

**A PARENT-INITIATED SCHOOL OF CHOICE:
AN EXAMINATION OF THE GENESIS
AND EARLY HISTORY
OF KING TRADITIONAL SCHOOL**

by

Simon Gibson

B.A., University of Victoria 1974

B.J., Carleton University 1975

M.A., California State University 1994

THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in the
Faculty of Education

©Simon Gibson 2005
SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY
Fall 2005

All Rights Reserved. This work may not be reproduced
in whole or in part, by photocopy or other means,
without the permission of the author.

APPROVAL

NAME Simon John Gibson
DEGREE Doctor of Philosophy
TITLE A Parent-Initiated School of Choice: An Examination of the
Genesis and Early History of King Traditional School

EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Chair Geoff Madoc-Jones

Carolyn Mamchur, Professor
Senior Supervisor

Marvin Wideen, Professor Emeritus
Member

Michèle Schmidt, Assistant Professor
External Examiner

Dr. Thomas Fleming, Professor, University of Victoria,
Department of Curriculum and Instruction, P.O. Box 1700,

Stn CSC, Victoria, BC, V8W 2Y2 Tel: 1-250-656-0539,
email: tfleming@uvic.ca
Examiner

Date October 20, 2005



**SIMON FRASER
UNIVERSITY library**

DECLARATION OF PARTIAL COPYRIGHT LICENCE

The author, whose copyright is declared on the title page of this work, has granted to Simon Fraser University the right to lend this thesis, project or extended essay to users of the Simon Fraser University Library, and to make partial or single copies only for such users or in response to a request from the library of any other university, or other educational institution, on its own behalf or for one of its users.

The author has further granted permission to Simon Fraser University to keep or make a digital copy for use in its circulating collection, and, without changing the content, to translate the thesis/project or extended essays, if technically possible, to any medium or format for the purpose of preservation of the digital work.

The author has further agreed that permission for multiple copying of this work for scholarly purposes may be granted by either the author or the Dean of Graduate Studies.

It is understood that copying or publication of this work for financial gain shall not be allowed without the author's written permission.

Permission for public performance, or limited permission for private scholarly use, of any multimedia materials forming part of this work, may have been granted by the author. This information may be found on the separately catalogued multimedia material and in the signed Partial Copyright Licence.

The original Partial Copyright Licence attesting to these terms, and signed by this author, may be found in the original bound copy of this work, retained in the Simon Fraser University Archive.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, BC, Canada



STATEMENT OF ETHICS APPROVAL

The author, whose name appears on the title page of this work, has obtained, for the research described in this work, either:

(a) Human research ethics approval from the Simon Fraser University Office of Research Ethics,

or

(b) Advance approval of the animal care protocol from the University Animal Care Committee of Simon Fraser University;

or has conducted the research

(c) as a co-investigator, in a research project approved in advance,

or

(d) as a member of a course approved in advance for minimal risk human research, by the Office of Research Ethics.

A copy of the approval letter has been filed at the Theses Office of the University Library at the time of submission of this thesis or project.

The original application for approval and letter of approval are filed with the relevant offices. Inquiries may be directed to those authorities.

Simon Fraser University Library
Burnaby, BC, Canada

Abstract

Parental activism in education in British Columbia has been manifest in a number of initiatives. In particular, within the last 20 years, a small number of “traditional” and “fundamental” schools have been proposed by parents and approved in communities such as Langley, Surrey and Abbotsford.

This dissertation focuses specifically on the genesis and early years of King Traditional School in Abbotsford, which opened in 1995.

King Traditional School is a school in which the wishes of parents are paramount. This dissertation enumerates the educational values of the school and acknowledges the “triad” of parent, teacher and student as the most salient factor in the school’s ascendancy; indeed, although the school has some unique characteristics – which primarily may be regarded as cosmetic – the vibrant support of participative parents is the most significant factor in the school’s successes.

Through the study of documents from similar schools that were founded in Pasadena and Langley, this paper reveals the origins of King Traditional School and demonstrates the ideological framework that underlay these schools, including responses to public education

In addition, through the examination of scholarly – and not so scholarly – papers concerning the school and fundamental/traditional schooling in general, an understanding of the aspirations of adherents is revealed. This understanding is also illuminated through some of the articles that appeared in local newspapers which introduced the school and the beliefs of its supporters into the public discourse.

As school boards aspire to maintain high enrollments and do not wish to lose students to the private system, they will continue to receive pressure to provide alternatives – such as traditional schools – which offer to parents the veneer of private schooling without the cost. The allure of such schools is understandable, particularly in the Fraser Valley with high private school attendance, but trustees will need to exercise caution in not pandering to parents

who may have a self-seeking approach to their children's schooling. The Ministry of Education may wish to consider guidelines for such schools in order to protect the principles of public education and provide local trustees with salutary parameters to guide their deliberations.

Acknowledgements

I am pleased to take this opportunity to thank Dr. Carolyn Mamchur and Dr. Marvin Wideen for their support and encouragement — they believed in me and consistently nurtured my efforts as I researched and wrote this dissertation. Dr. Thomas Fleming was extremely helpful in providing thoughtful suggestions relating to “choice” in the historical context of education in British Columbia. Dr. Michele Schmidt was also an important and considerate participant in the process.

In addition, I wish to acknowledge the many people associated with the Abbotsford and Langley School Districts who agreed to be interviewed and who also provided me with many original documents relating to the creation of King Traditional and Langley Fundamental Schools.

And, finally, I wish to thank the staff of the Simon Fraser Library for their tremendous help. They were always patient with me as they guided me through many of the intricacies of the research process.

Contents

Approval	ii
Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Contents	vi
Chapter One King Traditional School: The Case for the Historical Explication of this Parent-Initiated Public Elementary School	1
Introduction	1
Purpose/ The Research Problem	2
The Research Questions	3
Methodological Practice and Research Design	4
Document Analysis	5
Interviews with Key Informants	6
The Outline.....	8
Chapter Two The Currency of Choice: Establishing the Substructure for a Parent-Initiated School	11
The Putnam-Weir Report.....	12
The Chant Report.....	12
The Royal Commission on Education.....	14
Devolving Control to Locally-Elected School Boards	17
Public Confidence and the Popular Press	19
Provincial Funding of Independent Schools	22
Increased Choice in the Public System	23
Conclusion.....	24
Chapter Three The Paucity of Research: Accounting for the Relative Lack of Scholarly Inquiry	26
The Literature Review	26
Specific Studies	29
Limitations to these Studies.....	34
Accounting for the Lack of Study of BC Traditional Schools	44
Conclusion.....	48
Chapter Four The Origins of King Traditional School: John Marshall Fundamental School, Pasadena, California	51
John Marshall Fundamental School	52
Background Information – Pasadena Fundamental School.....	52
Marshall Fundamental School Handbook for Students, Teachers and Parents	54
Kyle M. Crist	55

Mission Statement and Handbook.....	57
Richard Vetterli	58
Conclusion.....	61
Chapter Five The Origins of King Traditional School: Langley Fundamental School, Langley, B.C.	63
Original Brief.....	64
Response to the BCTF.....	66
Lorenz Wiebe	73
Ron Sawatzky	77
Conclusion.....	81
Chapter Six The Origins of King Traditional School: The Initiative, Lobbying and Approval, Accounting for The Success of Proponents	83
The Founding Council.....	84
The Original Proposal	84
Teachers for Excellence in Education Brief	88
Recommended Constitution.....	89
The Ideal Principal.....	93
A School of Choice.....	94
Opponents and Community Feeling	97
District Survey	99
The School Board	106
Joanne Field	107
John Smith	109
Lynne Harris	112
Don Szostak.....	113
Cathy Goodfellow.....	115
John Sutherland	118
Robin Arden.....	119
The Founding Parents	121
Iris Rodrigues.....	122
Lisa Le Gear.....	125
Kim Dirksen	126
Karla Nelson.....	128
Conclusion.....	129
Chapter Seven The Early Years of King Traditional School: its Struggle to Achieve Acceptance, an Examination of the School's "Ethos in Action"	132
Initial Criticism	133
The Parents of King Traditional	135
The Accreditation Report.....	139
1. The Purpose of Accreditation	140
2. The External Report	143
3. The Internal Report.....	144
The Initiative for a Secondary School	146
Conclusion.....	156

Chapter Eight Understanding the Nomenclature: Deconstructing the Agendas and the Assertions, Coming to Grips with “Traditional Education”	159
Defining “Traditional” at King Traditional School	160
Cosmetic Characteristics	162
Material Characteristics	165
Conclusion.....	168
Chapter Nine Conclusion And Summary: Assessing The Merits Of A Parent-Centered School	170
Parental Involvement – The Triad.....	171
The Pedagogy	172
Discipline and School Conduct	173
Patriotic Ideals and Nostalgia.....	175
The Religious Dimension.....	176
Is King Traditional Elitist?	178
Some Concluding Remarks	181
Chapter Ten Contemplating the School: A Consideration of Possible Future Research	185
Appendix Findings: Traditional Model School Survey	188
References	192

Chapter One

King Traditional School: The Case for the Historical Explication of this Parent-Initiated Public Elementary School

Introduction

“Traditional schools”, as schools of choice, are a relatively novel phenomenon in Canadian education (Brown, 1999b; Kalaw, 1999; Coleman, 1998). Until the middle of the last decade, the only so-called “traditional” schools in British Columbia were found in the Fraser Valley community of Langley. The founding of Langley Fundamental School in 1974, a unique and rather controversial innovation, met with considerable dissent at the time (Fundamental Answers, 1975). Today, the two fundamental schools in that community are fully enrolled and, in fact, experience substantial waiting lists (L. Wiebe, personal communication, 1998). Similar schools have opened in the neighboring communities of Surrey and Abbotsford and at least two other communities elsewhere in British Columbia. Other applications for apparently similar schools in B.C. are either pending or in process (Brown, 1999; Kalaw, 1999; Coleman, 1999). The original Abbotsford school, King Traditional, founded in 1995, forms the basis of this study.

the debate regarding traditional schools, while largely concluded in those communities where such schools have been operating for some time, has nevertheless persevered somewhat in the popular press and, to a very minor extent, in the educational literature (Brown, 1999; Kalaw, 1999; Coleman, 1999).

Traditional and fundamental schools have had a relatively low impact on the educational fabric of the province. Yet such schools are growing in currency at a time when public educators and teachers' advocacy groups_ such as the British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF) and the local Abbotsford Teachers Association_ are approbating a disparate model of public education (Personal Communication, Wayne Anthony, 1999).

Purpose/The Research Problem

This dissertation seeks to deconstruct and analyze the genesis of King Traditional School in Abbotsford, B.C., with particular emphasis on the socio-cultural ethos of the protagonists and the subsequent constituency of supporters (families) and adherents in the school's formative years. The study was designed to describe and analyze the origins of a school of choice in one community. The research problem, to glean a fuller understanding of the school and the motivational ethos of its founders, may be termed a "phenomenological inquiry" with the explicit understanding that the resulting data will not be generalizable in the sense that they can be applied to other settings and educational environments. Nevertheless, this rather distinct inquiry provides some insights into the creation of a school through the successful lobbying of a group of parents. Indeed, the efficacious campaigning was a tribute to the determination of the parents; however, as will be identified, the transparency of the

motivations, the value of the pedagogical assumptions, and the underlying objectives of the locally elected school board may be debated. This study will identify and scrutinize a number of the salient characteristics of the various constituencies and stakeholders: These include school trustees, school board administrators, the school principal at the time of the school's opening and during its early years, media observers, and, of course, parents.

The politics underpinning the creation of what might be termed a "pioneering initiative" proved to be an important element of this dissertation. The story of this new school, embedded within a public construct, reveals much, not only about the community of Abbotsford, but also about the complexion of the seven-member school board.

A further objective for this study was to evince both the genuine characteristics of a traditional or fundamental school_ as revealed at King Traditional_ and the "cosmetic" or more specious aspects of such a school. This was an important concern because it goes to the very heart of traditional and fundamental schools and their supposed mandates. A detailed description of the school will be provided in a chapter dedicated to revealing both the subtle and manifest characteristics of King Traditional.

The Research Questions

While King Traditional is a unique institution, the study addresses questions that also may relate more broadly to similar schools in other districts.

What motivated the parents to lobby for a traditional school?

What factors resulted in the relatively swift approval of the school by the School Board of the day?

To what extent was the approval for King Traditional based upon the socio-religious commonalities, if any, between the proponents and the school board members?

To what extent did the community discourse and culture influence the process and ultimate decision?

How will an enhanced understanding of the drive to inaugurate such a school assist in providing a broader perspective on the role of parents in public education?

Given the apparent popularity of the school_ as evidenced by long waiting lists (Beyak, 2001)_ can a reasoned case be made for a public school based predominantly upon style and, in the views of some, a semblance of exclusion? Or, to put it another way, can adherents make tenable arguments in support of such a school in such a way that they do not extenuate the bases for public education?

Are there theoretical bases which affirm the efforts of the parents to create a traditional school; is there educational scholarship which demonstrates that such a school can achieve success notwithstanding its rejection of a number of contemporary educational premises?

Methodological Practice and Research Design

Using case study methodology, qualitative research can provide an understanding of why and how something occurs. My intent is to provide such an understanding of the creation of King Traditional School. There are many factors leading up to the School Board's favorable decision, and the subsequent, and remarkably expeditious, establishment of the school. While case studies may

be quantitative, they are more often qualitative, where "researchers are interested in insight, discovery, and interpretations rather than hypothesis testing" (Merriam, 1980, p. 10). The two foremost sources are documentary evidence and accounts by those involved in the decision-making and implementation process and by observers of the process. These are noted below:

Document Analysis

⟨ *Newspaper accounts:* As an issue with public (political) involvement, the lobbying for, debate about, and consequent approval of the school was of interest to both local newspapers, the *Times* and the *News*. Journalists with education beats provided coverage which attempted to explain many of the controversies to the local populace.

⟨ *Records of meetings:* The minutes of the Abbotsford school board, the committee set up by the school board to study the issue and the Abbotsford Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), and notes from the original parent (lobbying) committee provide useful documentary evidence of both the formal actions taken by official bodies and the informal initiatives pursued by advocates.

⟨ *School Documents:* Studies, the accreditation report, promotional pieces, newsletters, brochures, flyers, and other printed documents provide useful insights into the school.

⟨ *School District Documents:* In addition to the minutes of the School Board noted above, district documents relating to the proposal for the school, staff reports, and other miscellaneous documents reveal useful insights.

⟨ *Langley Fundamental School Documents:* As the seminal archetypical B.C. fundamental school which, in many ways, "blazed the trail" for King Traditional,

the documents located, including many columns and articles written by journalists, meeting notes and other printed items, identify some important themes that constitute the basic inspiration for King Traditional.

Interviews with Key Informants

While the documents provide a sufficiently unambiguous chronology of events, and represent the parameters of a particular decision, they do not fully explain personal motives or the underlying factors that influenced events. Therefore, a range of formal interviews were conducted. These interviews were approved by the Simon Fraser University Ethics Review Committee, and permission was also given to seek the interviewees' consent to use the data for this dissertation.

"Key informants" were essentially classified into two categories: those who have been intimately and actively involved in the decision-making process, which Merriam (1980) might call "elite" informants, and those who were positioned to know what transpired even if they were not directly involved. While the first group was less reliable with regard to determining their motives, and perhaps actions, the second group, by offering a different perception of the same actions and events, added balance. Although there were considerable challenges in securing an adequate number of parents to interview_ an issue which will be identified in a particular chapter_ nonetheless those parents who were willing to be interviewed contributed valuable insights into the school and its socio-cultural ethos. Their comments helped provide an understanding of what drives parents to select King Traditional for their children's schooling in

spite of the inconvenience of waiting continuously in line, sometimes for up to five days.

As well, I interviewed all school trustees on the School District #34 (Abbotsford) board, the superintendent, the assistant superintendent (who was initially responsible for the King Traditional implementation), and a number of observers of the educational ethos in the community, including representatives of the Abbotsford Teachers Association and principals in non-traditional schools.

Confidentiality: Given the relative uniqueness of King Traditional, and its profile in the community, any attempt to disguise the identity of the individuals involved seems futile, and, indeed, unnecessary. Much of the core narrative_ the chronology of what occurred and to whom_ has been constructed from stories in the popular press and from public statements made at the time. As well, it should be noted that participants, without exception, did not prevaricate or indicate a desire to offer their personal views on a confidential basis; the entire enterprise was marked with transparency and cooperation.

Bias and indications of partiality: Merriam (1980) and Stake (1991), for example, both acknowledge the role of bias in the writing (on behalf of the researcher) and in the reading. Notwithstanding the consequential reservations that may be felt in light of bias as it relates to my research, I have aspired to be as dispassionate as possible through the following means: I have approached the material without any direct association with the School District or the school, although I am a resident of Abbotsford and have some familiarity with the community. As well, I have attempted to reproduce the interview information without editing or abridgement: For the most part, the comments stand alone.

Certainly, in the case of the documents, which form a core element of this study, the material is allowed to "speak for itself," to be read in context, and with minimal expurgation. I hope the overall validity of the research will be demonstrated as the case study "makes sense of the material" for the reader, and contributes some genuinely useful (phenomenological) insights.

The Outline

This dissertation was organized into eight chapters, which will provide a largely chronological account of King Traditional School, emphasizing the year leading up to the school's opening_ which included the successful lobbying by proponents_ and the three years following the school's approval and establishment in 1995.

Chapter One, the introduction, has set the stage for the study, detailing the purpose, the case for the study, and the expected contribution to the field of education.

Chapter Two lays the groundwork for "choice" and, among other matters, details the three key reports that studied education in British Columbia.

Chapter Three, the literature view, provides useful insights into the paucity of research into traditional and fundamental schools. Comprehensive search techniques, especially the ERIC system, revealed some useful sources, most of which were funded by agencies with ideological views on traditional schooling. There is only a passing academic interest in traditional and fundamental schools. As well, I review the "triad" model (the interaction of parent-teacher-student) in the relevant literature to increase understanding of the school and its active parental involvement. I also detail some of the

contemporary discussion on "student-centered" versus "teacher-centered" pedagogical perspectives, in light of the school's less progressive approach to student learning.

Chapters Four and Five describe the "genealogy" of the school, including the genesis of the idea in Pasadena, California, and its subsequent crossing of the Canadian border into Langley School District, which ultimately led to the inauguration of King Traditional School in 1995.

Chapter Six describes the origins of King Traditional from the "spark" of a letter to the editor in a local Abbotsford newspaper, which coalesced into a formal initiative by five motivated parents. The chapter then chronicles the lobbying by parents, the culture of the school board, its expeditious approval of the school, the recruitment of the principal, the selection of a school site, the setting of a budget, and the public controversies which ensued. Original documents, including the school's original mission statement, are significant to this chapter.

Chapter Seven continues the chronological theme, examining the first three years, which might be termed the formative years, following the opening of the school. The chapter highlights some significant public interest issues and decisions that were debated in the local media at this time and the considerable role played by the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) in the continuing life of the school. This chapter concludes with the official accreditation of the school, a very significant time in the life of King Traditional. The analysis is based on the accreditation documents and other original documents.

Chapter Eight links the historical explication of the school's genesis and growth with some of the more profound questions that deal with the supporters'

portrayal of King as a "traditional school." What does this mean? Is it a private school, as some critics have suggested? Are the differences from neighborhood public schools merely cosmetic? Are teachers supportive of the ethos or merely selected because of their district seniority?

Chapter Nine, the conclusion, summarizes the purposes and themes of the dissertation. It considers the role parents have in a free society and their claims for input into their children's public education, against the legitimate mandate of school boards to provide for the general good of the overall school community. Given the current interest in schools of choice, and the rather aggressive competition of local private schools, particularly in Abbotsford, which, of all B.C. school districts, has the largest per capita number of students_ 17 per cent_ enrolled in independent schools, this is an important matter.

Chapter Ten recommends further study which may enhance understanding of traditional and fundamental schools in their context within the shifting landscape of British Columbia's public educational discourse.

Chapter Two

The Currency of Choice: Establishing the Substructure for a Parent-Initiated School

Public education in Canada and, more specifically, in British Columbia, has undergone an incremental but extremely significant transformation since its inception in the mid-1800s and, even more dramatically, in the last thirty years. In this chapter, I will provide an abbreviated review of some of the more salient historical themes that underpin the current growing inclination toward “choice” as a desirable component of the educational system. It would be fair to suggest that “choice” – the availability of options – seems in most circumstances to be desirable; indeed it is often associated with empowerment and the capacity to freely and thoughtfully follow one’s preferences. Nonetheless, the trend toward specialized programs or schools of choice – as advanced by some parents – may represent a decline in the public’s confidence in public education, and may indeed foreshadow further challenges to public education in general.

Studies of education in British Columbia have normally been regarded as positive initiatives which have resulted in significant popular discourse. I will focus briefly on three reports: The Putnam-Weir Report, the Chant Report, and the Report on the Royal Commission on Education (which led to the government’s Year 2000 initiative).

The Putnam-Weir Report

Although it was not a formally constituted Royal Commission, the Putnam-Weir study – which was submitted to the Government in 1925 – was regarded as “the most thorough examination of any school system in Canada” to that point (Johnson, 1964, p. 102). Of particular significance were proposals for curricular revisions with regard to civics, Canadian and BC history, oral arithmetic and some other subjects. The report acknowledged the influence of a “large number of ratepayers” (p. 103) and noted, “The report therefore recommends that educators and laymen, too, should study ‘modern education objectives, especially as to determining curricula and methods of instruction’” (p. 104). The report’s recommendations took over a decade to be fully implemented, and by then Dr. Weir, one of the report’s authors, had moved from academic life to become the Minister of Education (p. 113). The report raised the profile of education in the province and, because it was initially proposed by the BC Teachers’ Federation, alerted the government and the public to some of the challenges faced by educators, especially in the rural areas of the province which, in many cases, had ungraded schools with unique demands (p. 105).

The Chant Report

The Chant Report was produced by a Royal Commission, and was a more extensive study than the Putnam-Weir report some 20 years earlier. It was announced in the midst of a public discourse which seemed to make education a “target of disturbing criticism” (p. 255). One book that had apparently prompted much of the concern, *So Little for the Mind*, was a widely read and much-quoted critique of “progressive” educational philosophy. The author, Hilda Neatby,

although not an educational theorist, was a professor at the University of Saskatchewan.

As a “cold war” document, in the sense that it was a response to the so-called “Sputnik Crisis,” Neatby’s book lamented what she saw as a reliance on progressivism and presented a rather nostalgic appeal for a return to education with “values.” She said, “We have become a rootless and faithless society” (Neatby, 1953, p. 326), and argued for “a re-direction of education” to include an emphasis on “religious exercise and moral instruction” (p. 330). Although she did not employ the cliché “back to the basics,” she nevertheless stressed the value of mathematics and English proficiency, and referred to what she called “illiteracy in elementary and secondary schools” (p. 156). (This censure may be regarded as a canonical banner for many critics of public education, whatever the era.) As well, the matter of “guidance” as a classroom subject was canvassed within the context of values and the role of parents. She seemed to have some sympathy with those parents who worried that the values of the family might not be affirmed by the guidance curriculum, which was said to represent a “systematic invasion of private life” (p. 210). With regard to communication from the school to the parent – which received relatively little attention in the book – Neatby asserted that parents have the right to request transparent reporting of the child’s progress and to be permitted to take an active interest in the child’s education. She wryly noted, “The parent is supposed to resemble the negligent reptile who deposits her eggs in the sun and leaves nature to do the rest” (p. 218). Her overall concern that there was no national educational policy – given the provinces’ exclusive control of education under the constitution – was a recurring and pervasive lament in her writing.

With regard to the Chant Report itself, it affirmed religious instruction – including the Lord’s Prayer and daily Bible reading. And, perhaps as a response to the critics that suggested that the province’s education was being influenced by US progressivism, the report writers “favored the use of competition with discretion to obtain more effective application on the part of the pupil” (Johnson, 1964, p. 264). In addition, possibly as a retort to the public concern which in part had precipitated the study, the writers recommended “more frequent external examinations, more uniform standards of grading, the elimination of incompetent teachers, the more careful selection of principals, and the placing of more stress on the basic subjects in the secondary curriculum”(p. 264). Perhaps surprisingly, given the contemporary almost obligatory rancor between the government – of whatever persuasion – and the British Columbia Teachers’ Federation, there was a rather high level of consensus in favor of this report registered by the government, the Official Opposition, the media, and even the teachers’ union.

The Royal Commission on Education

The third and last report that I will examine is the Royal Commission on Education (1988), more commonly known as the Sullivan Report and named after Barry Sullivan, the lawyer selected by the Government of the day to study the state of education in British Columbia. This report would elicit a great deal of public dialogue and would form the basis of the “Year 2000” plan, which would subsequently become government policy.

The commission, which visited 89 communities and held 66 public hearings, had as one of its objectives finding the “means available for public and

teacher input" (Report on the Royal Commission on Education, 1987-88, p. 3). And, perhaps, as an indicator of the changing social ethos and attitude to education, the report noted that it was "evident in the course of the hearings that there was a considerable public appetite, especially on the part of parents, for participation in local school affairs" (p. 10). Further, as "consumers" of education, parents were acknowledged as key players in the enterprise: "It was difficult not to be impressed by the sophisticated perspectives brought to this issue, the public's knowledge of schools, and their commitment to be part of something they felt to have an important influence on children's lives" (p.10). Also, the public's insistence that more decision-making be withdrawn from the Ministry of Education in favor of school boards was stressed. Sullivan said in the report that he was "persuaded that certain aspects of educational decision-making should be entrusted to the local level where accountability for such decisions can be rendered more directly" (p. 10-11).

As for "choice," which should be considered a corollary of increased parental involvement and empowerment, the report was not at all equivocal: "Along with diversity and access, people also spoke about choice in schooling" (p. 11). The report continued, "Choice is expressed as a fundamental democratic right, especially as it concerned the primacy of parental over state rights in children's education. Many who appeared before the commission argued for greater choice and variety in schooling as a means of recognizing individual differences among youngsters, as well as acknowledging parental rights to select the academic, social and moral atmosphere of schools in accordance with their own philosophical beliefs and values" (p. 11). In a subsequent scholarly article dealing with the Commission's findings, one of the professors who served as an

advisor observed, “No expression of public sentiment has larger implications for the schools of the future, and no other theme expressed to the commission had any greater impact than this call for choice” (Fleming, 1990, p. 11).

The report affirmed the essential component of parental involvement and also seemed to anticipate the momentum which would find its ultimate expression in the creation of parent-initiated schools such as King Traditional.

Related to this matter was the “politics” of locally-elected school boards, which were endorsed by the Commission. The report also affirmed the PAC (Parental Advisory Committee) model and recommended a more systematic approach to incorporating parental input in the various school districts (p. 188).

In addition to the report itself, there were a number of “commissioned papers.” Volume one (of eight) also addressed some of these issues. In particular, a section on “the community school” spoke to the need for diversity in schooling and the opportunity to meet a variety of educational and social needs in the local school setting. Schooling options – such as Montessori and French Immersion – could also be addressed at such schools (Commissioned Papers, Volume One, Calam & Fleming, 1988). The authors believed schools that were more embedded in their communities would “provide excellent chances for sustained participatory democracy at a time when for so many the mass media have rendered government as conveniently remote, and when even attending PTA or school board meetings and lobbying on particular issues can prove (to be) a sporadic and disjointed engagement” (p. 43).

As an aside, and in closing this section on the three most significant reports on education in BC, it should be noted that governments seem to have a continuing appetite for researching and canvassing the public’s views on

education. In fact, as an example, just three years prior to the appointment of the Sullivan Commission, the government issued a series of discussion papers, "Let's Talk About Schools." A committee, made up of a variety of school board officials, trustees and academics, also canvassed the opinions of the public and "educational professionals," albeit on a much more limited scale (1985, p. 3). Perhaps the most salient aspect of these discussion papers related to school-community relations and invited public comment on the following question: "To what extent should parents and other members of the community be involved with schools, and to what extent should schools be involved in the life of the community?" (p. 14). This question would be heralded in the subsequent "Sullivan Report," and its poignancy would be affirmed by the considerable interest articulated by parents and others (Martin and MacPherson, 1993).

Devolving Control to Locally-Elected School Boards

The ongoing tensions between the provincial government – through the Ministry of Education – and the locally-elected school boards was a significant indicator of the growing independence of trustees and parents as the province devolved greater control. In this section, I will briefly detail the events that led to the burgeoning autonomy of school districts (which would permit the independent approval of schools such as King Traditional, for example) and elaborate on the provincial government's incremental withdrawal from its conventional role in education.

Questions regarding educational funding and concern about educational test scores prompted new levels of accountability in the 1970s. Expenditures on education increased rapidly at this time to equal nearly 29 per cent of the

provincial government's total expenditures, in contrast with 15 per cent 20 years before (Fleming, 1991, p. 193). As the national economy declined in the 1980s, cutbacks were required in all provinces – including British Columbia – and many observers felt that there was “no sense of social vision, no idea of human progress that is shared by scholars, government officials, elected representatives, or among the public” (p. 194). It would seem that with the reductions in expenditures for education, there arose a relatively new phenomenon: a challenge to professional control of schooling and the sense “that the public is no longer prepared to cede authority for decision and policy-making in schooling to educational professionals, as it has for much of public school history” (p. 194).

At about the same time, a major policy initiative was underway in the Ministry of Education which would ultimately have significant impact on the autonomy and local decision-making authority of school boards. The appointment of the superintendent had traditionally been the exclusive purview of the Province, and, with one exception, that had remained the policy right up to the 1970s (Fleming, 1989). However, in 1972, shortly after its election, the new NDP government moved in the direction of devolving more authority to local school boards; two years after assuming power, it introduced legislation to allow the province's seven largest school districts to recruit their own superintendents (p. 65). Six years later, with the return to power of the Social Credit Party – the NDP were defeated in 1975 – the new government introduced legislation which would allow all but the smallest school districts (those with less than 250 pupils) to also hire their own superintendents (p. 67). With this change, a significant obstacle had been removed. No longer would the superintendent be housed in the school boards' offices but be accountable to provincial authorities in Victoria.

It was the official abandonment of the “British Colonial system of district officers reporting to headquarters” (p. 68). Trustees, then, would be regarded as the board in charge of schools, and the superintendent would now aspire to serve local wishes and aspirations.

Public Confidence and the Popular Press

Paralleling this trend toward greater public participation in educational decision-making was the apparent decrease in the public’s confidence in public education in general. National surveys in the 1990s, such as Gallup polls, which are supposedly statistically reliable, appeared to demonstrate a decline in public support for education (Guppy and Davies, 1999, p. 268). More specifically, when the question was asked, “On the whole, would you say you are satisfied or dissatisfied with the education children are getting today?”, the level of dissatisfaction rose from 45 per cent in 1973 to 62 per cent in 1992 (p. 269). This troubling development was offset to some extent by the fact that during this same period confidence in other “establishment institutions,” such as courts, churches, newspapers and trade unions, also declined (pp. 274-75). It is somewhat encouraging to note that, in fact, “the confidence Canadians have in educational institutions is higher than either churches or their central economic enterprises” (Livingstone and Hart, 2000, p. 31). Nonetheless, given the desire for more active participation by parents, and the pervasive criticism of the public education system, it would seem that there were some legitimate concerns represented by these responses.

The “popular press,” in particular, has been often critical of public education, and many writers and columnists have assumed the role of the

“conscience” of the public. Some educational scholars such as the University of Victoria’s Thomas Fleming have also entered the debate by contributing articles to newspaper “op ed” pages. For example, in an article titled “Educational reform stuck in gridlock,” Fleming asserted that more choice in education could be a solution to counteract what he called “inertia” (Fleming, 1999). He also opined that schools would need to make significant adjustments in curriculum delivery and perhaps rely more on private sector involvement to maintain their relevance (p. A11).

Perhaps the best-known critic of education with a national forum would be Andrew Nikiforuk (1992), a former teacher, who writes fairly regularly on related matters in his *Globe and Mail* newspaper column, “Fifth Column.” In general, he tends to disparage the educational bureaucracy and the reliance on professional educators over the wisdom of the public and parents.

