

**Areas of Reform that Would Really Count:
Valuing the Teacher and Care and Relationships
in the Classroom**

by

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Abstract

It is the thesis of this paper that the current reforms and policies designed for improving student achievement may be hampering the goal of student learning, despite the good intentions of policy makers. This paper will show that the way to improve student learning is not to expand the prescribed curriculum or to insist upon more standardization, but to allow effective teachers to do what it is they know they need to do to create conditions for optimum student learning: foster care and relationships in their classrooms. Reforms then should focus on care and relationships in the classroom and valuing and supporting the teachers who are skilled at building and nurturing these relationships.

There is an examination of the current context in schools and some of the current reforms which are designed to improve student achievement. Research and writings about good teaching are then discussed and finally, there are new directions proposed for more effective reforms and policy in Teacher Education Programs as well as Professional and Curriculum Development. A conclusion is offered which discusses how these new reform directions could successfully address some of the problems in our school system today.

Reader's Summary

It is the thesis of this paper that the current reforms and policies designed for improving student achievement may, in actuality, be hampering the more worthwhile goal of student learning. This paper will endeavour to show that there are other areas of education which would be far more effective for creating conditions that would improve student learning.

An argument will be made that the way to improve student learning is not to expand the prescribed curriculum or to insist upon more standardization, but to allow effective teachers to do what it is they know they need to do to create conditions that will enhance student learning: foster care and relationships in their classrooms.

This paper will first examine the current context in our schools. It will look at how teachers are feeling, how the government is enacting this to try to raise student achievement, and how the public is reacting to this trend in Public Education. There will then be a description of how the current reforms designed to improve student achievement are affecting students' education.

In the next section, it is proposed that the most efficient way to improve student achievement, is to have classrooms in which there are thriving learning environments and good teachers. Research and the writings of many authors in the educational field are discussed to see if there are some core essential characteristics in good classrooms and teachers. It is evident that one of the most salient factors in these classrooms is that the students felt a bond between themselves and the teacher and that it was this sense of being cared for and having a connection with the teacher and subject matter, that created the highest motivation to learn.

The next section examines this need for having caring relationships in the classroom and why the presence of these relationships and bonds creates such a powerful foundation for

learning. Research and writings about relationships and care in the classroom will be discussed.

Following that, there will be a section which explores some implications that these findings could have on have on Teacher Education Programs and Curricular and Professional Development. New areas of reform which reflect the findings of this paper will be suggested. It will be argued that what needs to become the focus again, is the nurturing of the whole child (not just the academic parts of our children) through making connections and forming caring relationships with them, and getting and keeping good teachers in the classroom.

There is then a conclusion which addresses the current context which was described at the beginning of the paper, and how these new proposed areas of reform could quite successfully address many of the problems which are evident in Public Education today.

Dedication

This work is dedicated to Maddie, Brian and Georgia, and to my husband, Paul. Your patience and support have been so appreciated. I love you all very much.

A special dedication goes to my many friends who reminded me of my own mantra, "There's always a way" when I really needed it.

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Introduction

The incredible push for schools to cover more curriculum and be accountable through scores and standardized testing has created conditions which are not conducive to improving learning. Classrooms today are becoming places of uniformity and rote learning out of necessity. In order to “cover” the rapidly expanding prescribed curriculum and prepare for the testing of that curriculum, teachers are having to focus primarily on these tests and that content. Scores are published, teachers', schools' and students' scores are being compared against each other, and teachers feel the pressure to make sure that they and their students perform well on these tests. That means extra time must be allotted to the teaching of the content of these tests. That extra time is taken away from crucial aspects of the curriculum and these parts of the curriculum are diminishing. Ironically, it is these neglected parts of the curriculum that are most important for improving student learning. It is the purpose of this paper to illustrate that the way to improve student learning is not to expand the prescribed curriculum or to insist upon more standardization, but to allow effective teachers to do what it is they know they need to do to create conditions that will enhance student learning: foster care and relationships in their classrooms. Reforms then should focus on two main areas. Firstly, valuing the building of, and nurturing of, **care and relationships** in the classroom and secondly, valuing and supporting the **teachers** who are effective at building and nurturing these relationships and connections with students.

Currently, standardized tests are given in what are deemed to be the “most important” or “core” subjects, so the other subjects which help shape and educate the “whole child” are squeezed out and left as superfluous. These “extra”, non-core subjects are those which have been deemed for decades by many as essential to a child’s overall education as a well-balanced, learned citizen. Music, Art, Drama, and Physical Education which were once thought of as core facets of a child’s education, are relegated to the periphery, if anywhere,

of the school day to make way for time for increased focus on that which is measurable: increasing reading and math scores on standardized tests. As Kohn (2005,20) says,

The current version of school reform is changing what we value. If the sole goal is to raise achievement (in the narrowest sense of the word), then we may end up ignoring other kinds of learning. It's difficult to teach the whole child when you are held accountable only for raising reading and math scores.

These "immeasurable" parts of a student's schooling are integral to the education of the whole child. The term "whole child" refers to the idea that a child is a "whole" person who has physical, emotional, artistic, moral, spiritual as well as academic aims and that all of these aims should be focussed upon to some degree, in education. Noddings (2005,10) says that of course schools would focus more on certain aims than others, but that all of these aims should help us plan and decide what happens in schools:

These great aims are meant to guide our instructional decisions. They are meant to broaden our thinking -- to remind us to ask *why* we have chosen certain curriculums, pedagogical methods, classroom arrangements, and learning objectives. They remind us, too, that students are whole persons -- not mere collections of attributes, some to be addressed in one place and others to be addressed elsewhere.

To only make room for that which is measurable is to neglect much of what really matters in a child's education. Eisner (2005,18) argues, "Not everything that matters is measurable and not everything measurable matters. In any case, you don't fatten cattle by putting them on a scale -- you have to pay attention to their diet."

Before looking at the current reforms which have been designed to improve student achievement, I will first set the stage for this discussion by describing the current context in the schools today and the effect that the popular reforms are having on students, teachers and classrooms. The over-prescribed, increasingly packed curriculum is not just impeding choices, learning and motivation for students, it is burning out and turning off, some of the most gifted and dedicated teachers in classrooms today. Because it is the stance of this paper that the teacher is one of the key components to creating optimum learning

conditions, the debilitating atmosphere in which schools and teachers are amidst is important to consider.

Part One

The Current Context In Schools

Has there ever been a wider, or more offensive, gap between education rhetoric and reality than the one that defines the current accountability fad? The stirring sound bites waft through the air: higher expectations... world-class standards... raising the bar... no child left behind. Meanwhile, down on the ground, educators and students are under excruciating pressure to improve test results -- often at the expense of meaningful learning -- and more low-income and minority students are dropping out.

(Kohn, 2005,20)

Having taught in the same school for several years, I have been able to see some interesting changes occur, as well as patterns develop in my own, and in neighbouring schools. To put it one way, the enthusiasm seems to be waning. There is a palpable malaise that is seeping through the hallways and classrooms of schools today. Teachers are becoming tired. They seem increasingly defeated and negative. Worst of all, their stories tell of a hopelessness. If teachers are without hope, how can they nurture hope and optimism in their students? Without hope and optimism, how can one really learn? Without hope and optimism, why would one really *want* to learn?

Fullan, cited in Hargreaves (1997,221), discusses "hope" as a virtue which helps people to withstand overwhelming anxiety, and make better decisions. He says,

The more [teachers] care, the more anxious they get. The more they become emotionally detached, the poorer decisions they make. Understanding the intimate two-way link between emotion and hope is a powerful insight. Hope is not a naïve, sunny view of life. It is the capacity not to panic in tight situations, to find ways and resources to fight difficult problems.... Hopeful people are not unaware of reality or superficially happier. They are indeed hopeful in the face of lost causes and other intractable problems.... We stand less of a chance by pursuing the techniques of innovation than we do by working on a deeper understanding of the complex interrelationships of emotion, hope, empathy, and moral purpose.

Teachers need to have hope and optimism in these times of stress and change. There is a pall over schools and the teachers within those walls that is gravely affecting the learning capacity of students. Students will learn best when they feel cared for and respected, and the sense of belonging which comes from a caring environment is painfully absent in many troubled schools. If teachers are without hope, it is unlikely that they will nurture hope and optimism in their students. If students do not have hope and optimism, how can they learn, and why would they be motivated to learn? Students will learn from teachers who are learners and who have the energy and drive to bond with and care for their students. Teachers will not bond with students if they themselves are feeling burned out and hopeless. Why is this hopelessness pervading in schools today?

Years ago, in a school with which I was very familiar, every teacher sponsored at least one club or service (such as sponsoring monitors of some kind), or perhaps one of each, and extra-curricular work was seen as part of the “job”. Teachers enthusiastically coached, ran clubs, met with Students’ Council, or started new initiatives such as school beautification projects, or organizing UNICEF boxes for the school. In the last couple of years, however, the important beginning of the year staff meetings have been riddled with awkward silences as the principal cites the list of committees, teams and clubs for which sponsor teachers are needed. What commonly ends up on those sign up sheets are a few names -- the same few names repeated over and over. These jobs that were seen as part of all teachers’ jobs have been relegated to a busy few. Ironically, these teachers are often the busiest of all, juggling very full professional lives, home lives and various extra-curricular interests of their own. This is an interesting phenomenon in itself, that the busiest teachers take on most of the additional jobs that need doing. What is it that is different about these teachers that they do not exhibit the same waning enthusiasm, or cynicism, that some of the other teachers do? Perhaps it boils down to an inherent sense of caring about individuals, and a belief in the importance of the sense of community and the formation of strong bonds between student and teacher.

These “extra” parts of school are not extra at all to some teachers. Many teachers believe that these activities are key to the bonding experiences, and in fact the richest learning opportunities, within a school’s walls. The belief that these components of schooling are absolutely integral to a child’s education and development is becoming a powerful source of conflict and dissonance for many of the most effective teachers in our schools. We will return to this idea again later in the paper.

There is a strikingly ironic aspect about the dwindling interest of some teachers’ lack of interest in doing extra-curricular work at schools. The irony is that in the schools in which their own children attend, the amount and quality of extra-curricular activities and programs is typically praised and touted as a sign of a good school. The staff room talk around the lunch table sometimes turns to people’s own personal lives, of course, and when teachers talk of their own children’s schools, they often use the presence or absence of extra-

curricular activities as a marker of the quality of that school. Teams and clubs are given as examples, and lauded by teachers -- parents -- of these fortunate children. Many times I have heard teachers (in their "parent" roles) compare the school in which they are teaching to the school in which their own children attend. They will be scoffing at the lack of programs offered at the schools at which they work (due they say to the fact that they just don't have time to coach or run a club anymore), and yet praise the innovative and dedicated schools at which their children are lucky enough to attend.

