), but there is little

documentation related to Canadian elementary schools. The problems

undertaken in this study were three fold. The first focus was determining

the prevalence of student governance structures in British Columbia's

elementary schools. The second aspect of the study was to determine

whether or not there existed real differences of opinion between

sponsor/advisers and designated student leaders concerning the purposes

and functions of student governance structures in the Lower Mainland. The

final aspect was to compare the student governance initiated activities and

issues with the stated purposes for involving students in leadership. As

the literature review was predominantly based on American studies, it

seems possible that the Canadian, and more specifically British Columbian

student leaders and staff advocates, may respond differently.

Sources of Data

The data upon which this study is based was collected from a variety

of sources. The first was a survey mailed to 400 elementary schools

enrolling students in K-7, K-6, or 1-7 within 14 school districts located in

the southwest corner of British Columbia. Other information was collected

through personal interviews with nine student governance

sponsor/advisers, and 23 student leaders who had volunteered to

participate in the study and were randomly selected. Student governance

meetings were observed and any available documents, which included

minutes of student government meetings, student government

constitutions, and student government guidelines were also used.

Schools participating in the interviews varied in size - one small

school (0 - 99 students), three medium size schools (100 - 350), and five

large schools (351 - 600). Two of the schools were located in rural

settings, five in urban settings, and two were in settings making a rural to

urban transition. Similarly, significant variation appears in the student

government sponsors' assessment of the socio-economic status of their

school's catchment population - low (one), middle (two), low to high

(three), and middle to high (three).

In six of the schools, the prime sponsor/adviser of the student governance structure is an administrative officer. In the other three schools this position is filled by a classroom teacher – two of which have additional responsibilities. One of these teachers is the community school coordinator and the other is involved with special needs children. The sponsor/adviser's experience with councils also varies from less than one year to 15 years. Four of the sponsor/advisers had less than one year's experience with student governance structures – two of them being first year teachers.

However, a student governance structure is new to only one school in the study. Four of them have been involved with student structures for two years, two for three years, one for four years, and the other has been an advocate of student leadership for 10 years.

Collection Procedures

The following collection procedures were employed in this study:

1. 400 elementary schools from 14 school districts within the southwest corner of British Columbia were contacted by letter (see Appendix B), stating the reason for and the importance of the study. A brief

questionnaire (see Appendix C), to determine the prevalence of student

governances and the willingness of schools to be involved in the study

was attached.

2. A telephone contact followed, with the purpose of setting up a time, and

location for the interviews with the sponsor/adviser and student

leaders of nine randomly selected schools..

3. Informed consent forms (see Appendix D), for interviewing minors were

delivered to all participating schools. Principals were asked to give

them to student leaders.

4. Obtaining interviews was the next step. Prior to conducting the

interviews within the schools, written consent forms were always

collected from student leaders and sponsor/advisers.

5. Structured, in-depth interviews were used in this study. The interview

schedule employed, covered all the research problems outlined earlier

in Chapter I and as shown in Appendix A.

The personal interviews were taped for later transcript.

6. The interview schedule was tested for clarity, length and ease before

the actual interviews. An elementary school principal who had been an

elementary student governance sponsor for eleven years was used as a

pilot study. All conversations were taped. Specifically directed

prompts were used if it was clear to the interviewer that the

interviewee had either digressed from the topic or had not completed

the question. Interviews with sponsor/advisers were about one-half

hour in duration whereas those with student leaders were usually about

20 minutes. In order to alleviate any potential false allegation

charges, student leaders were always interviewed collectively, and the

doors of rooms in which the interview was being conducted were kept

open.

7. Based upon the information gathered during the interviews, school

documents, observations, and informal discussions with staff members

and students, a school description was written for each school involved

in the study. Sponsor/advisers were contacted by telephone and asked

to validate or correct errors found in the descriptions. A letter (see

Appendix E), restating the content of the telephone conversation was

attached to each description and delivered to the school. All

sponsor/advisers responded within a week and validated their school's

description as written, or made a few minor revisions. The revised and

validated descriptions are found in Chapter four.

Analyzing the Data

The taped interviews were transcribed and each response was coded

with a brief heading corresponding to the underlying patterns and

categories. Triangulation, using two graduate student colleagues, was

employed to confirm the emerging findings and to establish validity

through pooled judgement (Merriam, 1988). Subsequent to this process, a

large chart was developed in a grid format with schools listed across the

top and categories listed down the left side. Clusters of information were

grouped together in appropriate locations for the purpose of further

analysis. Reoccurring themes were color coded and their frequency was

recorded and compared to the findings from the literature.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

Introduction

Having stated the purposes and effects of predominantly American student governance structures as found in the literature in chapter two, the discussion will now focus on the increasingly popular student governance structures at the elementary level in British Columbia's schools. The problems to be addressed are: how common are elementary student governance structures; what is their purpose as stated by staff members or administrators, council members, and are the two perspectives similar? Furthermore, by reviewing the issues and activities of nine randomly selected elementary student governance structures from eight different British Columbia school districts, an assessment will be made as to their effectiveness in meeting their stated purposes.

Problem 1

How many elementary schools located in the southwest corner of British Columbia have operational student governance structures?

Findings

400 elementary schools from 14 school districts within the southwest corner of British Columbia were asked if they had some form of student governance within their school. One district, comprising of 72 schools from the survey sample, chose not to respond prior to receiving authorization from their district research and development committee. Because the authorization process would take approximately four weeks, and the researchers felt it was important to be in the schools prior to the beginning of June, the total sample was reduced to 328 schools.

Of the 328 schools, 123 schools responded - a return rate of 37.5%. Responses indicated that 56 of the 123 schools or 45%, had some form of student governance structure. 89 percent of these schools were prepared to be involved in the study.

The remaining 55% of the responses who did not have any form of student governance could be divided into two distinct groups. The first group consisting of 29% of the returned responses, indicated that although they did not have a student governance organization, they were interested in exploring its possibilities and the study's findings. The remaining 26%

were not interested in another new concept for their school at the present time due to reasons such as the number of changes already being directed from the ministry or district.

Other data gathered through the interview process indicates that student governance structures are a recent phenomenon in British Columbia's elementary schools. One school was experiencing their introductory year to student government, four of them had been involved with student structures for two years, two for three years, one for four years, and the other has had a student leadership team established for 10 years. The average length of experience for the nine schools involved was 3.2 years.

The preceding data differs significantly from the American studies which indicate that elementary student councils are found in the majority of American elementary schools, with councils which have been organized since the 1940's, and are well beyond the experimental stage (McKown, 1952; Gaynor, 1956c).

Problem 2

What are the purposes of student governance structures as stated by

student leaders and staff sponsor/advisers in nine randomly selected

elementary schools within the stated region; and how do the statements of

the two groups compare?

Findings

Student events. The most common purpose of elementary student

governance structures determined by this study, is to plan and organize

activities and social functions for students. All student leaders and staff

sponsor/advisers commented on the importance of having students involved

in this dimension of student governance structures. Comments from

student leaders were consistent with the words of Cleanayre's student

president, "Our interests are often different from adults because we're

kids. We know what students like and so we can arrange for those

activities."

(The abbreviations across the top of the following nine tables stand for the

fictitious names given to the elementary schools participating in this

study: CA.-Cleanayre, CS.-Countryside, EW.-Edgewater, LS.-Lakeside,

MW.-Meadowood, MV.-Mountview, PV.-Parkview, TB.-Thunderbird,

WN.-Whispering Needles.)

Table 1.

Student governments provide students with an opportunity to plan and organize activities for the school.

Opinion of:	CA.	CS.	EW.	LS.	MW.	MV.	PV.	TB.	WN.
-Student leaders	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X
-Sponsor adviser	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	X

An "x" indicates agreement with the statement.

School spirit. Enhancing school spirit, by allowing students to plan more events for themselves, was another purpose of student governance structures mentioned by those being interviewed in 44% of the schools. In 22% of the schools it was mentioned by the student leaders and the sponsor/adviser. In the other 22% of the schools it was mentioned by students 11% of the time, and the remaining 11% of the time by the sponsor/adviser.

Table 2.

The purpose of student governments is to enhance school spirit and enthusiasm.

Opinion of:	CA.	CS.	EW.	LS.	MW.	MV.	PV.	TB.	WN.
-Student leaders	x				x	x			
-Sponsor/ adviser					x	x			x

An "x" indicates agreement with the statement.

Special days referred to as "Spirit Days" or "Fun Days" are common

events in all of the elementary schools with student governance

organizations. On these designated days, students and teachers dress or

act according to a particular theme. Themes include school T-shirt day,

beach day, western day, fifties day, hat day, cool dude day, and color days.

Student input. Allowing representative students to speak for the student

body was the second most commonly stated purpose of student governance

structures. In 78% of the schools the sponsor/adviser, student leaders, or

both mentioned this purpose. However, a closer analysis of transcribed

interviews reveals that students expressed this purpose in only 44% of the

schools. Staff members perceived student input as a purpose in 78% of the

schools.

Table 3.

The purpose of student governments is to give students an opportunity to provide student input into school issues.

Opinion of:	CA.	CS.	EW.	LS.	MW.	MV.	PV.	TB.	WN.
-Student leaders	X				X		X	X	
-Sponsor/ adviser	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	

An "x" indicates agreement with the statement.

Besides stating the student governance purposes verbally, 33% of the

schools have a written document relating to the student governance

structure and purpose within their school. The written documents vary in

length from three to eight pages. All of the documents state that a

governance structure provides students with an opportunity to have input

into the decision making process, and students can discuss the policies,

rules and practices of the school. In the schools with written student

governance policies and guidelines, 66% of the student leader groups

viewed their role as the one mentioned in the student handbook.

Exposure to the democratic process. A fourth purpose expressed by only the

student governance sponsors/advisors in 44% of the schools include

phrases like: "an experience for students in democratic decision making;"

"an exposure for students to the democratic process;" and "it is a way of

involving children in a democratically run school."

Table 4.

The purpose of student governments is to allow students to be involved in a democratically run school.

Opinion of:	CA.	CS.	EW.	LS.	MW.	MV.	PV.	TB.	WN.
-Student leaders									
-Sponsor/ adviser			X			X	X	X	

An "x" indicates agreement with the statement.

It should be noted that the schools which include the term

"democratic" in their student governance purpose statement were the same

schools that mention the importance of allowing for student input.

Although these two purposes can differ significantly they were usually

connected into one all encompassing interchangeable, synonymous purpose

statement.

Ownership. Developing a sense of school ownership was a purpose

mentioned by 33% of the schools. In all of these schools, sponsor/advisers

mentioned this objective, whereas it was only mentioned 11% of the time

by the student leaders.

Table 5.
The purpose of student governments is to develop a sense of school ownership.

Opinion of:	CA.	CS.	EW.	LS.	MW.	MV.	PV.	TB.	WN.
-Student leaders					X				
-Sponsor/ adviser				X	X	X			

An "x" indicates agreement with the purpose.

An experiential understanding about governments. 44% of the schools

stated that a student governance structure provides students with an

opportunity to learn about governments through their own government

structure.

Table 6.

The purpose of student governments is to provide students with an opportunity to learn about governments through their own government structure

Opinion of:	CA.	CS.	EW.	LS.	MW.	MV.	PV.	TB.	WN.
-Student leaders									
-Sponsor/ adviser	x		x		x	x			

An "x" indicates agreement with the statement.

An analysis of elementary student governance structures reveals that 67% of the schools involved in this study use the traditional student council approach with a president, vice president, and secretary - treasurer. Candidates for these positions were involved in electioneering procedures such as advertising, interacting informally with students, and delivering formal speeches to attain student support.

On election day, gymnasiums became polling stations and students were given the opportunity to cast their ballot for the candidates of their choice. Polling booths, ballot boxes, and scrutineers were used just as if it were a municipal, provincial, or federal election.