For example, Nikiforuk explicated an issue at the Lakewood Board of Education in Ontario in which a school trustee and former area teacher had requested greater accountability, standardized tests and better marking standards. According to Nikiforuk, the trustee met with considerable opposition from the educational establishment, who were offended by her intrusion into their area of responsibility (Nikoforuk, 1991, September 27). In another case, he was censorious of the International Reading Association’s ideological commitment to whole language and its resistance to any other approaches. He reported on a professor, a cognitive psychologist, who favored a greater emphasis on phonics, and the resulting conflict that ensued between her and the association. Nikiforuk admired her tenacity and believed she reflected a “shining intelligence and love of children” (Nikiforuk, 1992, February 7). In another

article, Nikiforuk drew upon American experience, reporting on the book, *In the true and only Heaven* by social historian Christopher Leach, which argued for greater parental involvement in education: "Mr. Leach, along with millions of parents, believes that public education should graduate a community of informed and self-governing citizens rather than a body of narcissistic individuals who have been taught to feel great even though they can't read, write or compute" (Nikoforuk, 1992, March 6). Perhaps the most salient point made in the article – as far as the topic of "choice" is concerned – was the following: "Mr. Leach hopes that parent-teacher alliances and perhaps even school choice on an experimental basis will all play roles in the great populist crusade to restore order and direction to the public education system" (p. A18).

Jeffrey Simpson, another *Globe and Mail* columnist, has also focused on educational issues. I will briefly summarize two of his articles here. In a piece called "No time to waste in restoring common sense to our education system," he lamented that there was no national approach to education and blamed what he called "bureaucracies and teachers unions" for a system which lacked accountability and defined learning objectives (Simpson, 1991, May 15). In a reference to the US experience, he noted, "There's a growing sense that schools have somehow lost the ability to measure, test and analyze students' progress" (p. A16). In another article, "Only one way to avoid giving Canada's education system a failing grade," he said, "Canadians should fight with everything they command to enhance the public education system, the lynchpin of a meritocratic society. But once parents, and through them, society, lose faith in the school's ability to measure achievement, and to insist upon it if it is lacking, then the system will decline; and so, inevitably, will the country" (p. A18). He regarded

educational leaders with suspicion and urged Canadians to appeal for a national approach to education standards, which, he said, was the case in most other industrialized countries.

Provincial Funding of Independent Schools

“Choice,” of course, is not restricted to the public system, and I will now provide an abbreviated overview of the implications of government policy with regard to private or independent schools (as they are known in British Columbia). Parents essentially have three schooling options: public, private or home schooling. Although there is an additional expense for parents to select the private option, there are provincial grants provided to private schools which reduce the cost. In the case of Abbotsford School District – where 17 per cent of the total school population attends independent schools (personal communication, Robin Arden, 1999) – independent schools are a significant factor. There are four large private schools, one of which, MEI (Mennonite Educational Institute), enrolls approximately 1800 students in grades K-12.

Independent schools in British Columbia up until 1977 received no systematic government aid other than some concessions for transportation and health services (Downey, 1986). Through some consistent lobbying and the apparent acceptance by the general public that independent schools deserved some financial consideration, the government began providing operating funding for independent schools at the rate of 30 per cent in 1977 (p. 324). Subsequent NDP governments continued this approach, and, more recently, the funding was raised to 50 per cent.

In providing half of the operating funding to independent schools, BC governments are affirming choice outside the public school setting; and, although parents and other supporters of a particular school must provide substantial funds for capital needs (primarily the buildings), the fees can be kept much lower as a result of this reliable funding from the provincial government. As an aside, it should be noted that public school systems such as the one in Abbotsford must respond to the competition of such private schools. Attractive programs (such as fine arts) and traditional schools mitigate the advances of the independent schools, which appeal to those families with a congruency of values (normally based upon religion).

Increased Choice in the Public System

Paralleling somewhat the devolution of some of the provincial authority for education to the local school districts was the increased emphasis on “site-based” management of the individual school, as well as the enhanced role of the principal. With the rise of trustees who might be associated with “single issues” or “special interest” constituencies (Fleming, 1989, p. 73), schools are increasingly becoming a focal point for these interests. Reform, then, may find its focus in schools as communities – not in conventional schools but in schools “close to the workplace to allow a much greater spectrum of people greater access to education” (Fleming, 2002b, p. 26). Principals, as managers of these sites, may be in a better position to facilitate services tailored to the specific community. The local school in this model reflects the leader’s personality and compassion and humor, which places a “human face” on the provision of education to children (Fleming, 2002a, p. 9). Given the trend toward “choice” in the public system, it

would seem that further devolution of power to the individual school and the individual principal may enhance the opportunities for parental involvement and caring accountability.

The abandonment of conventional catchment areas by such school districts as Abbotsford and Langley has further enhanced the paradigm of choice within the public system. Although it is beyond the realm of this study, the provincial Ministry of Education has recently implemented an approach which will eliminate catchment areas province-wide and permit students, room permitting, to attend any school of their choice providing they can arrange the transportation. This will significantly increase the availability of schooling options for those parents who wish to “shop around” and determine the best school for their needs. Such a “consumer model” may create demands on principals – and teachers – to effectively “sell” their school, which may not necessarily correlate with sound educational practice; nonetheless, it seems apparent that such an approach would likely be attractive to many parents.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have observed that the momentum for “choice” has created an environment which facilitates parent-initiated schools such as King Traditional. Frequent criticism of public education in the media and an apparent general climate of declining satisfaction with public schools have also created a willingness to try something new. Provincial governments have devolved much of their authority for the administration of education to locally-elected school boards over the years – including the appointment of the superintendent – and this has allowed boards to operate with considerable autonomy.

With the passing of true “catchment area” schools and the continuing financial support for independent schools, the stage is set for “choice” to continue as a significant component of the province’s educational system.

Chapter Three

The Paucity of Research: Accounting for the Relative Lack of Scholarly Inquiry

The Literature Review

Choice, as a hallmark of a consumer-based society, is also very much found in contemporary education with "schools of choice" becoming a significant factor for parents who wish to "shop around" for what they believe is the best educational environment for their children. And, although "choice" is a positive word because it implies options and the application of research to make an informed decision, this ideal of choice may not necessarily be practiced in the selection of an appropriate school, public or otherwise. Schools of choice, nevertheless, are increasing in popularity especially in Abbotsford School District_ perhaps because they give parents a sense of ownership of their children's education without having to pay the fees that are required from independent schools. Compared to other school districts in the province, Abbotsford has a higher percentage of students attending independent schools_ 17 per cent_ and the largest number of students in the public system attending schools of choice (Personal Communication, Robin Arden, Superintendent, 2002).

Such studies as *Choices in Public Education* (Young and Clinchy, 1992) and *The Choices Parents Make* (Petronio, 1996), among others, deal with the broad issues of choice (within an American context).

In British Columbia, the educational options for parents continue to grow and, to some extent, this trend is being reinforced by the Ministry. Some of the Ministry's literature (Ministry of Education, Promotional Brochure, 1999) encourages parents to consider the varied programs_ which is an acknowledgement of the inroads independent schools are making in some districts.

I will briefly summarize some component approaches to so-called "schools of choice" in general terms in order to provide an overview of their contribution to the discussion.

Charter schools, only found in Canada in Alberta at this point_ although they are being used in various iterations in over twenty US states_ (Kalaw, 1999), are public schools with some unique twists. While they are publicly funded, they are quite autonomous, and accountability to the local school board may be virtually non-existent. Instead, a school committee, which perhaps might be considered a "Grand Parent Advisory Committee" (PAC), operates the school and might even attend to such areas as budget and staff recruitment.

Closely connected to charter schools are "voucher schools" which are often advanced by those parents who select independent schools for their children's education. In simple terms, the voucher, which is issued by an educational authority, provides a form of credit which can be applied to any school, public or independent. Although voucher schools are not even being contemplated in British Columbia, there are frequently attempts by independent school advocates to place it on the public agenda. Their view that they essentially pay twice for their children's education_ once through their local school taxes and once

through fees to their independent school_ has some approbation in certain quarters.

Schools of choice can sometimes offer the benefit of increased parental involvement, and it is important to acknowledge the profound significance of their support for their children's education. As a part of the literature review, it should be noted that there is considerable significance to the "triad" (the cooperative aggregation of the parent, teacher and child) and, indeed, it should be emphasized that for many, if not most educational scholars, it is the parent's active involvement in the life of their children's education that is the paramount indicator of student success. Well-developed home-school partnerships (Swap, 1993, Cunningham & Mitchell, 1990, Coleman, 1999, Dean, 2000) are of such importance that, within the context of traditional schools, and King Traditional more specifically, it would not be unreasonable to suggest that the enthusiastic support of parents may be more significant in accounting for King Traditional's apparent academic successes than the school's somewhat unique approach to discipline, respect and instruction. Perhaps it would be fair to say that a positive by-product of the current choice debate is the empowering of fervid parents to take a genuine interest in the educational experience of their children.

Independent schools continue to experience growth in British Columbia, and, in fact, for the first time, there are now more students enrolled in independent schools than in Surrey, the province's largest public school district (Ministry of Education website). As smaller, often more intimate educational environments with, in many instances, a prevailing ethos that is religious or ethnically based, independent schools are attractive to families who aspire to a higher level of familiarity among parents, students and teachers. Such commonalities usually

make for a more homogenous student population which may limit tolerance and empathy towards those students and families not represented in the school community.

The "triad," notwithstanding its obvious benefits to the culture of a school_ which sustains and nurtures a cooperative atmosphere_ also represents a tangible level of support for the "parent as consumer" and affirms the parent's role as more than a passive bystander to their children's education.

Specific Studies

With regard to specific scholarly studies done of traditional and fundamental schools in British Columbia, I will now outline the nature and approach of seven such studies. I will then comment on what I believe are problematic areas_ limitations to their value_ and then enumerate two sets of reasons that I believe, in part, account for these limitations. The first set will deal with particular issues that are found in the studies themselves, while the second set will be more summative and more general, providing six points which may account for the dearth of study of such schools.

The six studies are as follows:

1. "A Study of Traditional Schools in BC_ In the Name of choice" (Kalaw, McLaren, Rhenby, 1998).
2. "Traditional Schooling as Parents' Rights Movement in BC" (Kalaw, 1999).
3. "The Pressure for Choice" (Coleman, 1999).
4. "The Impact of Parental Choice on Three Canadian Public Schools" (Brown, 1999).
5. "A Study of King Traditional Elementary School" (Jensen, 1999).
6. "A Study of King Traditional School" (Bigh, 1999).

In addition, there is a seventh paper, "A Visit to King Traditional Elementary School" (1999), also by Dan Brown. It is a brief, informal essay_ which even cites two poems_ but is essentially a component of the longer study, "The Impact of Parental Choice on Three Canadian Public Schools," noted above, so I will only reference it in passing.

The organization of the discussion of these papers is deliberate; the reasons for the "clustering" will become apparent in the section that deals with the limitations of these studies.

The first paper, "A Study of Traditional Schools in BC" was written by an SFU professor, Arlene McLaren, an SFU graduate student, Ceclia Kalaw, and a freelance writer, Nadene Rehnby. The basic thesis of this paper is that such schools put private interests_ those of the particular group of parents_ ahead of what they term the "public good." They express some frustration with the apparent obstructions they experienced as they attempted to carry out their research and also single out what they call "neo-conservatives" who are critical of the public education system in general. They believe "the leadership of politically active Christian fundamentalists" will limit pluralism and equity, which they characterize as the heart of public education. They also are of the view that traditional and fundamental schools_ including King Traditional_ with their first come/first served admission procedure "will favor upper socio-economic and philosophically conservative families." They seem to contest such schools because of their political underpinnings rather than any contribution they may make to curricula or pedagogy.

The second study, "Traditional Schooling as Parents' Rights Movement in British Columbia," (1999) is written by one the authors of the previous paper.

This paper is by far the most rigorous and, indeed, could be characterized more accurately as "authentic academic research" than the others. This may, in part, be explained by the fact that this paper is a dissertation for a Master of Arts degree in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University. The other papers are written more anecdotally and make ideological assumptions which will be elucidated later in this chapter. Kalaw, notwithstanding her apparent predilections in the paper she has written with two others, as noted above, attempts to provide an overview of some BC traditional schools. While it would be a dramatic overstatement to contend that she is dispassionate in her views_ in particular with regard to her discomfort with competition and differentiation among public schools and her belief that supporters of traditional schools challenge teachers' unions_ she nevertheless provides some thoughtful, if not ideologically weighted reflections on traditional schooling.

The next two papers, published by the Society of the Advancement of Excellence in Education, were both written by educational scholars who were, at the time, faculty members at the University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University respectively.

"The Pressure for Choice" (1998), was written by Peter Coleman, who was a professor of education at Simon Fraser University. The overall theme of "choice" pervades much of his treatise, and he advances the view that proposals for traditional schools "represent a challenge to public policymakers" (p. vii). As well, he seems to endorse traditional (and fundamental) schools, not necessarily because they represent a unique pedagogical approach to education or because they supposedly respond to articulated public demands, but largely because they represent choice as an eminent ideal. Choice is seen as desirable, not purely for

its own sake but also because it is one way to mobilize parents to become more involved in education in general, but more specifically, in the education of their own children (p. 42).

"The Impact of Parental Choice on Three Canadian Public Schools" (1999b) was written by Dan Brown, also a professor of education. His criteria for selecting the three schools are unclear, although they are geographically homogeneous: Two are located in Langley, and one_ King Traditional_ is located in nearby Abbotsford. All three schools are "alternative schools," as he calls them (p. 1), and he reveals a high level of support for such schools. The fundamental question, "Does parental choice make a difference?" was at the heart of his inquiry. He also argues that the popularity of the schools as manifested by the long line for registration is an indicator that they are meeting a demand. The report acknowledges that the two schools which were initiated and established through the efforts of parents_ Langley Fundamental and King Traditional_ were seen to be controversial because they were originated by "popular demand," while Topham, an alternative school initiated by a Langley school district principal, "attracted very little negative attention" (p. 95). As well, he allows that, "the two traditional schools were formed partly as a reaction against what were considered to be less effective 'progressive' teaching methods. Originating from parental demand, they faced some challenges in the school community at large, although the concept of alternative choices was supported at the district level" (p. 2). All three alternative schools had commonalities which Brown enumerates. Some of the more noteworthy ones are as follows: 1) policies and practices are highly consistent; 2) student achievement is at a high level, particularly for the traditional schools, relative to others in their districts; 3)

levels of student and parent satisfaction are strong; 4) they all benefit from a high level of parental involvement; and, 5) both Langley Fundamental and King Traditional attract families with a lower income and lower occupational level than their counterparts in the respective school districts (pp. 91-98).

The three other studies, "A Study of King Traditional Elementary School" (Jensen, 1999), "A Study of King Traditional School" (Bigh, 1999) and "A Visit to King Traditional Elementary School" (Brown, 1999), provide some interesting insights into King Traditional School but are all relatively brief, in particular the third paper by Dan Brown who, in eight pages, offers a few anecdotal observations on the school and how the school operates; he also makes a number of recommendations which were subsequently communicated to the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education. The two papers by Bigh and Jensen were written as assignments for Dan Brown in a Master of Education program at UBC. Bigh's paper enumerates such areas as uniforms, student discipline and the consistent delivery of instruction as examples of why the school is apparently performing well. He recommends a lottery system for registration be employed rather than requiring parents to line up, and even "camp out" during inclement weather over many days, to ensure a place for their children. Jensen's paper is 62 pages, the longest of this group, and her emphasis is on the "social capital" of parental involvement. She provides some useful information into the start-up of King Traditional and some of the "tensions" along the way. Her paper reveals some of the dissatisfaction that led to the creation of the school, and how the cadre of parents was able to generate support from school trustees. This paper includes some salutary information that is important to an understanding of

some of the ethos of adherents in the year the school was approved and subsequently enrolled students.

I would now like to provide an analysis of the limitations of these studies, followed by what I see as the reasons for the limitations. Also, given the dearth of scholarly studies on such schools, I will follow with a list of six points which attempts to offer an inventory of reasons why scholars have tended not to study British Columbia traditional and fundamental schools.

Limitations to these Studies

It is important to consider the matter of the ideological biases of the funding or sponsoring agency for the studies. Although all four main studies noted were written by university scholars, only one_ a Master's thesis_ seems to exhibit the necessary scholarship to qualify as an analysis which meets accepted academic principles. The other studies were funded by organizations with particular agendas, and, as a result, cannot be considered impartial scholarship. While it is increasingly becoming accepted that there is not a rigid binary opposition between subjectivity and objectivity, and objectivity may never be fully attainable partly because of the natural interests of the researchers (Eisner & Peshkin, 1990), it is nevertheless important to determine who is "paying the piper." In the case of these three studies, one was funded by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, while the two others were funded by the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education. Who are these organizations, and what are their agendas?

The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) may be regarded as being found on the "left" side of the socio-political spectrum, and the paper, "A

Study of Traditional Schools in BC_ In the Name of 'Choice'," is predominantly critical of the rise of traditional schools in the province and terms them "problematic" in part because they seem to run counter to the pluralism and equity normally associated with the ethos of public schooling (Kalaw, McLaren, Rehnby, 1998, p. 57). This organization is strongly supportive of public education, and the study was commissioned by the BC Teachers' Federation. On the "right" _ and I acknowledge that, like the term "left" it is over simplistic _ is the Kelowna-based Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education. The two studies "The Pressure for Choice" by Peter Coleman, and "The Impact of Parental Choice on Three Canadian Public Schools" by Daniel Brown, are buoyant about what they see as a trend toward schools of choice, and are particularly comfortable with the growth in traditional schools. One study observes that the advantages of "choice" in schools challenges the dominance of educators and teachers' unions (Coleman, 1998), while the other study stresses the positive benefit of parental choice upon school outcomes (Brown, 1999).

If we reflect on the four studies_ in particular, the three funded reports_ and their conclusions and recommendations, it is possible to discern the paradigms which guided the research and discover a measure of furtiveness and an apparent lack of commitment to efficacious scholarship. While it may be conceded that there is a useful amount of empirical/ anecdotal information in these studies, there is nonetheless a manifest disinterest in generally accepted academic precision. Or, to put it more explicitly, the resulting data cannot be assumed to provide an adequate basis for an objective evaluation of traditional schooling in British Columbia.

In order to be respected, research needs to be systematic, and resist any processes such as "guesstimation" and intuition (Tuckman, 1999, p. 12). As well, the idea of objectivity, which is a bedrock proposition of all social science research, is critical to its value. "If other researchers obtain different results with the same measures, we can conclude that there is bias somewhere in the research procedures" (Borg & Gall, 1993, p. 7). Bias can mitigate the credibility of the research; in the form of a "systematic error," it can influence the results and undermine the quality of the research (McMillan & Schumkaer, 1989, p. 158). As an aside, it seems as if a "systematic error" might even be, on occasion, a euphemism for something more guileful.

Should, therefore, an essentially dispassionate observer with a fresh interest in the phenomenon of traditional and fundamental schools approach these reports, what flaws in the research might he discover which would moderate the usefulness of the data and resulting conclusions and recommendations?

The first treatise to be examined, "A Study of Traditional Schools in BC," as noted earlier, was financed in part by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation. To be fair to the researchers, the funding source - and anticipated predilection - dramatically impacted their capacity to adequately obtain even a small sample of interviewees for the primary component of their investigation. They comment, "Our lack of access to the traditional schools required us to shift some of our research questions and research design" (p. 7). School proponents and administrative staff were apparently suspicious of the researchers and did not cooperate by providing opportunities for interviews. Interestingly, the researchers acknowledged that, in the case of the Surrey Traditional School PAC

(Parents' Advisory Committee), there was more sympathy for the report done by professor Dan Brown of UBC, which was funded through an organization which also provides support to the Vancouver-based Fraser Institute, a right wing "think tank." In reacting to this lack of openness for the BCTF-funded research, and the corresponding support for the UBC/Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education study, they note, "For a broad and impartial understanding of public schools, it is necessary that research be undertaken from a variety of perspectives and funding sources" (p. 11). This is a reasonable assertion, given the expected biases; however, one cannot help but have some understanding of the resistance; after all, the CCPA's conclusions were consistent with some public statements made by the British Columbia Teachers' Federation, and they were well aware of the study performed by UBC professor Dan Brown and his associates, and how that study would be more supportive than their own. This, of course, is not a defense of their position because as participants in a public setting, there should be transparency, if at all possible. This is just one illustration of the kind of fragmentation we sometimes see today in education, where increasingly there is isolation amongst the various constituencies, and a parallel breakdown of communication and understanding (Burgess, 1985, p. 268).

Because relatively little research has been done on choice programs in general, and traditional schools in particular, the researchers experienced some difficulty in developing the historical (and theoretical) underpinnings to their inquiry. However, in their attempts to surmount these shortcomings, they focus on predominantly US data. Using anecdotal commentary, the authors refer to the "New Right" which, they say, advocates traditional education with an "explicitly

moral tone." As they comment, "This rhetoric may have originated in the US, but much of it is consumed by Canadians as well" (p. 16).

In considering British Columbia, the authors pay particular attention to the funding provided by the US-based Donner Foundation to causes with a conservative orientation such as traditional schooling. They contend that "traditional schools are inextricably linked, historically and politically, to conservative movements in North America" (p. 21). And, although they do not produce any data for BC, they remark that, "by all accounts, a collaboration of sorts between fundamentalist Christians and neo-conservatives has been central in pushing for a return to 'traditional' education" (p. 19). Such a conclusion may not be especially unforeseen given the ideological values of the authors, and the fact that their study was funded by the BC Teachers' Federation. Nonetheless, with the limited evidence, it is probably a shortcoming which diminishes to some extent the credibility of the report and its resulting conclusions.

On the other hand, had the writers been given greater access to the proponents and School Board officials _ including elected trustees _ for their study, then they likely would have been able to offer more definitive comments on the connections they allege between what they call "fundamentalists and conservative political movements" (p. 21).

The two reports authorized and funded by the Society for the Advancement in Education are supportive of schools of choice, in this case, traditional and fundamental schools. In both instances, the emphasis is on the value of parental commitment, which, they acknowledge, has a beneficial impact on student achievement.

Peter Coleman, in "The Pressure for Choice" advances the view that such schools are desirable because they are often promoted by parents who therefore exhibit a greater interest in the school's accomplishments (p. 42). In general, his analysis is a useful overview of traditional schools, but his underlying paradigm appears to be one of encouragement for these particular schools as a matter of personal value.

The other report, also funded by the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, probably could be accurately characterized as a case study which examines three Lower Mainland alternative public elementary schools. This report is longer than the Coleman study, noted above, and was completed with the assistance of eight graduate students. A case study involves an investigator who makes a detailed examination of a single subject or group or phenomenon (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 403), and this methodologically qualitative study would meet this definition. Another author expresses some caution with the case study approach to research because "the use of observations and unstructured interviewing can lead to a close liaison between those being studied and involvement in the events or issues being researched" (Burgess, 1985, p, 177). Notwithstanding this reservation, there is a large amount of useful information which provides a satisfactory overview of the three schools, two of which are traditional or fundamental.

Brown, like Coleman, stresses the parental advocacy aspect as a critical component to the apparent accomplishment of these schools. He notes, "The evidence gathered suggests strongly that parental choice of public schools makes an important difference in the lives of children, parents and educators" (p. 98). As well, Brown, in his study, believes the provision of parental choice for schools

has increased the enrollment in Langley and Abbotsford school districts, where the fundamental and traditional schools are available as alternatives for elementary children (p. 102). Such schools essentially offer parents a fourth tier of choice beyond the established pattern of neighborhood public, private (independent), and home schooling.

The fourth paper to be considered, "Traditional Schooling as Parents' Rights Movement in BC" by Cecilia Kalaw was apparently completed without funding from any outside agency. Kalaw, nonetheless, was a co-author with Simon Fraser University professor Arlene McLaren, and Nadene Rehnby of the study, "A Study of Traditional Schools in BC" which, as acknowledged earlier, was funded by the BCTF through the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) as "a progressive think tank conducting analyses on social and economic policy," and Kalaw expresses gratitude to her colleagues_ with whom she worked on the CCPA report_ for their assistance with this thesis (pp. 10-11).

Further, as she notes in the CCPA study, "funding from the BCTF proved problematic; while it facilitated access to data and subjects from BC's teaching community, it invariably prohibited access to traditional schooling communities" (p. 18). She adds, thus, the CCPA study was seen to be oppositional to traditional schooling from the start by parents within the movement" (p. 19). One cannot but acknowledge her candor which illuminates a hindrance for research of this type where the ideological biases of the funding agency become of such critical consequence. On the other hand, respective proponents felt comfortable with the Brown and Coleman studies, and were generally open because they presumably anticipated the research and data would be auspicious; at the same time, however, the proponents were leery of the CCPA and Kalaw's dissertation

because they felt the conclusions would be critical of traditional and fundamental school "movement." These proponents, as it turned out were generally accurate in their contentions; however, it is hardly a stellar comment on the respectability of the research, and may call into question the foundational intention of such inquiries.

To summarize Kalaw's thesis, she builds upon her own negative experiences in what she calls "very traditional schooling" at an independent Catholic school, and comments negatively on "the authoritarian culture" of the schooling, which she felt discouraged critical thought and "exposure to other cultural and religious experiences and class experiences other than my own" (p. 20). She worries that, for public schooling in general, greater competition and differentiation among public schools, in particular in the form of traditional and fundamental schools, will make it difficult for educational leaders, including teachers' unions, to strike a balance between democratic ideals and equity in a public school system that is deigned to provide parity for all students, whatever their social standing, family income, or neighborhood of residence.

The level of hostility towards Kalaw and her study had a dramatic impact on the quality of the research. While interviews were just one of the components of her paper, the lack of participation_ which in the case of the Abbotsford School District was endorsed by the Board_ essentially reduced her thesis to an examination of some historical data, and a limited number of primary documents of advocates and opponents (pp. 20-22). In fairness, this was largely beyond Kalaw's control, and she overcame some of the challenges through extensive secondary research and a reliance on literature on education choice, much of which originated in the States.

So, we have seen that four of the most recent analyses of traditional and fundamental schools offer some perplexing conundrums which need to be acknowledged. In some ways, they are political treatises in that they advance a particular viewpoint based upon certain ideological suppositions. That in itself may not necessarily be bothersome; however, because these papers are written either by educational scholars or graduate students in education, there is the assumption that the research will be as dispassionate as possible. While "objective truth" is probably not attainable, at the very least, truth should be pursued (Popper, quoted in Eisner and Peshkin, 1990). As well, educational researchers should not normally play a decisive role in the setting of public goals. As Kegan notes, "Researchers should be very careful in making prescriptions; neither should they play the role of social reformer" (1995, p. 25). The public, therefore, may be expected to receive a level of scholarship that would represent a candid appraisal of the situation along with conclusions and recommendations that directly emanate from this research. "Schools mirror inequities in the surrounding society, and many people want to be sure that they continue to do so" (Goodlad, 1984, p. 161). Or to put it another way, any investigation of schooling, in this case traditional and fundamental schools, may be expected to reveal societal flaws that some parents and adherents are attempting to address through these types of institutions.

Two additional papers have also been written as graduate level projects by UBC students for Dan Brown, who, as noted earlier, is a professor of education. These papers are as follows: "A Study of King Traditional School" by Marea Jensen (April, 1999), and "A Study of King Traditional School" by Ross Bligh (March, 1999). Both papers, though relatively brief, provide some useful

insights into the school and its ethos, and deal with some of the perceived differences between King Traditional and other Abbotsford public schools. A third very short paper, written by Dan Brown, should also be noted here. "A Visit to King Traditional Elementary School" (1999) is a smaller component of the larger paper, noted earlier, which was funded by the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education (September, 1999). This paper details some of his observations, and preliminary results, as he visited the school on a number of occasions to assist with research conducted by UBC graduate students. Interestingly, he offers a number of recommendations relating to such disparate areas such as transportation, plant improvements, and the advantages of producing a promotional video about the school.

To conclude this analysis of the limitations of these studies, it is important to recognize that they do make a significant contribution to a fuller understanding of traditional schools in British Columbia. The research, while relatively anecdotal at times, is nonetheless interesting and phenomenologically beneficial. In particular, Kalaw's M.A. thesis is well researched and is based upon some theoretically sound underpinnings. The two smaller papers, prepared for graduate education courses at UBC, are brief but clearly written and provide some background to the ethos and socio-political culture of King Traditional School that would likely not have otherwise been examined.

In spite of these efficacious points, the value of these studies, to a great extent, must be disputed because of their ideological biases as revealed from their funding agencies. A headline in a popular magazine or newspaper, "Smoking may prevent some illnesses" would immediately be discredited should we read the text of the article only to discover that the study has been sponsored

by the tobacco industry. While this imaginary example is certainly more vivid and more overt, the principle is similar. As well, it is worth noting that Peter Coleman and Dan Brown, were professors at Simon Fraser University and UBC, respectively, at the time: their academic affiliations would_ and do_ give them credibility that would have not otherwise been the case. While, of course, no scholar or his or her work can be regarded to be free from bias, there is the expectation that it is something that should be pursued; in the case of these studies, this assumption cannot be made.

Accounting for the Lack of Study of BC Traditional Schools

I propose to account for the lack of research into traditional schools by enumerating those matters which I believe have inhibited serious study into the phenomena of these schools. This inventory will admittedly be rather anecdotal although my conclusions have been elicited directly from my inquiries into the origins of traditional schools, in particular, King Traditional in Abbotsford, the focus of this dissertation. I have used a variety of research tools such as ERIC, Psych-Info, and hand searched many recent journals of education. This list will also provide a ranking from what I would suggest is the most consequential to the least consequential, based upon on my sense of those issues that are the most noteworthy for the consideration of scholars. No judgment should be inferred, nor is this list intended to be prescriptive or proscriptive; rather, it is offered as a way to elucidate the lack of inquiry into traditional (and fundamental) schools.

First, it would appear that such schools offer what may be termed a threat to the current system of education and the manner in which decisions are made in educational settings. Scholars who may identify with teachers or who have

personal career origins in the classroom may not be expected to be sympathetic to schools that have been established through the initiative of parents. As well, and perhaps more importantly, these schools can be seen as a response to the status quo, which, in effect, is a censure of the current sentiments regarding public education. While scholars_ who are mostly situated in university facilities which provide the training for future teachers_ will surely wish to provide a dispassionate and rigorous approach to their studies, it would not be unanticipated to observe that such scholars would see these kinds of studies to be inconsistent with the current ethos in the educational community.

Second, unlike some other contemporary institutions of choice that may be grounded in accepted public educational approaches_ such as Montessori, French Immersion and fine arts schools, for example_ traditional schools are often thought to be an adverse response to modern scholarship, which usually endorses a more student-centered, more group-oriented approach and which is based upon understanding and process rather than the acquisition of knowledge for predominantly instrumental purposes. In fact, it might be fair to suggest that, for some proponents of traditional schools, the underlying philosophy approaches a degree of anti-intellectualism, although I offer this point with a fair measure of caution. In other words, some parents will promote the propriety of traditional schools by asserting that they are beneficial alternatives to modern public schools, which they may perceive to be too progressive and perhaps too undisciplined.

Third - which will be detailed more completely in Chapter Seven - while it is entirely possible to identify some of the unique characteristics of traditional schools and the ethos that is representative of their founders and proponents, it is

also reasonable to suggest that there is an enigmatic side to the paradigms: Traditional schools offer a number of symbolic, and perhaps cosmetic, cues. For some observers, however, these may not be sufficiently tangible to provide a satisfactory research template. Advocates of such schools will correctly point to some tactile attributes such as an emphasis on phonics_ as opposed to whole language_ and the enhanced emphasis on respect and discipline, although some scholar may not be persuaded. It is worth noting, too, that, as these are public schools in the Province of British Columbia, where the design and implementation of curriculum is the exclusive purview of the Ministry of Education. Locally elected school boards, principals, staff and teachers can do more than receive and apply the curriculum as directed by the Ministry. Subtle emphasis and delivery of the curriculum, to be sure, can be tailored to individual settings, but the content is standardized and enforced on a province-wide basis.