I remember years ago that I posed some questions to colleagues (and have posed them over and over through the years) regarding the nature of a teacher's job and what it is we are responsible for doing. I asked my colleagues, "But what if our own children went to this school? How would you feel about the school experience they were getting here? Would you want your own children to attend this school? More tellingly, would you want your own child to be in a classroom just like yours?" Alarming, some of these teachers said no, they would not want their own children to attend the school, or be a member of the classroom, in which they teach. Saddened and stunned, my response to this statement was, "But these are all *someone's* children. What if your child's teacher had this attitude?"

Besides the lack of enthusiasm for taking on extra-curricular activities, there is a growing lack of enthusiasm for professional growth and development among too many teachers. I have always been on Professional Development Committees at the schools at which I have taught, and again, the same few teachers will organize and facilitate the Professional Days for the staff, each time, and often those same few teachers return to that committee each year. The remaining teachers have no involvement in planning the Professional Day's activities. Topics for these days have varied, but none of them seem to really be able to engage all of the teachers. When asked (I did a survey of the teachers at a school regarding their interests and feelings about Professional Days and how they would like to see them used, for a previous paper I was writing), the majority of teachers at a school at which I worked said they mostly desired time to work on their own, or time to just "talk". They felt so busy, they did not want to take on "more stuff". They just wanted to work on their own items, such as marking, planning, etc., or have time to talk to colleagues about whatever they

deemed important and pressing at the time. I have seen some teachers bring a stack of marking to Professional Development Days, and the marking is their focus rather than collaborating with colleagues, problem-solving in small groups around school issues, or listening to a speaker. Of course, not all teachers feel this way about professional development, but the number of teachers who do, is growing.

More evidence of this change in attitude toward professional growth and development was obvious at a school with which I am familiar. On the day before the Provincial Professional Day (a day when there are numerous conferences and workshops planned around the province so that teachers can attend some of these organized Professional Development opportunities), the principal sent around a staff list on which teachers were to indicate how they were spending the Provincial Professional Day. At least half of the staff of 20 or so teachers said that at that point, the day before the Professional Day, they were still unsure of what they were doing. I wondered if this was just a symptom of the particular dynamics of this one school, or was this apparent apathy evident at other schools. The interesting questions I began to ask myself were: “*Why* do teachers feel this way?” and “*What* is causing this malaise?” I knew that no matter what the answer was, the fact remained that the students in these schools would most certainly suffer when their teachers were feeling this way about teaching and their own learning.

Teachers need to be learners in order for their students to learn. Barth (2001) proclaims that, “Teachers and students go hand in hand as learners -- or they don't go at all.” (23). If teachers do not want to continue learning, if teachers do not feel the need to reflect on what they are doing and try to make things better for students, the students at the school will not have the benefit of teachers trying to incorporate best practices and trying to make conditions for learning continually better. Barth also describes this type of teachers' attitude as going on “automatic pilot”, and says that this can have a “devastating effect on the capacity of school people to be school-based reformers. For if you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always got” (22).

Another observation I have made when I have been in and about classrooms, workshops and staff rooms, is that there seems to be an “us and them” mentality growing in many schools. There seems to have always been a certain degree of this conflict between teachers and the public: *those teachers* get too many holidays, *those teachers* have short hours and too many benefits, *those teachers* protect their own (even when they are not deserving of it), *those teachers* do not deserve a raise, etc. Presently, the conflict has been heightened because of issues such as calls for increased parental input, school choice versus the neighbourhood school, and School Planning Councils (elected councils of six, that make school decisions about finances and school goals upon which there is more parent representation than teacher representation). Teachers are not feeling respected and valued. They feel their autonomy and professionalism are being taken away.

The “us and them” mentality with the public is closely related to the conflict that teachers feel between themselves and the present government in British Columbia. The government has created a series of “checks and balances”, it seems to teachers. They have instigated more testing and the scores of these tests are published and supposedly indicate the best schools and therefore, the strongest teachers. Many teachers are up in arms, of course, and say that not all things can be measured by these tests, that the tests discriminate between the have and have-not schools, that the schools at which economically disadvantaged students attend will score lower on these tests, and that high scores do not necessarily mean that lifelong learning has occurred, etc. The “us and them” conversations that happen in the staff rooms and in the schoolhouse hallways, illustrating the conflict between the government versus the teachers, have been heard for years, but never quite as loudly as now.

The most disturbing “us and them” conflict which has been more prevalent in recent years, however, is between teachers and a rather new antagonist -- the students. Quite common now is to hear teachers complaining that the current group of students is the “worst” group they have ever had. They are getting worse every year, one can hear them lament. Some teachers are adamant that students today are much more disrespectful and apathetic; they just don’t seem to care. This “kids these days” attitude is becoming more and more prevalent and, I believe, a self-fulfilling prophecy. Some teachers are *expecting* students to be

apathetic, to be rude, to be violent and to be disrespectful, so they are working from a deficit model -- the kids need to be put in their place, so we will not give them any latitude. We will give them no rights, no responsibilities, and no care or affection, because they do not deserve it. I assert that what they need is the exact opposite. To go a step further, I assert that the one of the main *reasons* for this behaviour in our students, is in fact being *caused* by precisely the reforms and directives which are being touted by policymakers as panaceas for our ailing system and lack-lustre performance of students.

Many caring teachers reflect on the behaviours which they are observing in students today and are asking themselves, "From where are these behaviours and attitudes coming?" Parents and government would do well to also ask these same questions. I believe that students are, for the most part, feeling disrespected and dishonoured at their schools. Many of those same children are feeling these feelings at home, as well. Their parents are busy and working, family time is eroding, the media is pushing them to grow up too fast by glamourizing behaviours that have been previously seen as adult behaviours, and their peers are becoming the group to whom they go to for advice and comfort, instead of their parents and teachers.

In our classrooms, these students feel they are not being cared for and they are acting accordingly -- just as children do with parents who are being neglectful. Because of the above described pressures and conflicts which teachers are feeling, one of the most important parts of school life is being pushed out of the schools to make room for increasing academic reforms, parental rights and an all-encompassing curriculum. Ironically, these reforms are being brought in in hopes of turning these kids around and squelching this apathetic attitude and lull in achievement levels. Ironically, the reforms *themselves* are a large part of the problem in schools. School communities, the relationships in the schoolhouse and the spirit of the children within our schools, are breaking down. One of the most important conditions under which schools and children, and indeed teachers, can thrive, is that of a caring community. Without relationships and caring, a school and its occupants cannot thrive and grow. One of the central arguments of this paper is that what

these children need now is to be given *more* rights, responsibilities, care and affection, not less.

With the current context of schools in mind, I will describe in this next section, some of the reform directions in Education and the effects that they are having on teachers, students and the education system.

Part Two

Current Reforms And Their Effects

Our schools, teachers, and students might be a lot better off if schools embraced the idea that education means learning what to do when you don't know what to do. At present, the same limitations constrain both teachers and students. Students receive from teachers the tasks that they are to engage in, and teachers receive from the school district the syllabi that they are to use in teaching particular subjects. Uniformity and efficiency become hallmarks of the process. Never mind that efficiency is a virtue applied to things we don't like to do. We like to take the garbage out efficiently, but we don't like to eat a wonderful meal efficiently;....

(Eisner, 2005,17)

I have described some of the observations I have made recently about teachers and their attitudes toward teaching. Teachers *are* tired. They *are* pressured. There is a bona fide pressure on teachers from the government and the public to do better, to do more, to get higher scores, to graduate the best. The educational reforms today are based upon the concept of more. The answer, the government seems to say, to the problems in our school system is that we just need to do more, and do it harder and for longer periods. More curriculum, more tests, more hours in the school day, more rules, more standards. The reforms of today are suggesting we do more of what we have always done. Hargreaves (2003,21) argues that:

Overview

More education in existing forms is not the answer, though. More efficient classrooms that concentrate on teaching and learning rather than behaviour management; more time spent on literacy and other basics; more summer schools and Saturday schools for students who are slow in learning; more hours in the school day and more days in the school year -- all these things do help increase student achievement, but only achievement of existing kinds. Subjecting them to more of the same does not change what students are achieving at.

He argues that today's society needs something different than what has been done already: "[t]he routines of factories, monasteries, and self-perpetuating bureaucracies provide young people with poor preparation for a highly innovative, flexible, and team-based knowledge economy where routine is the enemy of risk" (23).

Hargreaves describes a shift in how education began to be perceived in the United States during the last thirty years in his book, Teaching in the Knowledge Society (2003). He argues that education began to be more closely linked to business, work, science and technology, and that "Once the crucible of social optimism, education became the target of purging, despair and panic" (13). He goes on to explain that,

[c]hange became ubiquitous and was implemented 'just in time', with an escalating sense of urgency. And teachers were blamed for everything -- by governments, media, and newly instituted league tables of school

performance that shamed the 'worst' of them (usually in the poorest communities) for failing their students. (13)

The teachers are responding to these reforms -- they must. There are scores being published which are said to reflect the talents of the teacher, the strength of a school and the intelligence of students. I am suggesting that these reform efforts themselves are partially what is causing some of the malaise in the classrooms, hallways and staff rooms of schools. Barth (2001) discusses how this preoccupation with testing and scores may actually be part of the cause for ineffectiveness, or actually lowering achievement of students, in our school system. He states:

Increasingly, the feeling in our schools is that everything must be sacrificed on the altar of the standardized test. Accountability is ratcheted up and up by constant, comparative scrutiny by the of the scores by teacher, by grade level, by school, by district, by state, and by the nation. The public, it seems, will have its pound of flesh, which will come in the form of improved performance by students on standardized tests.

Standardized tests are having a chilling effect on the teaching profession and the inclination and the ability of teachers to assume broad leadership in their schools. Every moment of every teacher's day is being scrutinized to discover what change might raise a student's scores.... It is possible that the test scores will rise, but at costs that unfortunately will not be factored into the equation. The discussion has gone so far off track that the unquestionably valuable concept of standards has been divorced from all that goes into building the kind of school culture that leads naturally to the attainment of those standards. I wonder if these tests have an iatrogenic effect? That is, does the attempt to remediate a problem cause a greater problem than the one we were originally trying to solve? (92-93)

The curriculum *is* expanding and there does seem to be little time for anything that will not be tested and scored. Teachers want their students to do well, and if their students will be tested and scored, then the teachers feel they have to give those tests and scores more weight in their programs and more time in their lessons. As Barth says, this drive for the highest test scores has created conditions in the schools which, ironically, are conditions that may actually *work against* the actual conditions needed in order to see increased learning in students.

This focus on testable subjects has also diminished teachers' ability to be autonomous in their own classrooms. There is less time for teachers to judge for themselves and their students what are valuable and rich learning opportunities. There is less time for teachers to talk, to learn, to reflect and change. Not only are the students affected, but this lack of autonomy, this myriad of initiatives, this over-bearing sense of needing to be accountable, affects teachers' feelings of self respect, professionalism, and therefore, motivation to learn. The best teachers are those who thrive in the ability to be autonomous. These teachers know they have good instincts about what children need in order to learn and achieve. These teachers know what to do to help less-able children. The best teachers know how to motivate students and honour their students' ability to learn, their interests and their choices.