Another lesson students could learn about governments relates to the

communication process that is required before any idea comes to fruition.

Students are informed of appropriate communication processes such as

informal discussions with their representatives, suggestion boxes for

written concerns or requests, and classroom meetings.

Developing leadership qualities. 55% of the schools mentioned that student

governance structures provide students with an opportunity to develop

leadership qualities and skills. This objective was stated by the

sponsor/adviser in 33% of the schools and by student leaders in another

22% of the schools.

Table 7.
The purpose of student governments is to provide students with an opportunity to develop leadership qualities and skills.

Opinion of:	CA.	CS.	EW.	LS.	MW.	MV.	PV.	TB.	WN.
-Student leaders			X			X			
-Sponsor/ adviser				X	X				X

An "x" indicates agreement with the statement.

Specific skills mentioned by the sponsor/adviser of Thunderbird

Elementary include reflective listening, providing feedback, universalizing,

and speaking to groups of people.

Fund raising. Planning and gathering support for fund raising activities

was a stated purpose of student governance groups in 56% of the schools.

Student leaders saw this task as being their responsibility in all of these

schools whereas student governance sponsors only mentioned it 22% of the

time.

Table 8.
**The purpose of student governments is to plan and gather support
for fund raising activities.**

Opinion of:	CA.	CS.	EW.	LS.	MW.	MV.	PV.	TB.	WN.
-Student leaders	X	X		X		X			X
-Sponsor/ adviser				X		X			

An "x" indicates agreement with the statement.

In another 33% of the schools, neither the student leaders or the

staff sponsor stated that fund raising was one of the student governance

purposes. However, the minutes of their meetings, or comments made

during the course of the interview, reflect fund raising activities took place in 22% of these schools.

School Descriptions

The setting for this study included nine elementary schools from eight different lower mainland districts in British Columbia, Canada. 400 elementary schools enrolling students in K-7, 1-7, or K-6 were contacted by letter. The purpose of the letter was to determine the number of elementary schools with student governance structures in place, and those schools who would be interested in sharing relevant student government information.

Nine schools were randomly selected to provide the data for the study. The schools were contacted by telephone and arrangements were made to interview the student governance sponsor/adviser and several student leaders.

Based on the information that was supplied by those involved with governance structures a brief description was written about the nine schools and validated by the participants. These descriptions provide a context for the study.

Issues addressed in each of the descriptions include a discussion of the school and community, the purpose of the student governance structure, how they are organized, the format of their meetings, activities and issues initiated by student leaders, success components, and the observed benefits.

The school descriptions are arranged in alphabetical order according to their fictitious name which was given by the researchers to protect the school's identity and the comments made by any people involved in the interviews.

Cleanayre Elementary. School/Community description. Cleanayre Elementary is a small rural school accommodating 70 students at the present time. The school consists of two separate buildings linked by a covered walkway. The original building was built in the 1890's. At the present time there are three full classes: a kindergarten/grade one, a grade 2/3/4, and a grade 5/6/7. The student population is very stable and very few new children arrive at the school during the course of the year.

A drive through the surrounding community makes it obvious that many children come from families involved with farming - dairy, horses, vegetables, or mixed. In addition, there are a few smaller hobby farms or

acreages with some elaborate homes. The vice principal's summary was,
"If you had to take it all together, the socioeconomic background of the
school's catchment area would probably be very low. Those people who own
their farms certainly have some assets, but there are very few children in
the school who have professional parents."

Due to the small size of the school, the vice principal's
responsibilities include teaching, administrating, and being the liaison
between the student council and the staff. Cleanayre Elementary has had a
student council for two years, but the vice principal is new to the school
and district, and has not had any involvements with councils prior to
coming to Cleanayre. The principal seldom comes to the school because his
responsibilities involve two schools - Cleanayre and one other large school.

Council purpose. The purpose of Cleanayre's student council is to
provide: a learning experience for students by giving them the
responsibility of planning and organizing some school activities; an avenue
for students to approach the administration with student concerns about
school policies or practices; and an understanding about governments and
their operation.

Council organization. The student council consists of six members. All of them come from the grade 5/6/7 class and were determined by an election process within their class. Positions include a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and two representatives. It is the representatives responsibility to share council information with the two younger classes and write articles for the newsletter.

Comments from council members and the council sponsor indicate that the council was run on a more formal basis in the preceding year. Speeches were made by all candidates to the entire student body prior to the school election. Candidates had to be nominated and seconded by other students. Reasons for changing the structure and process resulted because students thought their new approach would be simpler and easier, and the younger children didn't know what was going on. Primary students found it hard to understand and impossible to explain council proceedings and plans to their class.

Council meetings. The student council meets every other Thursday after school. Meetings last between thirty and forty-five minutes.

Students set their own agenda ahead of time, but a lot of the ideas generate and grow at the meeting. Student council members are left on their own for the first fifteen minutes of the meeting. Once they feel ready to share their ideas and clear planned events, they call the staff sponsor to the meeting. Brief minutes are recorded at the meetings by the student secretary.

Council initiated activities/issues. Specific council planned activities include: several school dances; special days like hat day, clash day, and silent day; an air band competition; an Easter Egg Hunt; a school picnic; and fund raising activities such as popcorn sales and noon hour movies. Student concerns addressed by the council and presented to both administrators include the placement of locks on the washroom cubicle doors; carpet in some classrooms, and a bike stand. The administrator was unaware of the absence of locks on the washroom doors.

Successs components. Key ingredients for ensuring a successful council, as identified by council members and the staff sponsor were getting good members who had lots of good ideas, were good

communicators and organizers, and responsible. Some leadership training

pertaining to conducting meetings, recording minutes, and organizational

skills is also beneficial. Furthermore, the staff sponsor stated that an

evaluation component of activities that the council has planned is

necessary. Her words were, "I have witnessed how good that has been in

our council. Students have learned many things about planning events as a

result of reflecting on previous activities."

Having a written pamphlet for all council candidates and their

parents which would explain a little about meetings, and give them a better

understanding of what it's all about, and the commitment that is needed by

the student was also viewed as important by the staff sponsor.

Council benefits. Although the student council members and the

staff sponsor felt that councils foster a better relationship between

students and teachers, and students and students they had no concrete

evidence. Their feelings were based on the assumption that students in

schools with student councils can do more activities that appeal to

students. Students know what students like to do. The vice president

stated, "This has been my best year in school, because it has been the most

fun. When students are enjoying their time at school, better relationships develop between teachers and students, and school spirit grows."

Secondly, a student council can address student concerns which affect the entire student body. The vice principal's comments were, "If you haven't got a council in place then each class addresses their concerns to their classroom teacher, but you never really get a feeling of what the whole school believes in. This is really important."

In conclusion, the administrator speculated that as elementary student council information is shared, and positive effects become more evident, student councils will get stronger in elementary schools.

Countryside Elementary. School/Community description.

Countryside, a rural school with 420 students is located in the midst of a changing farming community. Small pockets of middle class subdivisions are emerging within the catchment area. Across the street from the school is a gas station and general store. Students walk, ride their bikes, get rides from parents, or use the school bus to get to school.

Student council beginnings. The vice principal, who came to

Countryside less than a year ago, is the major student council sponsor.

Based upon his teaching experience, observations, and a two year

involvement with a student council in another school he felt that most

students are eager to help make their school a "good" school, and are eager

to participate in suggesting appropriate school activities. It is his opinion

that students want to be involved in the decision making process. Having a

student council gives students a framework and process for their input.

Council purpose. Based upon the vice principal's convictions and a

recognized need by staff and students for some student activities at recess

and noon, the plans for a council were launched. Although no written

council guidelines were evident, the student council members and the

student council sponsor shared the same perception of the council's purpose

and the responsibility of representatives. The purpose of Countryside's

council is to help organize social activities, be involved in fund raising, and

provide input into the purchase of supplies like gym and playground

equipment.

Council organization. The student council is composed of a chairman,

vice chairman and four class representatives from the four grade six and

seven classes. Other classes do not have a representative but hear about

the council plans over the P.A. system or from newsletters. If the younger

students have any good ideas they are encouraged to share them with

council members. However, council members felt that most of their

planned activities were for the intermediate students.

All council member candidates volunteered for specific positions

originally. The twelve candidates then delivered a short speech in each of

the intermediate classrooms and all intermediate students were given the

opportunity to vote for their choice of candidates. The comment of two of

the successful candidates was, "Having lots of friends and being popular

helped us win the election."

Formal leadership skills training has not been given to council

members. However, the council sponsor wished he had more time to

instruct students about the procedural aspects of conducting a meeting.

Council meeting. Initially, council members planned to meet at noon

every two weeks. Since Christmas the scheduling of meetings has not been

as rigid and frequent. The council now meets as often as necessary,

particularly around the time of an event.

The meeting's agenda is set by issues needing follow up from the preceding meeting. Other ideas of what the council can do are then brought forward by the representatives and discussed. Formal minutes were originally kept by a student secretary but after some time minutes didn't seem to be a priority. The vice principal's comment was, "Things were going quite well at that point, even without, so the council became a looser and less formal organization than we had originally perceived."

Supervisory role. The general procedure that is followed after the council has made a decision is to seek staff approval. The sponsor of the council presents the council idea to the other staff members and then comes back after the teacher's meeting and informs the council members of the staff decision.

Council initiated activities. Activities planned by the student council included two dances, noon hour games almost every day, writing Christmas cards to a young cancer victim who hoped to collect the most Christmas cards, providing Christmas hampers for needy families within

the area, and numerous fund raisers which involved selling poinsettias and

collecting pennies. Some of the money which the students raised went

toward purchasing more sports equipment for the gym and playground.

Success components. Key council ingredients, as described by the

vice principal, included the need for a great deal of time and energy to

provide adult leadership on a very consistent basis. His comment was,

"Students lose energy through the year and they need to be kept on track.

Their intentions are good, but they often don't know how to go about getting

a project completed."

Council members felt getting students with good ideas and those

prepared to attend all council meetings were the key components for

ensuring a successful council.

Two deterrents which have limited the success of the council were

identified by the vice principal. The first factor has been the recent job

action situation within the district. Having to postpone council planned

activities several times dampened the council's enthusiasm level.

The second deterrent happened as a result of the changing social

network of students. As the year progressed, other student leaders arose

who were not council members.

Council benefits. Students felt that prior to the implementation of a student council their school was "a bad school. No one was interested in doing anything. Now there seems to be more school spirit because there are more fun things for students to do. In the past students had no way of presenting their ideas to teachers."

The students' idea pertaining to improved school spirit was supported by the vice principal. He felt that students claimed ownership for the activities they planned, were more active in participating and the events seemed more successful. In general, students seemed to be more enthusiastic and cooperative about the social/recreational activities that were planned.

Both council members and the administrator felt optimistic about student councils in the future. The students had enjoyed meeting the challenges of their new positions within the school and would consider running for council positions in the following year. The administrator's comment was, "With the changing School Act, student councils and students will have a much more prominent role in student leadership and in

coordinating the energies of the students in the decision making process."

Edgewater Community School. School/Community description.

Edgewater, a school of 340 students, is located in an urban community that

seems to have developed with minimal planning. Driving around the school

community one notices: retail outlets, light and heavy industrial

warehouses, low cost and regular rental apartments, cooperative housing,

single family homes - ranging from modest to very elaborate, and an

operational farm with animals is located right across the street from the

school. When asked about the socioeconomic background of the school's

catchment area, the principal confirmed the visual impression one

formulates while approaching the school. His comment was, "It's a real

mixed bag. There are pockets of people. One third live in low cost rental

units and two-thirds come from mid to upper management homes."