Fourth, there has been a proclivity amongst a few scholarly observers such as Kalaw (1999) and Coleman (1998, among others, to characterize the growth of traditional (and fundamental) schools as a movement. While there undercurrents of populism found in the initiatives of parents who work within the democratic environment to effect change_ revealed most overtly with the establishment of a traditional school_ it is perhaps the view among scholars that “movement” may be a rather generous nomenclature for such an enterprise which had been embraced by only a handful of school districts in the province. It would not be unfair to say that there has never been a multitude of supporters for traditional school initiatives although there is a genealogy, an apparent cohesion, amongst the various schools and their adherents. Scholars, therefore, may view the sporadic and somewhat diffident growth of these schools to be a relatively minor

component of the contemporary "schools of choice" debate. Traditional schools continue to have a measure of currency in a number of school districts; nonetheless, we have yet to see a momentum strong enough to lead to the creation of a large number of traditional schools outside of the current districts with traditional and fundamental schools. Scholars, therefore, may have little interest in these schools until such time as they become prevalent, more ubiquitous.

Fifth, traditional schools for some observers may be characterized as "right wing" _ an admittedly ambiguous term _ because proponents embrace a pedagogical model which may be thought to contest the conventional public school ideology which stresses egalitarianism and universality. Indeed, promotional documents produced by Abbotsford School District for the purposes of soliciting "business" _ from parents and their children _ for King Traditional School at the time of its expeditious approval and establishment in 1995 appealed primarily to parents who were home schooling or sending their children to one of the many independent, predominantly Christian, schools in the Abbotsford area. These parents were already seen to be at odds with the public school system with their non-participation; School Board officials, therefore, believed that these parents would be more receptive to a school with the educational ethos articulated by the original aggregation of proponents of King Traditional.

Sixth, and finally, traditional and fundamental schools are often seen as public alternatives to both private schools _ which are usually religious-based _ and home schooling, both of which contest the neighborhood "one size fits all" public school model. Scholars may not be attracted to scrutinizing such

schools in light of this fact. As well, with the reduced "pool" of available students in some school districts, there are inherent stresses that are imposed upon the established neighborhood schools, with a resulting decline in attendance. Traditional schools, therefore, as schools of choice, are a constituent of this phenomenon.

Conclusion

Scholars have shown limited interest in schools such as King Traditional. The few studies carried out on traditional schools have been largely funded by organizations that have ideological biases either in favor of or in opposition to such schools. Nevertheless, this chapter reveals some significant thematic streams which are relevant to the educational discourse.

First, the studies acknowledge the importance of the "triad" (the benefit of having a cooperative relationship and good communication between the teacher, student and parent). King Traditional is most transparently a school that was not only inspired by parents, but also guided largely by parents. In some ways, King Traditional is "their school" (referring to adherents and proponents) even a decade after the school enrolled its first students. The studies referenced in this chapter clearly identify the significance of parental involvement, and virtually all of the studies acknowledge that parental input has value for the efficacy of education. There is a widely shared understanding, I believe, that parental support plays a significant role in achieving student academic success. However, some of the studies (particularly those funded by the BC Teachers Federation) express reservations about King Traditional School, based on the related issues of protecting the teacher's professional stature and limiting parental involvement in

education, particularly at the school board level. These studies were not sympathetic to the growth of schools such as King Traditional and saw them as an intrusion into the current model of public education. "Parent-driven" schools are seen as adversaries which contest the professionalism of trained teachers and educational administrators. These educators – and the scholarly studies which support them – embrace the view that parents as "consumers" do not necessarily have the best interests of the entire system in mind when they propose such schools of choice based upon relatively narrow assumptions.

Second, these schools were seen by critics to be somewhat "anti-intellectual", embracing a more teacher-centered and structured model of education that is antithetical to much of the contemporary educational ethos. In some ways, then, there were contradictory sentiments being advanced by adherents. On the one hand, they wanted schools that cultivated healthy, genuine cooperation among parents, teachers and students, an approach which is thoroughly supported by educational scholarship. At the same time, they wanted schools characterized by less group learning, a greater reliance on phonics and an emphasis on the teacher as leader, for example, all of which contest contemporary pedagogical scholarship. They also wanted schools characterized by more discipline and formality, again in contrast to the tenets of contemporary pedagogical scholarship.

Third, in a related matter, it was observed by some of the studies that the supporting parents of King Traditional School were strongly representative of the Christian community in Abbotsford and so, in some ways, King Traditional School was seen as an economical alternative to the many independent Christian schools in the city, all of which charge substantial fees. Although the curriculum

is prescribed and cannot be “religious” in any way, the atmosphere and ethos at King Traditional tends to emulate some of the cosmetic features of an independent school with the provision of uniforms, for instance. The heritage of the Canadian educational system, as noted in the previous chapter, was tolerant, yet rooted in Judeo-Christian religious ideals; in recent times, however, it may be seen that this philosophy has given way to a more inclusive, more secular approach which endorses multicultural values. King Traditional seeks to “turn back the clock” in some ways, which, of course, prompted the BCTF to express a measure of consternation. This congruence amongst advocates demonstrates that there is a system of beliefs which is manifest in the founding ethos of the school; indeed, it may be fair to say that there is a fair degree of homogeneity found at the school which may be characterized as religious in nature.

Fourth, in spite of the defense made by the school’s adherents, some critics believe that King Traditional is “elitist.” They base these assertions on the requirement for school uniforms, the inconvenient and time-consuming “first come, first served” enrollment approach, and the stipulation, given the lack of busing, that all students must be driven to the relatively remote campus, which may preclude those parents without access to transportation from considering the school for their children.

Chapter Four

The Origins of King Traditional School: John Marshall Fundamental School, Pasadena, California

Proponents of King Traditional School were inspired by examples of traditional and fundamental schools in other jurisdictions, and made a deliberate attempt to seek out and understand these archetypes; as a result, the school's expeditious approval can, in part, be attributed to the persuasive power of pointing Abbotsford School District officials to these apparently successful precursors.

Chapter Four recounts the history of the first of these schools, John Marshall Fundamental School in Pasadena, California. Chapter Five will recount the history of the second, Langley Fundamental School, which is located in the municipality immediately to the west of Abbotsford. Most information for these two chapters has been gleaned from original documents and, in the case of Langley, from interviews with the Langley principals who were directly involved in the creation of the fundamental/traditional schools there in the 1970s.

Traditional schools in Canada originated through a blend of political struggle and parental campaigning, beginning with the inception of the country's first fundamental school in Langley. Although there has been some nominal interest in the idea of traditional schooling "east of the Rockies", the movement has almost exclusively been confined to British Columbia, where such schools are operating in six school districts. Today, the interest in traditional and

fundamental schooling continues, with a third school opening recently in Prince George and a second and a third school_ including a middle school_ opening in Abbotsford, so that such schooling is now available in both the western and eastern ends of this sprawling suburban and agricultural community. Approximately 21 B.C. school districts have now considered proposals for traditional schools.

The “west coast connection” for British Columbia's traditional and fundamental schools was Pasadena, California, which began the continent's premiere “fundamental” public school in 1973.

John Marshall Fundamental School

It is important to glean an understanding of the social ethos which supported the creation of this first fundamental school and which grew out of dissatisfaction with public schooling in Pasadena. The Pasadena Board of Instruction, principally three members of it, initiated the fundamental school concept_ as a result of articulated public concerns.

Background Information – Pasadena Fundamental School

A set of explanatory documents (Pasadena Unified School District, 1975. Background information) reveals the reasons behind the speedy approval of the John Marshall Fundamental School. There was a perception of great social unrest, and there was great anxiety by district administrators over declining scores on reading and arithmetic tests and also over the large number of students who were dropping out. In addition, private schools were experiencing increasing enrollments because of the public's apparent dissatisfaction with the

public school systems. According to these documents, approval of the school was remarkably expeditious; the school was proposed and approved in July 1973, and the school, grades K-8, subsequently opened for business in September 1974, using a vacant junior high school. Other schools were later added, including a high school, grades 9-12.

The inspiration for fundamental schools in the Pasadena Unified School District was initiated by three individuals_ out of a total board membership of five_ who had recently been elected. These three, two of whom would serve as president and vice president, provided the research and analysis which would serve as the stimulus for the school. Some of their more relevant remarks from the background information (written in the format of an open letter) are as follows:

“During the period 1969-73, we had lost nearly 7,000 students at a steady rate of 1200 per year and there were no signs of any leveling off. People were fleeing to neighboring communities. Private schools were bulging at the seams. New employees were being advised not to locate their families in Pasadena because of the school system.

“Open-structured schools were already springing up all across the nation. We had such a school in Pasadena. But nowhere, to the best of our knowledge, had a structured school been offered as an alternative to the tax-paying parent, and in this way, introduce free-enterprise competition for the first time into the public school system” (p. 1).

The letter notes that the new board, at its first meeting (in July of 1973), proposed the school and sent out 12,000 questionnaires to parents of children K-12, asking if they would be interested in sending their children to such a school;

3500 forms were returned. Subsequently 1000 students were selected from over 3000 applicants. These students were chosen to represent a “microcosm” of the School District's student body.

Marshall Fundamental School Handbook for Students, Teachers and Parents

In a small booklet published by the Pasadena Unified School District (Marshall Fundamental School, 1975. Student-parent handbook, 1975-76), there is a synopsis of the purposes of education at the school. Such areas as discipline, punctuality, accountability to teachers, recommended dress, personal hygiene, and suggested hours for students to allocate to homework are outlined. Perhaps most important is the consistent emphasis on “fundamental” learning. The first point in a list of school goals is: “To achieve the highest possible competence in fundamental skills, understanding and appreciation” (p. 5).

The booklet can probably be thought of as a “marketing device” for the school to communicate its ethos to prospective parents. Therefore, “Reporting student progress to parents” is one of the first main headings.

“Discipline,” another section, provides detailed standards of behavior, as approved by the Board of Education, which students were expected to maintain. A portion of this section is as follows: “Students shall respect constituted authority; this includes not only obedience to school rules and regulations, but also conformance to the laws of the community, state and nation” (p. 7).

Another section addresses the “dress code.” While there are no school uniforms per se, there is considerable attention paid to the attire worn by students at Marshall Fundamental School. Here is a citation from this section: “Parental judgment regarding appropriate school dress is necessary. Your

student's school attire will be closely checked by Administration and staff. Any attire deemed inappropriate will be called to the attention of both parents and student and the student will be sent home for a change of apparel, with parent consent" (p. 6). In addition, there are sub-sections for girls and boys, with particular emphasis on the former.

There is a patriotic feel to the handbook, which notes that the name of the school is a tribute to John Marshall, one of the "greatest chief justices our country has ever known" (p. 2). The fundamental school was not named after him, however; the fundamental school simply was assigned to an existing, named, but unused campus. Throughout much of the booklet, there are flags, eagles, and a "liberty bell." There is even a graphic illustrating a trio of soldiers playing instruments in preparation for fighting a war, presumably the War of Independence.

Kyle M. Crist

Kyle M. Crist, a reading specialist with Marshall Fundamental School, produced two documents shortly after the school's inception in 1974. These are significant in providing an understanding of some of the intentional shifts in educational philosophy at the school. The first document, a booklet entitled "Plan" (Marshall Fundamental School, 1975), largely deals with some of his efforts to enhance reading in the school. This booklet contains a number of teaching ideas and some testimonials from parents and students. The second booklet, "A Highlight Worth Sharing", speaks in part to the national interest that was generated by the school's opening: "One of the most phenomenal features of Marshall Fundamental School this past year (1974-1975) has been the steady

stream of visitors from all over the world. What is even more extraordinary are the comments these guests have made as they toured the campus" (p. 1). On the same page, he adds, "Although the school was not organized to be controversial, somehow it became that with persons and media, having many pre-formed ideas before they came, most of them erroneous, as to what the Fundamental school would be like. This makes the 'constant comment' of wonder and delight even more meaningful."

Crist, who apparently was an unofficial spokesperson at the school, provides selective quotes taken from some of the written responses made by visitors. It is unclear whether these quotes were chosen from a much larger list or because they were complimentary and consistent with the values of the school's adherents. A summary of these remarks, as provided by Crist, are as follows: "I am amazed at the courtesy of the students of this school, both in and out of the classroom." "These are the cleanest halls I've seen in years." "I wouldn't have missed hearing that class (6th grade) recite memorized things for the world." "I came here as a biased liberal with a biased viewpoint, but after seeing the many good things happening here, I'd like to know how I can get my child into this school." "This is the best school I have visited in all the United States." (This last comment was attributed to a representative from France who was part of a larger international delegation.)

Crist concludes his introductory comments_ which include the above-noted quotes_ with the following: "There is quality teaching of the basic Three-Rs. There is unity and strength among the teachers. There is structure and discipline. There is an emphasis on Patriotism and Moral Principles. But other

things are not forgotten. There is Music, Art, laughter, and growth. That is what Fundamental education is all about” (p. 2).

Mission Statement and Handbook

Another document is a single undated sheet identified as the “Pasadena Fundamental Mission Statement.” It explains the purpose of the school as follows: “Our Goal is to create a structured, nurturing learning environment fostering a partnership of parents, students and educators. _ ”

Marshall Fundamental School also published a longer, more detailed, color-coded book, also called a “handbook”, with more information for parents, students, and staff members of Marshall Fundamental School. This particular guide is useful because it identifies some of the issues that were addressed by the administration and staff of the day, while the smaller handbook, noted earlier, is more of a marketing-oriented external document. There are essentially three sections to the larger document: One, the introduction, is of general interest; the second section is for parents; and the final section is intended for new students, to help them to understand the expectations of the school and to cultivate a sense of belonging. There are 100 pages or more in this “package”, although, unfortunately, they are not numbered for easy reference. In light of the current controversy concerning “whole language” (which is now associated with more student-centered learning) and phonics (which is seen to be more teacher-centered, more traditional), it is significant that there is a strong emphasis in the section for students (coded in blue) which stresses “the phonetic approach.” Both paragraphs dealing with reading and spelling refer specifically to phonics.

Richard Vetterli

Another document which sheds light on the “culture” that fostered the creation of the fundamental school in Pasadena, is *Fundamental Revolution Against Progressive Education*, a paper written in 1974 by Dr. Richard Vetterli of the University of California, Riverside, which had some currency at the time as an endorsement of the so-called fundamental model of education: Vetterli begins by stating, “This article discusses two opposing educational philosophies and clearly indicates why there must be a change now in order to preserve our Western society as we know it” (p. 1). The article has a veneer of academic credibility, given Vetterli’s status as a professor in an unidentified faculty of a California university, but there is no effort to acknowledge sources, nor is there a “references” or bibliography section. Nonetheless, as I received this material from a former principal of Langley Fundamental School_ who will be formally referenced in a subsequent section of this chapter_ it may be seen that Vetterli’s views, with their supposed veneer of academic credibility, apparently provided some institutional support for the cause of traditional schooling in Pasadena (and also in Langley).

Vetterli attempts to establish a link between what he sees as declining social values and “progressive education” (p. 4). His premise, therefore, is that the “fundamental revolution”_ to use his term_ offers an alternative to a number of trends that he feels are not in the best interests of education. His list of the negative characteristics of progressive education, as he sees them, is as follows:

1. The rejection of absolutes or universal truths;
 2. “The New English”, which opposes definite rules for grammar;
-

3. "The New Math", which rejects the drill method and rule memorization and does not stress computational proficiency;
4. The "Open Classroom Atmosphere", which favors the student's "felt needs", is not comfortable with promotion and failure, keeps discipline to a minimum, and does not enforce dress codes;
5. The denial, following the philosophy of John Dewey, of an "established, ontological body of principles and morals", instead asserting that all values are relative;
6. The denial of the Judeo-Christian ethic, advancing in its place a liberal viewpoint regarding sexuality;
7. A centralized approach to educational decision-making, which discourages individual norms and judgment;
8. A de-emphasis on Patriotism, which rejects nationalism as an archaic precept and instead takes a "citizen of the world" approach to the future (pp. 1-4).

The article continues with an explanation of the ethos of fundamental education, which Vetterli sees as a constructive response to the supposed malaise of progressive education. He begins his remarks on the schism between progressive education and fundamental education by addressing "phonics", which was still very much an item of controversy some 20 years later at the time King Traditional School was inaugurated in 1995. The supposed abandonment of phonics in favor of "whole language" was and is a "lightning rod" for those who make a case for fundamental or traditional education. Vetterli states, "Proponents of fundamental education admit that there is a logical and obvious connection between the tragic decline in the ability of our children to read, as indicated in national achievement tests and college exams, and the abandonment of the phonics approach" (p. 4).

With regard to English and Composition, Vetterli again stresses phonics and contests a "watering down" of English requirements and a declining

emphasis on reading and writing skills. He asserts, "A generation that has formed itself linguistically around the primitivism of 'like', 'cool', 'man', 'feel', and above all, 'you know' will not be a difficult generation to enslave politically, morally and culturally" (p. 5).

With regard to mathematics, Vetterli asserts that progressive and fundamental educators have divergent viewpoints on its value. He makes a case for computational math, using the four basic functions, employing drill and constant reinforcement. "New math," while acknowledged as important, should not replace the foundation of the basics, he suggests.

Vetterli speaks of "excellence" _ which continues to this day as almost a cliché in popular educational circles. Vetterli states: "We have to get away from all this nonsense about social engineering and get back to the basics" (p. 8). He adds in a subsequent paragraph: "In fundamental schools, the emphasis is not on collectivism, but individualism and the promotion of individual excellence." Here he contests the view that it is only progressive education that is interested in developing creativity and a sense of self-worth.

Although there is no overt emphasis on "religion" _ which is often a unifying component for traditional and fundamental advocates _ he nevertheless touches on the matter while further critiquing the relativism of John Dewey: "Fundamentalists believe that the theological and traditional bases of Western culture amply provide the values and standards needed to build a creative individual and a creative society" (p. 9).

Finally, he speaks of "patriotism", which, as will be demonstrated later in the analysis of the ethos of King Traditional School _ and Langley Fundamental School, for that matter _ is one of the more visible characteristics of such schools.

He quotes approvingly from the school's parents' handbook: "Feelings of loyalty to his country give a child identity_ he belongs, he has roots." Further, in a direct comment against progressive education, he notes, "The prevailing education is destined, if it continues, to destroy Western civilization, and is, in fact, destroying it."

Conclusion

This chapter has revealed a number of significant characteristics of John Marshall School.

First, there is the matter of parent involvement. Although the school was not requested by parents – through aggressive lobbying or otherwise – the school nonetheless was created through the inspiration of three Pasadena school trustees because they observed a significant level of parental dissatisfaction with the public system. It was, therefore a response to the articulated concerns of parents and others in the community. Statistics had revealed that parents were increasingly either "pulling" their students from the public system and enrolling them in private schools, or simply leaving the community. The importance of parents in the school was further underlined in the school documents, in the emphasis on reporting to parents, for instance. The school thus affirmed the importance of the "triad," seeing education as a cooperative effort of teachers, students and parents.

Second, there was an emphasis on educational excellence at the new school, but that excellence was defined in terms of the three R's. Parents were not happy with the trend of open classrooms and extensive group work which had been common in California schools at this time. In contrast, in the new school,

individual excellence was to be encouraged, partly through encouraging competition among students. There would also be a return to an emphasis on the “basics”, including phonics, in hopes of arresting declining test scores in reading and arithmetic. In fact, this concern seems to have been the strongest motivation for creation of the new school.

Third, the trustees envisaged a school which would value discipline and respect. There was to be a more structured approach in most aspects of school life, as exemplified by a more definitive dress code.

Fourth, and closely related to point three, there was significant emphasis on the moral character of the school, particularly that it be based upon “Judeo-Christian values.”

Finally, and perhaps not surprisingly given the American context, patriotism would be stressed. A number of ceremonial activities were put into place to nurture a greater sense of patriotic spirit on the part of the student body.

Chapter Five

The Origins of King Traditional School: Langley Fundamental School, Langley, B.C.

I will now turn to a detailed analysis of Langley Fundamental School, which was conceived and launched as a result of an appreciation for Pasadena Fundamental School. Indeed, as will be demonstrated, the southern California school would provide the exclusive impetus for Langley Fundamental, British Columbia's first fundamental/traditional school. Literature from Pasadena had been circulating in Langley_ including parent and student handbooks, newsletters, proposals, and supportive articles. However, the impetus for the Langley schools originated with parents, unlike what had happened in Pasadena, where administrators and elected officials "fast tracked" implementation, perhaps because of an anticipated wave of public criticism.

The origin of Langley Fundamental School goes back to the spring of 1975. A group of approximately twenty Langley parents had organized themselves under the nomenclature "The Langley Fundamental School Committee" and made a formal presentation to the Board of School Trustees. The first fundamental school began enrolling students in September of the same year (Lorenz Wiebe, personal communication, April 30, 1998). I will review some of the original documents to provide a sense of the temper of the time.

Original Brief

Perhaps the most important document is the relatively laconic (three-page) brief which was presented to the Langley Board of School Trustees by the committee in the spring of 1975. The summary of the proposed criteria for the school is as follows:

1. The school shall be an integral part of the school system.
2. The school shall operate with a focus and emphasis upon a clearly-defined set of values, based on the Judeo-Christian heritage; a term used to describe those moral-ethical standards of behavior which have traditionally been regarded as foundational to our Canadian society.
3. The school shall not teach any doctrinal religious beliefs; one of its basic values is that of tolerance and respect towards those with whose ideas one disagrees.
4. The school shall encourage students to think through moral-ethical issues, to understand the basis upon which they may make value choices, to consider alternatives, to choose good life values for themselves, and to learn to act consistently upon them. (p. 1).

This grassroots lobbying for the school_ which would herald a similar initiative two decades later in Abbotsford_ was certainly controversial and would perhaps be considered even more controversial today, particularly the second criterion, that the school shall operate on Judeo-Christian values. Such an overtly religious basis for Langley Fundamental contrasts somewhat with the ethos identified in the promotional materials of Pasadena Fundamental, which seemed to place greater emphasis on patriotism and enterprise. This approach was certainly a departure from the general educational philosophy of the day. However, long-time Langley Fundamental School principal Lorenz Wiebe

comments that “this school was originally a 'political football' but now receives considerable support in the community_ there is a political advantage to favoring it” (personal communication, April 30, 1998).

Just as the *creed* of the school is in part a response to the public school ethos of the day, so the *values* of the school are essentially a parent-initiated response to the supposedly more permissive mores of the public school system. In a subsequent section of the brief, the “basic values” of the school are enumerated. These are as follows: a) Respect for fellow students, parents and teachers; b) Responsibility for one's actions; c) Purposefulness; d) Concern for others; and, e) A sense of value for one's own mind, body and spirit (p. 2).

Discipline, in particular, is stressed in the brief. The language employed to recount the values relating to discipline_ as it was to be enforced at the school_ is perhaps guarded to some extent: “The school shall provide an orderly, friendly and just environment; it shall emphasize discipline that is firm, but not harsh, but sufficient externally-imposed control shall be used to allow all students to develop the values set forth for the school” (p. 1).

The selection of the principal and teaching staff is seen to be important for the school's success. The brief further says: “The principal selected for this school must be an individual who commands the respect and support of a majority of the parents registering their children in the alternate school. Unless this is so, the whole purpose of establishing an alternate school is negated” (p. 2). In addition, the parents note, “The principal and teaching staff must be fully aware of and committed to these life values themselves.”

The parents' appeal for a “school of choice” was sensitive to the school board's political accountability to the entire community. They further comment

in their brief: "Our request for an alternate school with a focus on particular values does not in any way imply that existing schools in Langley do not have values or that they are not valuable. Our concern is that the school should be designated as having an emphasis upon a clearly-stated set of values that are shared by parents and teachers." They continue, in a subsequent paragraph: "In our present society, there is little consensus of opinion on what is good and what is not. It is because of this pluralization of our society, the confusion of many differing values, that we feel that parents should have the right to choose that their children in their formative years be exposed in a consistent fashion to this set of values and (be) encouraged to choose them as their own" (p. 2).

Response to the BCTF

Another document (which is unfortunately undated) is a more detailed defense of the "alternative" school particularly in response to some issues articulated by the B.C. Teachers Federation, which had gone on record as being opposed to the school. This brief is important because it provides greater detail on the philosophy of the school's advocates and reveals some of the tensions of the time. It seems likely that this brief was also produced shortly after approval for the new school was given by the Langley School Board.

The introductory remarks set the tone for the document: "The Langley Fundamental schools take a determined stand against any political, religious or anti-religious teaching. They stand for the moral-ethical standards that are the founding principles of our Canadian heritage: the value of hard work, as well as knowing how to use leisure, of respect, responsibility, discipline and cooperation" (p. 1).

The defense of alternate schools_ or “schools of choice”, to use today’s parlance_ is detailed, using a fair degree of persuasive language. The document makes a specific appeal to parents who value their right to make choices in the best interests of their children's education. This strategy, as shall be noted later in the analysis of the Abbotsford Traditional School, is one that has some currency for political decision-makers (school trustees) who are elected to office through a popular vote.

I will now provide a summary of this document. It begins with six foundational points, which seem designed to illustrate that the approval of such schools is not only in the best interests of education in general (as a social good), but is also consistent with the ideals of public education, or education that has benefit for the collective.

The six points are as follows: First, the writers state that the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights supports the right of parents to select the kind of education their children should receive. Second, the document notes the problem of the supposed instability of neighborhood (assigned catchment area) schools, where “changes of principal, staff personnel, and rapidly changing neighborhood scene as population moves and shifts may from year to year reverse the entire direction of that school” (p. 2). The writers do not address the matter of why the same or similar problems would not occur at an alternate school such as Langley Fundamental. Third, consistency in “teacher approach and behavioral standards” (p. 2.) is thought to be an important advantage of alternate schools. The writers state, “An alternate school can be counted on to stay basically the same in outlook and performance from year to year, thus giving the desired consistency from kindergarten through grade seven.” They do

acknowledge, however, that some parents may legitimately support a style of schooling which offers a wide variety of teaching styles and educational philosophy_ such parents would not seek to enroll their children in an alternate school which favors both consistency and continuity. Fourth, alternate schools are promoted as a means to protect minority rights and “provide satisfaction for those concerned parents who feel the special emphasis of the alternate school is worth the trouble of providing the children's transportation” (p. 2). Fifth, the writers assert that with more choices available in the public system, educators will be more conscious of their accountability. The sixth and last point expresses a degree of sensitivity in stating that the writers would be comfortable if those parents “at the other end of the educational philosophy spectrum” pursued their own alternative school. They acknowledge, too, that such a school would also be obliged to satisfy the requirements of the provincial Ministry of Education curriculum.

Much of the content of this brief contains what are termed “fundamental answers” to criticisms that had been leveled by the British Columbia Teachers Federation in a report that I have not been able to locate. However, the responses to these critiques make extensive reference to them, and, as a result, it is a relatively simple matter to discern both “sides” of the argument. Indeed, two decades later, as may be seen in subsequent chapters, many of the same issues were raised by the BCTF and its local body when the Abbotsford School Board moved quickly to start its own fundamental (in this case, traditional) school.

Open catchment areas_ which are more commonplace today_ were contentious at the time Langley Fundamental was proposed. In responding to the criticism expressed by the British Columbia Teachers Federation, the writers

of the document articulated a defense of open catchment areas. For one thing, the “parent-choice” issue, as they express it, was obviously fulfilled through the availability of Langley Fundamental School regardless of where a family lived in Langley. As well, regarding transportation, which was provided for all eligible students attending conventional catchment area schools, the writers acknowledge that such transportation could not be offered to those families who selected Langley Fundamental because the logistics of providing busing for students scattered throughout a large, sprawling community would be both expensive and impractical.

In response to the contention that alternative schools_ such as those that carry the appellation “fundamental” or “traditional”_ are elitist, the school’s proponents offer a list of counter-arguments in point-form. I will summarize these: No student is required to complete any additional documentation other than that required from any student in all other public schools in Langley. In addition, “there has never been any type of screening of children in regard to ability, race, creed or other factor” (p. 3). Parents are not required to explain why they wish to register their child at the fundamental school, nor is it required that they reveal any personal information about their beliefs or political affiliations. Registration is on a “first come, first served” basis. The document uses rather strong language on this point: “It can be categorically stated that no discrimination is practiced or condoned in the operation of the school” (p. 3).

The British Columbia Teachers Federation also apparently questioned use of the term “Judeo-Christian”. The authors of the brief give a rejoinder that emphasizes exclusively the ethical heritage of Canadian society, as they see it, rather than addressing the religious aspects of this term.

Another criticism was that such schools are “private schools in disguise” (a criticism which would also be asserted two decades later in Abbotsford). The brief’s reply is somewhat tautological, but nonetheless makes six points which may be noted here in encapsulated form: 1) Such schools were established by a motion of the elected School Board; 2) They operate under the jurisdiction of the district’s administrative staff; 3) They (the school staff) teach the prescribed curriculum set by the Ministry of Education; 4) All teachers are duly certified public school teachers hired by the school district; 5) They are administered in every way according to the Public School Act; and, 6) Children from anywhere in the school district are eligible for admission without discrimination of any kind. (p. 3).

As can be seen, the matter of whether Langley Fundamental was a religious school was a source of considerable debate. While it may be acknowledged that there is a significant religious community_ most of which identifies with the Christian church in its many forms_ to be found in the Fraser Valley, it can be a considerable challenge to determine the religious affiliations of parents who favor any school. Some anecdotal information, however, suggests that both Langley Fundamental and Abbotsford Traditional have received considerable support from parents who identified with a particular church in their respective communities. In responding to the allegations that Langley Fundamental was a “religious school,” the supporting parents refer to a statement issued by Mr. Clothier (his first name is not provided), principal of Langley Central Fundamental School, with regard to the B.C. Public School Act: “Not only am I committed to obeying this law, but I am personally in agreement with it. I believe that the teaching of particular religious doctrine is the

responsibility of the home and the church. I would not accept the administration of a public school that lawfully gave religious instruction of any kind, whether Buddhist, Hindu, Christian or whatever. This is not the function of a publicly supported school” (p. 4). Further, the parents draw attention to the Act’s prohibition of religious instruction: “The schools shall be conducted on strictly secular and non-sectarian principles. The highest morality shall be inculcated, but no religious creed or dogma shall be taught” (p. 5). At this time, the reading of a passage of Scripture and the recitation of the Lord's Prayer were still being authorized by the Ministry of Education.

The BCTF's critique apparently concluded with a few less weighty issues. One query concerned the emphasis on basic education and how it might impact negatively on the teaching of special education, music, art, drama, or creative activities. The brief’s reply stresses that the subjects noted are prescribed in the Ministry of Education curriculum guidelines and that the traditional school is obliged to fulfill these responsibilities. The brief comments, “The fundamental approach is to bring excellence and enthusiasm to every part of the program” (p. 5).

Another query was directed toward the function of the fundamental school committee. The authors of the brief note that the origins of the committee go back to 1974 when a group of parents initially made a presentation to Langley School Board. “The committee continued to function as representatives of the fundamental school supporters in meeting with the School Board and Administration” (p. 6). Further, the authors clarify the main purposes of the committee: 1) to preserve the original concept of the fundamental school; 2) to see that parents in the school thoroughly understand the fundamental

alternative; and 3) to act as a liaison whenever the fundamental alternative concept is threatened.

Another question which may perhaps be seen to be somewhat rhetorical was: "Are alternate schools making unfair use of tax dollars?" The reply, in condensed form, is as follows: "Educational tax dollars are for the education of all children and should as far as possible be available in an equal amount for each child. The fact is, that without any alternate school, many taxpayer-parents would be forced to support a monopoly system which they may feel does not serve the best interests of their particular children" (p. 5). The parents, then, seem to be asserting the case for choice, which is so frequently the theme of the arguments for these kinds of schools; indeed, advocates for King Traditional School in Abbotsford_ the main subject of this dissertation_ drew upon the same theme two decades later in their presentations to the School Board.

A final point deals with the BCTF's concern with the nomenclature of the school. This is the only instance where a recommendation was included in the BCFT's list of criticisms. The BCTF suggested that the name "fundamental" be dropped from the alternate school. Advocates, however, contend that the name has value or currency. They reply in the following way: First, they acknowledge that there is some controversy surrounding the school but note that a name change would not affect the opposition; second, they feel that a name change would result in the "gradual erosion" of the school's philosophy because there would be no identifiable distinctive; and, third, they contest the BCTF's support for fundamental-type classrooms embedded within existing neighborhood schools; the fundamental school's supporters appear to feel that this is not an acceptable alternative to full schools of choice with no catchment areas.