In an article entitled, "Why Great Teachers Stay", Williams (2005) says that the teachers she interviewed for her research (who were deemed "beyond good --the best that exist" by principals and district administrators) said that one of their highest needs was that of autonomy because it allows them to express their individual creativity and do what they need to do in order to best meet the needs of their students. She goes on to describe what drives and motivates these teachers:

Without exception, intellectual stimulation is a burning need of the teachers I interviewed. Eagerly embracing the challenges of meeting their students' needs, these teachers describe teaching as a non-stop quest for novelty, variety and new approaches -- an art that offers endless opportunities for creativity and personal expression. (72)

If the conditions which we have been discussing here prevail in the school system for any length of time, what will happen to those truly talented teachers? Sonia Nieto (2003) also ponders the effect of the current push for higher test scores and accountability on our best teachers. She argues: "Paradoxically, current reforms that focus only on accountability -- including standardized testing, teacher testing, and other such policies -- may be driving out some of the teachers who are effective with the students who most need committed and caring teachers." (18)

Fullan, cited in Hargreaves (1997,217), says, “[a]mong the fundamental problems of educational change are (1) the growing and deepening alienation among teachers; (2) the balkinization and burnout of passionate reform-minded teachers; and (3) the overwhelming multiplicity of unconnected, fragmented change initiatives.” Hargreaves (2003,171) also discusses the negative effect that the current reform agendas can have on teachers:

Reforms that drive teachers to teach to the test or tie them to scripted programs of literacy and other curriculum areas prevent long term development of competence and confidence in the teaching force. The results... show that standardized educational reform damages rather than develops strong professional learning communities.

Standardized reforms, such as numerous government initiatives calling for higher standards in “the basics”, and teachers’, schools’ and districts’ accountability of these reforms, are becoming the focal point of teaching and learning in schools. Schools in British Columbia presently need to have yearly goals which reflect these initiatives and the schools must be accountable to their districts, regarding the progress of these goals each year. A school’s precious few Professional Development Days are now often usurped by the discussion of, collecting and analyzing data of, and compiling the results of, these school goals. The “basic” areas in which these goals must fall, such as literacy, numeracy and social responsibility, are, granted, important and pertinent to each teacher’s classroom, but the ability of teachers and administrators to now create Professional Development Days around specific topics in which they are interested, reflect the current happenings in the schoolyard or hallways, would perfectly complement what they have read in some professional literature or seen as a conference recently, has been drastically reduced. Hargreaves (2003,107) argues that, “[s]tandardized reforms have taken away teachers’ time to think, and their imposed, prescriptive requirements have replaced creativity with compliance. An over examined professional life is producing an unexamined, unreflective one.”

The call for these reforms means something has got to give. In order for more time to be given to these aspects of the curriculum, time must be taken away from other subjects. Which aspects of school life are being minimized? It seems as though they are those things which will not be tested, those things less tangible, those things less quantifiable. Those

things that are, it is believed by many, the aspects of school which are the most integral to human development and lifelong learning.

The aspects of the school curriculum that are being overshadowed by the reforms focused on academics and standardized test scores are skills and subjects in the human and social realm, such as caring and relationships. They are the topics that are deemed “untestable” or “immeasurable” and therefore, less important and less worthy to be spending time and energy on. The time relegated to them will be less, so that teachers can spend time on what they are being told are the “really important” subjects. Ironically, I will argue, it is the *presence* of caring and relationships, along with highly effective teachers, which *create* the conditions in which real learning can occur.

Now that the current context and reform efforts in schools have been described, I will look to what I believe are the two most significant areas in which we could propose educational reforms that would really make a difference to student learning: supporting good teaching and teachers, and the need for care and relationships in the schoolhouse. The first will be effective classrooms and the importance of the teacher.

Part Three

Effective Classrooms: The Teacher Is Crucial

The common denominator in school improvement and student success is the teacher.

(Strong & Hindman, 2003,48)

Overview

When parents at my school, or even neighbours on my own children's school ground, come to me at the start of a school year and are alarmed because they see that their child is in a "split class", I always say to them that the *teacher* is far more important to their child's education than whether there is one grade or two in the room. I then say that I would much rather have my child in a "spilt" class with an excellent teacher, than in a "straight" class with a mediocre teacher. Most often, these parents as well as these neighbours of mine, will agree with me: one of the most significant aspects of children's education is for them to have great teachers. In this section of the paper, I will describe the personal learning journey I took over the last two years which led me to the writing of this thesis. I will describe how I came to examine the idea of "good teaching", what I found out, what authors in the field say about good teachers, and how this all relates to the reform efforts of today.

Most people would agree that their best teachers were those who seemed to care about them and got them motivated to learn. Most people say that these teachers also planned interesting activities, were passionate about their work and had high expectations. I have asked many adult friends, as well as my current and former students, about their opinions about what makes a good teacher and these qualities came up over and over again. Many of these people felt that having time with these teachers made a big difference to them and their learning at that time. They felt, in fact, that it was because of these teachers, that they were able to learn and become motivated to learn for themselves.

There is a loud and persistent call from the politicians, parents and the general public these days, for improvements in the school system. One of the loudest cries from our politicians and policy makers, is that we need to improve student achievement. They want our school districts, our province and our country to look good when compared to the districts and provinces or states in other countries. The scoring and testing (as well as the necessary accountability measures involved that are needed for assurance that these measures are done consistently and correctly), has begun. Unfortunately, however, it seems that these

current reforms designed for improving student achievement, may be creating conditions which are actually working against improving this very aspect of schooling. One of the reasons for this counter-effect, is that reforms today are taking the teacher out of teaching.

With the focus being on standardization, testing and increasing the prescribed curriculum in order to ensure the "covering" of more of the "basics", the focus in classrooms has begun to be these tests. Scores will be published. Teachers, schools and even students are compared to each other. Teachers want their students to do well and, understandably, for their students, and themselves, to look good when these scores are scrutinized by politicians and the public. Newspapers publish the test results and parents are shopping around for schools with best scores. There is little room in classrooms now for judgement, intuition, choice or passions of the teacher. There is little room for that all-important quality of *autonomy* which, as Williams (2005) found, is one of the most crucial needs of good teachers.

Besides leaving little room for the teacher and his or her passions and judgement, there is little room for the interests of the child. One of the conditions under which real learning takes place is when new information or concepts can be related, or connected, to what one already knows. Good teachers know this. They know that one of the most effective ways to motivate students to learn, is to try to find areas and subjects which are of interest to the students and then try to help them make connections between what they already know and what needs to be learned. Mohr (1988, 67) calls what needs to be learned or taught, the "official curriculum", and then she says that there is a separate, equally as important part of the curriculum she refers to as the "unofficial curriculum". The students' "unofficial curriculum" is that which is made up of their interests and intentions.

Mohr (1988) writes that the "unofficial" curriculum is so important for the learning of the "official curriculum". She says that there are four curricula present in any one classroom: the unofficial and official curricula of the teacher and the student. She explains that good teachers work to integrate all four curricula. She says when teachers work with all four

curricula, learning of the authorized curriculum can take place and that learning of the teacher's "official" curriculum cannot take place without the intersecting of all four curricula:

The unofficial curricula provide the path to the official curriculum and both students and teachers take advantage of this pathway.... Students who do not achieve as well as expected of them are not making enough connections enough times to become proficient at the official curriculum. (67,68)

Learning happens for all of us, when we make connections between what we already know, and the new. Without making these connections, we cannot learn new things. We can memorize them, perhaps, for a short time but we will not truly assimilate them. Barth (2001), says that the model in most schools is to transmit as much of a body of knowledge to the students as possible and that it is the students' job to assimilate this knowledge as efficiently as possible from September to June. He says this "Transmission of Knowledge" model may be successful at generating numbers and providing comparisons, but it has many flaws. He argues:

First of all, it is *futile* to try and transmit to students everything we think they should know. One study concluded that nine additional years of schooling would be required for students to master all of the material recommended by the various national organizations that have put forth standards. In addition, researchers -- and our experience -- suggest that as learners, we retain in six weeks perhaps 5 percent of what we are taught in this way. (Retention goes up to 7 or 8 percent if audiovisual aids are employed.) In two years, the recall is inconsequential. (34, emphasis original)

If learning the "official" or prescribed curriculum cannot happen without the integration of the "unofficial" curriculum, then room *must* be left in the school curriculum for the unofficial curriculum of the teacher and students. Some room for autonomy and judgement on the teacher's part must be allowed and even encouraged. To further support this need for autonomy and the futility of continuing to pack the prescribed curriculum, it will, as Barth (2001) points out, do little to further any real and long-lasting learning. Achievement in the form of scores could be seen as improving, but whatever is learned would only be retained for a short time at best. The over-prescription and over-expansion of the curriculum could,

ironically, be working *against* the goal of improving the learning and achievement of students.

Teachers feel unvalued. They feel a lack of respect. They are being told that their professional judgement and intuition about children are not valid. Instead of honouring the practice and validity of teachers' observations and carefully drawn-up classroom-based assessments of students, reform efforts are calling for standardized tests and accountability measures which are designed by people far from these classrooms. The curriculum, too, is increasing in response, supposedly, to the observation that children are not performing well enough on standardized tests whose results are compared to students around North America and the globe.

The prescribed curriculum has expanded and is increasing continually. This overloading of topics and skills which teachers "must" teach, is creating less and less space for the all-important, "unofficial" curriculum which is crucial to a thriving classroom. Currently, schools in B.C. must commit to "school goals" now, which become the primary focus of the few Professional Development Days (these are now called "Non-Instructional" days in B.C., which further demeans the validity of these days as times when teachers are continuing their professional growth. They are now labelled as days where there simply is "no instruction" of children, instead of days where teachers are given much needed time to work in various ways, on topics and strategies which will enhance their classrooms and schools) and in this way, take the focus, once again, away from teachers and schools working on topics which may be more pertinent for them at that time. The goals must be submitted the year before and the data must be reported to the districts and then the districts need to report the data to the Education Ministry of the provincial government.

What is the key to good teaching? Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005), write that, "[p]erhaps we cannot define quality teaching, but we know when we see it"(186). Strong and Hindman (2003), write that good teaching is an "elusive concept" (49) but they write that when most people recall a special teacher in his or her life, "[d]escriptions of these teachers

frequently include such words as *caring, competent, humorous, knowledgeable, demanding* and *fair.*" (49)

Authors have put forth many attributes, and called for many qualities. Through my experiences as a classroom teacher over the past sixteen years, I have contemplated this question continually. I have observed my students, as well as colleagues, for some glimmer of insight into the "ingredients" of good teaching. I have chosen the term "good teaching" as the term I will use for teaching that is most successful in having students learn and be motivated to learn, since arguably, one could say that this is the main objective of teachers: to help children to learn and be motivated to continue to be learners.