The veteran principal who is the major student council sponsor is

thorough, well organized, and pro-active. A twelve page student handbook

is given to all students in September and any new students that arrive

during the year. The handbook addresses a variety of issues like: school

objectives, extra curricular activities, special services, the school

behavior code, school procedures, and a brief description of the parent and

student councils, and their roles. A more detailed description of: the role

of the student council, what they do, the necessary qualities and abilities

of student council members, and election procedures is also available. The

guidelines have developed into a written format during an eleven year

period of involvement as principal and student council adviser in two

different schools. Edgewater had a student council prior to the principal

coming two years ago, but the principal couldn't comment on its

effectiveness. All he said was, "They didn't meet very often."

Council purpose. Information gathered through interviews and

available written documents pertaining to the student council indicate that

the council could: discuss the policies, rules and practices of the school;

make recommendations to the staff and Parent Advisory Council; plan,

organize and sponsor activities (with the permission of staff) such as

school assemblies, concerts, drama productions, talent shows, lip sync

performances, a school newspaper, school or recreational events, a school

store, school beautification programs, and programs to enhance school

spirit. Other purposes of the student council as stated by the principal

were, "It gives children an experience in democratic decision making and procedures for the election of representatives. The student council perceptions supported everything, stated by the principal or found in the printed information, with the exception of being involved in discussions pertaining to school rules. The student president's comment was, "Unfortunately, we don't get involved with the school rules."

Council organization. The student council is composed of a president, vice-president, and secretary (grade six or seven students, who are elected in September by all students in Grades one to seven), one class representative and an alternate from each class in Grades one to seven (elected by classmates), and two or three staff sponsors. Alternates are substitutes. They are responsible if the class representative is away, sick, or can't make it. Staff sponsors who volunteer to assist provide some input and direction.

Student council candidates were given the opportunity to campaign in the fall. Strategies include passing out flyers, putting up posters and pictures of themselves, and making a two minute speech about themselves and what they would like to see happen in the school. Parents were

involved in helping the president and vice president with ideas for their speeches.

Supervisory role. The principal's involvement with the student council seems to be a high priority. His comment was, "I like to be at the meetings because there might be a number of things that the council may want to initiate, and I like to be there at the initiation stage. One of the things that you don't want to have happen is the council making some decision and a bureaucrat coming along and disallowing something; quite a bit after the fact and after a lot of planning has gone into the event by the council. You want to make sure that the gate keeping is done at the meeting where the planning is done so that you don't run into a problem."

However, being at the noon hour meetings (twice a month) isn't the principal's only involvement with the student council. During the morning, prior to the meeting, the principal and student president make up the meeting's agenda based on the previous meeting or other incoming information. In addition to typing up the agenda, the principal also produces the council minutes and distributes them to all class representatives to share with their class. Minutes are also posted on the

student council bulletin board and in the student council binder.

Meeting format. Time is always designated for class reports and new items/issues from the class representatives at the council meetings. Attendance is always taken at council meetings and the minutes indicate close to 100% attendance. The student council members stated, "Sometimes the younger children forget, but we go and find them." A buddy system has been introduced where the students in grades one, two, and three have an older buddy who helps them understand what is going on, and shares the information in their class meetings. The rationale for the buddies is that some of the younger students aren't all that involved and can't read or digest all of the council issues. However, their presence is valued by the principal because it gives them exposure to the process and could be beneficial in future years.

Formal leadership training is not provided for student council members at Edgewater. According to the principal, "The student council follows the classic model of muddling through." Student council members stated that the principal had given them some help in running a meeting, but felt that more training would be helpful.

One opportunity had been provided for the council members to meet with the council members from three other elementary schools within their district. The purpose of the meeting was to share ideas pertaining to the way each school ran its council as well as to get some new ideas. One new idea which was implemented at Edgewater as a result of this meeting was the installation of a Student Council Bulletin Board in the hallway. This is used to display minutes of meetings and for publicizing planned events.

Council initiated activities/issues. Minutes and the responses of the staff sponsor and council members mainly reflect planned activities for students that support the goal of allowing students to plan, organize and sponsor fun activities that enhance school spirit. Planned student council activities include: house games, making a new monthly display in the showcase, organizing a school newspaper, holding a talent show, making decorations for a School Family Skating Party in the evening, having a Gingerbread House Raffle, sponsoring a Lip sync Show, composing a school song, recycling paper in the school, organizing fund raising events to support their Foster Child in Kenya, planning Special Days (Nerd Day), selling shorts/shirts/sweatshirts, discussing strategies to keep the hall

and grounds clean, organizing a tennis tournament, and numerous Earth Day projects.

Success components. Getting competent candidates for the student council seemed to be the key ingredient for ensuring a successful council. Strategies used by Edgewater were conducting classroom discussions prior to the election that focus on: electing the best person for the job and not necessarily their best friend; having a constitution which specifies the qualities and skills required of each council member; and monitoring the counting of ballots. Council members affirmed the idea of getting good people who think well, make rational decisions, have good ideas and good communication skills. The students stated that their teachers had talked about leadership qualities and that elections shouldn't be viewed as popularity contests.

The principal identified the major deterrent affecting the success of Edgewater's student council as being the cancellation of some meetings because too much was going on in the school. Cancelling meetings inhibits the momentum. Another problem pertaining to councils which was identified by the principal was that student councils take a lot of sponsor

time and teachers tend to be very busy and involved in many other

worthwhile school activities.

Student council members did not comment on the cancellation of

meetings as being a problem. Instead, their concerns were class

representatives who never said anything at meetings, and grade one

representatives who fell asleep at meetings, didn't know what was going

on, or didn't show up for the meetings.

Council benefits. Both the principal and the student council members

felt that their student council facilitated a better relationship between all

members of their school. The principal's words were, "The students realize

they can make some decisions in the operation of the school and work

together toward common goals." Students concurred with the principal's

evaluation by saying, "Students like it if they can have a part in making

decisions and make school a fun place to be."

All council members had found their position challenging and

rewarding and stated they would consider running in another election the

following year - in their own school or at high school.

<u>Lakeside Elementary. School/Community description.</u> Lakeside

Elementary is a full service school with an enrollment of 245 students.

Beautiful homes surround the school. Approximately one block away from

the school is a large park with a lake. Due to the school's strategic

location, some students are provided with the opportunity of taking

canoeing or sailing lessons during their Physical Education period. Other

community facilities like a swimming pool, skating rink, community center

and tennis courts are also near by.

It was the student council sponsor's opinion that most students at

Lakeside come from middle and upper middle class homes. Furthermore,

she stated that most of the children come from two parent families, and

many of the mothers do not work outside of the home. If they do work, it

was often on a part time basis. This allowed many mothers to walk with

their children to and from school, and get them involved in other activities

like piano, swimming, or skating.

The student council sponsor is the special needs teacher within the

school and volunteered for the vacant council position. The previous

sponsor who had initiated the student council during the previous year had

transferred to another school. The new sponsor is a first year teacher but

has had previous experience as a teacher's aid and as a community

recreational leader.

The philosophy of the present student council sponsor is that

students must want to have a council and feel it belongs to them. The

students need to come up with ideas of what they would like to see happen

at their school, get input from their classmates, and get approval from the

principal.

Council purpose. Getting all students to develop a sense of

ownership in Lakeside Elementary is one of the primary purposes for having

a student council. It was the sponsor's opinion that this goal could be

attained if students have some input as to what happens at school.

Students were not as explicit in stating the council purpose. They viewed

their responsibility as one of planning fun activities for the student body.

The second purpose of having a council at Lakeside is to provide

another learning experience for students and help them develop their

leadership skills as they succeed, or fail and try again. Occasionally,

students are left alone to conduct their meeting while the sponsor may be

doing something in another part of the room.

Council organization. The student council consists of a class

representative from each class in the school with the exception of

kindergarten. Selection of a class representative is determined by each

teacher and class. According to the class representatives a nomination and

election process had happened in every instance. However, no formal

council leaders are elected or appointed. All council members are

considered equal, even though grade six and seven students provide the

majority of leadership.

Council meetings. Council meetings are usually held on a weekly

basis. However, if several school activities are occurring at noon hour or

after school, and council members appear too busy and tired, a two or three

week break may be taken by the entire council.

Meetings are informal in nature. All class representatives gather in

the sponsor's room and meet in a corner that has several couches. Agenda

items, proposed by students, are written on the blackboard, discussed and

voted on. Previous council initiated activities or events are also discussed

and evaluated, but no minutes of meetings are kept.

Formal leadership training is not provided for council members because of their limited amount of available time. Many other events and practices are happening during the noon hour and this makes it difficult to get them all together more often. However, council members felt that some training would be beneficial.

Council initiated activities. Activities planned by the student council include a Halloween Dance, and fund raising activities (a craft sale at Christmas and a penny drive for the Variety Club in February). Coming events were a clash day, a gum day, and perhaps a car wash. Council members are also involved in making posters to advertise upcoming school events.

Success components. Key ingredients, according to the sponsor, which would ensure a successful council, were equality and mutual respect amongst all council members - regardless of age. No council member should feel more important than any other person. Secondly, the school needs to view the council as being important and not as some little club in the corner doing their own thing. The third ingredient, identified by the

students, was having competent, responsible and committed council members. The representative students need to have good ideas and remember to attend the scheduled meetings.

Council benefits. All of the student council members and the sponsor stated some advantages in having a council. The council sponsor felt that as a result of some council initiated activities, students are drawn closer together and are a more cohesive group. Council members, particularly those who had attended schools without student councils, felt that having a student council was great because it allowed students to do more things at school which were of interest and importance to them.

All council members viewed their experience as positive and would consider being a class representative next year.

Meadowood Elementary School. School/Community description. Meadowood Elementary is a school that is making the transition from being a rural school to an overpopulated urban school. Subdivisions are continuing to emerge in the surrounding catchment area and the type of homes being built attract middle income earners. Strong religious

convictions of some community members have been influential in replacing

one planned School Valentine's Day Dance with another activity.

Presently the school enrolls approximately 500 students, an increase

of 100 from last year. To accommodate the sudden population growth,

numerous portables are now positioned on the school grounds.

Due to the rapid student growth, and influx of new teachers and

programs the student council did not get on track until February. A grade

6/7 teacher volunteered to sponsor the council because no one else

assumed the responsibility. He had taught at Meadowood Elementary in the

previous year when there was an active council but was uncertain if

student councils had been active before then. However, his seven years of

teaching experience included teaching in the northern regions of British

Columbia. Interestingly enough, all of his former elementary schools had

functional student councils.

The school principal seems very supportive of student councils and

meets regularly with the student council president to discuss issues

arising in council meetings, provides opportunities for the president to

address the staff at their meetings, encourages the staff to remind their

students of planned council activities, and provides school funds to buy

prizes/awards needed by the council. Under the direction of the principal,

an eight page Student Government Handbook has been produced for students.

The handbook explains the responsibilities of different council members,

the role of the council, and some words of encouragement and challenge.

Student council purpose. The purpose of the student council as

outlined by the Student Government Handbook and reinforced by the sponsor

teacher is to give students a chance to: a). help plan activities for the

school; b). be community helpers by doing worthwhile activities for

students through the school; c). represent their classmates in making

decisions; d). learn to be good leaders; e). learn about government through

their own government; f). do things for others; and g). establish an active

and positive school environment.

Council organization. The student council consists of a president,

vice-president, secretary-treasurer, and a class representative from all

intermediate classes. Candidates for the executive council positions must

be intermediate students. Prior to the election all executive candidates

must fill out some basic information and consent forms which their

parents must sign. The next step in the process is to get the signatures of

ten students who will support them in the election.

The executive student council candidates were given the opportunity

of delivering a short speech in front of the whole school and campaigning

for one week. Campaign tactics include giving out pins, handing out flyers,

putting up posters, and addressing individual classes. The culmination of

all the campaigning is the election in the gym.