Lorenz Wiebe

Langley Fundamental Schools continue to this day, and, notwithstanding some of the early controversies, they have flourished to the point where they are fully accepted as alternative schools in the same manner as French immersion schools, for example. Langley Fundamental was followed by a second fundamental school, Langley Central. The two later merged in the 1980's. In recent times, Langley Fundamental (elementary) School has enrolled kindergarten to sixth grade. In 1998, Langley Fundamental Middle School was opened. Approximately 560 students attend the elementary school, although the number varies slightly from year to year. There have been up to 800 children on the waiting list. "Camping out" _ sometimes for up to five days_ has been required to secure a place for a child at the school. (This phenomenon is similar to that of King Traditional, which, like Langley Fundamental, has permitted siblings to attend, an exception to the usual policy relating to chronological order: "first come, first serve.")

Lorenz Wiebe, while he was principal of Langley Fundamental School_ he has since retired_ provided some historical reflections on the origins of the school from his perspective as an educator. He began his teaching career in Prince George, B.C. and later taught in Delta, B.C. and at an independent Christian school in Yarrow, a rural community in the Fraser Valley municipality of Chilliwack. He was one of the original teachers in Langley Fundamental School and spent a total of 18 years in leadership in three different fundamental schools. Wiebe had successfully sought an appointment as principal, and therefore is obviously an advocate for the "fundamental ethos". The following remarks are taken from an interview that was conducted in 1998.

Wiebe stated that his educational philosophy emphasizes the role of the family: "I will work from the family as the unit which takes the main responsibility for the education of the child. It is a recognition of the values of the home and the trust involved. As educators, we don't have all the magic answers." Similarly, he acknowledged the significant role of PACSs (Parent Advisory Committees) and their active role in local politics and curricular changes. "I try to be as flexible as possible to accommodate them," he said.

At the same time, Wiebe cautioned, "Parents are told this is a public school and that we must work within the law. The expertise of the teachers must be protected. We have worked out a balance, but the parents need to be reminded that there are limitations to their involvement." He continued, "As principal, I take responsibility to supervise the teachers and listen to their individual problems. Once you have the trust of the teachers, then the parents' energy is positive. We have a real continuity of staff_ they do have a high trust level."

Wiebe was conscious of a number of parental constituencies represented at his schools. "I would say there are three groups of parents that I have noted over the years, although they do overlap in some cases. The first group of parents favors a more structured approach to education, and this may be a 'knee jerk' reaction to a bad report card, for example. In the early days of the fundamental schools, this was the largest intake group, as many of the students had been unsuccessful in other schools.

"The second group of parents, who are mostly Christians, are very supportive of the traditional home and find their belief system in the church. Most of them subscribe to the Judeo-Christian ethic and probably represent

approximately 60 per cent of the families of the children attending our school. We also have some Orientals in this group who have children here and also like the emphasis on family." Wiebe acknowledged the impact of these Christian families: "The driving force at this school is from the evangelical Christian parents. They are very high profile on the PAC. There are a full range of churches represented here, and we have had Christmas concerts and Christmas programs."

The third and final group Wiebe noted was composed of those parents who liked the school for academic reasons: "These students felt our standards are higher, and they liked the consistency in our teaching style. And it is true that our academic results have been good. Professionals such as doctors and lawyers have children here; Orientals and Indo-Canadians are also a part of this group."

Home-schoolers, who, according to Wiebe, represent about 10-15 per cent of students enrolled in the school, may be found in all three groups noted.

Although the curriculum is set and mandated by the provincial Ministry of Education, Wiebe said the school and its teachers made changes in consideration of the parents' expectations. "We have a lot of flexibility on how the curriculum is delivered. Teachers can do some picking and choosing, and the philosophy can be adjusted. For example, in the case of family life, we responded to the parent's framework of values. If there is something truly controversial, then we defer to the home. The parents trust us to deliver the curriculum in a sensitive way. In the library, we select the books, and the parents aren't involved, but we do make choices that are wholesome and appropriate for the students. The librarian is sensitive to the parents' views so we never get too close to the edge."

Unlike King Traditional, Surrey Fundamental, and some other similar schools, Langley Fundamental has never had student uniforms. "Uniforms have never been a crucial issue here," Wiebe said. "The integrity of this school is established at a deeper level. We don't need the outside trappings, and uniforms are not essential to our philosophy."

There are, nevertheless, some "outside trappings" or symbolic activities that relate to the schools' disposition to education. "We use line-ups for students to enter their classrooms," Wiebe said. "We also begin every morning with our national anthem; the majority of parents would also like regular Bible readings, but we can't allow it. There is a sense of propriety which we value, and this includes modesty in dress, that it be in good taste."

The contentious matter of teacher selection was addressed through a cooperative approach between the School District office and the principal. "The office sends me the list of the applicants for the posting, and I interview four or five on the seniority list," Wiebe said. "The purpose is plain: to ensure that the applicant would fit the school. Occasionally a teacher may come here just to get a job; generally they will come because there is a good match. Ninety per cent of staff fits the bill. The system isn't perfect, but we have tried not to go head to head with parents."

The political culture of Langley no longer finds the fundamental schools to be controversial, according to Wiebe. "The original fundamental school was a bit of a political football, and there was initially a lot of political uncertainty. Today, however, there is a political advantage to favor it. Some left-wingers may not support the fundamental philosophy, but there has been unanimous support

for the Langley Fundamental Middle School, and parents know how to keep the wheels greased_ there is little need to lobby anymore.”

The level of “ownership” of the fundamental schools is reflected in a reasonably contemporary Parents' Handbook (1998) which I was given at the time of my interview with Lorenz Wiebe. Perhaps most significant is the chronicle of the schools, which is a saga of overcoming odds to achieve success. For adherents_ such as parents and school administrators_ the realization of fundamental schools in Langley School District is a populist narrative, an understanding that would subsequently resonate across the municipal boundary in Abbotsford.

Ron Sawatzky

At the time of the interview, Wiebe made the point that he believed that there were other schools in Langley School District that were basically fundamental in their educational orientation, but were identified as conventional neighborhood schools. He suggested that Peterson Road Elementary would be an example because of the tone set by principal Ron Sawatzky, who also had previous experience in Langley Fundamental schools. I had the opportunity to speak with Ron Sawatzky in May of 1998, an appointment recommended by Lorenz Wiebe, who was well acquainted with Sawatzky's administrative style.

As the first principal of the original fundamental school, Sawatzky said, “In those days they had supervising principals, and I was responsible for three schools, including the fundamental school. I was assigned to it because the School Board knew my background and saw the fit.

“My philosophy of education is built upon educational excellence. You want kids to learn to their potential. Quality teaching is an assumption, and [so is] an atmosphere for learning. And discipline is important. The biggest opposition to the traditional school is the [teachers'] union. We live in a pluralistic society_ we don't have an ideal society anymore. Some parents want more than their neighborhood school, and that choice should be made available to them. This is a democracy.”

Sawatzky acknowledged that funding for a school of choice such as the fundamental school can be problematic: “The provincial government will not provide any capital funding for an alternative school, so you have to have a building.”

As with Abbotsford's traditional school, busing is not available for fundamental school students: “I suppose any alternative school might be perceived to be elitist because transportation is required. It could perhaps be a problem for single parents although they can arrange car pooling. But this elitism argument also applies to French immersion and fine arts schools as well. There may be some validity to the criticism that the fundamental school is elitist, but that is just the nature of the public school system. Langley Fundamental schools don't look elitist because we don't use uniforms; Surrey uses uniforms at their traditional school because it depends on the philosophy. MEI [Mennonite Educational Institute, a private Christian school in Abbotsford] does not have uniforms, for example.”

Peterson Road Elementary was seen as an alternative to the “official” fundamental school_ which at the time of the interview had approximately 800 children on its waiting list_ largely because of the leadership style of the

principal. Sawatzky commented that, “My Christian parents realize this school has a fundamental flavor, and they also know that there is not room at the regular fundamental school. They bring their children because of what they perceive as the fundamental style. We have 13 medical doctors here, for example. This school was fundamental before I came, and our staff has agreement with the philosophy.”

In reflecting on the origins of Langley Fundamental schools, he noted that there was a negative reaction to some of the educational initiatives of the time: “Things have changed in education, and one might ask why parents wanted fundamental schools. In the progressive sixties, Langley was building only open area schools, pods with four classrooms in one area. There were 140 children per pod, and they had difficulty concentrating. Parents wanted their children out of these classrooms.

“The second issue related to the whole reading process. Teachers would hide readers in their cupboards_ it was very student-centered. Education goes in cycles, and whole language is more popular now. Some parents saw that their children weren't reading and realized they weren't being taught. With the fundamental school, there were more structured programs.

“Now with the BCTF, and the emphasis on combating what is called 'homophobia,' many parents seem to feel safer with their children at this school. Over half the teachers are Christians, and they teach the curriculum in a way that is sensitive to parents.

“Today there continues to be a consistency of teaching style here. There is a more structured approach to learning with an emphasis on respect. I would say

about 40 per cent of the teachers in our district could transfer to the fundamental school and nothing much would change.

“We do not have a catchment area_ it is open boundary. Out of 385 children at our school, 100 are cross boundary. There is a waiting list for the school. It is important that we take students from outside our normal catchment area because this is an older school, surrounded by ALR [Agricultural Land Reserve] land. The school population in this area is going down.

“I do not think fundamental schools operate at the expense of public schools. So what if parents get their school? This is a democracy.”

Sawatzky acknowledged that key PAC executive members at his school were Christians, and said he believed that parents who had their children enrolled by choice made the school a better place: “I have never been told not to accept families from cross boundary, and there is no transportation for these students.”

In conclusion, Chapters Four and Five have argued that the origins of Abbotsford Traditional School are firmly rooted in the Pasadena and Langley Fundamental schools, which were started in the middle seventies. I will draw upon some of the material noted in these chapters as the balance of this dissertation addresses the origins, growth, and controversies relating to the rise of King Traditional School in Abbotsford. There are a number of significant socio-cultural commonalities in all three schools that will be revealed more definitively in chapters Six and Seven.

Conclusion

Langley Fundamental School looked to John Marshall Fundamental School in Pasadena for its inspiration. Both schools are called “fundamental”, and both are “schools of choice,” offering a public alternative to motivated parents. However, the schools are not entirely congruous which, in part, can be explained by the different social cultures and disparate educational environments in the two nations. The two schools have five essential elements in common.

First, even more than John Marshall Fundamental School, Langley Fundamental School was promoted from the “bottom up;” that is, it was driven by parents, not by the school board or its administration. “Parent choice” was acknowledged by the first principal of Langley Fundamental School as being significant. The stress on the parents’ role is also evident in the active involvement of the school’s Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). It should also be noted that, in contrast to Pasadena, there was more controversy and more public discourse and consultation leading up to the approval of the school by Langley school board trustees, perhaps because of the strength of the teachers’ union in BC.

Second, as in Pasadena, Langley parents were motivated by a concern for the quality of their children’s education. Both schools had a somewhat wistful emphasis on getting “back to the basics.” While Pasadena was resisting the trend to more collective learning through open classrooms, the parents at Langley Fundamental were particularly concerned with declining grades on report cards. The significance of “consistent teaching style” was thought to be important; parents sought to have a cohesive approach to teaching which would not vary

from class to class and teacher to teacher, which they had apparently experienced as a problem at other public schools in the district.

Third, like the promoters of John Marshall Fundamental School in Pasadena, the supporting parents of Langley Fundamental School felt there was a need for greater emphasis on discipline, standards of behavior and the inculcation of values. In fact, it could be argued that while a concern for better grades was the primary motivation for the creation of John Marshall Fundamental School, it was the desire for higher disciplinary standards that was the primary motivation for the creation of Langley Fundamental School.

Fourth, a desire for the teaching and practice of "Judeo-Christian" values was also an important consideration in the creation of Langley Fundamental School, just as it had been in the creation of John Marshall Fundamental School. As the Langley principal has observed, a significant – and influential – group of parents at the school were drawn from the Christian community.

Fifth, patriotism (and some of its symbols) would be stressed at Langley Fundamental School, although, perhaps because of the differences in nationalistic beliefs, this would be less salient than the patriotic themes built into John Marshall Fundamental School in Pasadena.

Chapter Six

The Origins of King Traditional School: The Initiative, Lobbying and Approval, Accounting for The Success of Proponents

While the proponents of King Traditional had at least two archetypal models to guide them, as noted in the previous chapter, King Traditional was nevertheless a unique initiative that was achieved as a result of some focused campaigning by a relatively small but highly motivated group of women, predominantly parents with children enrolled in Abbotsford School District. This chapter provides a historical (chronological) account of the school's genesis and relates it to the socio-political culture of both the community in general and the seven-member School Board in particular. The opportunity to be "present at the creation" presented some unique challenges for the advocacy group, and, notwithstanding their affinity for a traditional school and their collective enthusiasm, they would not always have a congruency of views. Their success_ Board approval and the actual opening of a "free standing" facility within one year_ is a testament to their capacity to coalesce a supportive constituency. The timing of their proposal, combined with the apparent concordance of ethos, had a significant impact on the expeditious response by the elected Abbotsford School Board. I will draw upon some key individuals_ through interviews that were done expressly for this dissertation_ to show their contribution to the Abbotsford discourse on traditional schools.

The Founding Council

The genesis for the school began with a letter to the editor of a local Abbotsford newspaper expressing some concerns with the state of public (elementary) education in the community. This letter, written by Iris Rodrigues, a mother with a child at Blue Jay Elementary School, prompted four other mothers to make contact. They would subsequently meet and become the core organizing group which pursued the creation of a traditional school with vigor and dedication. This chapter, then, is a history of this enterprise_ to a large extent rendered in their words_ with some additional documentation in the form of some original briefs and material provided to the elected School Board of the day.

The five ladies, Iris Rodrigues, Joanne Field_ who would later go on to be elected to the Abbotsford School Board and serve as vice-chair and later chair_ Kara Nelson, Kim Dirksen and Lisa LeGear, would become the “Interim Council” for the school. Two other women, Laura Williams and Shelaugh Thomson, would also contribute to the effort but would be less involved in the overall effort (personal communication, Iris Rodrigues, 1998).

The Original Proposal

A significant document_ which I was given by Joanne Field, who maintained a file of papers and briefs relating to the traditional school_ is the original printed presentation given to the School Board, complete with a recommended schedule or “plan of action.” It is worth noting, that notwithstanding some public concern and dissenting views from people within

the school district, the dates on which the school was approved and opened virtually mirror the dates recommended in the presentation.

Although a nomenclature may have only cosmetic utility for a particular cause or enterprise, the original name for the school_ as proposed by the organizing committee_ was "Abbotsford Academic Alternative School" (brief, Nov. 1994). Nonetheless, the name "traditional" was selected for the presentation to the Board, notwithstanding the nostalgic impression of the name, which, like "fundamental," envisages a sense of old-fashioned order and structure. The proposed name "Abbotsford Traditional School" became "King Traditional School," named after the former King Elementary School which had previously occupied the same site in rural Abbotsford.

The brief itself, a relatively succinct document with four summary pages and further detail, was distributed to the Board (Field, personal communication, 1998). It reveals the main arguments for a traditional school in Abbotsford, particularly the three continuing motifs of choice, education as training (preparation for work), and parental involvement. The introduction acknowledges these themes: "In recent years, parents have become increasingly concerned with how prepared their children will be when they leave the public system. Competition in the future economy will require solid skills and capabilities. Across the country parents are seeking alternatives to the public school system as evidenced by increasing numbers choosing home schooling or independent schools. It is important for parents to have a choice within the public school system. We believe that parents can work constructively with the local school district to establish a school that will deliver a consistent, structured education, with clearly defined standards of academic achievement. While

supporting the traditional values of home and society, the Abbotsford Traditional School would produce independent self-disciplined, life-long learners, ready to take their place in our ever changing society" (p. 1).

The Mission Statement, which was introduced early in the brief and was typed in bold face for emphasis, captures much of the inspiration for the school: "We believe that children will become responsible citizens, capable of achieving their goals, if they are given a consistent, structured education, with high academic standards, in an environment that supports traditional values of home and society" (p. 1). (The original draft had the word "good," rather than "responsible.") While subsequent pages of the brief provide additional details on the case for the school, the phrase "traditional values of home and society" is never actually defined. There may be an assumption, given the apparent common ethos of the adherents, that these values would be readily understood by prospective parents who would choose the school as an alternative to either their neighborhood catchment-area school, or one of three or four independent_ mostly Christian_ schools in the community.

In many way ways, the brief is a treatise of intense persuasion. The proponents used language that may be regarded as engaging and compelling. Perhaps because the case for a school of choice embedded in a public school system might be seen by some to be controversial or at least open to a degree of scrutiny, the writing style was relatively dispassionate and was apparently designed to raise a minimum of debate.

The first section, "Structure," stated, "(the school) would operate as a part of the Abbotsford public school system; spending per pupil would be the same as that currently within the district. The school would open under an open

catchment policy using a first come first served principle” (p. 2). Further, there would be “a school council (consisting of parents, teachers and the principal) which carry out the responsibilities of hiring a principal who shares and affirms the philosophy of the traditional school model. The council, headed by the principal, would hire teachers who would also share the philosophy of the school. The principal, teachers and parents would work together to achieve superior, measurable results” (p. 2).

A second section, entitled “Objectives,” provided eleven points that reveal the guiding philosophy of the school. Some of the key points are, as follows:

- ⟨ Direct instruction is favored.
- ⟨ Basic skill development emphasizing a consistent structured approach is stressed.
- ⟨ Regular reporting to parents is considered essential.
- ⟨ Mastery of knowledge (in measurable terms) in phonics, reading, comprehension, grammar, handwriting, mathematics, computer literacy, and others is supported.
- ⟨ Staff and student dress codes are considered important.
- ⟨ Books, materials, videos and related teaching source materials would be based on traditional values.
- ⟨ The school council would define standards of behavior emphasizing respect, honesty, courtesy, self-discipline, integrity, responsibility and citizenship.
- ⟨ The school would model and support the traditional values of home and society, and would adhere to the traditional roles of parents, teachers and administrators

In addition, the committee included a paragraph which perhaps may be seen as a response to anticipated opposition: “The School will not be strictly ‘back to basics,’ but will incorporate new methods and ideas into its traditional teaching methodology. The school is not elitist, not strict (sic) authoritarian, not

private nor based on religion. It is not an attack on our teachers or our school system. It is a school of choice” (p. 3).

An abbreviated (one-paragraph) summary explains that a committee has investigated the Langley Fundamental School and notes, “We believe that a similar school in Abbotsford would satisfy a large demand of Abbotsford students.” The authors cited educational choices such as French Immersion, International Baccalaureate, and New Beginnings (which permits students who drop out to re-enter the system), among others, as evidence that the traditional school would not be inconsistent with school district philosophies. Of the seven members of the Interim Council identified in the brief, five were the parents noted earlier, but the other two were Neil Muhtadi, the school district’s deputy superintendent, and a school trustee, Gerda Fandrich; in fact, Muhtadi is listed as the chair. In other words, notwithstanding the fact that a decision to approve a traditional school was still under consideration, the Board had already assigned a board member and a senior administrator to serve on the Interim Council. This may, in part, explain the expeditious decision made by the Board to endorse the recommended plan of action which was also included in the brief.

Teachers for Excellence in Education Brief

A letter and brief, disseminated to Abbotsford School Board members, were written by Helen Raham, executive director of a Kelowna-based organization, “Teachers for Excellence in Education” (1997). This material was received about a year after King Traditional had opened and offers some significant insights into the philosophy of an organization that would support campaigns for “schools of choice in British Columbia”. This is essentially the

same organization as the Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education" that provided funding for two pro-traditional/fundamental school studies, noted in Chapter Three of this dissertation.

The brief and accompanying letter made a case for schools like Abbotsford Traditional and embraced school-based management, which gives more authority_ and accountability_ to the individual public school. The key words, "flexibility and choice," in particular, were stressed and would certainly resonate with Abbotsford Traditional School adherents. The following extract addresses this subject: "The current level of satisfaction and debate over the performance of B.C. public schools could be defused if greater flexibility and open boundary enrolment policies were permitted within the system. This would allow a broader range of services and delivery models to be offered to students to overcome dissatisfaction with 'one size fits all' public schools" (p. 5).

Recommended Constitution

Subsequent to the school's approval and after the first year of operation, the Abbotsford School Board received a fairly extensive report containing a recommended "King Traditional Elementary School Parent Advisory Council Constitution". At their meeting held on June 23, 1997, the Board members adopted this constitution.

This is a significant document for two reasons: first, it is relatively unique because of the amount of detail; and, second, it reveals the foundational values of the school which will continue long after the "trailblazers"_ the founding families_ have completed their parental responsibilities at the school and their children have moved on to other schools.

The constitution consists of 16 sections and three appendixes. While much of the text may be regarded as common for this kind of structural document, there are nonetheless a number of sections which delineate the particular ethos of the school and its advocates. Matters such as the basis of membership, meeting quorum, the role of the chairperson, conduct at meetings, and election procedures, for example, are all discussed in some detail and have likely been taken from similar generic documents by other comparable bodies.

The first indicators of the distinctive characteristics of the school are found in the listing of the committees and their coordinators. The car pool coordinator_ which is an important function at the school because of the lack of any available busing_ is noted. In addition, the dress code committee coordinator is mentioned. King Traditional, at the time of the school's inception, was the only school in the district which prescribed the wearing of uniforms. (The two largest independent schools in Abbotsford also did not authorize uniforms for their students.) There is, in addition, a separate heading, "Dress Code," which details the expectations for the wearing of uniforms and the fact that the code is fully supported by the school's administration and staff.

Appendix A, the "Statement of Philosophy and Goals of the School", was written by the founding parents for the perusal and approval of the Board.

The school is "an alternate program"; nonetheless, it is stressed that the "prescribed curriculum and regulations of the British Columbia Ministry of Education will be followed."(All pages are unnumbered.)

The emphasis on structure and accountability at King Traditional School is accentuated at the outset:

⟨ A consistent, structured approach to instruction

⟨ Clearly defined standards of academic achievement

⟨ Clearly defined standards of behavior

The significance of consistency to the parents_ which has been noted elsewhere in this paper_ is an important aspect of the school's pedagogical philosophy.

The emphasis on the "triad" is stressed with the following sentence: "We believe that the school and the home must work together as partners for the benefit of our children." As an aside, the "our" makes transparent the origins for the philosophy and emphasizes the ownership that is felt by these parents.

The response to what is seen as a "liberalization" in the public school system, with greater focus on student-centered learning, is addressed through a section on "Respect" which speaks of taking responsibility for one's actions. Although, in context, it is apparent that these responsibilities are neither controversial nor novel, they are nonetheless emphasized in this appendix:

⟨ be on time

⟨ be prepared

⟨ listen to instructions

⟨ do assigned work

⟨ work in a way that does not infringe on the learning of others

⟨ listen and do not interrupt others who are speaking

⟨ respect and support others

⟨ avoid humiliating or belittling others, even if the intent is humor

⟨ treat others in a way that does not hurt them or cause them to be afraid

⟨ respect the personal property of others and accept their right of privacy

The contemporary matter of bullying, which seems to be increasingly significant in some schools, is addressed here.

Teaching methods, sometimes thought to be "off limits" for parents and more appropriately left under the auspices of educational professionals_ the Ministry, principal and teacher_ is addressed in some detail. Under the heading, "Teaching Methods and Techniques," a number of points are identified. These go the essence of King Traditional School and its disparate approach to public schooling:

- ⟨ a major focus on content and skills development
- ⟨ emphasis on all aspects of language development including phonics, spelling, grammar and whole language
- ⟨ differentiation of subjects with some coordination between topics
- ⟨ prescribed scope and sequence
- ⟨ standardized tests with authentic performance assessment
- ⟨ letter grades (in grades four through seven) with purposeful anecdotal reporting
- ⟨ direct instruction combined with some active and cooperative learning
- ⟨ competition through academic achievement, art, music, and athletic awards
- ⟨ the teacher's role as supervisor of learners
- ⟨ professional, collegial and collaborative relationships

The ordering of the points should perhaps be acknowledged in terms of the school's emphasis on a more "traditional" approach to education. "Whole language," which is sometimes identified as a modern "villain" and contrary to the convention of phonics, is placed at the end of the list of language development. Also, there is significant emphasis on the work of the individual student, and, as result, the cooperative approach to learning_ which has some contemporary resonance_ is subordinate to direct instruction (one on one). The differentiation of subjects is stressed, although "some coordination" is

accepted. Finally, the teacher is seen as a "supervisor of learners": A supervisor is a disciplinarian, not necessarily a team-builder, and is one who takes responsibility for the educational environment for the benefit of the students.

The constitution of King Traditional School is thus an unambiguous document which identifies some of the key elements of the school's unique characteristics. Whether these various areas are an accurate reflection of the authentic educational experience, and whether they were implemented to the full satisfaction of the parents, is another matter, and will be considered in a subsequent chapter.

The Ideal Principal

The School Board posting for the position of principal of Abbotsford Traditional School provided little detail on the uniqueness the school or the supposedly distinctive expectations for the principal. There are but two points in the entire posting that would suggest that the successful candidate would be expected to possess a particular set of skills for this setting :

- < A commitment to the effective schools model, structured instruction and active participation of parents in educating the child; and,
- < A commitment toward management for results.

In contrast to this relatively benign posting_ which nonetheless elicited a suitable candidate_ the founding committee had circulated a document in conjunction with its original proposal which details what it termed "the ideal principal for the Abbotsford Academic Alternative School." A number of points on this single page stand out. The principal was expected to:

- < Create an orderly and pleasant school climate with an academic focus
- < Value, respect and apply parental input, and see parents as allies

- ⟨ Be someone who fosters and believes that a student's self-esteem is based on success and mastery of skills
- ⟨ Believe in and uphold a high standard of behavioral expectations and social values, and be willing to follow through on disciplinary actions when a code of conduct is not upheld

A School of Choice

Following the approval of the school, and its subsequent opening in a relatively underutilized former elementary school, the original committee produced a six-page brief which reviewed the progress and the inspiration behind the school. This is a significant document because it acknowledges some of the issues and values of the proponents; it also speaks to the culture of Abbotsford's democratically elected School Board. The document in particular took issue with a number of educational trends in "The Year 2000", an initiative of the previous Social Credit provincial government: "Some specific concerns of these parents [those who advanced the traditional school] were Kindergarten dual entry, whole language, child-centered learning, cooperative learning, subject matter integration, and lack of attention to social values, respect and responsibility. These parents had a preference for systematic phonics, teacher-led instruction, subject differentiation, basic skills taught with standardized testing" (A School of Choice", 1996, p. 1).

In a later chapter in this dissertation, more detail will be provided on the real and cosmetic distinctions between a conventional catchment-area or neighborhood school, and the traditional school. However, the 1996 brief contained a list of six or seven points outlining the proponents' view of what *should* characterize an efficacious traditional school. Whether or not this list, in

fact, is representative of the pedagogical ethos of the actual school is entirely another matter. In addition, the document provides some further useful information on the social culture in the period leading up to the approval and subsequent opening of the school. It is a “capsule” history of the founding of the school. Under a section entitled “Developmental Steps Leading to Implementation,” the following was stated: “During the school year 1994/95, the group of concerned parents, *with the assistance of the School Board office* (italics added), set up a planning committee.” The committee published “traditional school information in the local media. The media received and presented this information favorably. Through several formal and informal methods of communication, public support increased rapidly” (p. 2). The brief acknowledges that not all community members were pleased with the direction the Board was to take with the rapid approval of the traditional school: “Though the entire process seems to have passed with minimal opposition, the opposite was true. Parents, teachers, community members, voiced concerns about the speed of the process, and the actual establishment of the school” (p. 2). The brief also notes that the Board decreed that a minimum enrolment of 165 students would be required before the school would be approved. This figure was easily achieved. Indeed, as history shows, there continues to be a large number of parents who wish to enrol their children at King Traditional School. In addition to the points noted earlier with regard to some unique aspects of the school, the brief includes a number of additional items which the authors seemed to regard as significant. These are as follows:

⟨ Letter grades in grades four to seven, with purposeful anecdotal reporting

- ⟨ Competition through academic achievement, art, music and athletic awards
- ⟨ Stress on the teacher's role as a supervisor of learners
- ⟨ A team approach, with home and school working together
- ⟨ An open catchment policy
- ⟨ A dress code

It is important to note that although the adherents rejected the term "Back to Basics" and apparently eschewed the "nostalgia" epitomized by the "traditional" nomenclature, they did, in fact, stress the differences between the conventional public school ethos found in Abbotsford and that of King Traditional: "As with networking, the school district and King are at opposite ends of the spectrum when it comes to teaching and learning changes. Where King emphasizes the maintenance of the old system (i.e., teacher delivery of information, standardized tests for assessing programs), the school district encourages a variety of instructional strategies such as cooperative learning and student directed learning" (pg. 4).

Reflecting on the school's success, the brief stated under the heading of Administrative Roles and Responsibilities: "King and the school board share the same vision in their support for alternative programs. There has been no significant change in focus or direction at the school district level, other than the addition of 'traditional' criteria in the hiring process of a school level administrator. Although King focuses on one specific philosophy of education, the school board is progressively open to a variety of educational approaches" (pg. 5). This rather comforting point, which seems to be intended to mollify some opponents of the school, is reflective of the School Board's position on alternative schools. As well as the more typical French immersion schools_ which are

pervasive in the province_ the Board has established fine arts schools and a school which takes a relatively new approach to secondary and introductory college education: the Career Technical Center, which is designed to assist motivated students to make a comfortable transition from high school to a college-level trades program.

Opponents and Community Feeling

Notwithstanding the presence of a long-standing fundamental school in neighboring Langley, the Abbotsford School Board had virtually no interest in considering a traditional (or fundamental) school in the period leading up to the successful lobbying made by the aggregation of parents in 1994. I refer here to a report dealing with the configuration of schools in the Abbotsford School District. This report, which was issued in March of 1992, provides a fairly detailed analysis of the contemporary educational and pedagogical issues of the day, including the adoption of the middle school model and year-round schooling. In the case of magnet schools, the report only addressed a fine arts school which already existed at the time. In fact, the only place in the report that the word "traditional" was used was when it was mentioned as an aside on an unnumbered page in the "Conclusions" section. So, it may be seen that there was only passing interest in the traditional/fundamental school concept at this time; it would take the initiative of a well-organized group of parents to introduce this type of "magnet school" to the community discourse.

While the King Traditional School proposal received a positive hearing almost immediately_ given that a senior staff person and an elected school trustee were appointed to a steering committee even before the Board gave its

official approval_ the proposal did not proceed without opposition. A group of residents claimed that their concerns regarding needed maintenance on an inner-city secondary school had not been addressed after 10 years of complaints. These views received coverage in the local press, and a lead editorial with the headline "Not the decision, but how it's done" (*Times*, Feb. 22, 1995, p. 5) questioned the proposal in light of other more long-standing financial needs. The editorial, in part, commented: "It looks like the school board didn't count on its decision on traditional schooling blowing up in its face. Angry people are confronting the school board Monday about its quick decision on approving \$87,000 to fix up King elementary so it can house the Abbotsford Academic Alternative. But, the parents of Abbotsford junior (secondary) make a telling point Monday when they ask, 'What about us?' They say they've been waiting for renovations for their school for 10 years." Interestingly, while the editorial did not contest the need for a traditional school, at least implying that there might be a perceived public demand, it did criticize the fact that a sum was budgeted and approved for the school even though the Board had yet to provide a public forum or any other way to gauge popular opinion. "What it (the school board) deserves to take the heat for is the apparently devious way in which it approved the school" (p. 5).

Perhaps one of the more animated critics of the traditional school initiative was the president of the Abbotsford District Parents Advisory Committee of the day. Carrie Vangaalen made presentations to School Board meetings at the time the school was approved, and even after it opened, and she also used the "Letters to the Editor" section of the local newspapers, the *Times* and the *News*, to enunciate her views. Within a little over a year after King Traditional School

opened, the approval of a second kindergarten class by the School Board again stirred a reaction in the community, as parents who were opposed made their views known at public board meetings. Vangaalen, according to one report, "was a thorn in the side of the school board all year on the issue, especially challenging the board to define how a traditional program differs from a regular program" (Kwantes, *News*, Jan. 2, 1997, g. C1).