Pondering Teacher Effectiveness

I have had moments in my own classroom in which I have felt that everything was clicking along as smoothly as possible: the experiences I was providing were fostering rich and long-lasting learning. These euphoric times in the classroom had students motivated to learn, brimming with excitement for school and able to show their learning in a myriad of ways. I have also, however, experienced times in my own classroom in which I have felt that things just were not working: there was little enthusiasm, little life, little of the genuine learning I had seen at other times. Of course, as reflective teachers do, I have spent many hours and days pondering why students react in the ways they do, and how I could best help create a continually thriving learning environment for children.

In the last three years, due to some significant changes in my teaching life, I have become increasingly reflective about my teaching and learning. One significant change is that I began to do my Master's degree. After contemplating many possible areas of interest, and then deciding upon the Educational Leadership Program, I ended up feeling that the program of graduate studies in which I enrolled was not quite the right fit for me. In most of my courses' papers and discussions, I found myself returning to the issues around moral purpose, the aims of public education and good teaching. I realized that the one area in which I have always been interested, was that of effective classrooms (meaning ones in

which student learning and motivation was high). Throughout my teaching career, I have been fascinated with exploring the components of highly motivating classrooms and had asked myself questions such as: What constitutes “good teaching”? How does one measure “good teaching”? Are there things which all “good” teachers have in common?

Another significant change in my teaching experiences in the last five years was that I began to take Student Teachers into my classroom. I realized very quickly that the opportunities for professional growth were tremendous when one is in a Student Teacher - School Associate relationship. Simon Fraser University (the institution from which all of my Student Teachers have come), expects a large time commitment from the School Associates (S.A.'s) in the sense that besides doing numerous pre- and post-conferences and formal observations, the S.A. must make oneself available for ongoing professional conversations, questions and feedback. I enjoyed the professional conversations with my Student Teachers immensely, and was constantly aware of the fact that I was talking about my practice and beliefs all day long. I realized that my need for clarity and conviction regarding my philosophy and chosen practices was paramount. I saw that I needed to be able to explain why it was that I was doing certain things with children and why they were engaged in specific activities.

Instead of finding this experience only daunting and threatening, I found the whole thing reassuring and that it built my confidence and conviction. I actually could feel my heart rate increase as I talked excitedly about some of the learning experiences that went on in my classroom! The passion with which I spoke about teaching and learning energized me more than any other professional development experience in which I have been involved.

During a recent semester with a Student Teacher, I felt an even greater responsibility as a mentor. My sense of responsibility increased because for the first time, my Student Teacher was staying in my classroom for *both* of her teaching practica. Typically, Student Teachers stay with a School Associate for one term only and then move onto another classroom for the final practicum. I felt that since my (and my one day a week teaching partner's) classroom was the only place in which my Student Teacher would be involved, I would need to try and provide her with the best examples of good teaching and effective classrooms that

I could. I was her primary mentor. I was the one responsible for providing her with meaningful learning experiences which she would (as I knew that I did as a Student Teacher), carry with her for the rest of her teaching career. I knew that her formative teaching experiences were, in effect, greatly my responsibility. My Master's work and my role as a mentor to my Student Teacher then, became my reasons for pondering even more than I had in the past, the question of what it was that makes a teacher truly effective.

I would see my Student Teacher arrive in the classroom with meticulously planned lessons and carefully organized materials, and yet at times, teach a lesson that was rather mediocre in quality. I could hear in our pre-conference dialogues that she was carefully planned in terms of which "topic" she was going to address with the children, and she had all of the materials she needed, but, in those beginning lessons, there was something obviously missing. I believe what was missing, were the *students* and the missed opportunities for *connecting* with them. Her lessons at the start of her practicum were highly teacher-driven, and primarily a "lecture-style". The lessons were all about *delivering* some curriculum rather than *engaging* the students so they could best learn.

I wondered how to help her see that teaching should be about creating the best conditions for *learning*. I began to have her observe my lessons for specific things and asked her to contemplate many questions: What are the students doing? Why do you think I am having them talk in partners right now instead of work alone? Why would I choose small groups for this activity instead of a large group? Who is doing the talking during the lesson? How am I having them represent what they know? How many different ways? Why do you think I have individual reading conferences with students? Why do you think I devote two large chunks of time a week to this structure? What besides "math facts" are they learning right now?

We talked incessantly through our school days, as we facilitated activities and checked in on small groups doing various projects. We talked about topics such as developmentally appropriate practice, active learning, inquiry and metacognition, and she eagerly scrawled down names of professional books and authors as I excitedly explained how some of these

writings changed my teaching and helped me form my philosophy, and broaden my knowledge, of teaching and learning.

The presence of Student Teachers enriched not only my professional development, but the professional environment in our school. There were two other Student Teachers placed in classrooms at our school as well, and the lunch hour conversations suddenly became more animated, richer and reflective. Many staff members joined in and engaged these young women in dialogue, asking them about their experiences with students thus far, and their reasons for choosing the profession, etc. Then, my experienced colleagues would often reflect upon their Student Teaching experiences, or powerful moments with students and teachers of their own. Professional talk was abundant, and this renewed interest in each other's practice and experiences actually became a catalyst for strengthening not only many of the teaching practices in our school, but many of the personal relationships on staff as well.

I have always believed that the key to acceptance and having caring relationships with others, is empathy. If we do not have empathy for each other, we cannot care as deeply and understand as clearly. In order to have empathy, however, we need to find the time to listen to each other and develop relationships. These Student Teachers helped us begin a process of deepening our staff relationships, and helped us reconnect so that our relationships were almost as they had been years ago. As we listened to each other's stories of hilarious mishaps, times we had helped students flourish, teachers who had made differences in our lives, and tales of students who had touched us so deeply that we have ached to take them home with us, our empathy grew and our relationships grew. As we listened to each other recount these great successes and meaningful moments, I began to realize that these conversations were about the very thing I have been exploring in my Master's work and with my Student Teachers: *good teaching*. More importantly, I realized that every story to which we listened, and had told, of an effective teacher or a powerful lesson, seemed to centre around the "human" side of teaching: the relationships, the social interactions, the personal connections, the caring.

It became so very clear that it was the *teacher* that made the most difference to whether students learned or not, because it was the teacher who *carefully created the conditions* in the classroom that were needed to enhance the learning of the students. What became alarming to me was that despite the fact that many people would admit that the teacher played an integral, if not foremost role in affecting the learning success of students, teachers today seemed to be deemed by the public and the government as only one small factor in the learning of students. The public opinion of the time seems to be that there needs to be other factors intervening in the education of our students, such as more tests, more curriculum, more accountability, more parent voice and more public opinion. The teacher and his or her expertise and judgement, are being pushed aside and deemed almost *inconsequential* instead of being honoured and supported. I then began to look to the writing and research in the field of good teaching and effective classrooms to see what the findings revealed.

What The Literature Says

Numerous authors in the education field argue that this interpersonal side of classrooms is indeed important for effective learning environments. Goodlad's extensive research into over 1000 classrooms in his book *A Place Called School* (1984), included how he closely compared two elementary classrooms in several different areas. The classes looked very similar at first: similar numbers of students, economic classes, variety and type of resources, numbers of boys and girls, etc. He discovered, however, that because of an accumulation of a number of variables, one class clearly emerged as "more satisfying to students and more likely to enhance their learning". (1984, 121) . He explains that the difference in the "conduct" of these two classes was the primary reason for this finding. In the more positive class, there was more time spent on instruction and much less time on routines and behaviour. In the less effective class, more of the instructional time was taken up by routines and behaviour issues. The class in which the students felt more satisfied, was more interactive, with higher a higher degree of both teacher and student talk, and the work was seen by more of the students as being at an appropriate level of difficulty. There was a higher degree of positive student-teacher interactions, more students saying that their teacher was enthusiastic about

her work, and a higher percentage of students seeing their teacher as caring about them. In addition, the more satisfying class had more students observed as being highly interested in the work they were doing.

Goodlad's research also describes that in the grade one through three classes in which they observed, there was a high percentage of students (65%) responding positively to every activity, including test-taking. Interestingly, their satisfaction and dissatisfaction related directly to their perceptions of their teachers. They saw their teachers more favourably if their teachers "... listened to them and helped them when they did their work wrong" (141). Goodlad reiterates that the classroom environment sends important messages to the students:

I am struck by the fact that just a little show of teacher concern, the absence of teacher favouritism, the presence of peer esteem, an appropriate level of task difficulty, and other indices related to the personal well-being of individual students added up to more positive views of the class experience. Good teaching builds bridges to individuals. It is much more than the honing of mechanics. (248)

Other authors have espoused the importance of these interpersonal factors in a classroom and school. Van Manen (1986) in his classic work The Tone of Teaching, says certain themes emerge when one asks students about the teachers from whom they best learned, or the ones they would most like to be themselves. Their stories describe these teachers as being "... fair, patient, able to communicate, keeping good discipline, having a sense of humour, being interested in and knowing children, knowing what to teach" (46). He expands on this by saying:

But the themes behind these generalizations are harder to put into words. At an even deeper level, teacher competency has more to do with pedagogical tactfulness, having a sensitivity to what is best for each child, having a sense of each child's life and his or her preoccupations. It also includes a sense of the aspects that draw the curriculums of math, English, social studies, art, or science to the curriculum of life itself. (46)

Van Manen's words echo Mohr's (1988) belief that good teachers help students make connections to their own lives (the unofficial curriculum) to the authorized, or official

curriculum, as discussed earlier in this paper. Christian (1988) also writes of this need for teachers to give individual attention to students so they know what each child needs. She found that students' attitudes are critical to their success and that teachers can influence their attitudes by giving students this attention. She posits, "when we, as teachers, buy into meeting individual needs, students will buy into learning" (8).

Reeves (1990) also writes of the importance of teachers connecting to students and being sensitive to what they need and who they are. Reeves found that students needed to tell her about their problems, their successes, their dreams and their goals, and that once they opened up, the real learning started happening. She writes about "teacher listening" and how, through this way of being with students, she gained some powerful insights into teaching:

Instead of teachers and pupils, we became a group committed to respecting one another, learning and listening, and picking up mathematics along the way.

During that year, I learned a bit about the place of dignity, not the dignity of the teacher, but the dignity of even the weakest student...What all of them (the students) lacked was the recognition of their basic humanness, their worth as human beings." (22-23)

In an article about student perspectives on school improvements, Ruddick, Day and Wallace (1997), interviewed over 800 students between the ages of 12 and 16 years old. The interviewed students describe teachers whom they thought would "likely increase commitment to learning". The students said these would be teachers who:

- Enjoy teaching the subject.
- Enjoy teaching students.
- Make the lessons interesting.
- Will have a laugh but know how to keep order.
- Are fair.
- Are easy for students to talk to.
- Don't shout.