Class representatives do not need to make speeches and conduct a

campaign, but are determined by an election process within their class.

Council meetings. The council meets every Monday at noon. On

Monday morning the president brings his planned agenda to the sponsor

teacher who photocopies it and has it available for all council members.

The agenda includes items that may be carried over from a previous

meeting and an opportunity is provided for new ideas from class

representatives. The staff sponsor tries to sit back and let the students

come to consensus. However, council members stated that the sponsor

teacher would point out any errors they made, and certainly helped them

get started. After several months of experience the president didn't feel

there were very many problems despite the lack of formal leadership

training.

Minutes of all council meetings are to be recorded by the

secretary-treasurer and stored in a binder. An analysis of the binder

confirmed a problem identified by the president which was the absenteeism

of the secretary-treasurer and numerous class representatives from

council meetings in recent weeks. Many of the minutes were missing. An

assessment of the problem by the president was that some students seek

an elected position because, "They want to be Mr. Big and get all the glory,

but don't realize what is involved with the position."

Council initiated activities. Available minutes and the responses of

the staff sponsor and council members reflect planned activities for

students that support the goal of allowing students to plan, organize and

sponsor fun activities that enhance school spirit. Planned student council

activities include: dress up days like beach day, PJ/Slipper & teddy bear

day, twenty years older day, and a weird day. Other activities sponsored by

the council were a lip - sync contest, talent show, Steal-a-heart Day on

Valentine's and a poster contest for Saint Patrick's Day. Posters were

displayed around the school.

It was interesting to hear the student president share how many people had been involved in each of the events and that the council had organized one fun day every two weeks. Up until this point the council had not been involved in any fund-raising activities. Money they needed for prizes had always been provided by the school.

Success components. Getting competent and responsible candidates for the student council is the key ingredient for ensuring a successful council. Council members who do not show up for meetings are a major deterrent limiting the council's success. Another deterrent identified by the sponsor was the limited amount of time staff members have for student councils.

Council benefits. Positive effects of the council identified by students and the council sponsor are, "Good feelings develop as all stake holders communicate more frequently. Students experience what's involved in making a decision, and feel they are considered important. Nothing is just dumped on them. Students are involved in planning school activities

and this helps children like school a little more."

The council experience proved to be very positive and enjoyable for both council members, and both would consider running again in future elections.

Mountview Elementary School. School/Community description.

Mountview Elementary, a school with 550 students, is located in a desirable and prestigious suburban area. Many of the homes and properties are larger than average size. During the last two years, many new homes have been built in this area and it is not uncommon to hear about house prices in the five hundred thousand dollar range. The principal described the socioeconomic background of most community members as being upper middle class. No multiple family dwellings or stores are evident within the immediate vicinity.

Other educators within the district often refer to the school as Mountview Academy. It is known to be a "have" school. A quick tour through the school clarifies and reinforces the attached stigma. A deluxe Macintosh Computer lab with thirty computers, laser printers, and modems to network points around the world are evident. At the present time close

communications were being kept with NASA and the space shuttle developments.

On the surrounding playing fields, one notices an outdoor patio, concrete picnic tables, an outside basketball court and all sorts of equipment like slides and swings. The principal pointed out that all of these changes have happened as a result of an active council and a supportive community who were prepared to give thousands of dollars during the last ten years. Presently, the school is working on developing their own school flag.

The veteran principal has been at Mountview for eleven years and has found his assignment to be very gratifying. Moving to another school seemed to be an unlikely option for him because of the possibility of retirement in the near future.

Significant community changes, observed by the principal, are the number of families in which both parents are working outside the home, and the number of Pacific Rim families moving to the area. During recent years, new home purchases have been dominated by orientals. At the present time the school consists of approximately four hundred families. Two hundred of these families would be from the Pacific Rim.

Council beginnings. Mr. Smith, the principal at Mountview, has been

involved with student councils at the secondary and elementary level for

many years. Prior to receiving his first principalship, sixteen years ago, he

had been a secondary teacher and sponsored councils at the high school

level for numerous years. With his previous experience and belief in the

democratic process he felt that introducing student councils at the

elementary level could be rewarding, and therefore introduced the first

elementary student council within the district.

Coming to Mountview five years later, Mr. Smith noticed an

unappreciative attitude amongst the youngsters about a number of the

things that teachers were doing. Students seemed to be saying, "Is this all

there is to do at school?"

Furthermore, a fair amount of vandalism was going on. Windows and

playground swings were constantly being broken. Despite the fact that

windows were boarded during the summer months, up to eighty windows

were broken during that time period.

Council purpose. In order to overcome some of the attitude and

vandalism problems, Mr. Smith decided to implement a student council

after his first year at Mountview. His rationale was that perhaps the

student council would be an avenue for youngsters to start taking some

responsibilities in their school.

Besides developing a sense of student ownership, the council's

purpose was to increase communication and provide an opportunity for

student input pertaining to school policies, or practices, and have children

involved in a democratically run school. Student activities, social

functions and fund raisers could be planned and organized by students.

The third purpose of establishing and maintaining a student council

was to provide another learning opportunity for students. By allowing

students to run their own student government they could learn about the

functioning of a government.

Council organization. The student council consists of a president,

secretary, and treasurer who must be grade seven students. The other

executive position, the vice presidency, is filled by a grade six student.

Class representatives come from all intermediate classes and are

determined at the classroom level several weeks after the main election.

Student officers keep their position for the entire year unless there are some very major problems. The principal is usually the student council sponsor, but he also gives other teachers the opportunity to be involved.

Elections for the executive council positions are held in September after candidates have been nominated by twenty of their fellow students from the intermediate grades. Students can only sign one nomination form for one position. Nominated candidates are then given the opportunity to campaign for one week. Students are allowed to put up posters or slogans and hand out pins or buttons, but no candy or gum. The campaign week comes to a close by having a full school assembly and allowing each candidate to provide their platform, thank their supporters, and put forth their proposals. During the noon hour of that same day, the gym is made into a polling station, with booths, ballots, ballot boxes, and scrutineers. Each grade four to seven student is given one ballot. The principal felt this experience is important because it provides students with a real opportunity to learn about the election process.

Council meetings. The executive council meetings are scheduled to happen on a weekly basis and the entire school council meets every second

week. The time is not always the same and therefore doesn't always involve missing the same class. The principal felt that having meetings during school time worked better than at noon hours because there are so many things going on in a large school. Students can easily catch up on any class work they miss.

Minutes are recorded by a student secretary, and these determine a part of the subsequent meeting's agenda. Other agenda items are also brought to the floor by the class representatives.

The principal provides some training in communicating and on how to conduct a meeting. Some issues which are addressed include: calling a meeting to order, having the secretary read the minutes from the previous meeting, taking the attendance, making motions and clarifying the role of council members.

Supervisory role. Ideas proposed by the council must be approved by the principal. Because he attends the meetings, approval for some events can be given immediately, whereas other issues need a decision from the teaching staff. Once a council recommendation has been approved the information is shared with the students over the P.A., and/or in the

classroom by the representative.

Council initiated activities. Activities planned by the council

include: numerous dances; skating parties; spirit days (where students

wear their school shirts, a western day, cool dude day, wildest hat day);

preparing food hampers for needy families; and numerous fund raisers like

paper and bottle drives, pizza day, Santa's Breakfast, plant sales,

spell-a-thons, and penny marathons. The student president is also involved

in ceremonial events like sports day and assemblies. Minutes reflect

students being involved in evaluating their activities.

According to the principal, students could be involved in discussing

any of the school policies and practices - including their Code of Behavior.

However based upon the minutes, there was no indication of this in the

meetings and council members didn't feel that was their responsibility.

Success components. Council members who had good ideas, were

cooperative with other students, active, and enthusiastic about getting

things done were some key ingredients identified by council members for

ensuring a successful council. Two other important factors mentioned by

students was the importance of allowing students to vote for their council members and not leaving it up to each teacher's discretion, and maintaining regular council meetings. Council members felt that postponing council meetings inhibits their planning and progress.

According to the principal, the key ingredient for ensuring a successful council was the personality of the student president. His personality can help in the enthusiasm and building of school spirit. Students become aware of qualities which make for good leaders with time.

Council effects. Effects of the council identified by students were: all teachers and students within the school seem more together, more activities are planned for students, and all students including the shy ones have a way of presenting their ideas. The positive effect emphasized by the principal was a reduction in vandalism. In the past, eighty covered windows were broken during the summer vacation and now they might have one broken window during that same time period and none of them are covered.

The principal's concluding speculation was that councils will get stronger in the future. He stated, "I think there is a real revolution going

on world wide that is being instigated by communications. We see it in the

opening of Europe. Democracy is seen as the savior. Whether it is or not

remains to be seen. But right now it's seen as the savior, the only way to

go, the only alternative. Schools need to be conscious of this, and also

become more democratic."

Parkview Elementary School. School/Community description.

Parkview, a large dual track school with 460 students, is located at the end

of a dead end street in a residential neighborhood. Many of the French

immersion students attending Parkview come by bus or get rides to school

from their parents because they do not live within the immediate

catchment area of the school. Homes within the surrounding vicinity range

from being low rental complexes to elaborate single family homes. Within

the school one notices a high ethnic mix of students. The administrator

described the school community as, "A real mixed bag of everything."

Student council purpose. The purpose of the student council is to

impress upon students that they have a say in what goes on in the school.

They are involved in planning school activities, school

beautification/enhancement programs, and fund raising. They also have input into school policy and can change policy. However, the vice principal stressed that the student council is not an isolated decision making body, but rather a recommending body. The student council recommends ideas for consideration to the staff council, and requires their endorsement on any issue.

Student governance beginnings. The vice principal at Parkview sponsors the student governance structure. Having had three years of student council experience at a previous school she felt it would be worthwhile to establish a student council at Parkview when she came two years ago.

The council originally started with just five grade seven students - a model used in the vice principal's previous school. However, staff and students felt that an opportunity for involvement should be given to students in other grades. Therefore, it was decided to form a council with six grade sevens and four grade sixes. This council was determined by conducting a student election after all the candidates made speeches in the gym and campaigned for a week. After four months, this approach was

abandoned because the staff and students felt the election had turned out

to be a popularity contest and the elected council members weren't very

good when it came to coordinating things around the building.

Present student governance organization. Organizational governance

changes which have occurred have focused on the need for a functional

governance structure and one that fits with the school philosophy –

celebrating the successes of all students, and everyone working together

cooperatively. The most recent change has resulted in having a class

representative from each grade one to seven classroom in the school, and

allowing the grade six and seven class representatives to provide the major

direction. The grade six and seven class representatives meet on a weekly

basis, and the total council (25 students) meets every other week. The

sponsor felt the council worked best when all classes were represented

because the older students seem to be afraid of doing too much work and

avoid volunteering for some of the necessary preparatory work.

A class representative serves for a three month term, but can be

reinstated if that is the desire of the class and the individual. The process

to be used in determining the class representative is left to the discretion

of the classroom teacher. In the majority of classes a nomination and secret ballot format are used. However, in some of the younger grades, the representative is assigned to the position by the teacher, or interested candidates put their name into a hat and the representative is determined by a draw.

All class representatives have a buddy on the council. Older students are paired together with younger students and it is the older student's responsibility to attend the buddy's class meeting and provide direction if needed.

Supervisory role. Being at the weekly noon hour meeting isn't the vice principal's only involvement with the student council. All ideas recommended by the council must be approved by the staff council and sometimes the total staff. It is the vice principal's responsibility to be a liaison and present student council issues to the staff council.

Meeting format. Meetings follow an agenda which is written on the blackboard of the room in which the council meets. Agenda items are listed by the sponsor and student representatives. The student council then deals

with each one.