While advocates could cite high demand for the school_ as witnessed by week-long campouts and high parent participation_ there was nonetheless criticism as parents and others felt that the traditional school would draw resources away from existing schools and undermine the public school system (Kwantes, *News*, Jan. 2, 1997).

District Survey

Abbotsford School District, in the years 1994-95 leading up to the approval of King Traditional School, authorized a survey of a selected group of parents who had expressed interest in this type of school. This was a significant study because it would provide what might be termed the "ammunition" for the consequent decision to proceed with the school, which was supported by a majority vote of the Board. The study was seen as an important indicator of the potential popularity of the school. As it turned out, the study was correct, and the school met with considerable interest, the "camping out for a week" phenomenon, which had also been in evidence in Langley Fundamental schools becoming a part of the community public education folklore.

While the sample in the survey_ 56 people_ is relatively small, the results are nonetheless useful in identifying some commonalities among parents of

prospective students for the school. The majority of those surveyed were families with children currently in the public system. In spite of the district's interest in encouraging home schooling families to consider the traditional school as a potential alternative, the sample, at least, provided little representation from that community.

I will provide an abbreviated analysis of this survey in the Appendix, which was distributed informally throughout the community. The survey, which was designed and printed at the School Board's administration office, was apparently not intended to elicit generalizable data, although it would appear that the anecdotal information obtained had a positive impact on the Board's decision. There were three times as many parents surveyed who had their children enrolled in public school compared to parents whose children were in the private system, and there were just three parents whose children were in home school (not including the "mix" recorded by some parents). However, the figures changed substantially when respondents indicated their options should the traditional school not be available. Under that scenario, those choosing public school dropped from 32 to 20, those saying they would choose private schools rose from 10 to 16, and those saying they would choose home schooling rose from 3 to 10. Six parents suggested they would look at a combination of public and home schooling. It may be seen, then, that the option of traditional schooling_ however respondents may have defined it was apparently attractive. Of course, it must be remembered that the survey was distributed to parents who had previously expressed interest in this type of schooling for their children; this was not a "random" survey.

The survey's first main question_ "What would you like to see emphasized at the traditional school?" _ was followed by numbered lines requesting up to three responses. Attempts to group the rather indiscriminate responses into general categories is risky, in that it may make assumptions and connections that were not intended. However, this must be attempted because the comments offer some significant insights. The most significant category in number of comments (36) appears to speak to standards regarding discipline and respect for teachers, others and self. There was also the view expressed that responsibility was important in order to build a sense of "community" at the school. The second most commonly cited category (25), "Basics in Learning," is both clear and complicated at the same time: It is clear because the phrase often approaches the status of a cliché, and it is complicated because it does not elaborate on the respondent's intentions. To put it another way, parents might have used such a phrase to capture a sense of what they thought might be lacking in their current schooling experience, but they might also have used it to identify what they saw as a malaise in education in general. The next two most significant categories selected by parents (tied for third with 10) were "academic excellence" and "parental input." Little elaboration is needed. The first echoes the remarks of the parents who had originally coalesced around the idea of a traditional school, who saw it as a way to address their concern that their present (public) schools did not offer sufficient academic rigor. Regarding the last category, the paradigm of traditional/fundamental schools is built strongly upon substantial parental involvement, and so it is not unexpected that this would receive a reasonably strong vote of support.

The balance of the comments in response to this question was quite diffuse. Many of the areas traditional school advocates wished to see emphasized were autobiographical; that is, they were seeking an education for their children that supposedly countered their experience at their own school. (The majority of respondents based their comments on their catchment-area public school.) There were essentially three areas they wanted to see emphasized. First were points that might be characterized as cosmetic or symbolic, such as desks in rows, uniforms, an open door policy (whatever is meant by this phrase) and moral conduct/code. Second were points that dealt with actual pedagogy; these would include: academic excellence, learning, results/student success, challenge/motivation, emphasis on certain subjects (such as music, computers, art and athletics), a safe place, and quality teachers. Third were points that might be considered more typically "traditional" home school: traditional academic standards, good "basic" education, consistent teaching standards, direct instruction, healthy competition, sequential learning, frequent exams and reporting on a child's progress, structured use of class time, consistent format and structure, and community, not government, directed. These points, to a large extent, may be assumed to be things that parents had found lacking in the schools their children were currently attending.

The second main question asked about "Parental concerns regarding children's education." Many of the responses to this question continue themes that were advanced in answer to the initial question. Here also, there were numbered lines requesting a maximum of three responses. The responses here were more specific and more prescriptive, and there was less "clustering", although a few categories were clearly favored. I will identify these. Under the

category "Instruction/Curriculum," two responses tied for first with seven responses each: "lack of emphasis on phonics or no phonics" and a concern that students were "not challenged." Six parents also selected the following: "More student-based activities/less group work ('too many projects on their own'; 'pairing/grouping of weak/strong students_ takes teacher responsibility') and less direct instruction." The continuing conflict between advocates of whole language (the teaching of literacy in a meaningful context, responsive to the growing level of the student's understanding, e.g. reading using authentic texts and writing using invented spelling) and phonics (which favors a more systematic and hierarchical approach to phonics in the belief that instruction in sound-symbol relationships is foundational to learning to read) is reflected in this discord (Harris & Hodges, 1995). One would suppose that those parents who found that their child was not being challenged would like more academic rigor, more opportunity to work harder. This sentiment is expressed in a number of other responses including, "above average students feel left out/neglected," "stronger achievement," "deadline dates and follow through" and perhaps "teaching real academics." The third most noted grouping of comments_ "More student based activities/group work: ('too many projects on their own'", 'pairing/grouping of weak/strong students_ takes away teacher responsibility') and less direct instruction" also indicates a desire for individual recognition, for the more academically competent student to be recognized and encouraged. The concern was more about individuality and less about cooperation and teamwork. (As will be acknowledged later in this chapter, the motto of the school, "With Hard Work Comes Freedom," is, in many ways, the foundational ethos of the school, or at least the public representation associated with the school, as

promoted by its advocates.) The issue of split grades and lack of structured learning, with five responses each, are the next grouping in significance. Interestingly, parental concern about split grades is compatible with the previous remarks regarding a lack of challenge or academic opportunity for more competent students. Parents, however, seemed particularly concerned about such an arrangement when their children were in the upper grade of the split ("combined grade," to use the official nomenclature)_ particularly if they were in a significantly smaller aggregation_ and they were apprehensive that the teacher would be more occupied with the needs of the younger students. The response "lack of structured learning" is a criticism of the student-centered approach, with its acceptance of teacher as facilitator rather than teacher as disciplinarian. The balance of the comments are rather random, but there is a measure of congruency among some. For example, a number of parents provided single responses which tended to coalesce around issues of discipline, structure and consideration of the good of the individual over the good of the collective. Some instances of these are as follows: "more direct supervision," "deadline dates and follow through," "inconsistencies with teachers' philosophies and standards," "work is not being completed," "stronger achievement," "lack of structured learning" and "lack of sequential learning."

The next heading deals with a set of issues that are often associated with traditional and fundamental schools:

"Atmosphere/Discipline." The most frequent response_ "discipline_ not consistent"_ received seven votes. Discipline, as has been noted, is one of the inherent aspects of the traditional school model that is sought by many parents. Several other responses reflect the same concerns: "lack of discipline in

classroom”_ which is essentially interchangeable with the most common response noted above_ “fear children will have no discipline,” “noisy and unstructured,” and “disrespect, swearing is tolerated.” Two responses, “teachers not receiving enough parental support with regard to poor behavior” and “poor communication between parent and child,” speak to the continuing issue of communication between the three “sides” to the educational paradigm, the parent, teacher and child, and how some parents have the view that this matter can be problematic in conventional catchment-area neighborhood public schools.

Under the heading Governance/Structure, again there is a recapitulation, to a large extent of some earlier remarks. In particular, the dominant response here is the “lack of parental involvement/lack of welcome in classroom to observe/lack of meetings.” The parents who gave these responses clearly aspired to be involved more in the education of their child; they valued consultation, and they wanted to be present to observe_ perhaps even scrutinize_ the teacher in the classroom. Parents who sent their children to one of the many independent schools in Abbotsford identified a critical lament with the simple one-word category: “cost.” For these parents, the allure of an education for their children similar to that offered by independent schools, at least in outward indicators such as school uniforms, but with no fees, was apparently quite attractive. Home schoolers desired social interaction, which is reflected in two points. The School Board assumed that a traditional school would have some allure for home schoolers, particularly because of the greater involvement of parents, which was a part of the original paradigm as formulated by the parents and the planning committee. Home schoolers are generally regarded as more conservative, and they might be inclined to consider an independent school as an

option_ especially if the institution shared their spiritual and moral values_ over a neighborhood public school. It is therefore not surprising that the traditional school was attractive to parents who had contemplated home schooling and/or an independent (religious) school. More will be discussed on this matter in a later chapter.

The School Board

The impetus for King Traditional School, as noted, came from a relatively small number of female parents. Their remarks, based on a series of interviews (conducted specifically for this dissertation) are particularly useful in revealing some of the ethos and philosophical bases. As well, their values and their approaches to public education are in many ways congruent with those of the seven-member School Board, and it will be of interest to compare their comments and those of the elected school trustees, six of whom I also interviewed. I have allowed the various individuals to “speak for themselves” and reveal their views without comment. (Some editing of their remarks is required, however, for reasons of clarity and precision.) There were four questions asked of the school trustees and, for the most part, they addressed these subjects in a reasonably unequivocal fashion. Some responses sometimes “ran into each other,” and this is acknowledged, in part, by the way the remarks are recorded. These questions are as follows: 1) What is your educational philosophy? 2) What has been your experience with education? 3) Why does the traditional need to be separate? 4) What is the school’s purpose?

Abbotsford School Board has seven members and is a relatively stable body. Trustees, once elected, tend to serve for extended terms; in fact, the Board

that approved the first traditional school for the community in 1994, except for one member_ who successfully sought a seat on Abbotsford city council_ was the same group that continued to serve almost a decade later. It should be noted, too, that all but one member of the School Board concurred with the committee recommendation that the school be approved. At the board table, at least, there was little controversy over the matter, and, as will be noted, there was early consensus on the advisability of such a decision.

Joanne Field

The first school trustee to be interviewed, uniquely, had what might be termed a dual role in the process. On the one hand, she was one of the original mothers who formed the core committee that enthusiastically advanced the cause of the school and on the other hand, she would be elected to the Abbotsford School Board in a general election after the school was opened and enrolling area children. Joanne Field continues to serve on the Board to this day. Her electoral success may be attributed, in part, to the rather high profile she received as a result of her efforts to establish the traditional school. As well, given the social circles of the School Board of the day, and their general influences, it may also be seen that her contacts and dialogue with the Board could have had a positive impact on her capacity to be seen as a viable candidate for the Board.

Joanne Field was open to responding to the questions although her replies sometimes blended with others as she reflected on what she had shared. Her educational philosophy seems to be particularly motivated by her sense that parents should be more involved in the education of their children; she notes,

“There has to be some sort of balance between the parents’ versus the public responsibility to provide a public education. The system is making too many assumptions and over-riding the parents’ input.” While the school that opened as King Traditional was in part a result of her efforts, she allows that the school does not completely represent her philosophy of education. She says, “The model of classical education appeals to me” but does not define her terms. The school’s motto, “With Hard Work Comes Freedom” (which she wanted in Latin) is something she enthusiastically endorses, and she believes it reflects the more disciplined approach to education that is found at the school.

As for her own educational experience, she notes that her elementary school experience in Ontario was “good” and that she did well at school. Interestingly, she says, “If I had any weaknesses, it was probably my lack of discipline. My parents were results oriented, and if I didn’t get a high mark, my Dad, who was a businessman, would be upset.” Although she says she worked hard and valued education, she began a degree in psychology at Lakehead University, but did not graduate.

In speaking to some of the motivation that prompted some parents to pursue the traditional school for Abbotsford, she mentions the Year 2000 initiative, which was a province-wide educational approach of a former Social Credit government in the mid-nineties. “That’s what heightened my interest_ and I had already come to the conclusion that I did not like whole language, because I don’t think it works.”

In addition, in addressing the need for a traditional school, and its purpose, Field is a spirited supporter of choice in public education: “I think there should be as many choices in the public school system as the public demands. It

is a matter of equality_ there is no equality if there is no choice. Why shouldn't there be open funding? And, I do believe in vouchers."

Field, who had lived in Abbotsford for less than three years when the traditional school initiative was proposed, says, "I've never been in a town with more Christians_ I would say about 70 per cent of the parents are Christians, and the school reflects their input." She also notes, "There are more Indo-Canadians at King Traditional than in some other public schools in our community."

Field, at the time of the interview, was open to the idea of a traditional high school_ which has since been approved by the school district_ and is also sensitive to the fact that home schoolers are apparently more comfortable with the traditional school in contrast to the neighborhood public school. "Home schoolers can't afford to send their children to a private school, but do not like the public system_ some home schoolers feel the public system failed them."

John Smith

John Smith, a senior banker with the Abbotsford branch of the Hong Kong Bank of Canada, had been a school trustee for 17 years at the time of the interview. He is originally from England and moved to Canada, where he married a Canadian woman who is now a teaching assistant for the Abbotsford School District. He has four children, all of whom went through the public school system. Smith is quite open to sharing his views and, at times, seems to offer views that are intentionally controversial. His first remark seems to affirm this view: "The issue of the traditional school is polarizing society (in Abbotsford)

along liberal-conservative lines; the traditional school is symptomatic of the bigger issues in North American education, in every jurisdiction.”

Smith seems to have considerable rapport for the traditional school model, at least as it is articulated by supporters: “There is widespread dissatisfaction with the public school system, and there are disaffected parents. There is also the perception that the public school system is failing children, that it is producing illiterates. There is a lack of discipline in schools today and teachers may be unwilling or unable to enforce it.”

He continues by offering some insights into his own philosophy with regard to schools of choice: “I think charter schools are a vote of no confidence in public schools, and I passionately believe in choice schools, for example, such as fine arts, traditional, or a language program. When you have a state-sanctioned monopoly, the best thing to do is to provide a wide range of choices. The BCTF (British Columbia Teachers Federation) is opposed to choice, but I think they are in denial.”

Smith, as a businessperson, draws upon this experience when relating to the school district’s status with regard to the independent schools that flourish in Abbotsford: “With choice available, we steal children away from the private schools_ as a banker, it is my job to put the competition out of business_ call it a ‘killer instinct’. I want to put MEI (Mennonite Educational Institute, the largest independent school in the community) out of business. I want to put all private schools out of business. I don’t like losing clients.”

Smith disagrees with Joanne Field with regard to the voucher system, which has some currency among parents who support independent schools: “If we don’t adopt this approach (the availability of choice), we will get the voucher

system, which is the biggest threat we have. I do not want the voucher system because it will severely damage public education. The voucher system would foster elitism_ one level for the poor, one for the rich. The public schools would suffer." He is candid, however, with regard to the ideological assumptions about vouchers: "From a free enterprise view, I suppose I would have to argue for the voucher system."

Smith acknowledges that King Traditional has values that are in accord with those of many members of the community. "Abbotsford is a conservative school district, and we hire our teachers carefully. And I do know that some teachers are hurt when they know that parents line up for one week to register their children at King Traditional School."

Phonics seems to be an important consideration for so many individuals that have some sympathy with King Traditional, and Smith is no exception: "I am concerned about whole language without phonics. Some of those in the educational system believe you can go to whole language without a lot of phonics. Students never learn to spell properly. At King Traditional, they are concerned with whole language. Overall, I think there are three points that parents are worried about which are stressed at the traditional school: too much whole language, not enough discipline, and not enough structure."

He adds, "Our school district would never have started the school if there had not been the pressure_ our clients are the parents and you can't ignore them. King Traditional is just one of 48 schools in our district. I also think that opposition to the traditional school is based on political and doctrinaire grounds, not pragmatic grounds. There is no extra cost to the taxpayer. Even the BCTF in

its publications have spoken in favor of choice such as art schools and trade schools.”

Lynne Harris

Lynne Harris, who was first elected to the School Board in 1987, has five daughters, all of whom went through Abbotsford School district schools. A nurse by training, she has a degree in that discipline from the University of Manitoba. Her philosophy of education is “success for all”, and she adds that she is aware that will mean different things to each student in the educational system. She notes that she worked hard in school and was an only child, so that her father, an RCMP officer, had “high hopes” for her. “King Traditional School is consistent with my educational philosophy,” she says. “I believe that choice is a given_ parents want different things for their children, and it is based upon their values. If a school meets their needs, I have no problem with that; in fact, I accept it.”

With regard to the supposed uniqueness of the traditional school, she comments: “There is a perceived difference, but I’m not sure how different the school really is. It is unclear to me, other than the obvious, the visible, just how deep the difference is. The curriculum is the same at every school in the district.” She asserts that there are other schools in the district that have some teachers and classrooms that have what she calls “traditional qualities” which are just as apparent as those found at King Traditional. “The classroom teacher, and to some extent the administrator, sets the tone in the school,” she notes.

Harris also concurs with John Smith with regard to the competitive environment for student recruitment: “It has been obvious to all of us as trustees

that we are in the business of education and so we don't want to put students out into the private system_ we want to retain them in the public system. I don't have any problems with schools of choice. It's getting hard for us to meet all the needs of students at their local school, so I'm not opposed to magnet schools." She points at that some secondary schools emphasize fine arts while others stress science and math.

As to the assertion by some detractors that a traditional school is "elitist," she responds with some measure of sympathy: "It can't help but be elitist to some extent, but no more than French immersion. Transportation is the big issue, and parents must drive their children to any schools of choice. There are some kids with parents who don't care, but King Traditional parents take a real interest."

Notwithstanding her endorsement of the school, she says, "I don't think the parents even know what it is they think is different about the traditional school. Perhaps it is the personalities in a particular class that make the difference. Parents may not say what their reasons (for selecting King Traditional for their children's education) really are."

Don Szostak

Don Szostak was first elected to Abbotsford School Board in 1990, having moved to Abbotsford in 1987. He is married with three children who have been students in district schools. His mother was a nurse, and his Dad was a research analyst and completed his university education through night school. Szostak is an electrical engineer_ with a degree from the University of Saskatchewan_ and

worked for 12 years for Saskatchewan Power. He also lived in Toronto and in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

With regard to his educational philosophy, he says: "Education is the key to freedom_ if you want to keep people down, and keep them poor, don't give them any education. If you can read and think for yourself, then you can succeed." He continues, "The purpose of education is to teach people to think and think critically_ to come to conclusions based on as much input as you can get. To do any less is to indoctrinate."

Szostak agrees with Joanne Field's endorsement of vouchers: "I am in favor of the voucher system which would be good for one year's education wherever the parent chooses. This is a sore point with me_ that the government does not give people (parents) the opportunity to choose. "For example, there is MEI (Mennonite Educational Institute). They get half the operating funding of public schools, but they must pay 100 per cent of the capital; this is blatantly unfair. It is presumptuous for the government to think it knows what is best for every kid. Choice, to me, is very important. I believe the Ministry of Education should also fund the capital budgets of independent schools."

He is quite sympathetic to King Traditional School: "I happen to lean toward the King Traditional model," he says. He does acknowledge that a key challenge with the school is the lack of bus transportation, although he believes the parents' initiatives with car-pooling is resolving some of the obstacles.

He is also candid in his sensitivity to the role that area Christian parents play at King Traditional: "I know there's a lot of Christians who send their children there_ the philosophy of the school relates to the philosophy of those

parents. Of course, Christian values can't be taught there, teachers can't proselytize. But why can't we call it a Christian school? They do it in Edmonton."

Szostak does believe King Traditional is dissimilar to other, catchment-area public elementary schools in the District: "There are tangible differences at King Traditional, especially the air of respect. I think it had a lot to do with the staff and the parental support. The staffing issue is a problem, and the union sees it as elitist, as a public Christian school."

He is in accord with a number of other trustees who are comfortable with the school's accentuation on structure and phonics: "I think parents want structure_ they want their children to learn the basics. This includes phonics. Whole language doesn't work, it is New Age thinking. It is like teaching a person to drive a car without knowing what operates it under the hood." "I'd like to make all schools traditional," he comments. "Teaching students the basics_ you can do that without being pedantic or boring. It (education) is a joke today_ students don't even know the basics."

As to the aggressive espousal by the relatively small cadre of parents, he says, "The Abbotsford School Board would never have created the school if there wasn't the lobbying." In addition, with regard to the recruitment of the school's principal, he notes the unique involvement of parents in the enterprise: "Parents had more input in the selection of the principal. The four candidates met with a group of people, including five prime movers for the school."

Cathy Goodfellow

Cathy Goodfellow, was born in Abbotsford, and had two children go through the public school system in the French Immersion program. At the time

of the interview, she was serving a second term on School Board. She is a graduate of UBC with a B.A. in psychology and she has been a travel agent, a realtor, and more recently, an entrepreneur with the ownership of a small restaurant in the city's downtown core.

In attempting to summarize her philosophy of education, she says: "I'm a strong believer in the public educational system which should strive to be all things to all people. I want to make sure that every learner has the opportunity to succeed." As for independent schools_ which are well represented in Abbotsford_ she notes, "I think private schools offer a valuable alternative. What distinguishes a private school in our community is the religious component, and that is something we cannot do in public education."

Goodfellow, was the only trustee_ out of seven_ not to vote in favour of the traditional school. Her support for schools of choice is apparently limited to French immersion and the Career Technical Center, which is a joint project of School District #34 and the University College of the Fraser Valley. "I voted against King Traditional because when I spoke to the individual parents to find out what they wanted, I had a lot of difficulty separating their requests compared to any neighborhood school in Abbotsford. Phonics and uniforms could be handled within the local school, so I could not find a reason to support this stand-alone school. I also went to see the Langley Fundamental School, but I couldn't see much difference there, either. As a school trustee, I thought that we could address the parents' concerns in their neighborhood school, and I think abandoning a problem is a poor way to solve it. But I was certainly lobbied aggressively by the parents."

She believes that some of the traditional motifs are already found at other schools and apparently thinks that is largely dependent on the expectations and style of the principal: "There are a lot of schools in our district that run a traditional delivery style_ Thomas Swift Elementary would be an example. I think it depends on the principal; her or she will attract teachers with a similar philosophy."

The voucher system, as advanced by some other trustees, is not endorsed by Goodfellow, who says, "I don't support the voucher system. In a sense, if you do not have catchment areas for schools, then you have a kind of voucher system. I think vouchers could create antagonism, and power could be wielded inappropriately. The current provincial government policy which provides 50 per cent operating funding for private schools is fair because of the religious instruction that is taught."

Once King Traditional School was approved, she no longer registered her opposition. She comments, "Once the school was established, I supported it. The parents are being served well, and they have created a school that suits them. They do have a very active Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). I do believe, however, that these parents have created an insulated, protected school. I do not see a lot of diversity there. They are trying to create an environment of uniformity_ a lot of the students are similar, it is a homogeneous place. I would prefer to have a school environment which has diversity."

"Judging by Langley's experience, I think King Traditional will last," she says.

John Sutherland

John Sutherland, a school trustee since 1983, is a former professor at Trinity Western University, a private Christian college in nearby Langley. He subsequently accepted a management position with the Christian Labour Association of Canada in Surrey. He was born in Ontario and has an M.B.A. from Queens University. His wife is a teacher in the District although his children have attended Mennonite Educational Institute at certain times while he was serving on the Abbotsford School Board. He was the chair of the board, in 1994, when the school was approved.

In addressing his philosophy of education, he says, "My belief is that children must have the opportunity to be educated in order to best meet their needs, abilities and aspirations_ from special ed to the gifted. No child should be left out."

With regard to the general availability of schools of choice, as opposed to the neighborhood catchment-area schools, he notes, "The vast majority of students will be educated in the public system. It is accountable, and parents need to have their say, but they are not experts. I know some people criticize schools of choice, but not everyone fits the model, so I think some diversity should be permitted. Alternatives have to be educationally viable and affordable, and they cannot diminish the education of others."

In considering the arguments for the school and the case made by certain parents, he says, "I had reservations about the tone of the proponents_ some of their comments were offensive. They made many personal issues for their proposal, but it didn't bother me. I did not find that the school was elitist."

“King Traditional was assigned to an empty building (an unused elementary school), so that was attractive to the board. The school attracted a whole wad of students back into the system who otherwise would have been out of it_ there was a return on investment.”

Sutherland responds to some critics of the school who contend that it is an attempt to embed a private school in the public system: “It is not a pretend Christian school; that is boloney. I understand that about 2/3 are religious, and 1/3 are not, so I just don’t buy the Christian thing. The two biggest differences in the school are the much broader parental consensus and involvement, and the overall focus, across the school, on certain teaching methods. But, I do believe these same approaches are also used at some other neighborhood schools such as Ten-Broek Elementary, which has a similar style.”

Robin Arden

Abbotsford School District superintendent Robin Arden, the only staff person who reports directly to the board, was a key individual at the time of the implementation of King Traditional School. His responses to some of the queries are useful to understanding the appeal of the school and also the process of approval. Arden is a former district principal; he was appointed superintendent in January 1995 as the school was under consideration.

Arden makes a case for “site-based management,” which he says gives autonomy to individual schools. “I don’t know what’s best for King Traditional_ the principal knows better than I do; this also allows applies to Barrowtown (another rural school on the far eastern end of the community).”

“Today I find that parents are the child’s best consumer of their education. So, if the child is having trouble at school, the parent will shop around. Some parents will go around to two or three schools_ this is not unusual. Parents are a big factor today, and principals need to know to know their power. At King Traditional, there is a huge expectation, and the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) is the largest in our school district. It is not unlike a private school.”

Arden, in acknowledging the unique ethos of the school’s proponents, says there is a perception that there are a large number of Christians involved: “There is the perception that there are a higher proportion of Christians involved in the school, and I would say that it is true_ it is a school of choice. And, I personally favor schools of choice. We (in the school district) would like to put the private schools out of business.”

As for the uniqueness of the school, he cites some of the more common cues, or characteristics, which will be deconstructed in a later chapter. “There is respect and a culture of expectations of behavior. All students stand up to speak to the teacher from their desk. There is also more consistency in teacher strategies from class to class, unlike other schools in the district. Volunteers are very important in the school_ parents are involved.”

At the time of the interview, Arden indicated that the School Board would entertain the idea of additional traditional schools. (In subsequent years_ which are outside the realm of the study_ the board, in fact, would authorize further traditional schools.)

The Founding Parents

I now turn to a brief analysis of the remarks of a number of key parents who played a critical role in the creation of the school during the years 1994-95. As noted, a core group of four mothers may be regarded as the genesis, the nucleus, for the traditional school initiative. I do not argue that their views can simply be juxtaposed upon the remarks of the school trustees and the superintendent who responded in an expeditious fashion to the original inquiry and subsequent lobbying. I also wish to acknowledge that the intriguing matter of religious congruencies, which has been alluded to by a number of trustees, cannot be adequately canvassed because of the difficulty in seeking this information in an inoffensive manner. People's beliefs are to some extent "out of bounds", and it is difficult to glean such information unless it is volunteered or introduced into the discussion in a contextual manner. I therefore, cannot address this matter other than in a purely anecdotal fashion.

In the case of the parents, there were eight questions that were presented to interviewees: 1) What is your philosophy of education? 2) What was your experience of education, particularly in your elementary school? 3) How did you find out about King Traditional School? 4) What attracted you to the school? 5) Now that your children have attended the school, have you been satisfied with the experience? 6) What, in particular, do you like about the school? 7) If King Traditional School was not available, what other educational options would you consider for your children? 8) Would you be in favor of a traditional high school? Notwithstanding the discreet nature of these questions, respondents, as in the case of the school trustees and the superintendent, sometimes either "blended" their responses or moved quickly from one topic to the next.

Iris Rodrigues

Iris Rodrigues may be considered the original “spark” which precipitated the ultimate inauguration of King Traditional School. Her apparent dissatisfaction with her neighborhood public school, which resulted in a written to the editor of the Abbotsford News in early 1994, led to phone conversations, meetings and, eventually, the coalescing of a small group of like-minded women who would efficaciously lobby the Abbotsford School District. Although she would later break with her original colleagues and indeed would completely dissociate herself from the school, her views nonetheless are particularly provocative as they reveal some of the tensions experienced in some measure by proponents during the school’s seminal years.

With regard to her philosophy of education, she says, “Education should expose children to new things_ education works best when the individual student is being challenged to reach his or her potential.”

She comments that her experience in school was “very positive.” German-born, her parents did not speak English, and she says that they were not involved in her education. Her younger years were spent in Ontario: “I attended a public school in Mississauga_ we wore uniforms, and the school was very structured, although the teachers were kind. It was a good experience for me.”

Her experience in the Abbotsford school system, which was apparently disappointing, was based exclusively on her son’s schooling at Mountain Elementary, which is located in what is generally regarded as the most affluent area of Abbotsford. The area is relatively new with large homes on the high hills facing south and southwest with vistas of Mount Baker and the pastoral Sumas Prairie farming area. “I wanted my son moved from Mountain Elementary,

where he was in grade four," she says. "The principal refused, and I was told I could move if I didn't like it. I later saw a TV program on traditional schools, so I wrote a letter expressing some concerns to the *Abbotsford News*, and, to my surprise, four women made contact: Karla Nelson, Kim Dirksen, Lisa Le Gear and Joanne Field. Joanne also had children in the same school, and we later met in my kitchen to discuss the matter."

Rodrigues had a number of issues with one teacher at her neighborhood school which apparently were sufficiently concerning for her to share her sense of anguish with others through the popular press. "I had documented evidence," she says. "My son had a final essay which had 32 spelling mistakes_ even so, he got an 'A'. The teacher had bad spelling. And, you could call her by her first name, and you could even eat in her class whenever you wanted. There were 12 parents who wanted their children moved out of her class; she later left to teach in another district. I think it is just repulsive that a teacher like that can just move on to teach in another school district."

She uses rather strong language to express her views on education in general: "Our school system has become a babysitting service. Many parents want schools that teach respect and have student uniforms. We could have had such a school with King Traditional, but it never really happened. There should be only single grades with smaller classes, and there should be much more parental involvement. Academically, the school should do more, I also think the school should have been marketed to rich and poor_ I was disappointed because none of these things happened."

As noted, her affection for the school would diminish, and her parting with the original group would cause her to distance herself dramatically from

the original initiative: "I think the present school is no different than any other school as far as the goals we had. We returned to Mountain, our local school, for grade seven. It was quite heart-breaking to see that has happened at King; it had become a religious school. Joanne Field has used the school to promote herself as a school trustee. When we originally began discussing it, we never planned on building a Christian school."

She also expresses the opinion that boys are more difficult to persuade to make a change of school, so that King, in her view, had 70 per cent girls and 30 per cent boys: "In my son's class, there were only five boys."

Although she had a great affection for the original principal, Marg McDonough, whom she calls "incredible," she is less enthusiastic for the teachers because they did not necessarily share the school's vision: "We had staff at the school that did not believe in the philosophy; one of the teachers had a child at another school in the district, for example. Social skills were not instructed at the school, and I found that disappointing."

The academic emphasis was a source of some concern for Rodrigues, who apparently expected it to contrast more to the style of schooling she experienced at Mountain Elementary. "I was not happy with the school (King Traditional) academically. We compared my son's work at King Traditional with Mountain, and there was no difference in the amount of homework. Students did not get tested more at King. The school is more structured, and students do stand to speak, but academically there is not much difference. My son was only in the school for grade six. When he came home, he still played with the neighborhood kids. He loved the principal, but hated his teacher."

She cites Meadowridge in Maple Ridge as a school that appeals to her: "If we were rich, we would have looked at Meadowridge_ I always wanted a nonreligious private school."

Lisa Le Gear

Lisa Le Gear, who grew up in the neighboring community of Chilliwack, was also a member of the original parent aggregation which lobbied for King Traditional School. Three of her children attended King Traditional.

With regard to her philosophy of education she says, "Education is learning how to learn_ learning how to obtain information. Then you know where to go. Education should help you to comprehend everything, to not be afraid to go out after something. Education can also help with the social side of life."

She notes that her elementary school experience was positive: "Elementary education was good for me. My parents gave me no support; my father was very busy, and my mother was detached. So, now I'm trying to be more interested in my children's lives."

The schism between the four women and Iris Rorigues is noted by Le Gear, who apparently attributes the tensions to be more a matter of finding what was best for Rodrigues's son: "Iris worked hard for the school at the start, but her son had problems and was in five different schools in two years."