- Don't go on about things (eg. how much better other classes are, or how much better an older brother or sister was).
- Explain things and go through things that students don't understand without making them feel small.
- Don't give up on students. (86)

Again, these responses primarily are to do with interpersonal relations in the classroom which contribute to the learning environment. These attributes sounded like the characteristics my colleagues and I mentioned over and over in our discussions about teachers whom we most appreciated. We agreed that if the teacher really *cared* about the students, and tried to see them each as *individuals* who had diverse learning needs and deserved *respect*, that teacher would be effective in helping students learn. The last two items on the list of student responses say a great deal. These responses, say that good teaching is not just "sit'n'git". A teacher who will explain things thoughtfully, allow children to keep their dignity, sees teaching as an interactive process, and expect that they can learn, is an effective teacher.

It Is Not *What* One Teaches, But *How* One Teaches

As I read more books and articles about good teaching and learning environments, I came across an eye-opening book by Daniels and Bizar called Methods That Matter: Six Structures for Best Practice Classrooms (1998). This book would be extremely important to me in my journey toward a better understanding of what good teaching really was. What Daniels and Bizar had to say about best practice and effective learning, became rich fodder for the conversations in our staff room, at our weekly Collaboration Time, and throughout my school days with my Student Teacher. What was different about this book, was that the authors argue that there are six structures teachers can adopt, that will foster and emphasize the shared principles believed to be found in effective classrooms, according to many diverse and respected educational groups, such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and the Centre for the Study of Reading. They describe how all of these groups call for a "rebalancing of the ingredients of schooling -- students, time, space, materials, experiences, and assistance" (1998,3). These groups are calling for *less* lecturing, passivity, rewards, "fill-in-the-blank" worksheets, rote memorization, ability grouping, time

reading textbooks, standardized testing and “pull-out” special programs. On the other hand, they think schools should have *more* experiential learning, students collaborating, higher-order thinking, deeper study of fewer topics, reading of whole, original books, goal-setting, choice for students, modelling of democracy, attending to various learning styles, cooperative learning, heterogeneous grouping, varied roles for teachers, parents and administrators and, reliance on teachers’ anecdotal observations.

The authors admit that people in Education have been calling for these “best practices” (meaning, the authors say, “progressive education”) for many years. They rightly note, however, that each time this essentially same set of beliefs and practices has fought for acceptance, it is contorted or misunderstood, as a new wave of “shallow and uncomprehending reform” (4). They want to once again put these principles into the forefront and this time, they are proposing that six structures can be adopted by teachers who wish to foster these “best practices”. The six, recurrent structures or activities are: Integrative Units, Small Group Activities, Representing to Learn, Classroom Workshop, Authentic Experiences and Reflective Assessment.

When I read this I was ecstatic! I recognized that most of these structures are staples in my own classroom. It was so reaffirming to read about these best practices in which I have believed and touted as essential for many years and in many conversations and workshops with colleagues. These structures were the key, I thought! By having these recurrent structures as the foundation of a classroom, one could be fostering those principles which are deemed valuable by so many educators in numerous fields. I could see that these activities would undoubtedly *ensure* that teachers had thoughtful interactions with students (through observing and conferencing during workshop times as well as when facilitating and monitoring small-group work), respected their students (evidenced by the choice to use a variety of teaching approaches and strategies to allow for varying learning styles and interests), preserved students’ dignity (through reflective self assessment) and provided interesting, varied and social activities (through planning authentic experiences, using group-work, and planning for integrative units). The things which these structures promoted,

were many of the very things that my colleagues and I had come to believe were the characteristics of the most effective teachers.

This topic of conversation was pervasive in my life. At our dinner table at home, when my family and I would embark on our routine of recapping our highs and lows of the day, I asked, on many nights, about my own children's experiences with teachers whom they respected and enjoyed. I asked them why they thought these teachers were so wonderful and I got some of the same responses which I had read in the books and research on effective learning environments: these teachers cared about them, had a good sense of humour, gave choices, had lots of energy and excitement when at work, and planned interesting and fun work for them. The teachers they named as their favourites did not surprise me; they were teachers whom I admired and had known were doing an exceptional job. I felt the same way about them as my children did. They were caring, energetic, gave the kids great responsibilities, had high expectations, could laugh at themselves and with the kids, and planned some wonderful, rich learning opportunities for the students.

When I thought about these teachers' classrooms, however, I realized that the ones they were naming did not necessarily use all of the structures such as the ones that Daniels and Bizar were recommending. Some of these teachers, as I sifted back through my memories, had classrooms which were quite different from mine, in terms of the routines and structures in which the students were regularly involved. All of them had used some integrative units and small group work to a certain extent, but there was little use of the other four of the structures. I began to wonder if whether these six structures were actually the primary *reason* for these effective learning environments or not.

Recollection of some of my own personal experiences reminded me that the sheer *use* of routines and structures in a class, is, of course, not necessarily enough to achieve an effective learning environment in a classroom. I remembered that I had seen this first hand several times in my career thus far. A colleague and I have taught several workshops on the writing process over the last few years in our district. Because of this passion for the writing process and the integral role it plays in my primary classroom each year, I have had other

teachers come to observe this structure in my classroom, and I have been invited into other colleagues' classrooms to help them introduce this routine to the students in their rooms. Sometimes these introductory sessions with teachers are enough to get them fired-up about the writing process and let them see enough of it that feel they have the tools and strategies to shape it into what works for them and then integrate it into their own programs. At other times, however, attendance at our workshops and even having one of us come in to a classroom to get the children motivated to write and begin the process, is not enough to ensure the continued success of this structure in that particular room.

For whatever reasons, the structure just does not work as effectively in certain classrooms. Perhaps there is not enough ownership of the routine on the teachers' part since it was introduced by someone else, perhaps they find it just is not their "style" or does not reflect their philosophy, perhaps they have other routines which they feel are at least as valuable, and therefore do not have the time to devote to the writing workshop structure. Whatever the case, just because the structure is "happening" in a room, it is not necessarily working as effectively. It makes sense then, that this can be said for Daniels' and Bizar's six structures.

There have been many examples of how best practice, or progressive education, has gone wrong in the past. As Daniels' and Bizar argue, "[e]very day, the ideals of Best Practice are being misunderstood, watered down, debased, co-opted, and sometimes sold back to educators in false and empty guises" (4). The Writing Process which was being lauded by authors such as Caulkins, Graves, and Atwell in the 1980's, is a glaring example. I had just started teaching in the late 80's and had read extensively about (and been immersed in its philosophy in my student teaching experiences) the "Writer's Workshop" structure. Many teachers were talking about it, attending workshops touting it and trying to implement it in their classrooms. It was soon obvious though, that in some classrooms, anytime students were writing, they were said to be doing "Writer's Workshop", even when some of the methods and philosophy were completely contradictory to the original methods and philosophy.

Several years ago, for example, all of the classrooms in a school with which I was familiar, were to put up a poster (pre-made by an educational publisher, and bought by my school and others in our district) of the writing process terms, such as “pre-drafting”, “drafting”, “writing”, “editing” and “publishing”. The most outrageous thing about the posters (besides being imposed on all of the teachers, even the ones who were not comfortable using the structure and had felt their professional autonomy was being uncomfortably threatened) was that these components of the writing process were to happen on *specific* days! I remember thinking at the time, that there was no way, in a true writing process classroom, that all children would be doing any one of these stages at the same time, and that many times, for that matter, not all pieces of writing were taken through all of the stages! The posters were distributed nevertheless, and of course they contributed nothing to the likelihood of whether or not the Writing Process was being implemented properly (or at all). In those classes in which the teachers felt committed to the ideals on which this structure was based, the process flourished. In others, the writing activities which prevailed before, basically continued on as usual, but in many cases, were now presented under the guise of the more progressive label: “Writer’s Workshop”.

Of course, just because there may not have been the “writing process” per say in some of these rooms, it is not to say that valuable and rich writing experiences were not happening. Of course they were! Conversely, there were inevitably classes in which there remained dull, seemingly meaningless writing assignments that did not produce any genuine, long-lasting learning nor any hope of students finding writing as an enjoyable, powerful life long skill. The point is, that just because a structure is seemingly “in place” in a classroom, it does not mean that it is being used as it was intended, and therefore, it may not be instrumental in helping to create the desired learning outcomes for which it was originally designed.

Other current examples of how best practice has been morphed into something very unlike the original practice, are “Reading Workshops” and “Literacy Centres”. In some classrooms, any period in which students read and do activities related to reading material, will be titled “Reading Workshop”. More often than not, this structure has been translated into a time in which students read and then do worksheets to supposedly build comprehension and

knowledge of story grammar. "Literacy Centres" originated as a rich component of a "Guided Reading" structure, in which children would explore various literacy skills in a myriad of ways. In many classrooms, however, "Literacy Centres" has become the time in which the bulk of the class is kept busy doing various worksheets on language skills, so that the teacher can manage one small group at a time in a guided reading situation. My own theory that these six structures proposed by Daniels and Bizar would be the perfect way to creating effective classrooms, was being challenged. What was it then, that made these effective classrooms so effective?

When I go back to look at the comments that my colleagues and I have made about the most effective teachers in our school lives, and the responses of my own children when I asked them this same question, I see that the responses are mostly about the teacher as a person. These effective teachers cared about us, they had us do interesting and meaningful things, they had high expectations for us, they had a good sense of humour and they respected us as learners. Specific structures can definitely allow for these types of interactions to happen in a classroom, but the structures are not the *only* way in which they can happen.

A teacher my youngest daughter had a few years ago, is an example of this. This teacher had been teaching for at least ten more years than I had and had more of what would typically be called "traditional" sort of practices in her program. There were parts of the "six structures" which Daniels and Bizar hold in such high esteem but these structures were not fully implemented in the way these authors intended them. This teacher, however, created a thriving, energetic, respectful, challenging learning environment for her students.

Two of my children have been fortunate enough to have this committed and dynamic teacher. I have seen with my own eyes throughout the days and months and years they have been in her classroom, that they have thrived and learned and flourished in this environment. When I asked them about why they thought she was such a good teacher, my daughter (who was in her grade two class at the time) said, "She gives us choices. She cares about us. She gets us whatever we need and she is really funny!" In these words, my

daughter had let me know a wealth of information about this woman's teaching: this teacher made the children responsible for their learning, took into account their interests, cared about them, laughed with them and provided them with the tools and materials they needed to foster their learning. These comments reflect almost exactly what the students in the Ruddick, Day and Wallace (1997) research said about effective teachers. They definitely reflect what my colleagues and I had said about the effective teachers who had inspired us.

If the teacher is the key, how do we increase the likelihood of having teachers such as these in our children's classrooms? Are there circumstances and conditions which help increase teachers' effectiveness? If there are, how do we help to create the right circumstances in which teachers can flourish? Why do some teachers feel "burn-out" and others not? Why are some schools rife with energetic, committed teachers, and others only with a smattering of these teachers? In the educational literature, there definitely seems to be some conditions which can increase the likelihood of teachers being effective in the classroom.