Minutes are not recorded at the meetings, but the staff sponsor records brief notes in a notebook to remind herself of issues that need to be presented at the staff council. In the past, the sponsor has tried to help students write minutes but it became a lot of work and abandoned the idea. However, this is an issue the sponsor is still struggling with, because she has observed that student council information changes as it is shared with individual classes. Her comment was, "Perhaps I need to keep brief minutes, run them off and hand them out to the class reps."

Success components. Key ingredients, which ensure a successful student council, mentioned by students and sponsor were: a mutual respect for each person's idea or suggestion; a tireless adviser who expends the necessary time, follows up on class meetings, and presents student issues to teachers; and committed council members who understand the importance of their role and attend all meetings. The sponsor stressed the importance of allowing classes to choose their representative for a three month term after doing an activity revolving around, "What does it mean to be a leader? What responsibilities and qualities must they demonstrate?"

At the present time, leadership training is not provided at Parkview even though the sponsor thought it would be useful and worthwhile. Her comment was, "It is something I would do, if I had more time." On the contrary, student council members didn't see the need for leadership training and felt competent to figure out everything by themselves.

Council benefits. Student council members and the sponsor felt positive about the results of the student council. Student comments include: "The school is better now because there have been a lot of rule changes and we have done more things together; teachers get a better student outlook; we get to reason with them, and we have a say in the school."

The sponsor's comment was, "Student councils seem to solidify the communication and the importance of communication. There are no surprises. Students do not feel like victims. It shows that we value what the kids have to say and as a result we don't seem to have the troubles that are evident at other places. There is no vandalism, or thievery because if there is it will come to the class representative and will be dealt with. This happened once last year. If we didn't have the student council link, I

don't know if it would come forth. It may have stayed at the classroom level or staff level but it wouldn't have the life that it does when kids bring it up."

The sponsor concluded by saying that despite the major time commitment, she wouldn't discard the notion of having student councils in the future because of "the few little gems that happen as the year goes along that are just too neat to give up."

Thunderbird Elementary School. School/Community description. Thunderbird Elementary is a 13 year old school, built in a box-shape configuration in a picturesque setting. The school is nestled in a shallow valley below the main road passing the school. Rolling hills with green pastures and grazing cattle encompass the school's playground. However, changes are happening. Some of the farmland is being developed and small subdivisions with modest homes are being constructed. In order to accommodate the area's growth, portables are necessary at Thunderbird.

At the present time the school enrolls 430 students. Some students from outside of the catchment area, were attracted to Thunderbird Elementary because of the emphasis placed on the fine arts by staff

members and the administration. Students enjoy being involved in their elaborate musical productions.

The socioeconomic background of the community is mixed. According to the principal, some of the children come from very low socioeconomic backgrounds where the father may reside in the local penitentiary. Other families live simply in absolute squalor. However at the same time, there are children attending Thunderbird who come from very affluent families.

Student council beginnings. The present principal has been the administrator at Thunderbird for seven years and introduced the notion of a student council four years ago. Although he didn't have any previous experience with student councils, the idea was conceived after recognizing the value of student input, and being impressed with the way classroom meetings were going. Extending the concept of class meetings resulted in school council meetings.

Student council purpose. The administration and staff have developed an impressive 64 page Student and Parent Handbook which is available to all students. A variety of topics like discipline, academic

standards, and routines are discussed in this handbook including a message from the student council, their role and a description of their structure. More detailed information sheets dealing with the format of council meetings, the council's function, and a description of important group leader skills were also available.

The philosophy of the school is that children learn best in an environment where they have some control over decision making. Therefore, the staff at Thunderbird have made a concerted effort to have children involved in a democratically run school. Students are given choices within limits and are given an opportunity to have input into the decision making process through the council. As a result students: develop better relationships with each other; learn to solve problems together; share their feelings, intentions, and beliefs, as well as ideas; establish guidelines for class and school behaviour; and increase group cohesion, and individual feelings of belonging and acceptance.

Information gathered through interviews and available written documents pertaining to the student council indicate that the council is involved in: establishing playground rules to benefit the largest group of students; searching for ways to solve school behaviour problems and

establishing guidelines for school conduct and consequences for bad

behaviour; providing input for purchasing equipment - (swings, mirrors in

washrooms); addressing environmental concerns - (litter around school);

and planning special events - (talent show, dances, fund raisers, and fun

days like pajama day, opposite day, twins day, fifties day).

Council organization. The principal is a member of the council and

usually chairs the meeting. However, opportunities to perform this role are

also given to students and other staff members. According to two of the

student representatives there were no designated student leaders at the

present time. In their opinion most ideas came from the grade sevens, but

they felt the younger students were also important because they usually

shared some fun ideas.

Two representatives from each class form the student council.

Representatives may be elected by the class or appointed by the teacher for

the year, or a one or three month term. Determining the representative and

length of office is left up to each teacher and their class.

Meeting format. Council meetings occur every two weeks. They

start at 12:30 and finish at 1:15. By giving 15 minutes of school time the staff recognizes the student council's importance and it provides a little incentive. Issues to be discussed at the council meeting come from the classroom meetings. Class representatives place agenda items on the notice board on the hall wall and ideas are dealt with at the next council meeting. Only class representatives are allowed to write agenda items on the council board after they have been discussed by their class. If there are no agenda items for the council, then the meeting is cancelled.

Minutes are recorded by a staff member with keyboarding skills. In this way minutes can be printed and reproduced shortly after the meeting is over, and the information can be shared with all the students in class meetings that afternoon while everything is still fresh in the representative's mind.

Supervisory role. The general procedure that is followed after a decision has been made by the student leadership team is the idea must be presented to the staff by the principal or the secretary. The staff decides if the student council may go ahead with a specific plan. According to the principal,

most council ideas are approved.

Success components. Key ingredients for ensuring a successful

council include: establishing some ground rules so that staff and students

know what the council is all about; and having someone take responsibility

for the council. Other things can easily interfere with council plans and if

this happens the council will die. Someone needs to be the council advocate

and leader, and make sure that nobody forgets about it.

Students felt that to maintain a successful council, it was extremely

important that all council members be treated equally, respect each other's

ideas, and try to understand each other.

Council benefits. Students learn about leadership skills by observing

the process used in classroom meetings and council meetings. However,

the principal stated that skills like reflective listening, universalizing,

linking, brainstorming, and summarizing are taught through the Systematic

Training for Effective Teaching (STET) model of getting people involved in

group dynamics.

The principal of Thunderbird felt that setting up an experiment to

measure the differences between schools with student councils and those without would be too difficult because you wouldn't be able to control all of the variables. However he stated, "Anything positive is positive. Establishing a student council is one positive step in many things we try to do to help students feel as if they belong and have some control over things. Student councils appear to enhance the relationship between students and teachers." He based his comment on the central premise that students in the council are taught to display mutual respect for each other and their ideas. Furthermore, by learning to universalize, students learn they are not alone in the way they feel or think and thereby enhance their sense of belonging. Thirdly, as students feel they have some power and control over what is going on, it enhances their self image. A positive self image helps when relating to others.

Positive effects observed by one council member who had recently transferred to Thunderbird were more planned activities for the students and less fights on the playground because the counsel has made the rules. Both council members enjoyed the opportunity of being a class representative because it made them feel responsible.

The principal concluded by saying that he hoped that his council

would continue to be a meaningful communication avenue within the school

system. If he allowed the council to die, it would be an indication that his

school was not functioning as it should. If students reached the point

where they lost interest in a council because nothing ever happened, then it

was important for him to reflect on his own leadership.

Whispering Needles Community School. School/Community

description. Whispering Needles, a school with approximately 200

students, is nestled in a picturesque setting of tall fir, hemlock, and cedar

trees. Being situated at the back of a pan-handle shaped property makes it

unnoticeable from the main street leading past the school. Nearby, is a

large natural park with crystal clear creeks and numerous trails that

attract serious and pleasure hikers alike.

The surrounding established homes are well maintained, and further

development is still evident. School staff members identify the

socioeconomic background as being middle and upper middle income

families.

Although, Whispering Needles School has had student councils for

several years, it was slow in getting started this year. The election

campaign ran for one week in February and culminated with speeches from

the candidates on February 12, 1990. The reason given for the late start

was, "There was a high turn over of staff this year, and the staff decided to

wait until after Christmas before re-establishing the student council.

People need to feel comfortable in their new environment." The staff

member who volunteered to provide leadership for the council and be their

representative is a first year teacher. Some assistance is given by another

classroom teacher.

Council purpose. According to the staff sponsor, the main purpose of

the Whispering Needles student council is to promote school spirit. Council

members see their role as planners and organizers of activities for the

school including fund raising activities.

Council organization. The student council consists of three

executive positions: a president, vice-president, and secretary-treasurer.

Executive positions could be filled by a student in any grade, but according

to student council members, "It usually is a student from grades five to

seven. Prior to their election a form consisting of campaign guideline

information was available to all students. Guidelines specify: the number of members on the campaign committee, the number of posters permitted in the school, the maximum amount of money to be spent during the campaign, and the importance of finding out about student concerns.

All potential executive members had to fill in a 'Student Government Nomination Form' which provides some basic statistical information, a rationale statement for wanting to be on the Student Government Executive, and a signature from themselves, their teacher, and their parents. The executive was elected after making a small speech to the student body explaining what they proposed to do. Council members who were interviewed stated, "Making the speech was a lot of fun."

In addition to the executive positions, there are two class representatives from each room. Class representatives are chosen in a variety of ways. Some teachers choose to rotate their class representatives, and others have a boy and a girl representative who do the job for the entire year. Class representatives may be selected by the teacher or elected by the students. This process is left to the discretion of the teacher.

Formal leadership training is not provided for the candidates at

Whispering Needles. It is the sponsor's opinion that, "Students kind of learn as they go along; leadership will develop if they are provided with an opportunity to be leaders."

Council meetings. The community school co-ordinator's office is the designated area for the student council meetings. They are scheduled during school time every second Monday or more often if necessary. Students are pleased to be at the meetings and feel it is necessary to conduct weekly meetings.

Minutes are kept at all student council meetings and copies are available. When asked how the agenda was set the sponsor's response was, "We usually don't have an agenda although it would probably be a good and helpful idea in getting us focused and looking at the long term." She continued by saying, "Maybe that is something we need to consider in the future, but for now it's good just to get the kids involved and hopefully let them feel they have a say or an avenue to go through if they want something different in the school."

Supervisory role. Student council members know that any decision

they make is subject to the approval of the staff. So far the sponsors

haven't had any problems. If the students bring up an idea that the council

sponsors feel will not go over with the other staff members, they try to

refocus the students on another idea. However, if the students are very

keen on an idea and keep coming back to it, the sponsors say, 'That is fine,

but further discussion must happen at the staff level." The staff decision

is brought back to them at their next meeting.

Council initiated activities/issues. Minutes and the responses of the

staff sponsor and council members reflect planned activities for students

that support their stated student council purpose. Planned student council

activities include: dress up days revolving around themes or colors, (hat

day, green day on Saint Patrick's Day), and contests or activities like lip

sync contests, talent shows, a science fair, an Easter trivia contest, and an

Easter bonnet display. Student council members commented, "Students like

days where they can dress up or do something, and when there are prizes

for the best costume, talent, or whatever."

However, the council sponsor stated, "The staff is beginning to

realize that making everything into contests isn't always a good idea

because we're trying to promote school and class spirit. For that reason
the original plan of having an Easter bonnet contest became an Easter
bonnet display.

Council benefits. A formal evaluation of the effects of a student
council at Whispering Needles or its activities has not been conducted.
However, the council sponsor's opinion was, "Student councils help promote
a good relationship because it shows that students want to give something
back to the school and make it a better place. At Whispering Needles,
school spirit has been positive. Council members have been able to get
their classmates involved in the different things that are going on. Kids
who are on the council are quite enthusiastic, and the relationship between
them and their classmates is good."