While La Gear is enthusiastic about King Traditional School, she notes: "I didn't really know much about traditional schools. I liked the uniforms and the focus on mathematics. There is zero tolerance of bad behaviour, and there is no bullying."

In the balance of her relatively brief responses, she expresses her support for the promotion of hard work at school: "I feel our children should be pushed to the nth degree, but sometimes this is not the case." She also seems to admire an independent school also mentioned by Iris Rodrigues: "I would have looked at Meadowridge School in Maple Ridge. There are probably eight kids from King who are now attending Meadowridge. They are very academically focused and strict_ plus they also have uniforms."

Kim Dirksen

Kim Dirksen, another member of the originating group, is a resident of Mission and grew up in Abbotsford. She is the mother of seven children, most of whom are attending or have attended King Traditional School.

In addressing the matter of her philosophy of education, she says: "The teacher teaching the three "R's", not a lot of the sex thing, for example. There are areas that should be left to the home. At school there should be a strong academic foundation, and accountability by students for their actions."

Her elementary experience was apparently not that efficacious: "My mom and dad were helpful, but today's parents are more involved in their children's education. I felt that I was one of the kids who slipped through the cracks, like in the case of math, for example. I didn't fail it, but I did become insecure. In high school I was floundering, but my math teacher helped me."

Dirksen's experience in the public school system led to her openness to what would later become the traditional school model: "My oldest boy in school had no problem in the regular public school classes; my next son was in school when the Year 2000 program hit. There were new programs, and out went the

old reader. He was not learning to read, and phonetics were not being taught. It never got better, and I noticed no proper punctuation was being taught. He was slipping through the cracks. The teacher said to me, 'Don't worry. I don't know why you're upset. The sentence has a beginning, a middle, and an end.' But I said to myself, 'Something is not right here.' My son had learning disabilities. Another teacher in the school agreed with me, but she was the only one. Today, I think the average learner does need more structure, and I believe education has just too much artsy stuff."

She acknowledges that it was the initial letter to the editor by Iris Rodrigues in a local Abbotsford newspaper that prompted her to make contact and accept a role on the original committee.

Dirksen indicates that she is "happy with the school" and had not been pleased with the treatment she had received at her own local public school. "There were problems at Blue Jay, our neighborhood school. I met with the principal, but he just crunched on an apple when I met with him. The school lacked strong leadership. But at King it is different. The principal is a strong leader, and kids get a strong foundation which is carried out continuously from year to year. There is good accountability at the school, and the children show respect for one another. It is also nice that the national anthem is sung every day."

While Dirksen expresses an interest in independent schools such as Mennonite Educational Institute and Abbotsford Christian School, she notes, "Private school might have been an option, but I wasn't sure about the academics at these schools."

Karla Nelson

Karla Nelson, another parent in the original group, is a mother of three children. She received a portion of her schooling in the United States, and indicates that she was an early supporter of the traditional school.

In identifying her educational philosophy, she says, "To be educated is a life-long process, not just in school. Education gives you the tools you need to survive, to be a contributing member of society, whatever your formal education. You don't have to have a formal education to make a contribution to society."

As for her educational experience as a child, she says: "My parents were extremely supportive of my education. I liked it in the States and went to school in Grand Forks, North Dakota. Dad did not graduate from high school, but Mom did, so, for her, schooling was a priority. Homework was important, and we were always taught to be respectful. I was quite shy but liked school. We had corporal punishment, and I remember that when I colored outside the lines, I got smacked with a ruler."

Nelson's interest in traditional schooling was precipitated by the reading of two newspaper articles: one, dealing with traditional schools, was published in the *Vancouver Sun*, and the second was the letter, mentioned earlier, written by Iris Rodrigues in the *Abbotsford News*. The letter, in particular, led her to take action. "I phoned Iris and we discussed our concerns. Joanne Field was also involved, and Lisa Le Gear joined us later. The initial public meeting was held at Abbotsford Senior Secondary School in October 1994. Forty people were in attendance. From that meeting we got a list of names. We also had a booth in the mall. We made our proposal to the board in January, and it was approved in

principle. Neil Muhtadi, the deputy superintendent, was assigned to work with us on the school.”

The matter of discipline was an important issue at the time, according to Nelson: “I had friends with children in different schools in the district, and there was a general concern about discipline. In many cases, the children were working below their grade level. There were also several children in grade four who couldn’t tell the time. My daughter, whom I home schooled could read better in preschool than some students in the primary grades. I was worried she wouldn’t get help in public schools.”

She is critical of the school district’s approach to selecting teachers for the school. “Some of the teachers at King Traditional were placed at the school because of union seniority_ they don’t necessarily buy into the school’s philosophy. I think there should be a bit more autonomy to permit the hiring of teachers because of the special kind of delivery of education.” The consistency of teaching style is of particular interest to Nelson, who likes the greater discipline and respect for teachers and fellow students. She adds, “Students know what is expected from year to year.”

She had originally home schooled her daughter, whom she had registered with Cornerstone Christian School, a relatively small school in central Abbotsford.

Conclusion

I will now provide a capsule inventory of some of the more significant themes that emerge from this study of the early days of King Traditional School.

First, it was truly a “bottom up” school; that is, parents had not only initiated the school and lobbied aggressively for its creation, but they also assumed a significant role in the selection of the principal and maintained ongoing involvement through an active Parent Advisory Committee (PAC). “Regular reporting to parents” was also a feature of the school.

Parents were thus seen as allies in the education of their children. King Traditional was a school that strongly affirmed the value of the “triad”, in which education was seen as a cooperative and supportive relationship between the parent, teacher and student. This was a “team approach,” with home and school working together. This emphasis on the significant role of parents in the education of their children was very much consistent with a similar emphasis at the two fundamental schools discussed in Chapters Four and Five. King Traditional, like Langley Fundamental and John Marshall Fundamental in Pasadena, can be seen as a response of parents to the “status quo.” Parents had identified that the alternatives in the public system would not meet their needs as they saw them.

Second, as in Pasadena and Langley, the supporters of the traditional school in Abbotsford wanted “quality” education, which means a more traditional education. Just as John Marshall Fundamental School was a reaction against the open classroom concept, King Traditional School was a response to the “Year 2000” initiative. Parents, in particular, were not pleased with what they perceived as the Year 2000’s more liberal approach to education, which, among other things, included a de-emphasis on phonics and basic math skills. In place of the Year 2000 approach, parents wanted letter grades (for intermediate students), greater academic competition, an emphasis on the teacher as

supervisor of learners, more direct instruction and less group work, a focus on mastery of the knowledge of a particular subject, and an emphasis on phonics (as opposed to whole language).

Third, like supporters of the fundamental schools in Pasadena and Langley, supporters of King Traditional School wanted a strong emphasis on high standards of behavior and discipline. The respect that was nurtured at home was to be matched at the school; students would stand at their places when addressing adults and also request the opportunity to speak in a classroom setting. There would be a dress code, which would, uniquely, mean uniforms in a public school. The school environment was to reflect the “traditional values of home and society.”

Fourth, although the evidence is anecdotal, it is clear that there was a significant group of parents among the school’s supporters who would identify themselves as “Christians” – just as there was among the supporters of Langley Fundamental School and perhaps John Marshall Fundamental School. This bloc of religious adherents would play a significant role in the life of the school. They were people who would likely have chosen independent schools or home schooling had King Traditional not been approved.

Fifth, patriotism would also be a characteristic of the new school, as evidenced by the regular flag-raising ceremony and the daily singing of the national anthem.

Chapter Seven

The Early Years of King Traditional School: its Struggle to Achieve Acceptance, an Examination of the School's "Ethos in Action"

With the opening of the King Traditional School in time to enroll students in September of 1995, the fulfillment of the aspirations of a number of Abbotsford parents had now been achieved. In many ways, the attainment of this ambition was the "climax" to the lobbying, the meetings, the activities, and the school district's deliberations and planning. King Traditional had literally swept onto the educational landscape of the community. Now, however, the majestic dream had effectively been transformed into a reality which could be judged by a watchful community. Indeed, King Traditional had initially been seen as an educational experiment—but could it be expected to flourish and grow within the context of public education? This chapter deals with the first three years of the school's existence, with particular emphasis on the first twelve months. I will rely, to a great extent, on the popular press, the *Abbotsford News* and the *Abbotsford Times*, for a record of the community reaction of the day. As well, certain informed observers—those with a particular interest in the school and its origins—will be canvassed in this chapter. In addition, in early 1998, King Traditional successfully participated in an accreditation process. I will provide some relevant details on this accreditation, based on the original documents that were provided to me by the government-assigned consultant who performed the assignment. An initially unsuccessful attempt to establish a traditional secondary

school will also be briefly examined, although it is generally extraneous to the scope of this study. This initiative, to secure a traditional secondary school patterned on King Traditional, was pursued by some parents. It was considered (and not approved) by the Abbotsford School Board within two years after King Traditional had opened.

Initial Criticism

As noted earlier, the leadership of Marg McDonough, the school's principal, would have a dramatic impact on the school's ascendancy. McDonough, who was recruited specifically for the position from outside the school district, became the leader who would implement the parental vision, and it would be her on-site leadership that would ultimately build the school's credibility. Her public relations skills would be a major asset as the school grew in popularity with those parents who saw King Traditional as a legitimate alternative to either another district elementary school or an independent school located in the City of Abbotsford.

It would not be all smooth sailing for the school, however. And, although teachers were successfully recruited by McDonough, there was a brief "protest" by the Abbotsford District Teachers Association, a local branch of the BC Teachers Federation, who filed a grievance contesting the articulated philosophy of King Traditional, stating that it might 'drive a wedge in union authority'" (Jensen, 1999, p. 35).

Critics would also assert that King Traditional was "elitist" in part because of its rural, remote setting and the lack of available busing, and also in part because the school, with its uniforms and formal symbols, more resembled an

independent school. The public discourse would rage on, predominantly in the local newspapers and in public discussions that would, on occasion, reach the elected School Board.

The school district community would also articulate some reservations about King Traditional based upon a concern regarding the allocation of limited financial resources. Matsqui Parent Advisory Council (PAC), for example, in a memorandum to its members, noted the following: "While not opposed to the principle of alternate schools, we are concerned that the School Board is not adhering to its policy for establishing alternate schools, developed after the first traditional school was implemented. We are concerned about the lack of long range planning and feel that the project should be scrutinized by the School Board in the same manner and using the same guidelines as all capital projects. Most importantly, we are concerned about the inequities in funding . . ." (Matsqui PAC, newsletter, 1997).

While the Board had approved a redundant rural elementary school—which had been used as a meeting and training center for a number of years—to be the location for the city's first traditional school, the facility itself was barely suited for the needs of the school population. The building was converted back into a school with classrooms, a gym, a library and offices. Two portables were added to the site to permit a sufficient number of classrooms for the school's opening (Jensen, 1999). King Traditional also started its first year without any computers since the two full Macintosh labs that were located in the original meeting and training center were ordered to be dismantled by the Board in an apparent effort to appease critics who felt that the proponents of King Traditional had received preferential treatment by the Board (Jensen, 1999).

Critics maintained that resources designated for the school could be efficiently used at other schools and that local catchment area schools could be negatively affected (Brown, 1999).

Much of the dissent toward the school was directed at the expeditious approvals given by a sympathetic Board of School Trustees. Nonetheless, while there were controversies, the school was popular with a large number of parents. In fact, King Traditional School would soon be regarded as more than an experiment, and its popularity with a large number of families—who would willingly "camp out" at the school grounds for up to a week in order to secure a "first come, first serve" spot for their children—would assure its continued presence on the educational landscape of Abbotsford. Registration for September 1995 enrollment took place in March of the same year. "Approximately 100 parents had camped out on a Thursday and Friday for registration on a Saturday morning. No phone registrations were allowed. After this enrollment, King had 254 students registered for the coming September, just 54 students more than what the (Abbotsford School) Board required in order to start-up" (Jensen, 1999, p. 33).

As time went on, King Traditional would dip slowly beneath the "political radar." Its acceptance would grow as detractors and journalists moved on to other issues and the school became an acknowledged addition to the public educational landscape in Abbotsford.

The Parents of King Traditional

The school, from the outset, had an extremely active Parents Advisory Committee (PAC), which met regularly. In fact, according to Robin Arden,

superintendent of schools, King Traditional School possessed one of the most active committees in the district (personal communication, 1999).

A review of the committee minutes shows that the school's parents were highly motivated and discussed issues that related to the ideological ethos that would come to typify the school and its unique characteristics in the context of a public school district.

Uniforms, relatively unheard of in the public school system, would become a significant symbol for parents of children at King Traditional School. An undated single-page discussion paper—which was apparently printed and distributed at the time of the school's implementation—was circulated with the authority of the Parent Advisory Committee. Some of the points in support of uniforms, according to proponents, are worth noting here: 1) Focus: The uniforms help to develop a strong school focus; 2) Team Spirit: Uniforms produce a sense of belonging; 3) Safety: Intruders on the playground or in the school visually stand out; 4) Visibility: Children are recognized immediately should they wander off school grounds or be truant; 5) Hassle-free: No need to debate each morning what to wear or if it is appropriate; 6) No class distinction: The children make friends based on personality and not on the socio-economic status of parents; 7) Individuality: Fears that children will lose their individuality are groundless as what they wear does not change their creativity and personal uniqueness inside. These points are placed in "bullet form" on the page. In fine print at the bottom, there is additional information which states that the parent body is "enthusiastically supportive of uniforms" and that teachers are also behind the program. The concluding sentence is as follows: "The continued

success of the uniform program requires wholehearted support of parents, students and teachers."

Perhaps ironically, the highly visual cue of uniforms, a hallmark of King Traditional, would contrast most vividly with the community's large independent schools, Mennonite Educational Institute (MEI) and Abbotsford Christian School, neither of which uses uniforms

Perhaps more than any other school in the District—not including other traditional schools added later and outside the purview of this study—King Traditional is truly based upon the inspiration and continued support of parents; the school's origins can be traced back to this group of advocates. Unlike any other school, therefore, the school's very existence can be attributed to the efforts of people who are still very much a part of the school's socio-cultural milieu. Many of the current families involved in the school are "first generation", with a full appreciation of the school's genesis. This contrasts dramatically with most, if not all, schools that are just a part of a particular neighborhood. Parents move in, locate the nearest (public) catchment-area school and register their children; even the name of the school may be relatively generic or perhaps pay tribute to a local pioneer or some highly-regarded historical figure. Even independent schools are usually enduring institutions. The city's two largest schools are a case in point: Mennonite Educational Institute was started in 1955, and Abbotsford Christian School enrolled its first students in 1952 (meisoc.com; abbotsfordchristian.com). King Traditional, on the other hand, is about a decade old and has a nomenclature that represents its values, its ethos.

The substantial parent involvement is perhaps manifest most visibly in the various publications that have been produced with regularity by staff and

parents. These publications showcase the talents of the school's students and represent a considerable amount of work. I will summarize the content of these various publications and indicate how they reflect the ethos of the school. Although other district schools produce certain printed materials, King's publications are more ambitious, more substantial. The following printed periodicals were produced regularly, and copies were disseminated widely throughout the district.

"Beginnings," which later became "Reflections," is a rather ambitious yearbook of over 100 pages, somewhat similar to those associated with a secondary school. Included are pictures and bios of each student and teacher, as well as words of greeting from both the principal and the chair of the PAC (Parent Advisory Committee). Also included are many pictures of students participating in sporting events, competitions, assemblies and science fairs, for example. There are a number of advertisements in the back of the book which serve to sponsor the publication, although it was sold for \$10 a copy. A number of the ads are simple congratulatory messages from parents to their children. One ad, in the first issue, "Beginnings," expresses gratitude to the founding committee of the school and identifies them by name.

In addition, the school has published a bi-annual entitled "An Anthology of Student Work", which follows a similar format to the yearbook. Resembling a soft-bound book, complete with taped binding, each of these anthologies contains poetry, short stories, drawings and some copied examples of student work. Most of the work selected may be regarded as "secular" in nature although the Christmas poetry and stories contain more religious themes, which may perhaps represent some of the ethos of the families represented at the school.

The “Parent Advisory Newsletter” is produced monthly during the school year and features short articles and notices to parents prepared by members of the PAC committee.

Another publication which is quite detailed is the “King Traditional School Student Handbook” (1995), which has eight pages. There is a message from the principal on the front cover—which stresses some unique aspects of the school (these will be detailed in Chapter Eight)—and also a place for the student to print his or her name. There is an entire page dedicated to discipline and a section on students’ rights and responsibilities.

The Accreditation Report

Public schools in British Columbia have been required to go through a rigorous accreditation process on a regular basis, usually every four to six years. Although these analyses of schools have recently been phased out by the current government (Ministry of Education website, 2003), they provided much useful information and added to an understanding of each school and its tenor. Such studies were required to be performed by an external examiner, assisted by a team, and provided an analysis of the school based on a consistent, province-wide guide prepared by staff of the Ministry of Education.

King Traditional's first accreditation process was completed in 1998. I was extremely fortunate to have been provided with the complete set of inquiry instruments, including survey results, a school information profile and the final external report, complete with committee recommendations. In addition, an internal report, designed expressly to be disseminated to teaching staff, was also made available. These printed documents are particularly salutary insofar as this

dissertation is concerned because they speak to the school's mandate, its success in achieving its stated objectives, and its capacity to provide a satisfactory educational experience. The supervisor of the accreditation, and writer of the final report, Hank Stafaniak, is a Victoria-based retired BC school superintendent.

1. The Purpose of Accreditation

Before dealing with the study itself and its findings, it may be profitable to review the provincial Ministry of Education's accreditation policy, which had been available in printed form and on the Ministry's website (www.bced.gov.bc.ca/accreditation/accred_policy). For the purposes of this analysis, I will outline the policy through a review of the text and also appendix A, which responds to some accreditation questions. The policy itself is a relatively laconic summary of some six pages and is built upon relevant legislation such as the School Act, accreditation progress reports and annual district reports.

The purpose of accreditation is identified as follows, "to ensure schools continuously examine, improve and report on their growth and achievement" (p. 1). When a public school is accredited by the Minister of Education at the request of the local school board, it has "met or demonstrated acceptable progress toward meeting expectations of the Ministry, the district and the school community" (p. 1). It is the latter group, the school community, that is of particular relevance to this study. King Traditional School, after all, is somewhat unique because the community—as represented by the cadre of parents—served as a precursor to the school rather than the other way around. In a conventional public school

model—which, in general, advocates neighborhood catchment areas—the school is planned in anticipation of population growth in a particular geographic area of a municipality. When a certain density of population or availability of school-age children is reached, property is located and a school is constructed and staffed. King Traditional, on the other hand, may have been authorized by the school board, but it was the "community"—the group of adherents—that created the demand and lobbied the school board accordingly.

The internal school review (p. 2) stresses the role of the principal in leading the accreditation process. This process was built upon the school plan, which had been approved by the school board and was defined as follows: "(The plan) identifies priorities for the school for the next two to three years. The plan specifies goals and objectives for school and student performance which are based on an analysis of evidence. A work plan indicates how objectives are to be achieved. The school monitors the growth annually, making adjustments where appropriate" (p. 2). Nonetheless, the team approach is also stressed; administrators, teachers, and support staff are all constituents in the process.

The five major accreditation questions are as follows: 1) To what extent is the school meeting the goals of education? 2) To what extent are students attaining the prescribed curriculum? 3) Does the school meet the educational needs of students? 4) To what extent are the principles of learning guiding educational practice in the school? 5) Is the school a welcoming place where communications are effective, and where members of the school community feel safe and have opportunities for involvement and leadership? (p. 2)

Perhaps of particular interest to this study would be those questions that elaborate on the goals of education. The ethos of King Traditional School, as has

been noted, is built upon a more structured, more disciplined, teacher-centered approach which may, in some cases, run counter philosophically to that of many other (neighborhood) public schools in the community. It will therefore be useful to consider the responses to these questions in the context of Ministry of Education standards for accreditation on a province-wide basis. There are no additional criteria for traditional or fundamental schools, or any other schools of choice such as French immersion, Montessori or fine arts.

The accreditation process addresses the role of education in modern society (Goodlad, Hargreaves, Fullan, and others) and speaks not only to citizenship and self worth, but also to the issues of instrumental and intrinsic purposes of contemporary education. All accreditation research instruments, including this one, examine the following:

- _ School report card results
- _ Student attendance records
- _ Surveys
- _ Foundation skills assessment scores
- _ Examination and participation rates (not applicable)
- _ Grade to grade transitions (p. 4)

While the accreditation takes place at the school, the school board and superintendent are also involved. The board approves the general plan, and the accreditation report, through the superintendent, is submitted to the board (p. 4). It is important to note from the accreditation documents that there is clear accountability in the process. And, there is active involvement from virtually every member of the educational community, including the parents. The Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) is to "take a major role in ensuring parent participation" (p. 5).

2. The External Report

I will now provide an abbreviated analysis of the accreditation results for King Traditional School based upon the documents circulated, including the external report, school information profile, and the internal report. King Traditional was recommended to the Ministry for accreditation, and this recommendation was subsequently approved. According to Robin Arden, Abbotsford School District superintendent (1999), although accreditation is often presupposed to be awarded as a matter of course, a number of BC schools do initially not receive this designation. While a school and its staff will take pride in receiving accreditation, it may also be that the growth plan will have some significant recommendations for improvement in order to better reflect the policies embodied in the Ministry standards for education.

The external report for King Traditional indicated that the team had taken a rather structured approach, identifying a number of activities in which the accreditation team participated: 1) observed classes, 2) interviewed teachers, the principal, parents, support staff, and community members, 3) held group meetings at the school with teachers, parents and students, 4) met with the deputy superintendent (who, it should be noted was assigned by the Board to expedite the school two years previously). (p. 6)

The summary of the external report, written by the team chaired by consultant Hank Stefaniak, concluded, "King Traditional School is a fine example of what educational research and literature describe as an effective school" (p. 19). The attributes of an effective school, according to the team, were then enumerated. An abbreviated summary is as follows:

- _ Dedicated professional and collaborative staff

- _ Outstanding home-school cooperation
- _ Shared ownership, commitment to the school's values
- _ Cooperative and respectful attitude of students
- _ Caring and nurturing nature of school (like a family)
- _ Consistency and clear understanding of expectations
- _ Regular communication between school and home
- _ Role modeling by adults
- _ Supportive parents (demonstrated by fund-raising)
- _ Committed, energetic, visionary leadership (p. 19)

3. The Internal Report

The external report, which provided the formal recommendation of accreditation, affirmed the internal report, which, as noted earlier, provided the context for the overall accreditation process. It may be useful to note here some of the remarks (narrative) from this document. In addition to the expected perspective of province-wide accreditation, the team also provided some rather dispassionate reflections on the school and a number of its distinguishing characteristics.

At the time of the report's preparation, there were 285 students enrolled, with a waiting list of a little more than half that number. The student population was broken down as follows: gifted students, two per cent; special needs students, zero per cent; English as a Second Language students, two per cent; Indo-Canadian students, five per cent; and First Nations students, two per cent (p. 10).

In the case of student characteristics, the report stated that "Students are well behaved, responsible, respectful and enthusiastic. Attendance is high (94.21 per cent) and transience is low (five per cent). Students are challenged academically to excel and are supported at home by their parents" (p. 11).

Dealing with parental characteristics, the report made the following observations: "Most families consist of two parents, of middle to upper-middle class socio-economic status. Parents are very interested in their children's education and are informed on educational issues. The majority of parents have high expectations of staff and students, and want to be involved in their children's education. Parent Advisory Committee involvement is high in both classroom and school activities such as hot lunches, uniform committees, lunch supervision, school carnivals and sports coaching. Parents are particularly enthusiastic about fund raising to provide valuable resources to and to enhance the facility. The average attendance at PAC meetings is 75 although it varies depending on the topic" (p. 11).

Community characteristics, the committee noted, are as follows: "The school is located in a rural area of Abbotsford and has an open catchment policy for students from across the district. There is no school busing provided, therefore parents who enroll their children must commit to driving them each day. The community has demonstrated a need for a traditional school which is evident in the waiting lines; however, growth at the school is regulated by space restrictions" (p. 10).

The internal report also addressed what it termed "the unique features of King Traditional School" (I will summarize these here; elsewhere in this dissertation I will provide a detailed analysis of the inimitable aspects of the school): "King Traditional School offers parents and students a consistent focus on the traditional method of instruction which includes direct teaching, regular accurate testing and assessment in a structured teacher-centered class setting. A very clear defined code of behavior has been established by staff and parents and

is consistently enforced throughout the school. Many classrooms are set up in rows and students wear uniforms" (p. 11).

In addition, the report identified a number of "traditional" methods of instruction, such as: 1) an emphasis on content and skills development; 2) a differentiation of subjects with some coordination between topics; 3) letter grades (4-7) with purposeful anecdotal reporting; 4) direct instruction combined with some active and cooperative learning; and, 5) teachers' role defined as supervisors of learners. The writers of the report, under Mr. Stefaniak, the external team chair, seem to have accepted this definition of "traditional", and did not contest its relevance in this context. In some ways, perhaps it is fair to say that the word "traditional" seems to imply a return to earlier ways of teaching. The team did not address issues of pedagogy and instead appeared to simply acknowledge, and perhaps even accept, what they observed as a positive learning environment, advanced by parents through enthusiastic participation in the school and its activities. In Chapter Eight, I will provide fuller detail on the distinctive characteristics of King Traditional School.

The Initiative for a Secondary School

Many of the parents who had successfully lobbied the elected Abbotsford School Board for the creation of King Traditional School, almost immediately turned their attention to a new aspiration: a traditional secondary school. Although this study is focused on the origins of King Traditional Elementary School and the successful advancement of that school, the lobbying for the secondary school followed a parallel course and sheds some light on the creation of King Traditional School. While the secondary school would only be approved

many years later, the proposal was, in some ways, a "lightning rod" for some of the dissent in the formative years of the King Traditional School. The popular press, which featured detailed coverage of much of the "crusade" for the school, provides a useful record of the public discourse of the day. I will therefore reply on articles from both local Abbotsford papers, the *News* and the *Times*, for an analysis of the debate.

Perhaps the satisfaction of achieving a traditional elementary school was an inspiration to parents who felt there was momentum, the impetus, to aggressively seek a secondary school with a similar educational philosophy. Notwithstanding their record of achievement and their apparently auspicious relationship with the Board of School Trustees, as we shall see, their optimism would not ensure ready approval for another school. Their case for a traditional secondary school would coalesce some of the community and school board discussion around the very nature of what it means to be educated within the context of a traditional school.

Interested parents first advanced the cause of a traditional high school in 1996, less than six months after King Traditional had opened. In fact, a committee had begun creating interest in such a proposition by issuing news releases to local newspapers announcing that they would be pursuing a traditional secondary school (King school parents set up info booth, *Times*, March 1996).

Supporters had set up a booth in a local Abbotsford mall and had also scheduled an "open house" to discuss the matter at King Traditional School. A form, which had apparently been approved by representatives of the School Board, was disseminated at this time. The form, "Proposed Secondary Traditional School, Expression of Interest," requested such information as current schooling

and possible electives to be stressed at the proposed traditional high school; these included art, music, cafeteria training and computer sciences.

At about the same time, the school board authorized a survey of sixth and seventh grade students to determine if there was a demand for a traditional high school. Forms were distributed to area elementary schools in March, and the results were made available to the board in April (Grade 6 and 7 Survey, School District #34, April 1996). Approximately 475 parents completed forms and returned them in time to be tabulated. Six questions were asked of parents, and no qualitative comments were requested. I will provide an abridged summary here of the responses which were recorded on the form. While 79 per cent supported schools of choice in the district, which would include traditional schools, and even more (88 per cent) supported their continuation, only 33 per cent would send their children to a traditional school located at an existing secondary school. Further, 41 per cent said "yes" when asked if they would send their children to a separate traditional high school in the future. It should be noted, too, that of those parents who would select a traditional secondary school, 79 per cent said they would remain with the public system and only 17 per cent would choose private schooling. One additional question, which indirectly related to the perceived mandate of traditional schooling, dealt with a so-called "dress code." Parents were essentially split on the question which asked if they would support "coordinates" in dress for students at individual schools in the district (53 per cent said yes and 47 per cent, no).

A discussion paper—actually a single sheet, "Proposed Philosophy for a Traditional Secondary School" (1996)—was also prepared for consideration by the Board.

In many ways, much of the ideology of the proposed high school emulated that of the elementary school, which had opened the previous year. Obvious similarities such as "open catchment" (city-wide enrollment), "a highly structured learning environment," "traditional concepts of citizenship, responsibility and respect," and "mastery of basic academic skills and curriculum" were emphasized. Under a separate heading, "Method of Implementation," the shared responsibility aspect of education was stressed. Some examples of this was to be implemented are as follows: "teaching of values as a shared responsibility interwoven through the climate of the school," "consistent and firmly implemented behavioral expectations by staff and parents," and "parental involvement and support in the school; a team approach to communication between home and school."

The overall "characteristic" of the school was to be a "shared sense of mission and purpose between staff, student and parent." It is therefore worth acknowledging that the expected ethos of the school clearly emulates the original paradigm for King Traditional, which stressed so resolutely the value of parental involvement in the affairs of the school. (Parents, particularly mothers, generally become somewhat less participative in the education of their children once they leave elementary school, although this reality is not mentioned in the material.)

Perhaps because of the expeditious approval given to the traditional elementary school by the board, the dissent against a traditional high school was quite animated. This dissent apparently anticipated a more favorable level of support for the proposed school from trustees, although this never materialized, perhaps because of the relatively unenthusiastic support from existing parents, as identified in the survey.

Some critics of a traditional high school made their case by contesting the allocation of funds for such a school. (This approach was also employed in some measure at the time King Traditional School was advanced, although with considerably less success.) A form which acted as a petition against the traditional secondary school was disseminated at this time (Fiscal Responsibility and the Establishment of Alternate Programs or Schools in District 34, 1996). Although the creators of the form did not identify themselves, it was apparently developed by representatives of the District Parents Advisory Committee (DPAC). The petition form, while not overtly criticizing the establishment of traditional schools, nonetheless argued against creating a traditional high school until the School Board could demonstrate that such a school would not draw financial resources from other schools. The form adds, "The use of operating funds to establish an alternate school would further dilute existing programs and strain existing facilities which are already struggling under government cutbacks." A total of 667 Abbotsford residents completed this petition form which expressed opposition to further free-standing alternative schools ("600 against traditional secondary", Gillies, Times, 1997).

Carrie Vangaalen, then president of the DPAC, had made it known that she was not sympathetic with the Board's endorsement of traditional schools and, in fact, had been critical of King Traditional School. In a letter to the editor ("District DPAC president wants to clarify her group's position," The News, April, 1997), she expressed opposition to the proposed traditional high school. Her main objection appeared to be that the Abbotsford School Board would permit free-standing alternative schools—such as King Traditional—as opposed to making some choices available within existing schools. In referring to some

earlier communication with the school district, she noted, "We pointed out that offering educational choices by establishing alternate schools is a major philosophical change from alternative programs within existing schools."

In her capacity as chair of the District Parents Advisory Committee, Vangaalen also corresponded directly with the board on a number of issues which related to the philosophical assumptions of a traditional school. The resulting four-page report issued by the School Board in response to these queries may be regarded as a significant document, and I will also make reference to it in greater detail in Chapter Eight. I will allude to one question posed by Vangaalen which, to a great extent goes to the "heart" of the pedagogical claims of the adherents of traditional schools; it should be remembered that King Traditional had already been operating for over a year at the time of this communication. Vangaalen asked, "In regard to educational practices, how does the traditional school differ from other schools in the district?" The response to this question, it should be noted, had been prepared by School District staff so, in a sense, it was the "official position" being advanced by the Board and its management.

I will provide an abridgment of this response. First, the consistency of teaching style was emphasized, and the apparent congruency amongst the staff—including the principal—who made the choice to teach at the school. Second, the open catchment approach, while also used for French Immersion and fine arts schools, for example, was also rather unique for a school. Third, parental involvement was stressed. (This section is by far the longest.) "The school strives to create a team approach of home and school working together" (p. 2) was the foundational value for this section, which also included references to expected

behavior, homework and deportment, with an emphasis on what supporters have often termed "traditional values"; these included the following: respect, honesty, courtesy, self-discipline, integrity, responsibility and citizenship. The dress code and so-called "key visuals", such as the requirement for a student to rise at his or her place to speak, were also acknowledged in two subsequent sections. And, finally, the educational practice was addressed, which spoke to the pedagogical expectations for traditional schooling. A teacher-directed classroom, a "rigorous learning environment," and the separation of subjects, among other areas, were noted (pg. 3).