Conditions Contributing to Teacher Effectiveness:

Interaction

One condition that seems to contribute to teacher effectiveness, is the atmosphere in the workplace and the *interaction* between teachers. Goodlad (1984) found that when schools are staffed by teachers who describe themselves as satisfied with their careers and teaching circumstances, these schools are relatively unlikely to be seen by students, parents or teachers as schools with problems. These are the schools that students most frequently perceive as the schools that are giving them a good education. Goodlad goes on to explain that these findings do not support the claim that "everything comes down to the teacher". He says it is quite the opposite, and that it is the *atmosphere* in the school that will determine whether teachers are likely to feel satisfied and be effective in the classroom: "[These observations] lead to the proposition that "everything", presumably the quality of education provided by a school, depends on the interaction between teachers -- more or less

competent, more or less satisfied -- and the circumstances of schooling" (1984, 178). He concludes his argument about the impact of the school environment by saying:

We must give attention, then, to the workplace. The circumstances of teaching must provide optimum opportunity for teaching and learning to proceed. When teachers find themselves restrained and inhibited by problems of the workplace that appear to them not to be within their control, it is reasonable to expect frustration and dissatisfaction to set in. Undoubtedly, teacher effectiveness, in turn, is constrained and the very problems frustrating teachers are exacerbated. Students' perceptions of the quality of education being provided decline. It is reasonable to assume that the actual quality of this education declines also. (180)

Lortie has long professed the importance of teachers working together, as well as the dangers of teachers working in isolation. He writes in his classic Schoolteacher (1975):

Change is impeded by mutual isolation, vague yet demanding goals, dilemmas of outcome assessment, restrictive inservice training, rigidities in assignment, and working conditions that create "more-of-the-same" syndrome among classroom teachers. ... In short, serious efforts could be made to reduce the intellectual narrowness induced by mutual isolation and to foster closer exchange among faculty members. Reflexive conservatism is less readily sustained when people confront others who do things differently but well; the "critical mass" applies to ideas as well as to atoms. (232)

The call for collegiality has been made many times since Lortie's writings of more than thirty years ago. More recent publications, such as Barth's Improving Schools From Within (1990) devotes many pages to the positive effects brought by collegiality among teachers and why it is so vital. Barth refers to Little's work from 1981 and her definition of collegiality in schools. He summarizes her definition and her finding that there are four specific behaviours involved in collegiality:

Adults in schools *talk about practice*. These conversations about teaching and learning are frequent, continuous, concrete and precise. Adults in schools *observe each other* engaged in the practice of teaching and administration. The conversations become the practice to reflect on and talk about. Adults engage together in *work on curriculum* by planning, designing, researching and evaluating curriculum. Finally, adults in schools *teach each other* what they know about teaching, learning and leading. Craft knowledge is revealed, articulated, and shared. (31, emphasis original)

Grimmett and McKinnon (1992) write of passion for teaching and commitment to students evident in teachers whom they describe as “crafty” in their article on Craft Knowledge and Teacher Education. They describe “Craft Knowledge” as the part of teaching that a teacher acquires “at the elbows” of another. MacKinnon (1996) defines “at the elbows” as: “ a form of apprenticeship-learning that occurs at the side of someone who is proficient in the practice being acquired”(653). This is the aspect of teaching that is acquired through experiences, not through textbooks. They explain: “Craft Knowledge has a different sort of rigor, one that places more confidence in the judgement of teachers, their feel for their work, their love for students and learning, and so on, almost on aesthetic grounds” (437).

Effective teachers are those who are passionate about their teaching. Teaching is not just a job to them -- it is a calling of sorts. Grimmett and MacKinnon (1992) speak of the passion teaching becomes for crafty teachers:

Teaching is not just a job for crafty teachers; it is a vocation for which they have developed a passion. They are obsessed by the urge to help others learn and grow. Caring for students and nurturing them as persons is a theme that runs through much of the writings on teaching as craft....

The purposes of teaching that crafty teachers pursue, the collaborative context within which they do this work, and the sentiments they hold inevitably leads to an emerging moral voice. These teachers speak on behalf of students. Their language is not confined to the expression of educational aims and expectations; its syntax is existential with words like, “caring”, “loving”, “nurturing”, “listening”, “empathic understanding” and “connecting”. They do not write about technical aspects of teaching; rather, their focus is on ways of relating with all students in a manner which promotes learning. (430 - 431)

Barth concurs that the research shows that there are some positive outcomes for teachers and students when collegiality in schools is evident. He says decisions tend to be better, there is more trust and higher morale among adults, adult learning is more likely to continue over time, and that students' motivation, and even *achievement* rise. He also says that when adults share and cooperate, students tend to share and cooperate, too.

Little (1999), in a more recent work, again writes of the need for teachers to work together in order to be most effective. She believes that it is not even *probable* that teachers working alone could help students gain “uniformly high levels” of achievement. She argues:

It is an established sociological tenet that complex tasks require the development of strong lateral relations. Parallels are readily evident: piloting a large ship in a crowded harbour, diagnosing and treating serious illness, staging an opera. To acknowledge this necessary interdependence does not require that we dismiss the independent, creative role that talented and well-prepared individuals play, but it does suggest more deliberate supports for what I have termed *joint work* among teachers. (234, emphasis original)

A final argument for the importance of teachers working together, can be made by Barth (1990). He believes that getting the adults in schools working together should be at the top of the national agenda of school improvement. He sees it as the most powerful, and integral, component of change:

[How to bring more collegiality into the schools] belongs at the top because the relationships among adults in the schools are the basis, the precondition, the *sine qua non* that allow, energize, and sustain all other attempts of school improvement. Unless adults talk with one another, and help one another, very little will change. (1990,32, emphasis original)

Teachers as Learners

Another widely written about link to teacher effectiveness is the degree to which teachers are themselves “learners”. Allington (2001), in his work on how to support struggling readers, refers to some of the convincing findings by Darling-Hammond to support his argument that the best way to improve classroom instruction is by expanding what teachers know. He writes:

So how might improved classroom instruction be accomplished? In my view, it won't be accomplished by purchasing a different basal reader series or just by adding a souped-up technology component.... It isn't that such tools cannot be useful, but that they simply will not do much to improve teaching quality. Teachers teach what they know, and expanding what teachers know produces a substantial impact on students, as Linda Darling-Hammond (1998) noted in summarizing the research on improved teaching. (112)

Ball and Cohen (1999) argue that continual learning *in, and from* practice is essential for teacher effectiveness. They say that their argument is not that teachers need to become researchers: "Rather, it is that a stance of inquiry should be central to the role of teacher. ...teachers must be actively learning as they teach" (1999,11).

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1999) summarize many findings that link the significance of teacher learning and expertise to teacher effectiveness. They write that the level of teacher *expertise* and the ability of teachers to keep learning *in practice*, both have significant effects on student learning, and that new policy on teacher professional development and teacher training, needs to reflect this connection. Barth (2001), goes so far as to say that continual student learning will only happen when teachers "join the community of life-long learners". He continues by saying:

In order to create communities of learners, teachers must model for students the most important enterprise of the schoolhouse--learning. A teacher who has stopped learning cannot create a climate rich in learning for students.... If their teacher is not a learner, students soon recognize that the message is "Do as we say, not as we do." (81)

Reflection

Numerous authors have written about the significant positive effects of teacher learning on student learning. I am struck, as I read through the plethora of research on teacher effectiveness that it is a teacher's ability to continue learning in collaborative situations, as well as examining and reflecting upon his or her practice, that seem to be

the keys to teacher effectiveness, *not* necessarily whether or not the teacher is using the so-called "best practices" of the day. Granted, as Daniels and Bizar have espoused, there are teaching strategies and structures that are more effective in promoting deeper and more genuine student learning, but my stance is that *if one is continually examining and reflecting on one's practice, then one would be continually attempting to better one's teaching and improve the capacity for student learning*. The examination and reflection that come through continual learning would presumably *lead into* the use of more good teaching and learning

strategies. The reverse, however, is not necessarily true. Just because one adopts some specific strategies and teaching approaches, does not necessarily mean that teacher effectiveness and consequently, improved student learning, will result.

As much of the research in this area illustrates (and as much as my and my colleagues' personal experience indicates), teacher effectiveness seems to be more about the *teacher as a person* and the *environment* he or she is able to create and sustain in the classroom. The likelihood of a teacher creating a thriving, learning environment, seems to be connected, according to much of the research in this area, to some conditions in the school environment itself: teachers working together, teachers seeing themselves as learners, and teachers being reflective, are three of the most significant.

As the old, insightful saying goes, "You cannot discover new oceans unless you risk losing sight of the shore". In order to find new and better ways to improve student learning, teachers must be ready and able to honestly and objectively examine the ways in which they do things, even if it means that they must "lose sight" of their old practices for a time, in order to truly see some new ones. Teachers learning and reflecting upon their practice means that teachers would be learning and reflecting upon their teaching and, therefore, students' learning.

Effective Teachers

When I think of good teaching, I try to think of teachers who made a positive impact on my life as a learner. Whenever I try to isolate the qualities of the most effective teachers with whom I have worked, or from whom I have been taught, I come back to those same qualities which seemed to resonate in my children's responses and in those of my colleagues. These teachers care, they laugh, they have high expectations, they find joy in their career, they make sure students have what they need in order to learn and they demand students take some responsibility for their learning.

At the conclusion of this discussion on good teaching, it may be fitting to return to Daniels' and Bizar's book *Methods That Matter: Six Structures for Best Practice Classrooms* (1998), since this is the place from which we began. There are four "Implicit Factors" which the authors put forth as the foundation for creating the optimum "psychological climate" for learning. These factors, I find, are even more useful and more integral, than the six *structures* which they propose, to creating an effective, thriving learning environment for children. The authors say that, "[a]mong the vital ingredients for this climate are choice, responsibility, expression and community" (9). These four conditions more closely illustrate what the literature says about teacher effectiveness. These four conditions are also more closely in line with the learning environment which my daughter enjoyed so much in her grade two classroom. These ingredients were present in that room. The six structures may not have been happening exactly as the authors describe, but the vital conditions which are so needed for this type of learning to *exist*, were definitely present. My daughter's proclamation that, "She gives us choices. She cares about us. She gets us whatever we need and she is really funny!" is evidence that those conditions existed in her classroom.

The learning environment which the teacher creates is crucial. This type of thriving, supportive, challenging learning environment would not happen if the teacher did not care about the students and their learning needs. A teacher that cares about, and reflects upon, the learning needs of his or her students, will be an effective teacher. Teachers who are reflective are teachers who are learners, and when teachers are learners, their students are learners. When I next take a Student Teacher into my classroom, I will again promote the importance of collaboration, learning and reflection. When a teacher willingly examines his or her own practice, there is a desire to improve the learning of the students. If teachers can continually examine what they are doing because they care enough to try and reach all of their students and their varied learning needs, they will be effective.

When I saw my Student Teacher begin to reflect upon her plans at the end of the day, make changes based on the observations she had made, bend down to look students in the eyes as they spoke to her, ponder how to best help the students learn a concept or abandon a carefully planned lesson because one of the students brought in a collection of precious

stones and wanted to share them, I knew that this novice teacher was learning what it takes to be an effective teacher of children.