Likewise, the student council members had not formally assessed
past events, but unanimously agreed, "Councils are good ideas because
students in the whole school get more fun activities." Council members
also commented on the positive relationships that were evident at
Whispering Needles between students and staff members, and amongst
students.

Although it wasn't stated as a purpose for having a student council it became apparent that students were involved and learning first hand about election procedures and leadership skills. Students were involved at the polling stations, getting their own campaign managers, developing their own platform and involved in the planning of school activities after consulting with students and staff.

The third purpose of the student council was to raise funds. To date only one such event has transpired. It was an ice cream sale and the council made a profit of fifteen dollars. The money was designated for the purchase of some flowers to enhance the outside beauty of their school.

Having a student council has been a positive experience for students and staff at Whispering Needles. All of the council members stated they would seek re-election next year. For the staff sponsor, the position proved to be enjoyable and allowed her to get acquainted with many different aged students.

Problem 3

How do the functions of the student governance structures compare with the stated purposes of student leaders, their respective staff

sponsor/adviser, and the literature?

Findings

Besides identifying the purposes of student leaders and sponsor/advisers collectively, it is important to consider the purpose statements within each school. Comparing the perceived student governance purposes of student leaders and sponsor/advisers within the same school indicates a low degree of purpose agreeability with the exception of providing students an opportunity to plan and organize activities for the school. Both groups stated this as one of their purposes in 100% of the schools.

Agreeability in the remaining stated purposes was minimal or non-existent. Some agreeability was found in providing student input (57%), promoting school spirit and enthusiasm (50%), raising funds (40%), and developing a sense of school ownership (33%). The three remaining purposes: an exposure to the democratic process, gaining an experiential understanding about governments, and developing leadership qualities and skills were not shared by student leaders and sponsor/advisers within the same schools.

Student Governance Effectiveness in Meeting their Purpose - Student

events. The primary stated role of elementary student governance

structures revealed by this study is to plan and organize activities and

social functions for students. Comments made by student leaders and staff

sponsor/advisers indicate that 100% of the student governance structures

planned activities and functions for students.

The three most common types of student activities which were

evident in 78% of the schools could be categorized into three divisions.

These include Spirit/fun days, talent shows which include lip sync and air

band competitions, and student dances.

Spirit/fun days are planned events for the entire student body and

staff members. In the schools which had Spirit/fun days one notices a

range of three to twelve events for the 1989/90 school year. The mean

score was 5.4 events per school. The most common types of Spirit/fun

days were: hat days, and color days coinciding with special days like Saint

Patrick's Day and Valentine's Day. Other types of Spirit/fun days include: a

fifties day, backwards day, neon day, pajama day, old fashioned day, nerd

day, teddy bear day, punk rock day, western day, twin day, cool dude day,

school T-shirt day, opposite day, backwards day, beach day, ten years older

day, weird day, clash day, silent day, and gum day.

Talent shows were also evident in 78% of the schools. Like

Spirit/fun days, students and staff members could be involved. Guidelines

and auditions for all forms of talent shows were planned and directed by

students under the supervision of a sponsor teacher. Schools involved in

this study had two or three talent shows during the school year.

Unlike the previous two categories which encouraged participation

from the entire student body, school dances were student governance

planned events for intermediate or upper intermediate students. Student

leaders usually planned three dances a year to coincide with Halloween,

Valentines Day, and the end of the school year.

Planning recreational types of activities was the second most

popular student governance activity. Recreational activities were evident

in 56% of the schools. The most popular student governance directed

recreational activity was organizing teams and noon hour games. Other

student planned recreational activities were: skating parties, a tennis

tournament, a ping-pong club, and a skate boarding day.

A miscellaneous category of student activities makes up the fifth

category. Events such as a: Recycling/Science Fair in two schools,

poster/coloring contests, a monthly display in the school hallway, primary

Easter egg hunt, game show, "Steal a heart contest", year-end school picnic,

fireworks display, Easter trivia contest, and an Easter bonnet display form

a compiled list.

School spirit. In Mountview Elementary with its 550 students,

"Spirit Days" happen on a regular monthly basis. According to the student

president, "Spirit Days get everyones' spirits up."

Other noticeable events or activities planned by student leadership

teams with the intent of fostering school spirit include a student

newspaper, developing a school banner, designing a school flag, and

composing a school song.

Although activities and events were planned by student leaders in all

of the schools to increase school spirit, no formal analysis had been

conducted in these schools prior to implementing student governance

structures which would allow for a comparison with the current situation.

However, students in governance structures and sponsor/advisers in all of

the schools commented that student governance structures had facilitated

a better relationship between students, and between staff and students within their school. Unfortunately, no hard data such as a reduction in number of fights at school or recorded misdemeanors was available to confirm this speculation.

Other comments relevant to school spirit, which were made by those who were interviewed include: "Student governance structures foster the growth of school spirit"; "they add to the overall level of enthusiasm and cooperation"; "their result is a more cohesive student body and an improved mood within the school."

Two concrete examples of students striving to improve their school spirit were evident in Parkview Elementary. The first revolved around a student initiated plan to form a friendship club for English Second Language (ESL) students at their school. Its purpose was to promote the integration of non English speaking children with others. Students had observed that ESL students isolated themselves at recess and during the noon hour and made minimal attempts at conversing with other students in English. Shortly after the Friendship Club was established it became obvious that ESL students were being included in recess and noon hour games, making new friends, and communicating with other students in English.

The second example also came as a recommendation from the student

leadership team. Their proposal was that the Kindergarten to grade seven

cooperative Sport's Day teams be established much sooner than just before

Sport's Day. The rationale for the suggestion was that if team members

were given a longer period of time and more opportunities to get to know

each other, the end result would be a stronger multi-age bonding amongst

students within the school.

Student input. All student governance structures provided some

student input into decisions which affected them. The predominant area

was in relation to the planning and organizing of student events as

discussed previously. Providing input pertaining to the expenditure of

funds raised by students, or designated to the school by the board, was

evident in 89% of the elementary schools involved in the study. The other

school making up the remaining 11%, had not had any student fund raisers

to date even though the topic had surfaced in their council meetings.

Council members in this school felt that having some money in an account

to purchase prizes for their contests and competitions would be

appropriate. However, based upon the principal's commitment to supply

prize money, fund raisers were no longer viewed as being necessary.

Common sources of shortages identified by students, were in the area of playground/gymnasium equipment - (balls, swings, basketball hoops, lines painted on the pavement to play a variety of games), and computer hardware/software.

Other needs identified by students included: mirrors in student washrooms, spectator bleachers on the playing field, locks on washroom cubicle doors, carpet in some classrooms, bike racks, new pictures in the school, a student council bulletin board, and more flowers in the garden outside of the school.

Needs beyond the immediate school community were identified by student governance teams in 44% of the elementary schools. The majority of these schools decided to donate some money to local charities, and one decided to foster a child in a foreign country.

Two other issues which surfaced in 33% of the schools were: student input into the design of aspects of the school discipline program and school litter problem. Behavior concerns discussed by student governances were students writing on washroom walls, problems associated with hockey cards at school, student entry into the school prior to staff designated times, playground and equipment usage problems,

destruction of student art work displayed in halls, older students blocking

washroom entry ways, and the inappropriate use of the library at recess

and lunch. To alleviate these problems a variety of programs, schedules,

awards, rules, and consequences have been drafted and initiated by

students after receiving staff endorsement.

Besides providing input to correct inappropriate school behavior,

Parkview student leaders shared student views pertaining to: the

invitation of particular guests (drama teams, bands, opera singers,

puppeteers, etc.); and the need for a greater variety of food days. Food days

began as being hot dog days with no choice of condiments. As a result of

student input, food day now varies each month (hot dog day, hamburger day,

chicken day, pizza day), and students apply their own choice of condiments.

A sixth major area of student input was evident in 22% of the

schools. In these schools the traditional student governance format of a

president, vice-president and secretary-treasurer was eliminated after

consulting with students. The new format is based upon a cooperative

model employing class representatives who serve for a term rather than

the entire year.

Although 67% of the student governance sponsors viewed the purpose

of student leaders as a source of student input, it became apparent that all

student governance structures provide some student input in certain areas.

All governance structures provide input for the planning and organizing of

student activities. Most student leaders are involved to a small degree

with the expenditure of school funds, regardless if they are raised by

students or supplied by the board. However, few student leaders (only 33%)

get involved with discussing the policies, rules and practices of the school

as they pertain to behavior, litter, inviting school guests, food day options,

and evaluating/restructuring their student governance format.

Exposure to the democratic process. 44% of the school

sponsor/advisers felt that student governance structures provide students

with an exposure to the democratic process, or is a way of involving

students in a democratically run school. However, based upon the

information of student leaders and staff sponsors/advisers the existence

of fully democratically run schools as defined by Dewey (1968) were not

evident in the sample of schools involved in this study. Dewey describes

democracy as a way to effect the will and the interests of the majority of

the people where consent is freely given to the purposes and the rules by

which the individual or the institution is to live. Agreement as to the common purposes, rights, and obligations is embodied in a social contract; the political procedures in a democracy ensure the right of the individual to a voice and a vote in its decisions. (See Chapter 2).

In most elementary school situations the individual student voice was only heard if it was in agreement with the sponsor/advisers philosophy. A statement made by the sponsor in Whispering Needles supports this argument. Her words were, "If the students bring up an idea that we (the council advisers) feel will not go over with the other staff members, we try to refocus the students on another idea."

Similarly, a statement made by Edgewater's principal who was also the student council sponsor, reflects homologous connotations. He felt that it was very important for administrators to be at student governance meetings and work together with students at the initiation stage of any idea. A summary comment made by him was, "You want to make sure that the gatekeeping is done at the meeting where the planning is done so that you don't run into a problem like disallowing an activity after the council has put a lot of time into planning an event." Gatekeeping was very evident in this school. The principal was predominantly responsible for setting the

agenda of all student council meetings, was a dominant speaker at council meetings which were observed, and produced the minutes after each meeting. However his first response, when asked about the purpose of the student council in his school was, "To give children an experience in democratic decision making."

Student leaders at Edgewater Elementary were unaware of their democratic privileges even though the principal hoped to provide a democratic decision making experience for students, and had written a policy on the role of the student council which included the statement, "The council may discuss the policies, rules and practices of the school." When student leaders were asked about their involvement with school policies, rules and practices, their response was, "Unfortunately, we don't get involved in that, and we are never given the chance."

Control and order by staff and administration members, as described in the preceding paragraphs, was observable in 67% of the schools which were visited. In the remaining schools, student leaders were given the liberty, and took the opportunity to address some school policies, rules and practices which were of concern to them.

An example, shared by the principal of Thunderbird Elementary

revolved around a district policy of allowing children to sell tickets for raffles or other money making ventures to only those people within their catchment area. However, 25% of Thunderbird's student population live outside of the school catchment area. A complaint was made to the district superintendent that Thunderbird students were selling raffle tickets in the Raven Elementary's attendance area. Shortly thereafter, Thunderbird students received a letter from the superintendent informing them of the district policy and a warning to stop selling tickets in other catchment areas. Thunderbird student leaders felt this was unfair and arranged for a meeting with the superintendent to discuss their concerns. After both sides were presented, an agreement was made that students outside of the Thunderbird catchment area could sell tickets to immediate neighbours, close friends, and relatives, but should refrain from soliciting up and down entire streets.

Regardless of the amount of student involvement in the decision making process, all schools required the staff authorization of any student governance recommendation. Schools which had loosened the reins of adult guidance identified several similar success components. The four components were: 1). a mutual respect between students, sponsors, and

their respective ideas and viewpoints; 2). ground rules so that all stake

holders (staff, students, and parents) know the council's purpose; 3). an

energetic, tireless council adviser who is a strong advocate for student

concerns and doesn't allow other school events to interfere with scheduled

meetings and plans; and 4). leadership training and experience provided for

all students in the classroom and at student governance meetings.