The community discourse regarding traditional schooling in general, and the proposed new traditional high school in particular, created a dialogue in the local press, which also revealed a level of polemic which was often quite contentious. The Letters to the Editor section in both Abbotsford newspapers featured headlines such as "Need to invest in teachers, not just new schools," "High school destined for disaster," "Let us choose, parents urge" and "Traditional high school progressing". These headlines and many others showed that in the two years following the opening of King Traditional, the idea of a traditional high school was meeting with disparate reviews. The issue of cross-boundary schooling, a requirement for a successful school of choice such as a traditional school, was discussed by the Board in June of 1996, and although a case was made by parents for an expansion of this approach, the Board decided not to accede to the request, partly because declining enrollments in some downtown/inner city schools would be aggravated (Beyak, News, 1996. p. 6).

At about the same time, the notion of traditional schooling, originally a concept fraught with its share of controversy, was being affirmed by the school

board, which, at a meeting held in early 1996, decided to pursue, in principle, such schools. With the success of King Traditional and the substantial lineups, the Board affirmed their continued presence in the community. Board chair John Smith was quoted at the time: "I feel very passionately that parents should have choices within our school system, and anything we can do to prevent parents from going to private school or home schooling is a positive move" (Beyak, 1996, p. 3).

The balance of the school board, with the exception of trustee Cathy Goodfellow, supported the continuation and eventual expansion of traditional schools. Goodfellow had also dissented on the approval for King Traditional in the previous year and told the Board that she was uncomfortable with the policy but supported magnet programs as opposed to magnet schools. She also was critical of what she considered to be a limited amount of public consultation regarding the whole matter (Beyak, 1996, pg. 3).

Perhaps one of the more controversial aspects of a new traditional school would be its location. The campus for King Traditional was conveniently and economically found and located at an under-utilized building which had previously been a neighborhood school. Although the secondary school would not be approved by the Board at this time, the location received some discussion and the idea of locating a traditional school within a regular secondary school was an option considered by the Board. Abbotsford Junior Secondary, located in the community's "inner city", had been contemplated for demolition (Beyak, Feb. 14, 1996), and consolidation with the neighboring senior secondary school was considered. At about the same time, an initiative to increase the school's viability through the introduction of a traditional track was proposed for Abbotsford

Junior. The school board chair of the day, John Smith, said, "This is a major shift in thinking; up to now, there has been a resistance from the established schools to the traditional schools, but now they're actually being invited in, and that's very encouraging" (Beyak, April 22, 1996). Nonetheless, the existing Parent School Council (PAC) at Abbotsford Junior Secondary was not unanimously supportive and, in fact, asked that the proposal be "put on hold" (Gillies, Times, May 31, 1996). Liz Wright, who was speaking for the PAC, asked, "Why are the wishes of 800 families being ignored over the wishes of a small pressure group?" (This was a reference to the efforts of King Traditional parents to lobby the school board to locate the traditional high school at their school.)

The campaigning for a new traditional secondary school, either "freestanding" or part of an existing conventional high school, was promoted by King Traditional parents; in fact, their PAC newsletter (King Traditional, May 1996), featured a front-page article entitled "On the Brink of Decision" which was exclusively a treatise on the benefits of the school.

The article began, "The possibility of BC's first public traditional secondary school wobbles on the brink of decision. The expansion committee, guided by chairperson Joanne Field, has pushed, pulled, squeezed and coaxed the expansion plans . . ." In addition, the author or authors of the article asserted that if the traditional high school was located in an existing high school, it should be housed in its own wing; as well, they desired that the name "Traditional School" be clearly identified, and that uniforms be prescribed. The "appeal" concluded with strong encouragement to King Traditional parents to lobby for such an initiative: "On Monday night the expansion committee will go before the school board with this proposal. This is where YOU come in. A strong show of

support at this meeting is a show for Traditional Schooling. So—call, phone, and ask other parents, people you know on the waiting list, friends, neighbors, or anyone who may be interested to come out Monday night. Call Joanne Field for more info. Let's seize the Opportunity. And don't forget, there are 'those' who are opposed to all Traditional School education and you can be sure they will be there as well. Expect the sparks to be flying. The media will be on hand to cover the story also."

Although the secondary school would not be approved at this time—subsequent traditional schools would later be acceded to, which are outside the province of this study—the offensive, as may be seen, was systematic and well organized. Proponents would use a variety of means, including the informal co-opting of the media, to ensure that their message of education choice would be advanced. In addition, the public discourse, which would see the two "sides" state their cases, in particular in "Letters to the Editor" and in general articles, would give way to acquiescence as the community realized the traditional schools would be here to stay. With a supportive board and a growing acknowledgement that traditional schools were favored by a reasonably large constituency, the controversy would diminish. As well, with the province's largest population of students attending independent schools, the appeal of providing Abbotsford parents with no fee public school options—particularly those that would emulate some of the visual cues of the private schools—would be attractive to a school district seeking to increase its enrollment.

Conclusion

Armed with a favorable accreditation report and growing acceptance (or perhaps passive resignation) by the Abbotsford populace at large, King Traditional would increasingly become an accepted component of the community's educational landscape and discourse. Controversy would give way to acquiescence as the public would acknowledge that King Traditional was here to stay. A later attempt by supporters to pursue a traditional high school stirred an even greater level of community discord, to the extent that the school board of the day would not give it their endorsement. Nonetheless, approximately eight years later – which is outside of the parameters of this study – a traditional high school, would in fact be opened, along with another traditional elementary school – on the opposite end of town – and a traditional middle school.

There are a number of key themes which may be gleaned from this chapter that should be acknowledged.

First, it was parents who had led to the school's creation, and parents continued to play a strong role in the school once it was established. The accreditation report stated that cooperation between home and school was "outstanding." There was "shared ownership" and a commitment to the school's values, and this contributed to the caring and nurturing nature at the school (like a family). Expectations were consistent between parents and the school, and the parents were seen to be extremely supportive and involved. The Parent Advisory Committee was particularly well-organized at King Traditional, producing a number of tangible results, including extensive fund-raising and the production of a number of rather ambitious publications which had not been seen at other district public schools.

The staff at King Traditional School was identified as dedicated, professional and collaborative. Nevertheless, the opening of King Traditional was met by a fair amount of opposition from the local BCTF office, which had a suspicion of so-called “schools of choice.” From the perspective of the local teachers association, it was suggested that such a school could have a negative impact on the hitherto strong role of the union in Abbotsford School District.

Second, the accreditation report also emphasized the consistent emphasis on the traditional method of instruction at King Traditional School. For the consultants, this meant direct teaching and regular accurate testing and assessment in a structured teacher-centered classroom.

Third, the accreditation team also acknowledged the clearly-defined code of behavior which is enforced at the school.

Fourth, the school does not offer any Christian curriculum, so it is difficult to ascertain the extent to which King Traditional is a “Christian” school. However, the large number of religious parents apparently find the values and discipline to their satisfaction.

Fifth, symbols such as a daily flag-raising demonstrate the “patriotic” nature of King Traditional.

In all five of these areas, it should be noted that King Traditional seems to have achieved the goals of its supporters. It has in practice the characteristics that supporters envisioned for a traditional school when they began agitating for it.

Sixth, King Traditional School also received criticism from critics who saw the school as a type of private school embedded in the public system. The assertion that the school was in some way “elitist” was advanced: It was felt that the lack of available busing (due to its rural setting), would limit attendance to

those with means. The provision of uniforms would also be seen to be contributing to the “private veneer” of the school. The criticism also included the view that the financial resources devoted to this new school would be better allocated to existing schools.

Chapter Eight

Understanding the Nomenclature: Deconstructing the Agendas and the Assertions, Coming to Grips with “Traditional Education”

It may have been an apocryphal statement, but there was apparently a judge who, when asked his definition of pornography, was reported to have responded, “I don’t know if I have a definition, but I know what pornography is when I see it.” In the case of the topic at hand, traditional schools, and King Traditional School in particular, the situation is the opposite in some ways. The term “traditional” (like the term “fundamental” used in the neighboring community of Langley) has some currency, yet could a relatively uninformed and dispassionate observer gain a satisfactory appreciation of the ethos, the pedagogical bases for such schools, by viewing the schools “in action”? Indeed, could such an observer appreciate the stated uniqueness of the school by reviewing the various documents and minutes to determine what makes King Traditional so “special”? Is there sufficient evidence to disclose the palpable reasons for the school’s existence? In this chapter, I will review the unique characteristics of the school – as articulated by adherents and supporters – which may be regarded as either cosmetic or material, and deconstruct their apparent contribution, if any, to the quality of education.

Defining “Traditional” at King Traditional School

Notwithstanding the apparent cachet of “traditional” in some quarters, it may be regarded as being as ambiguous as the phrase “family values”. Words such as “traditional” and “fundamental” can rarely be understood in isolation but instead must be considered within their social context.

Whatever it means, the name “traditional” must have had some strong resonance in the Abbotsford community. As “schools of choice,” traditional and fundamental schools do not have a geographic catchment area, as is the case with “conventional” public schools, and they must be sufficiently appealing to attract parental interest throughout their entire communities. Further, in the case of King Traditional School, bussing is not available, so parents are obliged to take full responsibility for transportation. This is particularly significant because of the rather isolated location of the school, in a predominantly agricultural area in the southwestern area of the city. Further, there are two conventional catchment-area schools within two or three kilometers: Ross Elementary, to the east, and Aberdeen Elementary, to the north.

The term “traditional” is a departure from the term “fundamental” employed for a number of similar schools, such as Pasadena Fundamental – the archetypal school – and Langley Fundamental. But, what does “traditional” mean, and how does it reflect the ethos of the school? Does “traditional” simply have a wistful, sentimental appeal to a constituency who wish for the “good old days” and harbor an apparent dislike for some of the cues of modern public education?

In considering some of the early documents and discussions among proponents, it is worth noting that the current name of the school was not

immediately adopted; in fact, the original nomenclature was “Academic Alternative School” (Original planning notes, May, 1994). It would appear that proponents wished the school to be seen as a public school of choice emphasizing a firmer approach to academics. It would be fair to suggest that this original name had a degree of “marketing appeal” within the anticipated constituency: those parents who were dissatisfied with their children’s experience in public school. (As well, as was revealed by the district’s survey, the school was also designed to be attractive for parents in the independent schools in Abbotsford and also for those who home schooled their children.) Subsequently, however, the name “Academic Alternative School” gave way to “Abbotsford Traditional School” and, finally, to “King Traditional School,” which was the name selected once a campus was selected at a former elementary school, “King Elementary.” (Although it is outside of the realm of this study, “King” would become increasingly important to accurately identify the geographic location of the school as further traditional schools would later be approved in other areas of the city by the School Board.)

In order to better define “traditional” schooling as it is accomplished at King Traditional, I believe it will be valuable to register two lists of characteristics inherent in the school. The first list may be termed “cosmetic”, consisting of those cues relating to the institutional appearance of the school. The second and more significant list, in terms of its consequences for pedagogy, may be termed “material.” While such a “grading” of characteristics will be useful, I acknowledge that both adherents and detractors may very well have their own lists, either based upon their individual sense of the school’s worth or based upon ideological preconceptions. In any event, because King Traditional is

approximately a decade old and still relatively new and even still developing, there is still the opportunity to have widely divergent perspectives on the school.

Cosmetic Characteristics

The list of more cosmetic (“visual cue”) items is as follows:

_ Teacher-centered classroom environment

Unlike some recent educational innovations which tend to favor a more friendly, welcoming physical environment for students, King Traditional encourages – perhaps even enjoins – teachers to place their desks at the front of the classroom, where the desks convey more sense of “authority.” There is more opportunity to monitor student activity with this arrangement. The desk – the teacher’s visible workplace – is also physically disassociated from the student’s desks, which creates a hierarchical environment. The teacher, therefore, is definitely “in charge.”

_ Student desk placement

In addition to the above, a “traditional” classroom avoids the clustering of students’ desks and instead requires that they be placed in symmetrical rows. At King Traditional, rows reinforce the “teacher as authority figure” paradigm because they physically direct attention to the front of the room. Symmetrical rows also would seem to place greater emphasis on the “collective,” the shared responsibility of the aggregation. The individual student therefore accedes to the group, under the guidance of the teacher. There is also a sense of nostalgia to rows, and nostalgia is apparently an important component to the school’s ethos. (More will be said about this later.)

_ Classroom decorum

Consistent, to a large extent, with the above-noted physical aspects of the classroom are the regulations regarding classroom behavior. Although this is apparently not enforced on all occasions, the student who wishes to speak, usually at the direction of the teacher, is required to stand at his or her place and receive permission to speak. In addition, should a visitor arrive in the classroom, the students are required to stand at their place and say, "Good morning," or voice some other appropriate welcome. There is therefore an emphasis on the corporate group of students as opposed to the individual student. Visitors may receive the impression that they are respected, but also that they are entering a room which exudes a soldierly atmosphere.

_ Emphasis on patriotism

Perhaps as a rather amorphous – or even inadvertent – recognition of its US origins, the school's advocates view "traditional" as somewhat synonymous with "patriotic." There are two activities that affirm this view. First, there is the daily singing of the National Anthem at an assembly. At the time this was instituted at the school, there were no other (public) schools in the district that prescribed the singing of "O Canada." In addition, there is a focus on the flag, which is raised in a formal manner as a part of the day's activities.

_ Old-fashioned public address

As an overt, wistful acknowledgment of the "good old days," as a means of calling the students together and garnering their attention, a hand bell is employed to announce the beginning and conclusion of class times and other scheduled events. The principal is normally present at the time, although the bell is usually rung by student volunteers.

_ A sylvan setting

While the school's proponents were not initially seeking a rural locale for the city's first traditional school, the School Board's selection of the current campus in a predominantly agricultural area in the southwest quadrant of Abbotsford proved to be positive for the "traditional" image. Perhaps recalling the simpler life and the agrarian "little school house," the rural location proved to be an appropriate motif for the school. In addition, the relative isolation of the school, far removed from Abbotsford's urban core, would give King Traditional a certain aesthetic appeal, a perceived aura of exclusivity.

_ School attire

This "visual cue" may be contested by some school supporters as being more than cosmetic and constituting a key component of the school's educational ethos. Indeed, many of the original documents and subsequent Parent Advisory Committee printed policies stress uniforms as a significant differentiator for the school. Nonetheless, I have chosen to place school uniforms on this "cosmetic list" because I am of the view that uniforms, while significant for community-building and identification, are more about peripheral impressions than educational philosophy. Uniforms are consistent with the school's more formal – strict – approach to education and are, again, somewhat nostalgic. While it is not a part of the local educational discourse, it should be acknowledged that uniforms are generally regarded as *de rigueur* for private schools; in fact, uniforms are significant contributors to the rather elitist image of such schools, which are often quite expensive. Notwithstanding this assumption, it is ironic perhaps that the two largest independent schools in Abbotsford – Mennonite Educational Institute (MEI) and Abbotsford Christian School, with total enrollments of some 2,600 students – do not have uniforms. In neighboring

Langley, the fundamental school, as noted earlier, also does not prescribe uniforms for its students. Uniforms, then, are evidently an important symbol for King Traditional School. While they may provide visual cohesion and a sense of community, the value of uniforms may be found more in their ability to give King the visage of a private school, which nevertheless entails no additional cost to parents.

Material Characteristics

I will now offer a list of those “material” attributes which have a more tangible impact on pedagogy at King Traditional School. At the outset, it is important to note that although there is obviously some flexibility with regard to delivery, school curricular requirements are exclusively the domain of the Ministry of Education; individual districts and schools cannot depart from the stipulations set by the Province. In spite of these restrictions, certain emphases are certainly found at various schools, and King Traditional is no exception.

_ Emphasis on parental involvement

It would be fair to observe that perhaps the single most salient characteristic for educational beneficence at the school would be parental involvement. In fact, King Traditional is a paradigm of parental empowerment for a number of reasons.

First, the school was not conceived by School Board officials, such as office administrators, as a way to broaden the appeal of public schooling in Abbotsford; the school, as noted, was the creation of a small group of motivated mothers. There is no other public school in Abbotsford that was created under the same circumstances (excluding subsequent traditional schools, although they

would also look to King Traditional for their inspiration). The parents were ostensibly not affiliated with any organization or religious group – notwithstanding some remarks made by observers elsewhere in this paper – so that unlike some of the area’s religious schools, such as Abbotsford Christian School and Mennonite Educational Institute (MEI), there were no explicit sectarian roots to King Traditional.

Second, as a “school of choice,” King Traditional would be the first school in the Abbotsford School District which would have no catchment area and would appeal to families from the entire 350-square-kilometer area. As the antithesis of a neighborhood school, it would be similar to most private schools, which have a community-wide “market area.” Parents, therefore, may be expected to sustain considerable inconvenience for the opportunity to have their children attend the school. And, as noted in an earlier chapter, this inconvenience may also include the “hassle” of waiting in line over many days, often in inclement weather, to secure a seat for a child. (It is my understanding that no other schools, public or private, up until this time had experienced such line-ups.) Such support for the school, quite obviously, requires a rather high level of devotion. There is a perceived “value” in suffering through a fair degree of annoyance, although, as a public school, King Traditional requires no monetary fees.

Third, increased parental involvement may also contest the authority of the educational leadership, both in the school and in the School Board office. Parents who feel a sense of “ownership” will perhaps think of the principal and teachers as their employees to some extent, which may not be entirely surprising, especially for those parents who were involved in the genesis of the school and

in its formative years. These parents may see King Traditional as not so much another public school, but “their” school.”

Fourth, as noted elsewhere in this dissertation, King Traditional’s Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) is one of the most active in the entire school district. As an organization firmly embedded in the culture and structure of the school, the PAC can exert considerable authority as a consultative body; its role is seen to be significant, and its involvement in school activities is considerable.

Fifth, parents, as “partners” in the education of their children, are frequently present on campus and are also involved in a wide variety of activities, including career fairs, sports events and the production of literary journals; these involvements may be seen as an affirmation of the school and confirm the parents’ high level of support for their children’s education.

_ A consistent approach to education

Perhaps one of the more appealing features of King Traditional School, at least from the perspective of parents and proponents in general, is its commitment to consistency of teaching style. “One of King’s goals is to achieve commonality” (The Impact of Parental Choice, Brown, p. 35), and the school handbook (1997) goes even further, by affirming a sense of united purpose among all stakeholders, including parents, staff and students. The consistent teaching style, as advanced at King Traditional, means that teachers – with the encouragement of the principal - strive to have the same level of discipline and the same level of teacher-centered instruction in every classroom.

_ Traditional approaches to learning

Advocates for the school wanted to return to older approaches to the teaching of subjects such as reading and mathematics. They were especially

critical of the use of "whole language" as a foundational approach to the teaching of reading. Indeed, as noted in an earlier chapter, the term "whole language" – which provides a contextual approach to teaching literacy where reading, writing, oral language, word study and letter/sound knowledge are interwoven, - was perceived to be antagonistic to synthetic phonics, a more traditional form of teaching reading and the approach favored by King proponents. Workbooks and other old-fashioned approaches to the teaching of reading were also recommended by parents to be used at "their" school. Phonics was to be embraced fully by the school and was expected to be taught by the teachers under the direction of the principal.

Conclusion

I have attempted to deconstruct the somewhat obfuscated term "traditional," in this chapter by noting that King Traditional was a parental response to the existing public school options in Abbotsford. The view that other schools were not pursuing high academic standards and did not have consistent teaching styles was a guiding supposition. The school, therefore, was ultimately a parent-driven institution which sought to provide a more structured, more disciplined alternative to the public schools of the day. Its popularity would seem to suggest that there was a currency for such a school amongst a reasonably sizeable constituency in Abbotsford.

While there are some apparently authentic pedagogical emphases, given that the curriculum is prescribed by the provincial Ministry of Education, it appears that the school's distinctiveness relies rather strongly on the more visual cues which I have enumerated. Nevertheless, the energetic support of parents

and the pursuit of consistency in educational style, which some students may find more conducive to learning, would seem to be of considerable value.

Chapter Nine

Conclusion And Summary:

Assessing The Merits Of A Parent-Centered School

In this penultimate chapter, I undertake an analysis of some of the significant educational issues that emerge from the study of King Traditional School. I will focus, in particular, on some of the thematic principles that underlie the school and how they relate to the larger educational discourse.

The school, in many ways, reflects some of the perceived dissatisfaction with the educational system experienced by a number of parents, but, more importantly, it has significant phenomenological implications for the way “we do education” in British Columbia.

King Traditional School, although rather inconsequential in its impact on education in general, nonetheless provides insight into some very significant issues, such as the scope of education, the role of parents, the nature of local political administration of education, and the function of education in modern society.

At the very least, King Traditional School may be regarded as a “success” from the perspective of parental popularity. As I have acknowledged, the school opened a decade ago and immediately enjoyed rather lengthy line-ups of parents who saw the school as a suitable alternative to their current public educational experience, to home schooling or to expensive private schooling. The school is now one of four traditional schools in the community and continues to have parents making applications for more children than can be enrolled.

King Traditional has a “genealogy” going back to the neighboring school district, Langley, and also to the fundamental school in Pasadena, California. This genealogy not only shaped the ethos of the school but, perhaps more importantly, also highlighted the general public malaise that has, at times, been identified by a number of concerned parents and some school boards.

Six principal themes emanate from this study which I now review.

Parental Involvement – The Triad

Parental involvement in the creation and subsequent operation of King Traditional School is perhaps the most salient factor in the school’s currency; in fact, the “triad” of co-operative student-parent-teacher relations is critical to the school’s apparent success, demonstrated in both the accreditation report and the Foundation Skills Assessment scores. Of particular interest is the fact that King Traditional is only a decade old and many of the founders are still active in the school community. These parents have a strong sense of ownership and seem to take considerable pride in the school and its accomplishments. As noted, the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) is one of the most active in the community, providing a strong support system through fundraising and extensive volunteerism.

Notwithstanding the school’s popularity and strong parental endorsement, King Traditional nonetheless raises some potentially problematic educational issues which may in part offset the benefits of the triad model. There is a sense that parents may be more interested in supporting such a school for somewhat selfish reasons - perceived educational benefits for their children - as opposed to a more altruistic affection for public education which will benefit the entire

school community. Parents who sense what they believe to be a less than satisfactory experience for their children at their catchment-area school may look to a school of choice such as King Traditional as a panacea.

Parents, as consumers of education, may see themselves as sufficiently informed on educational practise and the benefits of a particular pedagogical approach; however, the training, knowledge and experience of professional classroom teachers and administrators may potentially be compromised when parents become excessively involved in the instruction of their children. The result of such interference not only may impact the morale of teachers and potentially undermine the leadership of the principal, but, perhaps more importantly, it can also negatively impact the quality of education provided at the school.

The Pedagogy

Proponents of the school advocated what they believed would be a “quality” education, that is, a traditional education which included a systematic, sequential, phonics approach to the teaching of reading; attention to math operations; and subject mastery. As well, they called for a structured, teacher-centered classroom with an emphasis on direct instruction and individual academic competition, as opposed to cooperative learning.

While the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) scores indicate that King Traditional students have demonstrated proficiency in reading, writing and mathematics, it is difficult to ascertain whether student success is attributable to the teaching methods or to the involvement of supportive parents who not only place a high priority on education in general but also scaffold their children with

daily homework and a home environment which values literary and mathematic competencies. In other words, should the same group of committed parents provide a similar level of parental nurturing and commitment to the school, could such quantitative instruments as the FSA scores be replicated in a conventional catchment-area school? Does this model really require a free-standing campus based on a supposedly unique approach to educational ethos?

The school's adherents value what they believe to be King Traditional's pedagogical uniquenesses; nonetheless, it would seem that most, if not all, of the perceived instructional differences may be superficial, extrinsic rather than intrinsic.

Discipline and School Conduct

Another of the unique characteristics of King Traditional School is the emphasis on student discipline. The school's founding parents were particularly concerned with the perceived lack of discipline they encountered in their catchment-area schools, so discipline was systematically stressed at the school. The school's approach to discipline can be understood to consist of two components: first, there are the "visible" disciplinary cues; and, second, there is the clearly defined code of behavior which governs day-to-day student conduct.

The visual disciplinary cues will be initially canvassed. School uniforms, traditionally a motif of independent schools, were consistently endorsed by parents at King Traditional as a way to contribute to school identification and classroom order, as well as to reduce the tendency of students to rely on fashion to gain acceptance from their peers.

Classroom appearance, as prescribed by the founding parents, was also a significant factor in the school's ethos. Student desks were placed in rows, and the placement of the teacher's desk at the front of the room was designed to give authority and visual command of the students to the teacher.

Another distinctive aspect of the school's culture was the implementation of a code of conduct which requires students to show respect to adults entering the classroom. Students are required to stand at their desks and greet adult visitors with a scripted salutation. In addition, students are to return to their seats only with permission from the teacher.

Notwithstanding the parents' affection for visual disciplinary cues, it is not clear if these "military academy" measures will be as impactful on behavior as is contemplated by the parents. Nonetheless, there may indeed be some value to consistent, school-wide disciplinary cues; in other words, new parents enrolling their children can generally have confidence that the type of visible discipline will be evident throughout their children's tenure at the school. As this paper acknowledges, the founding parents desired an overall consistency in the "look" of school discipline.

As for the code of behavior, it would seem useful to have a central document which can be disseminated and embraced by parents, students and teachers. Although this is apparently not unique to King Traditional, a written code of conduct, consistent with the parents' aspirations, is a significant component of the school's culture. The code of behavior is identified in a parent handbook that is distributed annually to all new families that enroll students: this would seem to be a beneficent initiative, which is also designed to nurture the type of behavior that is reinforced and expected at home.

Patriotic Ideals and Nostalgia

As the archetypical school for subsequent traditional and fundamental schooling initiatives, John Marshall School in Pasadena, in particular, stressed the significance of patriotism; in fact, the school itself was named after a highly regarded US judge. Americans are often thought to be more patriotic than Canadians, so it is not especially surprising that patriotism is a significant factor in the American school's ethos. Langley Fundamental also stressed patriotism in its founding documents and subsequent operations; however, this factor was not as significant here as at John Marshall.

King Traditional School also stressed patriotism in its founding documents. Patriotism at the school seems to be an exercise in nostalgia to some extent.

Daily flag raising ceremonies and the regular singing of the national anthem are seen to be important patriotic cues at the school. Founding parents were of the view that students need to be more patriotic, and identified a connection between student conduct and nationalistic ideals. Good citizenship was viewed as a salient component of school life.

Patriotism, therefore, is, not surprisingly, a significant aspect of the ethos of King Traditional School. Parents were reacting to what they believed to be a breakdown in respect for institutions at their local public schools and so took the initiative to implement such activities as flag-raising and the singing of the national anthem. While it is laudable that the school would advance a high level of patriotism, the daily patriotic exercises may not necessarily have much more

than a minor effect on student regard for authority. Students, it is true, should value their citizenship and take pride in their nation, but whether or not such ceremonies have a significant beneficial effect on student respect for governing bodies and school administration is not necessarily apparent.

The Religious Dimension

Perhaps somewhat related to the ideal of patriotism is the "religious" component of King Traditional School, which must be acknowledged, with considerable circumspection, in light of anecdotal evidence. It seems that the "Judeo-Christian" values which were a pervasive theme in the fundamental schools in Pasadena and Langley, were also of some significance at King Traditional, from two perspectives.

First, it would appear that a significant plurality of families with children enrolled in the school would identify themselves as "Christians", which perhaps is understandable given Abbotsford's reputation as the "Bible Belt" of the province. These parents attend local churches and would identify themselves and their families as having a common set of religious beliefs.

Second, these families would see the traditional school as an alternative to one of the many religious (Christian) schools in the area. The Abbotsford School Board also attempted to market the traditional school to home schooling parents, many of whom also possess strong religious values. There is absolutely no religious curriculum at King Traditional. Therefore, in choosing King Traditional School for their children, these parents were, in effect, electing to forsake the sectarian component of education found at a Christian school or in home schooling in favor of the appeal of paying no fees. What attracted these parents

to King Traditional was the presence of some of the private school indicators such as uniforms, more structure and greater discipline. Many King Traditional parents appear to have embraced the values of the school because they believe them to be consistent with their religious beliefs. Although the school is a public institution and likely staffed by teachers who may not have spiritual congruencies with the parents, nonetheless these parents seem to take satisfaction in the school's ethos and values which, in part, simulate their religious principles.

It is also significant that elected School Board members at the time the school was advanced were supportive of the school and all but one trustee approved the opening of King Traditional School. Trustees ostensibly believed that the public system needed to offer a variety of educational options and desired to keep as many students in the system as possible. Nevertheless, it is apparent that there also may have been a congruency of values between the elected trustees and the parent-advocates. That is, it is also likely that at least some of those School Board members also held the same Christian religious beliefs as the supporting parents.

Although religious parents, as taxpayers and "consumers" of education, deserve some recognition and respect for their aspirations, it is nonetheless important to protect the nature of public education, which is designed to be non-sectarian and free of religious dogma. British Columbia in particular, as we have noted, is the province with the strongest heritage and commitment to secular education, devoid of religion. In addition, it may be a source of some concern that religious parents (predominantly embracing the Christian faith) wish to send their children to a school with some of the disciplinary "trappings" of a

religious school at no additional cost. These parents would normally have had the options of either home schooling or enrolling their children in one of the many Christian schools in the community, but of course then they would have been required to pay fees over and above their contribution to public schooling through their local taxes.

On the other hand, a significant clue to the parents' thinking may be found in the term "traditional", with its sentiment of a return to the past. It should be remembered that the original Canadian public schools, while non-sectarian, were nevertheless Judeo-Christian in their values. While Canadian society has become more secular and the school system more secular along with it, supporters of traditional schools seem to want to "turn back the clock" to an era when Canada was a predominantly "Christian" society. This focus on a former Christian Canadian society may also have overtones of the patriotism characteristic of traditional schools. Supporters may be looking back to an era that was more Christian and more patriotic.

Is King Traditional Elitist?

Critics of the school have sometimes asserted that, in effect, King Traditional is elitist, almost an "exclusive" place. It is argued that the school's proponents desired the visage of a private school and that King Traditional cultivates so-called elitist ideals. More practically, because the school is in a remote southwest Abbotsford location, bussing is not available and parents are required to drive their children daily to school, sometimes from considerable distances. Therefore, it can easily be seen that the school effectively excludes children whose parents do not own cars or who for other financial and social

reasons cannot afford to send their children to the school. And, unlike some other schools of “choice” in the district, such as French Immersion and the fine arts school (which has opened in the last three years and is outside of the realm of this study), there are no walk-in students at King Traditional because there are two catchment-area schools within a few kilometers.

Although it might be possible for local children, those who live in the immediate area, to select King Traditional as “their” school, there is also the matter of long line-ups which critics also feel precludes single-parent families and those on restricted schedules such as shift jobs, from considering the school. In some instances, parents have waited for many days and have even camped out or used RVs to ensure a place in line. It would seem reasonable to suggest that not all parents would be capable of assuming such a challenge without considerable hardship. There may, then, be some basis to this contention of elitism. On the other hand, there are no longer strict catchment areas in Abbotsford in any event, so parents who wish to enroll their children in another school that is somewhat distant from their home would still have to make the travel arrangements.

Proponents point out that King Traditional School is not elitist in the sense that it only accepts students of a particular intellect. There are no tests or interviews, and in fact enrollment is based strictly on a “first come, first served” basis, which precludes favoritism of any kind. The only departure from this tenet is the provision that allows family members to have priority for subsequent children once one of their children is enrolled. Therefore, King Traditional cannot be termed “elitist” in the same sense as some private schools which interview prospective students and limit enrollment according to some set criteria.

Whether it is the desire of certain parents to present an image for King Traditional School that includes a type of “snootiness” – a word I employ here with some caution – is perhaps worth examining. The matter, however, is beyond the scope of this study.