Effective teachers know they can excite children about learning. They know they can, by listening attentively, find out what motivates a child and what interests a child. They know that they can create exciting learning opportunities for children by taking their interests and allowing them to ask questions and teach each other, by giving them responsibility and choices. They also know that these things are not going to happen in a classroom which is paced by, and fuelled by, the choices made by those other than the teacher and his or her students.

Perhaps Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005), in an article which examines first the definition of, and then tries to extract the specific aspects of, "quality teaching", say it best. These authors argue that "quality teaching" is not just about *what* is taught, but *how* it is taught. They purport that it is more likely we will obtain quality teaching when four conditions are in place: "[a] willingness and effort on the part of the learner, a supportive social surround, ample opportunity to learn and good practices employed by the teacher" (191). It is clear that what the best teachers do, is care about their students. They care enough to listen, they care enough to do what it takes to meet their individual needs, they care enough to treat all students with dignity and they care enough to help students make connections from what they already know to what they need to know. The next section of the paper will detail why so many effective teachers know that spending time fostering care and relationships in their classrooms is so important to creating an environment conducive to student learning.

Part Four

Care And Relationships: A Foundation For Learning In Schools

... if giving multiple-choice tests were central to the assessment of human growth and development, we parents would administer them regularly at home. Instead we lie in bed asking ourselves and our mates exactly the kind of questions I've suggested above, and then -- together with our kids -- we decide, and we roll up our sleeves and work together to accomplish what we deem important.

(Noddings, 1992,180)

Students Learn When Teachers Care

Barth (2001) says the most significant element of a school's culture is that it embody "an ethos hospitable to the promotion of human learning" (11). He argues, in fact, that the culture of a school is the most important and determining factor in whether learning will happen. He argues that to promote human learning, the school must be a "community of learners". He says many schools profess that they are this type of community, but most are run as organizations, institutions and bureaucracies. His vision of a true community of learners, is that of "a place full of adults and youngsters who care about, look after, and root for one another, and who work together for the good of the whole, in times of need as well as times of celebration" (12). He believes that we need to ask not whether all humans *can* learn, but what conditions we can create so that they *will* learn.

Noddings (1992), in her book, *The Challenge to Care in Schools: An Alternative Approach to Education*, writes about the "ethic of care", and the importance of having "caring" in various forms, at the centre of the school curricula. She argues that what provides the best opportunities for learning in schools is caring relations and the teaching of the importance of care. She argues that children will learn from people with whom they have caring relations:

Kids learn in communion. They listen to people who matter to them and to whom they matter. The patterns of ignorance we deplore today are signs that kids and adults are not talking to each other about everyday life and the cultural forms once widely shared. How can it be that kids who watch television every night do not know where El Salvador or the Philippines or Israel is? The people telling the news do not matter, and if there is not a caring parent to comment on the news, then none of it matters. (36)

The link between good teaching and connectedness amongst teachers and students, is made clear by Palmer (1998, 115). He says that, "[c]ommunity, or connectedness, is the principle behind good teaching,...". Liston (2004, 460) writes of this connectedness as well, saying: "Teaching, at its heart, is the creation of connections among teacher, student, and content so that educational experiences can be had."

Gordon Neufeld, a Child Psychologist and Professor at the University of British Columbia, is perhaps one of the most vocal and impassioned speakers regarding the importance and impact of relationships between child/student and adult/teacher. In his book, Hold On To Your Kids: Why Parents Need to Matter More Than Peers (2004), co-authored by Mate, Neufeld writes of a phenomenon happening to our children today: peers are replacing parents (adults) in the lives of our children. He talks of how this trend is influencing what is happening in schools, too, and that teachers, as well as parents, are feeling the effects of their students' lack of attachment to the adults around them. He says that this lack of attachment is affecting students' ability, and motivation, to learn:

As many teachers nowadays attest, teaching seems to be getting harder, students less respectful and less receptive. Classrooms are increasingly unmanageable and academic performance seems to be slipping. The reading abilities in schoolchildren appear to have declined, despite the heavy emphasis many schools have placed on literacy skills in recent years. Yet our teachers have never been better trained than today, our curriculum never better developed, and our technology never as sophisticated.

What has changed? Once more we return to the pivotal influence of attachment. The shift in the attachment patterns of our children has had profoundly negative implications for education. (166)

Neufeld and Mate say further, that there are four essential qualities in determining a child's teachability and that they all are enhanced by healthy attachment. The four qualities are: "a natural curiosity, an integrative mind, and ability to benefit from correction, and a relationship with the teacher" (166). These authors say that this relationship with the teacher is the *most important* quality in determining whether a child will learn or not:

We do not discount the value of a teachers having a superior education, a wealth of experience, a deep commitment, a good curriculum, or access to technology. But these do not fundamentally empower a teacher to teach. Children learn best when they like their teacher and they think their teacher likes them. The way to children's minds has always been through their hearts. (173)

Another author for whom the theme of caring and relationships has great impact on student learning capacity is Lambert. Lambert (2003) links learning and leading in her writing, saying

that giving students opportunities to lead, gives them opportunities to learn, and without opportunities to lead, the learning of these students will not be as rich. Her ideas for learning and leading (of teachers *and* of students), are based on the principles of constructivism. She argues that effective learning is based on constructivism, and that constructivism “is based on an understanding of student voice and the need to ignite the brain and focus learning” (57). She says inquiry and discovery, are the main ways in which students, and teachers, find and gain new knowledge. This combined with self-reflection and metacognition, translates into true learning. Why the principles of constructivism need to be mentioned at this point in the discussion of care and relationships in schools is that Lambert posits “resiliency” as being central to learning and leading, and explains that resiliency needs to be cultivated by the school in various ways. It is this *cultivation* of resiliency which requires the presence of care and relationships in a schoolhouse. Lambert says that schools can “provide their students with ‘protective factors’ such as caring, high expectations, purposeful support, and opportunities for meaningful participation and contribution” (59-60). She explains the importance of resiliency by saying:

Students who are resilient are able to bounce back from adversity and resist being pulled into hopelessness by difficult environments. These students display self-direction, problem-solving capabilities, social competence, and participation in the world around them; they also contribute to others and possess a sense of purpose and future (58).

The weight which Lambert attributes to care and relationships is evidenced throughout her writing. For example, she includes the “Ten Commandments for Involving Young People in Community Building” by Kretzman (60) in her book, and most of these directives are steeped in the stance that care and respect for students is of the utmost importance. Without including the complete, detailed list of these “must-do’s” for community building in this paper, eight of the ten directives are directly related to showing care and respect to young people, and fostering deeper relationships with them. These “commandments” suggest many caring ideas, such as: remembering to start with the students’ gifts and talents, not their needs and problems; speak of the “unique individual”, not the category to which they belong; fight isolation of young people (resist age segregation); reward and celebrate every creative effort by young people and; in every way possible, let young people know, “We need you!”

If resiliency is so important to one's learning capacity, and building resiliency is most effectively done through a school's provision of "protective factors" which are based on care and relationships, then the importance given to curriculum and activities which foster these aspects, should be *increased*, not *decreased*, as we see happening in many schools today. Instead, the reforms calling for more testing, more of the "basics", and more rigorous academic standards, are taking up the time, and the spotlight, in classrooms.

Another educator and author, Shields (2004), also argues that it is the personal relationships we form with students that ensures their continued learning. She says that educators must talk to students about their lived experiences and allow them to explore difficult and personal subjects in safe, sensitive and respectful environments. She says dialogue is the "lifeblood" of a community which truly values individuals. She clarifies the meaning of 'dialogue' and passionately describes its importance: "Dialogue is not just talk. It is a way of life -- a way of encountering others and treating them with absolute regard" (41). She goes on to say that we need to persevere despite all of the distractions, in our conviction that caring, respectful relationships are needed in order for students to become motivated learners in our schools. She argues:

Good leaders get to know their followers, learn from their perspectives, understand their values, respect their beliefs, take time to treat each person with absolute regard, and bring them together in community. (41)

It seems that it is not the multiple-choice testing, nor the fact that more time might be spent on academics, that actually causes increases in learning, growth and achievement over the long haul. It seems as though there must be a foundation of care, relationships and community to be in place for real learning to occur. Noddings (1992), writes that we as teachers, should look at children as though they are children in our *own* heterogeneous family, and ask ourselves what we would want for *each* of them. She says we should care for these students as if they were our own children. About testing, Noddings wisely points out:

... if giving multiple-choice tests were central to the assessment of human growth and development, we parents would administer them regularly at

home. Instead we lie in bed asking ourselves and our mates exactly the kind of questions I've suggested above, and then -- together with our kids -- we decide, and we roll up our sleeves and work together to accomplish what we deem important (180).

Barth (2001) argues that care and relationships are integral to student learning because the conditions under which real learning occurs, are conditions that are primarily borne out of the caring relationships and actions within the schoolhouse. Interestingly, he also says that the conditions for this rich, caring learning environment are also the conditions under which teachers and administrators can find continual renewal in their work. He advocates an environment in which there is: active learning or experiential learning; teachers sharing their craft knowledge, which is, "a description of practice accompanied by an intentional *analysis* of practice" (57, emphasis original); reflection and; teacher leadership. *All* of these conditions imply a significant reliance on the presence of meaningful relationships amongst those in the schoolhouse.

I will discuss each of his proposed conditions for optimum learning because they so adeptly strengthen the case that caring and relationships must be a foundation of effective classrooms if real learning is to occur. These conditions actually *necessitate* caring and relationships in the classroom. I will begin with "hands-on" or experiential learning.

Barth discusses the need for teachers to abandon what he calls the "sit 'n' git" transmission model of teaching (32) because people do not learn in this way. He says that confining our teaching to that model deprives the students and teachers of both community and learning. He advocates kids posing most of the questions rather than the teacher, in a classroom where there is a more active, experiential or "hands-on" approach. Providing this type of environment *necessitates* that the teacher listen to students and their interests, allow them to ask questions and discover answers, seek ways in which to best reach each student and to accommodate his or her learning style. One cannot do this without building a relationship of some kind with the students; the "sit 'n' git" method does not require this kind of caring or relationship. It is teacher driven, and student received; there need not be any caring relationship between the two persons involved.

The other conditions which Barth proposes for real or transformational learning also require a certain level of positive and respectful relationships with students, and amongst the teachers themselves. Another of his proposed conditions for real learning is the sharing of craft knowledge. This practice will only happen in an atmosphere that promotes risk-taking and honesty; the teachers need to feel safe to share and ask questions. This practice *necessitates* care and relationships in the schoolhouse.

Reflection is another learning condition he promotes. To reflect on one's learning, as a student or teacher, requires independent, as well as social reflections. Reflection involves conversations, appreciating other's differences and the sharing of craft knowledge. This practice, too, *necessitates* care and relationships.