Ownership. 33% of the schools reported that student governance

structures enhance the feeling of student ownership. Class representatives

sharing student governance plans with the entire student population and

involving them at the planning stages in classroom meetings, provide an

opportunity for all students to buy in to the activity at an early stage. The

end result is a greater degree of student participation in student planned

activities.

Soft data reported by Mountview's principal, pertaining to the

reduction of vandalism around the school also supports the feeling of

belonging by students - something he partially attributes to the student

councils. Present and former students have developed a stronger feeling of

school pride. Eleven years ago when Mr. Smith came to Mountview, swings

and windows were often broken. During the summer holidays vandalism was so bad that all school windows were covered with plywood. Even in spite of the precautions, it was common to have 80 broken windows in September. During recent summers, boards are no longer used to cover windows, and seldom do you find even one broken window.

An experiential understanding about governments. Although gaining an experiential understanding about governments was stated by 44% of the schools, it was not stated or implied as an effect or benefit by any of the student leaders or sponsors.

Developing leadership qualities. Few references were made by student leaders or sponsors about student leaders developing their leadership qualities. However, 33% of the student leaders alluded to feeling competent in chairing a classroom or student governance meeting due to the instruction, modeling, and practice observed or experienced during the previous year.

Another finding of this study was that 100% of the student leaders stated they would run for a student governance position in the following

year. For some of them, this would be at the junior high or secondary

level, and others at the elementary level. All of them viewed their

responsibilities as a positive experience which made school a more

enjoyable place for everyone and allowed them to contribute something to

the school.

Fund raising. 89% of the elementary schools involved in this study

allowed student governance structures to plan and organize fund raising

activities. Furthermore, they were given the opportunity to provide input

pertaining to the designation of those funds as discussed previously.

The emphasis placed on fund raising, and the number of fund raising

events varies significantly in the schools. For example, Whispering Needles

had only been involved in one fund raising event (an ice cream sale), and the

proceeds had been designated toward the purchase of flowers to enhance

the outside beauty of the school.

Other schools like Mountview Elementary, were consistently involved

in a wide variety of fund raising activities. The school principal stated

that the student council often motivated the student body to raise up to

15,000 dollars during the course of a year for projects around the school

and outside charities.

Motivation strategies employed by student leaders often included a competitive aspect between classes - boys against girls, or one class challenging other classes to beat their contribution. In order to maintain the competitive spirit, thermometers or other charts were used to record and display the contributions of different groups.

A compiled list of fund raising activities include: bottle drives, newspaper drives, penny drives, raffles, spell-a-thons, Canada-a-thons, plant sales, seed sales, poinsettia sales, food sales, popcorn sales, ice cream sales, student made craft sales, school T-shirt and sweat shirt sales, a car wash, and admission proceeds from showing videos at noon, and school dances. One student council also operated a school store which sold food supplements and school supplies.

Comparison of literature stated purposes and British Columbia's elementary schools. Student governance purposes identified by participants in the British Columbia study correlated closely with one of the purposes of American elementary student governance structures. The one purpose which is viewed as important in the American literature and by

leaders of student governments in British Columbia's schools was giving

students an opportunity to take part in the activities of the school and help

plan school affairs. A summary of American elementary student

governance purposes as found in the literature of Reum and Cummings

(1973), Greco (1961), Gaynor (1956), VanPool (1964), and Casebolt (1976)

include:

1. Elementary school student councils should permit students to

assume responsibilities and have experiences in democratic participation.

2. They should help develop good citizenship and democratic

leadership.

3. They should give students an opportunity to take part in the

activities of the school and help plan school affairs.

4. They should help in the determination of school policies and

practices.

5. They should build school spirit and pride.

Although the literature is fairly consistent in emphasizing the same

types of goals for student governments, it appears that schools in British

Columbia are unaware of their existence or have not considered to

incorporate all of them into their own student governance goals. Allowing

students to have experiences in democratic participation, helping them

develop good citizenship and democratic leadership, providing opportunities

for students to assist in the determination of school policies and

practices, and building school spirit and pride were goals mentioned by less

than 50% of the leaders (students and staff) in British Columbia's

elementary schools.

Summary

The specific purposes of elementary student governance structures

most frequently mentioned by elementary student leaders were: planning

and organizing activities and social functions for students (100%), fund

raising (56%), providing student input (44%), enhancing school spirit (33%),

developing leadership qualities and skills (22%), and developing a sense of

school ownership (11%). Two purposes not stated by student leaders, but

mentioned by the sponsors/advisers included: an experiential

understanding about governments, and an exposure to the democratic

process.

The rank order of the purposes of elementary student governance

structures as stated by the sponsors/advisers were: planning and organizing activities and social functions for students (100%), providing student input (78%), an experiential understanding about governments (44%), gaining an exposure to the democratic process (44%), enhancing school spirit (33%), developing a sense of school ownership (33%), developing leadership qualities (33%), and raising funds (22%).

Based upon comments made by student leaders, sponsors/advisers, and student governance minutes an assessment of student governance activities and issues indicates that elementary student governance structures plan and organize activities and social functions for students (100%), enhance school spirit (100%), provide student input - {events (100%), fund raising (89%), school policy, rules, practices (33%), litter control (22%), student governance format (22%), invite special school guests (11%), food days (11%)}, gain exposure to the democratic process (33%), develop leadership qualities (33%), and develop a sense of school ownership (33%). No comments indicated that students developed an understanding about governments or made the correlation between their school elections and provincial or federal elections.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions

Summary

As outlined in chapter one, the purpose of this thesis was to

determine: the prevalence of student governance structures in British

Columbia's elementary schools; the extent of the discrepancies between the

statements of teachers and students pertaining to the student governance's

purpose within their school; and the alignment of student governance

initiated activities and issues with the stated purposes for involving

students in leadership. The results, it is hoped, will provide vital

information to aid in planning for meaningful student governance change,

and useful information for other elementary schools who are interested in

establishing effective democratic student governance structures within

their school.

This particular study analyzed the information collected through

personal interviews with nine student governance sponsor/advisers, 23

student leaders who had volunteered to participate in the study, available

school documents relevant to the student governance structure within the

school, and observed student governance meetings. Documents included

minutes of student government meetings, student government

constitutions, guidelines, and student handbooks.

Chapter two, the literature review, provided a discussion of school

democracy, a background history of student governments, student council

purposes in American elementary schools; desirable outcomes attributed at

least partially to student governance involvements; and current research

findings on the student voice, particularly within the Canadian context.

With the history of American elementary student councils it was

interesting to note their gaining popularity during the 1940's and 1950's

(McKown, 1952; Gaynor, 1956c). This finding is in sharp contrast to the

findings of this study which shows that British Columbia's elementary

schools are still at the experimental stage. The average length of student

governance experience for the schools involved in this study was 3.2 years.

From the literature of Reum and Cummings (1973), Greco (1961),

Gaynor (1956), Van Pool (1964), and Casebolt (1976),

a composite list of student governance purposes for elementary schools

was developed. They include:

1. Elementary school student councils should permit students to

assume responsibilities and have experiences in democratic participation.

2. They should help develop good citizenship and democratic leadership.

3. They should give students an opportunity to take part in the activities of the school and help plan school affairs.

4. They should help in the determination of school policies and practices.

5. They should build school spirit and pride.

In addition to a discussion of the purposes of student governments, desirable outcomes which are attributed to student governments were reviewed. The findings state student governments result in the development of student responsibility, good citizenship, democratic participation, leadership, school spirit, pride, a lower incidence of vandalism, a closer relationship between the school and community, and a stronger voice in school policies and practices. Although causal relationships between student governance participation and desirable characteristics appear in the literature, caution must be exercised in accepting these claims. Many factors influence the development and socialization of students.

In criticizing the involvements with extra-curricular activities and

effects in general, Holland and Andre (1987) state,

> Researchers have been tempted to conclude that correlations
> between participation and socially desired characteristics imply
> that participation causes such characteristics. However, evidence
> from studies that simply compare participants and nonparticipants
> on variables of interest provide no evidence for causal relationships
> (p.449).

Holland and Andre (1987) go on to suggest that the research needs to

compare students prior and subsequent to participation in a given activity.

Furthermore, as pointed out by the principal of Thunderbird

Elementary,

> Measuring noticeable differences between schools with student
> councils and those who do not have them is very difficult because
> you wouldn't be able to control all of the variables. However, having
> a student council is one positive step in many things we try to do to
> help kids feel as if they belong and have some control over things.

Current research indicates that limited student input, few decision

making prerogatives, and being ignored when discussions of change and

school improvement take place are common perceptions of today's students

(Fullan, 1982; Lee et. al., 1983; Goodlad, 1984; Sarason, 1982). Student

governance structures can change some of these perceptions if they are

given some real power.

Essential Findings

The findings of this study are that 45% of the elementary schools within British Columbia who chose to respond to a brief survey had some form of student governance structure. Based upon the research involving a random sample group of these schools it was determined that the average length of experience schools had with student governance structures was 3.2 years. The majority of the remaining responses (29%), indicated not having a student governance structure, but were interested in exploring it's possibilities.

Eight prevalent elementary student governance purposes were identified by the information collected from the sample group of participating schools. They include: provide students with an opportunity to plan and organize activities for the school, enhance school spirit and enthusiasm, provide student input into school issues, allow students to be involved in a democratically run school, develop a sense of school ownership, learn about governments through their own government structure, develop leadership qualities and skills, and plan and gather support for fund raising activities.

The purposes of elementary student governance structures most frequently mentioned by elementary student leaders were: planning and organizing activities and social functions for students (100%), fund raising (56%), providing student input (44%), enhancing school spirit (33%), developing leadership qualities and skills (22%), and developing a sense of school ownership (11%). Students did not state that the purpose of their student government was to gain an experiential understanding about governments or gain exposure to the democratic process.

Sponsor/advisers of elementary student governance structures viewed purposes of the student governance structures slightly differently. Purpose statements from them focused on: planning and organizing activities and social functions for students (100%), providing student input (78%), gaining an experiential understanding about governments (44%), providing an exposure to the democratic process (44%), enhancing school spirit (33%), developing a sense of school ownership (33%), developing leadership qualities (33%), and raising funds (22%).

Besides identifying the purposes of student leaders and sponsor/advisers collectively it is important to consider the purpose statements within each school. Comparing the stated student governance

purposes of student leaders and sponsor/advisers within the same school indicates a low degree of unanimity with the exception of providing students an opportunity to plan and organize activities for the school. Both groups stated this as one of their purposes in 100% of the schools.

Unanimity in the remaining stated purposes was minimal or non-existent. Some unanimity was found in providing student input (57%), promoting school spirit and enthusiasm (50%), raising funds (40%), and developing a sense of school ownership (33%). The three remaining purposes: an exposure to the democratic process, gaining an experiential understanding about governments, and developing leadership qualities and skills were not shared by student leaders and sponsor/advisers within the same schools.

Comments made by student leaders, sponsor/advisers, or available minutes indicate that elementary student governance structures plan and organize activities and social functions for students (100%), enhance school spirit (100%), gain exposure to the democratic process (33%), develop leadership qualities (33%), and develop a sense of school ownership (33%). Providing input varied according to the issue. Evidence of input pertaining to: planning events was (100%); fund raising (89%); school

policy, rules, and practices (33%); litter control (22%); student governance

format (22%); inviting special guests to the school (11%); and types of food

days (11%).