From another, more pragmatic perspective, the ideals of public education, based upon egalitarian principles, may be compromised to some extent at King Traditional. If it is to be agreed that children of parents who take a genuine interest in their schooling do better, and if we also affirm that King Traditional parents are among the most participative and motivated in the district, then this would imply a level of homogeneity at the school which would likely preclude students who do not come from similar backgrounds. Or, to put it another way, the medley of students found in a conventional catchment-area public school which caters to a variety of students from disparate socio-economic backgrounds and family circumstances, may not be found at King Traditional. In addition, the existence of King Traditional might have a detrimental effect on students who have more difficult home and economic circumstances and who attend catchment-area schools. This is because a significant number of the more motivated students – who are strongly supported by nurturing parents – have been withdrawn and sent to King Traditional School and are no longer represented at the local catchment-area schools which they might otherwise have attended.

A final point on “elitism” in schools: it should also be acknowledged that even in suburban, rapidly-growing communities like Abbotsford, there are still going to be so-called “desirable” and “less desirable” areas. In general, the newer the area, the more desirable it is to live in. More financially secure families may

elect to live in these newer neighborhoods, which also feature the newest schools. On the opposite end of the scale are those areas, often around the periphery of the core, that feature older (often rental) housing and the oldest schools. These neighborhoods tend to be the most transient, and there are usually more one-parent families there. From the perception of the public, it would seem that while the nomenclature “elitist” may not be employed in regard to public catchment-areas schools, there is nevertheless the sense that the children who live in newer, more desirable neighborhoods will be different in their level of motivation, financial resources and parental support than those children who live in more socio-economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Elitism, then, would appear to be always present in any community which has a wide variety of home and schooling options.

Some Concluding Remarks

King Traditional is a school that initially created a measure of controversy when it was first proposed, although after about a year of operation, and the recognition that the school was sufficiently popular with a constituency of parents, the dissonance subsided. The school also had a degree of resonance in the community, and it appears that there was some congruency between the aspirations of the parents and the sentiments of a majority of the elected trustees. Now, after a decade, other traditional schools have been approved by the Abbotsford School Board, and although this is outside of the time period of this study, it seems that these schools have elicited virtually no public discourse. Traditional schools, it appears, are here to stay.

King Traditional is, above all else, a school for parents. It is “their school.” Not only did parents conceive of the school and promote it aggressively to their elected school board, but they have maintained active involvement, which, as noted earlier in this paper, ensured that King Traditional’s Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) was one of the most energetic in the district. The school is, in a sense, a visible tribute to the efforts of parents to take part in the school’s implementation and subsequent opening; parents, therefore, can look back with some sense of pride and can see tangible evidence that their efforts succeeded.

It may be that the reasonably small number of parents province-wide who would even entertain sending their children to a traditional or fundamental school will have a miniscule impact on the culture of public education. Although they are contesting some contemporary values of public education and, indeed, may be exhibiting a lack of confidence in the system, it seems likely that they will have little overall influence. Or, considering the energy and enthusiasm of advocates, and the fact that, in many cases, the traditional schools option influences parents to keep their children in the public system – as opposed to enrolling them in a private school – it could be considered that the availability of such schools provides a “safety valve” to allow parents to release some of their angst within the context of the public system.

School boards currently have the autonomy to offer a variety of schooling choices to parents in their districts. French Immersion is widely available in most districts, and other options are either available or being contemplated. In the case of Abbotsford, for example, a new fine arts school has opened within the last nine years; parents in the immediate area can also enroll their children in this school, although the emphasis is definitely on those students whose parents

believe they have an aptitude or interest in the arts. It may be prudent for the Ministry of Education to consider developing some guidelines for school districts interested in setting up schools of choice. Certainly in the case of those schools that are advocated by a bloc of parents, it is possible that a school may have some currency and even a measure of ideological congruency with the views of elected trustees, but the school nevertheless may not be in the best interests of public education _ either because it is narrow in its appeal or because it does not offer a pedagogically valid alternative to the conventional catchment-area schools. To put it in its simplest terms: Just because a proposed school is apparently popular with a sizeable group of parents, and even with a majority of school trustees, does not necessarily mean that it should automatically be approved, subject to available funding.

The public can still take some satisfaction with the current Ministry of Education guidelines, which dictate curriculum and provide prescriptive province-wide standards. In spite of this, however, there is still latitude for a group of parents to advocate a school that fully subscribes to the BC curriculum but places a particular prominence on a teaching style, philosophy or subject emphasis. King Traditional, of course, would be an example of such a school. Given the current vacuum in guidelines for setting up schools of choice, it would not be unthinkable for lobby groups to successfully advocate schools stressing vegetarianism, pacifism or capitalist thought, for example. While these are admittedly somewhat flippant examples, they nonetheless illustrate the potential for new schools of choice to be opened, perhaps at the expense of the ideals of public education.

Locally elected school boards, not surprisingly, face the thorny challenge of providing the appropriate “mix” of schooling options that will meet the needs of a wide variety of students with different intellectual capacities and different aspirations. At the same time, these boards also have a strong aspiration to be responsive to their constituencies and to maintain or expand their enrollments without losing students – and the corresponding provincial grants – to private schools or home schooling. In a “consumer” environment, BC school boards can expect to deal with these issues in an educational environment which assigns significant weight to local autonomy and parental input.

Chapter Ten

Contemplating the School: A Consideration of Possible Future Research

King Traditional School, which to a large extent began as an experiment, has now been in operation for over a decade. Proponents are essentially satisfied with the school, and overt criticism by others has largely dissipated. Four more traditional schools have subsequently been approved by the Abbotsford School Board and are now enrolling students.

This dissertation has attempted to deconstruct the ethos behind the school and the congruence between parents as constituents and the school trustees as keepers of the democratic trust. Nonetheless, there would appear to be a number of research avenues that could complement this study of King Traditional School.

Scholars interested in the sociological aspects of such a school may find it fruitful to survey a sampling of parents to determine their orientation and attitude towards public education in general. Although, it is decidedly anecdotal – and it is important to stress this assumption – it would seem that supporters of King Traditional School may be somewhat “anti-intellectual” and possess a subjective bias against public education. For many parents who sent their children to King Traditional, home schooling and private schooling were their principle other options, and it would be of particular interest to determine why they favor these options – to learn to what extent their pedagogical views are based upon religious values, for instance.

Scholars may also find it rewarding to undertake a quantitative analysis of a group of students with similar backgrounds and intellectual capacities and “track” their progress as half the selected aggregation go through a conventional public school while half go through King Traditional School. Research might include a study of the students’ progress as they subsequently enter secondary school and participate in a conventional educational environment or even as they move on to postsecondary education. Such a study may reveal interesting insights into the significance of the traditional school ethos and how it prepares students for subsequent educational endeavors.

Another area of study may involve a rigorous deconstruction of the phenomenological educational environment of the school. Advocates assert that the school offers some significant contrasts with conventional catchment-area schools, but, is this really the case or are the differences merely cosmetic? Such a study could examine such salient issues as: 1) the enforcement of the curriculum province-wide by the Ministry of Education; 2) the fact that all teachers at King and other traditional schools are selected based upon their district seniority, not because of their empathy for the school’s ethos; and, 3) the extent to which respect, discipline and enterprise as foundational values are also present in other, non-traditional district schools, based upon the emphasis of the principal and the interest of parents. This examination may be useful in revealing the necessity, or otherwise, of having a free-standing school which embraces a particular philosophy which can perhaps be implemented in conventional catchment-areas schools.

In conclusion, although King Traditional casts a short shadow over the educational environment of British Columbia, there are nevertheless a number of

areas of study that could be pursued by scholars who wish to add to the understanding of such schools and their significance to the “schools of choice” debate and public education in general.

Appendix

Findings: Traditional Model School Survey

Number of surveys: 56

System currently in:

Public:	32
Private:	10
Home school:	3
Combination:	
Public and private:	3
Home school and public:	2
Correspondence and unspecified:	1
Unclear answer (public and home school):	1
No answer (probably because children would be entering kindergarten):	4

Choice of school for next year if attending Traditional school is not possible:

Public (But two offered qualifications: "but would choose private if money not an issue" and "I cannot afford private_ and home school would not work in home situation")	20
Private	16
Home school (including one by correspondence)	10
Public and home school	6
Public and private	1
Uncertain	3

What would you like to see emphasized at the Traditional School? (number of responses):

Academic Excellence	10
Traditional Academic standards	2
Learning	2
Good "basic" education	2
Challenge/Motivate	3
Results—student success	1
Good parent/teacher communication	1
Consistent Teaching Standards	2
Direct Instruction	1
Sequential Learning	6
Structured approach to learning	3
Frequent exams and reporting child's progress	1
Desks in rows	1
Individual work	1
Higher degree of instruction	1
Some integrated curriculum	1

Basics in Learning (Reading, writing, arithmetic, spelling, phonics; four specifically mentioned "Math skills"; 13 specifically mentioned the phonics/ phonetic approach); while others mentioned "the 3 R's" or "basics")	25
Direct teacher instruction	1
Individual attention when students struggle or excel	2
Structured use of class time	1
Music	2
More music/art/sports direction	1
Athletics	2
Computers	1
Cooperative and individual learning	1
No split grades	1
High Behavioral Standards/Discipline (respect—for teachers, others, self, discipline, responsibility; also includes community e.g. respect by parents for teachers; consistency)	36
Safe place	1
Good role models	1
Good student/ teacher relationship	1
Uniforms	3
Parental Involvement	10
Values (traditional values and principles)	2
High standards/ expectations (general)	1
Moral conduct/ code	3
Increase number of teaching days	1
Caring teachers	2
Qualified teachers	1
Consistent format	1
Comprehensive program	1
Good team spirit/enthusiasm to learn	1
Healthy competition	2
Structure	1
Structured assistance	1
Strong parent and teacher relationship	1
Unity	1
Community—not government directed	1
Open door policy	1
Individual responsibility of student to perform/ outcome	1
All stated objectives	3
Present concerns regarding children's education (# of responses):	
Instruction/Curriculum	
Year 2000 philosophies	1
Declining academic standards	4
Mastery of skills for grade level	1
Commitment/ dedication to teaching	1
Computer labs—not being used for keyboarding or education	1
Some whole language practices	1
Above average students feel left out/ neglected	1
Work is not being completed	1
More student based activities/ group work ("too many projects on their own"; "pairing/ grouping of weak/ strong students_ takes away teacher	

responsibility") and less direct instruction	6
Teacher instruction	1
Lack of emphasis on phonics or no phonics	7
Math skills	2
Reading	1
No music, arts, sports	1
Not enough French in Fr. Immersion K-1	1
Teaching real academics	1
Diluted / vague	1
Lack of grading system	1
Lack of knowledge re learning difficulties or handled inappropriately	2
Deadline dates and follow through	1
Not being thoroughly educated—too much to cover, no structure, self-ruled	2
Inconsistent teachers / teaching methods	3
Time poorly used	1
Sports—intramural / competition	1
Split grades	5
Lack of structured learning	5
Lack of sequential learning	1
Not challenged	7
Evaluation (unclear report cards, poor feedback on child's progress)	2
Inconsistencies with teachers' philosophies and standards	1
Not all students learn through lectures	1
More direct supervision	1
Stronger achievement	1
Too much non-academics is being pushed—takes over family's instructional role	1
Values in classroom, choice of books, curriculum conflicts with family values	1
Atmosphere/Discipline	
Drugs—declining social behaviour / negative moral standards	2
Competition (name brands)	1
Lack of discipline in classroom	2
Disrespect, swearing is tolerated	3
Low expectations (general)	2
Character building / role models	1
Teachers not receiving enough parental support with regard to poor behavior	1
Discipline—not consistent	7
Noisy and unstructured	1
Fear children will have no self-discipline	1
Poor communication between parent and child	1
Air Quality 1	
Better rel. between_	1
Governance/Structure	
Lack of parental involvement / lack of welcome in classroom to observe / lack of meetings	9
Cost	3
Class in portables	1

Stability	1
Good education	2
Secular education	1
Social interaction (for home schoolers)	2
Mother overworked	1
Child needs other authority figures	1

References

- Archer, N. [Secretary-Treasurer, School District #34] (1997, April 21). *Preliminary budget for traditional Secondary School*.
- Arden, R. [Assistant Superintendent, School District #34] (1992, March). *Configuration report*.
- Arrington, L. (1998, April). What's a world view? *Focus on the Family*, 14.
- Bacharach, S., & Mundell, B. (Eds.). (1995). *Images of schools: Structures and roles in organizational behavior*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Balcom, S. (1996, January 12). Back-to-basics high school sought in Surrey. *Vancouver Sun*, B1.
- Balcom, S. (1996, March 6). Traditional school gains support in Abbotsford. *Vancouver Sun*, A11.
- Balcom, S. (1996, January 6). Parent power brings problems. *Vancouver Sun*, D3.
- Barrow, R. (1998, July 2). The higher nonsense. *Simon Fraser News*, 5.
- Bell, D. (n.d.). Langley school trustee candidate flyer.
- Bellett, G. (1998, September 24). Parents necessary to success of traditional schools, says expert. *Vancouver Sun*, B4.
- Benjamin, S. (1989, March). An ideascapes for education: What futurists recommend. *Educational Leadership*, 46, 6-14.
- Bensen, D. (2000, May 11). Parents taking an interest in schools are mostly mothers. *Vancouver Sun*, A15.
- Berres, M., & Ferguson, D. (Eds.) (1995). *Creating tomorrow's schools today*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Beyak, T. (1996, February 20). PAC takes swing at policy. *Abbotsford News*.
- Beyak, T. (1996, March 12). CTC first choice as "traditional" high school. *Abbotsford News*.
- Beyak, T. (1996, March 13). King Elementary a "class" act. *Abbotsford News*.
- Beyak, T. (1996, March 20). Guidance, freedom, balanced at King. *Abbotsford News*, A3.
- Beyak, T. (1996, May 30). Traditional talks turn very tense. *Abbotsford News*, 1.

- Bligh, R. (1999). *A study of King Traditional School*. Unpublished essay, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.
- British Columbia Ministry of Education. (1985). *Let's Talk About Schools: summary and highlights*. Victoria, BC.
- British Columbia Ministry of Education. (1998, April). *Skills and Training Accreditation Documents, King Traditional School*.
- British Columbia Ministry of Education. (2000, Winter). *Better learning: Education in the 21st century* [Pamphlet]. Victoria, BC.
- British Columbia Royal Commission on Education. (1988). *A legacy for learners*. Victoria: Queen's Printer.
- Brown, D. (1999a). *A visit to King Traditional Elementary School*. Unpublished paper, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.
- Brown, D. (1999b). *The impact of parental choice on three Canadian public schools*. Kelowna, BC: Society for the Advancement of Education.
- Calam, J. & Fleming, T. (1988). *British Columbia schools and society, Vol. 1, Commissioned papers of the Royal Commission*. Victoria: Queen's Printer.
- Caldwell, L. S. (1997, Spring). A determined group of parents fight for a traditional school. *NW Education Magazine* [On-line]. Available: http://www.nwrel.org/nwedu/spring_97/articles8.html.
- Chrispeels, J. (1992). *Effective schools and home-school-community partnership roles: A framework for parental involvement*. A paper prepared for the National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development. University of Wisconsin, Madison.
- Cochrane, D.B. (1992). The Stances of Provincial Ministries of Education Towards Values/Moral Education in Canadian Public Schools in the 1990s. *Journal of Moral Education*, 21 (2), 1-11.
- Coggins, J. (1998, September 24). Public school: Should we abandon it? *Mennonite Brethren Herald*, 3-8.
- Coleman, J. (August-September, 1987). Families and schools. *Educational Researcher*, 27, 32-38.
- Coleman, P. (1998). *The Pressure for Choice*. Kelowna, BC: Society for the Advancement of Education.
- Coleman, P., & LaRocque, L. (1993). Trustee leadership and school district ethos. *The Alberta Journal of Educational Research*, 39 (4), 149-167.
- Coleman, P., & Tabin, Y. (1992, April). *The good teacher: A parent perspective*. A paper presented at the Annual General Meeting of the American Educational Research Association: San Francisco, CA.
-

- Coleman, P., Collinge, J. & Tabin, Y. (Spring, 1993). *Learning together: The student/parent/teacher triad*. Unpublished paper. Simon Fraser University, BC.
- Crawley, M. (1995). *Schoolyard bullies: Messing with British Columbia's educational system*. Victoria, BC: Orca Book Publishers.
- Collins, J. [Co-chair Elect, Surrey Parent Advisory Committee] (1997, May 31). Letter to PAC Chairs in Langley and Abbotsford.
- Crist, K. (1975). *Plan: Way out front*. Marshall Fundamental School, Pasadena, CA.
- Crist, K. (n.d.). *A highlight worth sharing* [Informational booklet]. Marshall Fundamental School, Pasadena, CA.
- Cunningham, L., & Mitchell, B. (Eds.) (1990). *Educational leadership and changing contexts in families, communities and schools*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Dean, S. (2000). *Hearts and minds: A public school miracle*. Toronto: Penguin.
- Delgado-Gaitan, C. (1991, Spring). Involving parents in the schools: A process of empowerment. *American Journal of Education*, volume number, 20-46.
- Different Philosophies, Methods Among Schools [Letter to the editor]. (1996, June 8). *Abbotsford News*.
- Downey, L.W. (1986). The Aid-To-Independent Schools Movement in British Columbia. In N.M.Sheehan, J.D. Wilson & D.C. Jones (Eds.), *Schools in the West*. (pp. 305-323). Calgary, Alberta: Detselig Enterprises Limited.
- Eisner, E. & Peshkin, A. (Eds.) (1990). *Qualitative inquiry in education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Epstein, J., & Dauber, S. (1991). School programs and teacher practices of parent involvement in inner-city elementary and middle schools. *The Elementary School Journal*, 91 (3), 271-178.
- Expansion Committee of Abbotsford Traditional School (1994). *Proposal to the Abbotsford School Board* [Summary form]. Abbotsford, BC.
- Field, J. (1996, March 12). Submission to the Education Restructuring Steering Committee.
- Fine arts school program [Advertisement]. (1999, February 13). School District #34 (Abbotsford), 9.
- First year at King a big success [Letter to the Editor]. (1996, June 7). *Abbotsford Times*, 7.
- Fleming, T. (1989, Spring). In the Imperial Age and after: Patterns of British Columbia school leadership and the institution of the superintendency. *B.C. Studies*. 81,50-76.
-

- Fleming, T. (1990, Spring). The British Columbia Royal Commission on Education: The process of the study. *Education Canada*, 10-160.
- Fleming, T. (1991). Canadian school policy in Liberal and Post Liberal eras: Historical perspectives on the changing social context of schooling, 1846-1900. *Journal of Education Policy*, 6(2), 183-199.
- Fleming, T. (1999, March). Educational reform stuck in a gridlock. *Victoria Times Colonist*, p. A11.
- Fleming, T. (2002a). School principals: The last best hope for public schools. *Canadian Association of Principals Journal*, 10(3), 8-9.
- Fleming, T. (2002b). Beyond school reform: re-imagining and re-inventing the public school in the 21st century. *Canadian Association of Principals Journal*, 11(1), 23-27.
- Fleming, T. (2003). From educational government to the government of education: The decline and fall of the British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1972-1996. *Historical Studies in Education*, 15(2), 210-236.
- Foulds, C. (1996, May 25). Poll shows education may need back to basics. *Abbotsford News*, A12.
- Fullan, M. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Fundamental School Committee (1975, Spring). *Brief submitted to the Langley Board of School Trustees*.
- Fundamental School Committee (1977). *Fundamental answers to the BC Teacher's Federation Commission Report on Langley*.
- Gibson, J. (2000, November). *My vision for inclusive schools*. Unpublished paper prepared by School District #34 (Abbotsford, BC).
- Giddens A. (1996). Living in a post-traditional society. In *A defense of sociology* (pp. 9-64). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.
- Gillies, K. (1996, March 3). Traditional high school by September? *Abbotsford Times*, A2.
- Gillies, K. (1996, March 5). King Elementary underway, sights set now on high school. *Abbotsford Times*, 1.
- Gillies, K. (1996, May 31). 2nd thoughts for traditional school. *Abbotsford Times*, A8.
- Gillies, K. (1996, May 31). More room needed (in traditional school). *Abbotsford Times*, 7.
- Gillies, K. (1997, June 27). 600 against traditional secondary. *Abbotsford Times*, 7.
- Gillies, K. (1997, May 30). King Traditional's differences spelled out., *Abbotsford Times*, 7.

- Glegg, A. & Fleming, T. (2004). Teaching to the test or testing to teach? Educational Assessment in British Columbia, 1872-2002. *Historical Studies in Education*, 16(1), 115-137.
- Good, G. (1996). The hegemony of theory. *University of Toronto Quarterly*, 65 (3), 535-555.
- Goodlad, J. (1994). *A place called school*. New York: McGraw Hill.
- Guppy, N. & Davies, S. (1999). Understanding Canadians' Declining Confidence in Public Education. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 24 (3), 265-280.
- Gustafson, R.W. (2001). The Future of Canadian Public Education: Canadian or American. *Education Canada*, 42 (1), 40-43.
- Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Hart, D. & Livingstone, D.W. (1998). The "Crisis" of Confidence in Schools and the Neoconservative Agenda: Diverging Opinions of Corporate Executives and the General Public. *The Ontario Journal of Educational Research*, No. 1, Spring, 1-19.
- In Surrey, meanwhile, it's back to basics. (1996, January 22). *British Columbia Report*.
- Jensen, M. (1999). *A study of King Traditional Elementary School*. Unpublished graduating paper, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC.
- John Marshall Fundamental School (n.d.) *Pasadena Fundamental Mission Statement* [flyer].
- Johnson, F.H. (1971). *John Jessop: Goldseeker and Educator: Founder of the British Columbia School System*. Vancouver: Mitchell Press.
- Kalaw, C. (1999). *Traditional schooling as parents' rights movement in British Columbia*. Unpublished master's thesis, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC.
- Kalaw, K, McLaren, A, & Rehnby, N. (1998). *In the name of "choice": A Study of traditional schools in BC*. Vancouver, BC: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.
- Kellner, M. (1975). *A handbook for students, teachers and parents*. Pasadena Unified School District, Pasadena, CA.
- King Traditional School (1994, Fall). *Mission Statement and Objectives*. King Traditional School, Abbotsford, BC.
- King Traditional School (1995). *Beginnings*. King Traditional School, Abbotsford, BC.
- King Traditional School (1995). *Student handbook, 1995-1996*. King Traditional School, Abbotsford, BC.

- King Traditional School (1995). *Uniform requirements for boys and girls*. King Traditional School, Abbotsford, BC.
- King Traditional School (1995, October). Logo competition. *King Traditional School Newsletter*.
- King Traditional School (1995, September). Welcome letter. *King Traditional School Newsletter*.
- King Traditional School (1996, February). Expansion: It's time for choices. *King Traditional School Newsletter*.
- King Traditional School (1996, May). *King Traditional School Newsletter*.
- King Traditional School. (1998, 1999). *Reflections, 1997-98, 1998-99* [Annual yearbook]. King Traditional School, Abbotsford, BC.
- King Traditional School. (1998, 1999). *Anthology, 1997-98, 1998-99* [student art and writing]. King Traditional School, Abbotsford, BC.
- King Traditional School (n.d.). *Library materials donation* [Brochure]. King Traditional School, Abbotsford, BC.
- King Traditional School (n.d.). *Lunchtime supervisors manual*. King Traditional School, Abbotsford, BC.
- King Traditional School (n.d.). *School focus* [Informational sheet]. King Traditional School, Abbotsford, BC.
- King Traditional School (1995). *With hard work comes wisdom* [Summary of implementation of the school]. King Traditional School, Abbotsford, BC.
- Kohn, A. (1999). *The schools our children deserve*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Kossmann, P. (1995, February 22). Basic school OK blows up. *Abbotsford Times*, 1.
- Kwantes, J. (1997, January 2). Year of trading shots over traditional schools. *Abbotsford News*, C1.
- Kwantes, J. (1997, April 28). MEI system second largest in BC. *Abbotsford News*, 3.
- Kwantes, J. (1997, November 13). Location missing "traditional" element. *Abbotsford News*, 7.
- Kwantes, J. (1998, February 24). It's a traditional elementary ritual. *Abbotsford News*, 2.
- Kwantes, J. (1996, September). Camping out for kid's sake. *Abbotsford News*, A5.
- Kwantes, J. (1997, April 13). After tough fight, parent gives up. *Abbotsford News*.
- Kwantes, J. (1997, April 3). "Traditional" religious views become issue. *Abbotsford News*, A6.

- Kwantes, J. (1997, June 21). Traditional OK. *Abbotsford News*, 9.
- Kwantes, J. (1999, February 11). Campout tradition continues. *Abbotsford News*, 3.
- Kwantes, J. (1999, November 2). Traditional school concept a winner: Study. *Abbotsford News*, A3.
- Harris, L.H., & Hodges, R. E. (Eds.), (1995). *The Literacy Dictionary: The Vocabulary of Reading and Writing*. Newark, Delaware: International Reading Association.
- Henry, F.J. (1964) *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*. Vancouver, Canada: University of British Columbia.
- Johnson, F.H. (1964). *A History of Public Education in British Columbia*. Vancouver: UBC Press.
- Lambert, L. (1998). *Building leadership capacity in schools*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.
- Langley Central Parents Advisory Group (1976, April 7). Letter to school parents. Langley, BC.
- LaRocque, L., & Coleman, P. (1993, December). *The politics of excellence*. Burnaby, BC: Simon Fraser University.
- Leonard, G. (1992, May). The end of school. *Atlantic Monthly*, volume number, 5 24-32.
- Livingstone, D.W. & Hart, D. (2001), *Public Faith in Education*, Education Canada, 41 (1), 32-35.
- Lodish, R. (1999, March). Velveeta or brie? *Principal*, 70-71.
- Mamchur, C. (1990, April). But...the curriculum. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 634-637.
- Marshall Fundamental School (1975). *Student-parent handbook, 1975-1976*. Pasadena Unified School District, Pasadena, CA.
- Martin, Y. M. & MacPherson (Eds.). (1993). *Restructuring administrative policy in public schooling*. Calgary, AB: Detselig.
- McLaren, A. (1998, July 16). How should we respond to the traditional school movement? *Vancouver Sun*, A13.
- Memoranda from Margaret Stenersen Elementary School and Matsqui Elementary School (School District #34, Abbotsford)*. (n.d.) PACs to other district PACs.
- Merriam, S. (1988). *Case study research in higher education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Ministry of Education. *Accreditation Policy for BC Public Schools*. On line: http://www,bced.gov.bc.ca/accreditation/policy_appenda.htm

- Minutes, Annual General Meeting, Parent Advisory Meeting (1995, October 19). King Traditional School.
- Minutes, Strategy Meeting for Future Expansion (1996, February 6). King Traditional School.
- More parental access to schools urged in Ontario (1998, November 21). *Vancouver Sun*.
- Neatby, H. (1953). *So little for the mind*. Toronto: Clark Irwin.
- Nehring, J. (1988). *The school within us: The creation of an innovative public school*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Nikiforuk, A. (1991, September 27). Fifth Column. *The Globe and Mail*, p.A16
- Nikiforuk, A. (1992, February 7). Fifth Column. *The Globe and Mail*, p.A24
- Nikiforuk, A. (1992, March 6). Fifth Column. *The Globe and Mail*, p.A18
- Not the decision, but how it's done [Editorial]. (1995, February 22). *Abbotsford Times*, 5.
- Notes, Goal Setting and Planning Session*, submitted to the Abbotsford School Board. (1997, March 4).
- One-size schooling no longer fits all [Letter to the editor]. (1998, July 20). *Vancouver Sun*, 11.
- PAC president wants to clarify her group's position [Letter to the editor]. (1996, February 28). *Abbotsford News*, 5.
- Pasadena Unified School District. (1975). *Background information*. Pasadena Unified School District, Pasadena, CA.
- Pasadena Unified School District. (1976). *Student achievement in Pasadena public schools* [Brochure]. Pasadena Unified School District, Pasadena, CA.
- Polkinghorne, D. (1988). *Narrative knowing and the human sciences*. New York: State University of New York Press.
- Provincial School Review Committee. (1985) *Let's Talk About Schools*. BC Ministry of Education.
- Proposal submitted to School District #34 (Abbotsford). (1994, November 28).
- Proposal and notes for a traditional secondary school submitted to the Abbotsford School Board. (1997).
- Public Education. (2000). *BC Encyclopedia*. Madeira Park, BC: Harbor Publishing.
- Public school has served family well [Letter to the editor]. (1996, June 7). *Abbotsford Times*.
- Pynn, L. Traditional school issue reconsidered. (1998, June 1). *Vancouver Sun*, B3.

- R.H. King Academy promotional booklet and curriculum guide (n.d.). Scarborough, Ont.
- Raptis, H. & Fleming, T. (February 15, 2004). From "La Plume de Ma Tante" to "Parlez-Vous Francais?" The making of French language policy in British Columbia, 1945-1982. *Canadian Journal for Educational Administration and Policy*, 28, 1-14.
Available: www.umanitoba.ca/publications/cjeap/issuesOnline.html/
- Report of the Royal Commission on Education (1960). Province of British Columbia, Victoria, BC.
- Report to School District #34 Board (Abbotsford) in response to a letter written by Carrie VanGalen, chair, district PAC. 1997.
- Robinson, V., president, Abbotsford District Teachers Association, interview, June 11, 1997.
- School District #34 (Abbotsford) (1994). *Traditional model school survey documents and forms*.
- Simpson, J. (1991, May 15). No time to waste in restoring common sense to our education system. *The Globe and Mail*, p. A16
- Simpson, J. (1991, May 15). Only one way to avoid giving Canada's educational system a failing grade. *The Globe and Mail*, p. A18
- Stake, R. (1991). *The case study method of social inquiry*. Boston: Kluwer-Nijhoff Publishing.
- Steffenhagen, J. (1999, November 28). Traditional schools excel, study reports. *Vancouver Sun*, A4.
- Steffenhagen, J. (2000, January 7). Vancouver parents make bid for traditional school. *Vancouver Sun*, B3.
- Steffenhagen, J. (2000, May 24). Traditional school in city progresses. *Vancouver Sun*, B7.
- Stein, G.S. (2001). Choice and Public Education: A Core Civic Challenge. *Education Canada*, (42) 1, 4-7.
- Stronks, J., & Stronks, G. (1999). *Christian teachers in public schools*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books.
- Swap, S.M. (1983). *Developing home-school partnerships*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Sweet, L. (1997). *God in the classroom*. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart.
- Teachers for Excellence in Education. (1996, March). *Newsletter*.

- Traditional Secondary Committee (1997, May 12). *Report to the Abbotsford School Board by the Traditional Secondary Committee.*
- Tyler, R. (1969). *Basic principles of curriculum and instruction.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- US Department of Labor (1991, June). Characteristics of today's and tomorrow's workplace. In *Competing in the New International Economy.*
- Usher, R., & Edwards, R. (1996). *Postmodernism and education.* London: Routledge.
- VanGalen, C. [Chair, Abbotsford District PAC] (1997, April 21). Presentation to Abbotsford School Board. Abbotsford, BC.
- Vetterli, R. (n.d.). *The fundamental revolution against progressive education.* Unpublished manuscript, University of California, Riverside, CA.
- Walberg, H., & Wallace, T. (1992, April). *Family programs for academic learning.* Paper presented at the Annual General Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.
- Wellborn, S. (1978, September 11). Quest for better schools. *US News and World Report*, 43.
- Whitely, R.F. (2000). *Fingernails on the Blackboard: A Socio-Historical Narrative of Educational Policy Making in British Columbia (1975-1989).* Unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC.
- Wideen, M., & Courtlans, M. (Eds.) (1996). *The struggle for curriculum.* Burnaby, BC: Institute for Studies in Teacher Education.
- Wilson, J.D. (1982). From the swinging 60s to the sobering 70s. In Titley & Miller (Eds.), *Education in Canada* (pp. 197-208). Calgary, Alberta: Detselig Enterprises Limited.
- Young, T., & Clinchy, E. (1992). *Choices in public education.* New York: Teachers College Press.
- Yvonne M.M. & MacPherson (Eds.) (1993) *Restructuring Administrative Policy in Public Schooling.* Calgary, Alberta: Detselig Enterprises Ltd.