Conclusions

By looking at the stated purposes of student governance structures,

and the issues and activities addressed by them, it becomes clear that

planning and organizing activities, social functions, and fund raisers are

the predominant activities of British Columbia's elementary student

governance structures. These findings should not be overwhelming

considering that student leaders viewed planning social activities and fund

raising as being their responsibility, and that these purposes aligned with

those of the sponsor/advisers most often.

Although many of British Columbia's elementary governance

structures are in their infancy and going through developmental changes, it

is essential that all stake holders share the same purposes. Ideal goals

held by segments of school populations, will have no impact if they are not

communicated regularly, supported, and given an opportunity to develop.

Seldom capitalizing upon the opportunities which could foster the

development of democracy within schools indicates it is not a priority

within most schools located in the southwest corner of British Columbia.

This was evident by the number of student governance meetings or planned

events which were cancelled due to other school activities or

involvements, and the minimal amount of school time given to student

leaders and staff sponsors for developing plans, purposes, or strategies.

Student leaders in some of the schools were very cognizant of this fact,

and viewed the lack of priority as being the most frustrating part

associated with their position.

Although student government and school democracy can not be

equated or viewed as synonymous terms, a student government can be one

aspect of a democratic school. Student governments can provide

opportunities for the development of leadership and provide students with

the message that democracy is important to our society.

However, a change in the organization and formal authority of the

student government structure is necessary in British Columbia's schools.

Student government groups can not remain to be loosely run organizations

displaying superficial forms of democracy. Not only is the problem of

superficial democracy evident in British Columbia's elementary schools,

but is also evident in American high schools (Schmuck and Schmuck, 1990).

Illusions of being involved in the decision making process within schools

will only lead to the disenchantment of student government leaders, and

result in the disintegration of student governments within schools.

Implications

The data from this study has many implications for teachers and

administrators who create the learning environment for students. First of

all, it indicates that teachers and students are not united in their

perceptions of the purpose and goals of the student government. Lacking

mutual agreement demands that some basic clarification of roles must

happen. Collectively developing student government handbooks based upon

available research and other schools within the province, and then revising

them as necessary, would alleviate some differences of opinion.

Thoroughly evaluating past efforts and accomplishments, and recording this

information would assist the reflective growth process. Furthermore, a

commitment from staff members to implement the ideas of student

involvement more fully in all areas where decisions are made that affect

students is necessary.

A commitment to a process is natural when an individual experiences success that is attributed to the process. If students experience success in utilizing democratic processes to solve problems at school, the result will be a commitment to democratic traditions. In these times of widespread disenchantment with politics and government at higher levels, it is imperative that our own model at the instructional level is in order. If faith in elementary student governments is to be established, then administrators and staff members need to make the necessary accommodations in the operational procedures of their respective realms of authority. The failure or success of elementary student governments depends upon the actions of the staff.

The school staff must bear the major responsibility for providing the experiences which contribute to the development of democratic citizens. No other common institution or group of people has the formal obligation, capacity, and potential for the task of nurturing and instilling within students a commitment to democratic processes. Student government structures within schools can offer unique learning opportunities for practicing participatory government, for opening up communications with students, and for enrichment of the learning environment.

The success of the student government is dependent largely upon the degree of openness, mutual respect, and trust that a staff and administration is willing to develop with the student leaders. Student leaders can only have the amount of authority that the staff and administration give to them. Their empowerment and effectiveness is determined by the total staff who must be committed to facilitating the growth of democratic principles within students. Students must move beyond the feeling of dependency upon the good will of teachers and administrators whom they have to approach prior to initiating any student government plan.

As a result of the analysis of the data provided by this study, and a review of related literature, it becomes apparent that one of the major problems is the reluctance of staff and administration to give student governments appropriate responsibility and authority. In all of the schools participating in the study, it became obvious that student governance structures were mainly recommending bodies. The principal or sponsor/adviser was the liaison and seldom did student leaders present their ideas to the total staff. Information was simply shared between the two groups and very little opportunity was provided for students to be

involved in the reasoning process prior to the staff making a decision.

A true commitment to the concept of student governance and democratic principles seemed to be lacking in the majority of the elementary school sample group. Bringing students into the circles of decision-making and policy formation in all areas of the school which affect them could change this observation. Staff members and administrators should consider giving up some of their control, concern for efficiency and routine, and be prepared to take increased risks as students grow in their educational knowledge.

However before this can happen, concerted action and cooperation must be taken by all stake holders - educators, students, parents, the community, and the provincial Ministry of Education. Local schools and communities must collectively develop and clarify their purposes. School Boards and Provincial Ministry Personnel must provide support, initiatives, and legislation to make elementary schools more democratic.

If provincial incentives such as exchange programs with educators engaged in democratic procedures, support materials, and time are not provided for educators, we will continue to see teachers and

administrators stuck in their hierarchical patterns, and schools being

ineffective in fostering democratic participation.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

In researching elementary student governments, it is interesting to note that the majority of American elementary schools have had student councils since the 1940's and claim to be beyond the experimental stage. We have undertaken this study to determine the presence of elementary student government structures in British Columbia's schools, the extent of the discrepancies between the perceptions teachers and students have of the student governance's purpose, and comparing the alignment of the stated purposes with the actual council initiated activities or issues. Let us begin....

Interview Schedule with Student Government Sponsors/Advisers

Q.   What position do you hold in relation to the council?

Q.   What is the purpose of your student governance structure?

    -Do students help in the determination of school rules,

    policies, and practices?

    -Are student leaders involved in evaluating texts, courses, or

    teachers?

    -How do new students or staff members become aware of the

    purposes of the council?

Q. How do you organize your councils?

    -Are students elected, appointed or do they volunteer?

    -Is any leadership training provided for students? What

    issues are addressed?

    -Are students involved in the planning and organizing stages of

    student government structures?

    -How is the student government sponsor/adviser determined?

-How do you ensure that each student is represented?

Q.   How are your student council meetings conducted?

    -How often do you meet?

    -How is the agenda determined?

    -Are minutes recorded at each meeting?

    -What is the general procedure after a decision has been made

    by the student leadership team?

    -How is the information shared with staff members, other

    students, and the community?

Q.   What types of activities, projects, or decisions does the student

    governance structure get involved with or address?

Q. What are the key ingredients for ensuring a successful council?

    -What problems or deterrants have affected the success of

    your student governance?

Q.   Based upon your experience, is there a noticeable difference between

schools with student governance structures and those who do not

have them?

-Do they facilitate a closer relationship between students and

staff, or students and students?

Q. How long have you had a student leadership team in your school?

Q. Have you had any previous experience with student leadership teams

prior to coming to this school?

Q. How many students in your school?

Q. How would you describe the socioeconomic background of your

community?

Q. Do you have any further comments?

Interview Schedule with Student Government Leaders

Q.   What position do you hold in the student council/leadership team?

Q.   What is the purpose of your student governance structure?

-Do you provide some input into school rules, policies, and

practices?

-Are you involved in evaluating and sharing your opinions about

text books, subjects you are studying, or teachers?

-How do new students become aware of the purposes of the

council?

Q.   How do you organize your councils?

-Are students elected, appointed or do they volunteer?

-Is any leadership training provided for students? What

issues are addressed or discussed?

-Are students involved in the planning and organizing stages of

student government structures?

-How is the student government sponsor/adviser determined?

-How do you make sure that each student is represented?

Q.   How are your student governance meetings conducted?

-How often do you meet?

-How is the agenda, or what you are going to discuss, decided?

-Are the minutes, or what you have discussed at meetings,

written down? If so, who is responsible for this job?

-What is the general procedure after a decision has been made

by the student leaders? Do you need to get permission from

anyone before you inform students of your plans?

-How is the information shared with staff members, other

students, and the community?

Q.   What types of activities, projects, or decisions does the student

governance structure get involved with or discuss?

Q.   What important factors or components are necessary if you want to

have a good student government?

-What are some of the major problems that have limited the

success of your student government?

Q. From talking to friends of yours who attend other schools, or from your

possible experience of attending another school, is there a noticeable

difference between schools with student governments and those who

do not have them?

     -Do students and teachers, or students and students have a

     better relationship with each other as a result of having a

     student government?

     -Would you run for a student government position next year?

Q.   Do you have any further comments about student governments?

APPENDIX B

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

APPENDIX B

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

March 13, 1990

Dear Administrator,

Student government offers young people an opportunity to develop skills in goal setting, communication, group dynamics, planning and organizing, problem solving, decision making, and self-awareness in a very natural and real setting. Furthermore, it enables children to foster: a sense of ownership and belonging; a sense of responsibility toward a group; a freedom to express their views; an ability to deal with differences of opinion without personal condemnation; and a readiness to accept and give constructive feedback. Developing these participatory, cognitive, and affective competencies results in a more supportive, cooperative, and productive environment.

In the coming months, Dr. Norman Robinson (Professor of Educational Administration at S.F.U.) and myself (a graduate student at S.F.U.) will be analyzing the content and significance of the student voice via student councils or governments in B.C.'s public elementary schools. If you have an interest in this area feel free to contact Dr. Robinson at 291-4165 or myself at 936-6263.

We would appreciate your assistance in our research by submitting the following information in the enclosed self-addressed envelope.

Yours sincerely,

Don Koehn

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE

APPENDIX C

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. At the present time, does your school have a student government or council?

    a). Yes   b). No

2. If your school has a student government structure and you would be willing to share your insights, or if you are interested in the possibilities of a student government for your school, please list your name, school, address and phone number below.

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FOR MINORS

APPENDIX D

Informed Consent for Minors
By Parent, Guardian and/or other
Appropriate Authority

The University and those conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of subjects. Your signature on this form will signify that you have received adequate opportunity to consider the information in this document, and that you voluntarily agree to allow the subject(s) for whom you are responsible to participate in an interview conducted by Don Koehn, graduate student in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. The nature of the brief interview will include questions pertaining to the purpose, organizational patterns, and activities of the student government at your child's elementary school.

As parent/guardian of (name of child) _____ I consent to the above-named engaging in a short interview at _____ on _____ .

I understand and have explained to my child:

a) the general procedures to be used in this research project.
b) that he/she has the right to withdraw from the project at any time.
c) that his/her responses will be maintained in strictest confidence.
d) that he/she will remain anonymous in any written report growing out of this study.
e) that his/her school and district will also remain anonymous.
f) that tapes and written transcripts of the interview will be destroyed upon completion of the study.
g) that I may register any complaint I might have about the research project with the chief researcher named above or with Dr. Robin Barrow, Director of Graduate Programs, Faculty of Education, Simon

Fraser University.

h) that I may obtain a copy of the results of this study, upon its completion, by contacting Don Koehn (936-6263) or the Simon Fraser University Library.

NAME (Please print): _____

ADDRESS: _____

_____

SIGNATURE: _____ WITNESS: _____

DATE: _____

APPENDIX E

LETTER CONCERNING VALIDATION

OF SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

APPENDIX E

LETTER CONCERNING VALIDATION
OF SCHOOL DESCRIPTION

565 Ebert Ave.,
Coquitlam, B.C.,
V3J 2L1,
June 11, 1990.

Mr. or Ms. (name of sponsor/adviser),
Student government sponsor/adviser,
(School name) Elementary.

Dear (name of sponsor/adviser):

Please find enclosed the "description" I have written from the
interviews that I did with yourself and several of your council members.
As I explained on the phone, in order to understand exactly what the
purpose of your student council is and how it works, I found that this was
an important step in my analysis. At this point, I would really appreciate
you reading the description and giving me a reaction to it. If you would like
to make notes on the outline, feel free to do that. You may call me at
936-6263 and give me your reaction or send me a letter. If you would like
to share this description with the council members who were interviewed,
and get their reaction to it, that would be great.

I realize this is a busy time of the year for you but I would really
appreciate your input as I want all information to be absolutely accurate.
As you will see, all names of staff members, and the school have been
changed in order to ensure confidentiality.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Don Koehn

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