The last specific condition which Barth mentions is teacher leadership. Teacher leadership obviously involves a communicative relationship between teachers and administrators, but it also has builds communicative relationships between staff and students. He says:

This change in the leadership culture of a school is not lost on students. Ripple effects soon radiate throughout the building as teachers enlist student leadership to amplify their own. And the more the school comes to look, act, and feel like a democracy, the more students come to believe in, practice, and sustain our democratic form of government. (80-81)

Students become more involved in decision making, and therefore feel respected and cared for. This all contributes to a genuine community of learners. Teacher leadership too, then, *necessitates* care and relationships.

Effective Teachers Build Relationships and Care About Students

Those deemed "good teachers" by colleagues and administrators, are often those who are enthusiastic about their jobs and about doing the work of helping kids learn. Because these teachers need, and indeed thrive on, opportunities to show care and develop relationships with students, the need for care and relationships also becomes important for condition for

keeping the best teachers in classrooms, rather than having them burn out and leave the profession.

Hargreaves (1997) reports that "Good teaching is not just a matter of being efficient, developing competence, mastering techniques and possessing the right knowledge. Good teaching also involves emotional work" (12). He cites various research findings of what "good teachers" say about their classrooms and students. The responses he cites speak of emotion, care, enthusiasm, and risk-taking. He speaks of how teaching not only involves emotional sensitivity, but emotional labour as well:

Teaching involves immense amounts of emotional labour -- not just in terms of "acting out" feelings superficially, but also in terms of consciously working oneself into experiencing the necessary feelings required to perform one's job well -- be these feelings of anger or enthusiasm, coolness or concern. In many respects, it is a positive aspect of teaching. It is a labour of love. Classrooms would be (and sometimes are) barren and boring places without it. (16)

He argues that emotional labour also "exposes" teachers, however, making them vulnerable when the conditions and demands on their work make it difficult for them to do this emotional, and they feel, integral, aspect of the job well. The point that perhaps some of the reason for the malaise felt in schools today by the teachers and even the students is because of this feeling of an inability on the teachers' parts to be able to do an important aspect of their job well. Because of time constraints, content demands, extra paperwork due to accountability, an expanding curriculum, the fact that too much weight and importance is being placed only on "testable" subjects and standardized testing, teachers feel they cannot do one very important aspect of their job well -- the emotional labour part. These "good" teachers are often feeling that they cannot do their jobs as well in the current political context. When the aspects of teaching that give them satisfaction and move them to take risks, keep learning and connect with kids are becoming less tangible and given less value by the public, parents and the government, these "good" teachers lose parts of themselves which in fact have made them effective teachers.

Neito (2003) also argues for the need to focus on caring in schools in order to best serve children and in order to keep the best teachers. She discusses the need to change Teacher Education courses so that new teachers know it is not all about the techniques, but about their professionalism and intellectual activity. She says we need to support those teachers who “love their students, who find creative ways to teach them, and who do so under difficult circumstances” (18). Keeping good teachers then *necessitates* care and relationships and the fact that these foundational aspects of the curriculum are being pushed out of the daily curriculum of classrooms, could mean that we end up losing some of the best professionals in the teaching field. Cummins, et al (2005, 42) sum up succinctly the importance of putting care and relationships at the forefront in education policy and in our classrooms. They state: “[m]any teachers understand intuitively that human relationships are at the heart of schooling. Student achievement will increase significantly only when this insight permeates all levels of policymaking.”

This paper has shown that the fostering of care and relationships is essential to creating a learning environment in which all students can thrive. It is also clear that the most effective teachers know this and know how to create these learning conditions. It seems understandable then, that new reforms should be focussed on these two aspects of schooling: supporting effective teachers and good teaching practices, and seeing the fostering of caring relationships in classrooms as integral to promoting student learning.

In the next section of this paper, I will propose some areas on which policymakers should focus if their aim is to effectively increase student achievement, and more importantly, in the long term, student learning.

Part Five

Reforms That Could Really Matter

Many teachers understand intuitively that human relationships are at the heart of schooling. Student achievement will increase significantly only when this insight permeates all levels of policymaking.

(Cummins, et al, 2005,42)

Reforms Should Focus on Teacher Effectiveness and Care and Relationships

Many agree that when students have effective teachers, they learn. Many agree that effective teachers are those who, among other things, know the necessity of bonding with their students; these teachers nurture care and relationships in their classrooms. It seems then that one of the key steps to take when proposing reforms for improving student learning is to ensure that new Professional Development, Teacher Education Programs and Curriculum Development directives focus on the area of teacher effectiveness and care and relationships. In other words, knowing that effective teachers in a classroom is one of the most efficient ways to improve student learning, reformers should focus on ways to support and nurture effective teachers and to deem this area of education as integral, if not more so, than the “testable”, “measurable” core subjects currently revered by policymakers, to the real learning of students in today’s classrooms.

How increased teacher effectiveness can be achieved is often a topic of debate by the public, the media and the government. If policymakers were to look closely at the literature and research on teacher effectiveness, they would see that expanding the curriculum, administering more standardized tests, and increasing accountability measures, are not the essential elements for improving student learning. Those proposing reforms would do well to heed Eisner’s thought: “You don’t fatten cattle by putting them on a scale”. It seems the push for the increase and implementation of some of these misplaced reform efforts, could very well be *decreasing* the likelihood of student learning. Goodlad (1984) states that,

At no academic level is the need of one cramming more into the curriculum and into each lesson. Indeed, a sorting out of central principles from the clutter of specifics would be beneficial. A few concepts should be learned from a variety of approaches. For most students, academic learning is too abstract. They need to see, touch, and smell what they read and write about. (129)

Teachers know what they need to do to be good teachers. They know they need to form trusting and respectful relationships with their students, help them make connections from

what is already known to the unknown, and to concentrate thoroughly, as Goodlad purports, on a few key concepts, rather than touch the surface of a myriad of concepts. Teachers know about how children learn and that they learn best by being fully engaged in subject matter in which they are interested, and that they learn best by doing, instead of just by listening, or learning by rote. The reform directives today are detracting from some of the things teachers really need in order to more effectively teach and learn: time to talk, time to collaborate, time to reflect upon their teaching, time to use their professional judgement about what their own students need.

If we contemplate once again what Fenstermacher and Richardson (2005) argue, they say that the teacher and the “quality” of his or her teaching, is not just simply what the teacher “does” during a lesson. “Quality” teaching occurs when there are specific conditions in classrooms. Fenstermacher and Richardson have proposed that for student learning to occur, there also needs to be a *willingness* on the learner’s part, a *supportive social* atmosphere in the classroom, as well as *opportunities* for learning and teaching. It is extremely difficult for these last three conditions to be present in a classroom in the current political situation which permeates Public Education today. With reforms focusing on more standardization, more accountability, more prescribed curriculum, there is little room for good teachers to create the important conditions proposed by Fenstermacher and Richardson. For a social network to be present in a classroom, for example, there must be time spent on social interactions between students and between the students and the teacher. There would likely need to be time spent on fostering trust, respect and empathy among the students and to do this, time would need to be spent on some “untestable” subjects and take time away from prescribed curricula.

For there to be opportunities for learning and teaching, there needs to be some time in the school day for teachers to grab those “teachable moments”, or to plan learning experiences which they know would be of high interest or purpose to their particular group of students. Learning is more likely to occur when students are highly motivated and highly interested. Opportunities to learn are also high when teachers teach that for which they feel passion. An over-prescribed curriculum leaves little room for teachers to show and use their individual

gifts and strengths, unless it happens to fall into the mass of detailed prescribed curriculum for each grade and subject matter. Liston (2004) argues that a love of learning is passed onto students when teachers pull them into subject matter for which they feel passion:

It is the teacher who invites us beyond the boundaries of ourselves, and we do so to contact and connect with an otherness that exists outside ourselves. In teaching with a love of learning, we (as teachers) attempt to lure students into reaching beyond themselves, to connect with the subject at hand. It is the teacher that invites us beyond the boundaries of ourselves, to another territory. It is an invitation to join and take part in the human inheritance, the human conversation. It is an invitation that arises from the teacher's depths, builds on what the teacher finds alluring in his or her love of learning, and expresses a respect for, faith in, and insistence that the students see what the teacher finds so precious. (460-461)

Current reforms are taking time away from what effective teachers know they need to do in order to create rich learning environments. Teachers are feeling pressured to "cover" masses of curriculum and prepare students for tests. This takes away precious classroom time from creative, hands-on, challenging, student-driven endeavours because most of the time is deemed as being needed for preparing for tests, dealing with a continually expanding curriculum and ensuring accountability. This over-prescribed curriculum is also pushing aside the time teachers need to cultivate bonds with their students in order to get a "sense" of each one. Because relationships and care are not seen as among the testable, core subjects in school, there is pressure for teachers to spend their time on that which will be tested.

In order to give value to the importance of care and relationships in the classroom, teachers need to be given permission to focus on these aspects of the curriculum. When the curriculum is already packed and the school days already seem impossibly short, priorities need to be established and made clear by policymakers. If teachers are told to be ready to have their students perform well on standardized tests and that their scores will be published, scrutinized and compared, they will spend the time on preparing for these tests because they want their students to do well. In order to do well, time must be spent on the various curricular areas on which the tests will be based. The curricular areas on which the tests will be based are in so-called "testable" subjects and these subjects are not in the area

of care and relationships because these skills are not deemed as important, nor are they as easily measurable. Eisner (2005) describes the cause and effect of the current educational reforms as follows:

If various school districts employ the same curriculum, have the same standards, and use the same evaluation practices and testing programs, then it is possible, in principle, to secure comparative data regarding student performance in each of the districts. The competitive culture that we have in the United States seems to support such a vision. In their drive to look good, schools focus their efforts not on what is best for the student but on what will boost test scores. As a result, cheating increases, the curriculum narrows, and the reward system undermines any intrinsic satisfaction that that students might secure from their work at school. Our anxiety, or at least uncertainty, about the educational effectiveness of our schools leads us to monitor and measure without recognizing the collateral damage we create in the process. (16)

If these elements of a child's education are going to be deemed important, teachers need to be free to spend some time on learning experiences which would foster these aspects of their students' curriculum, without feeling guilty about "giving up" valuable time for activities and skills which are often seen as superfluous. Freeing up some time for this, may mean that standardized testing takes a lesser role in schools today and that Public Education's priorities be focused on fostering more of the "whole child" rather than just the academic skills of the child. The "collateral damage", as Eisner describes it, is far more debilitating to our students than any good they might get out of the short-lived positive feelings (if they are fortunate enough to do well) from their work or test scores at school.

Also part of the "collateral damage", is that teachers, instead of discussing school-based concerns and needs at Professional Development Days, are now needing to spend much of these days planning, discussing and assessing the government mandated initiatives and goals which are imposed on their schools. Teachers should be able to spend time on their own learning and on collaboration with colleagues. The value of teachers collaborating and learning together is clear in the research on teacher effectiveness. Barth (1990) argues that professional development efforts should focus on teachers learning more about their

teaching. He ventures to say that there is nothing more important for improving student learning:

Teacher growth is closely related to pupil growth. Probably nothing within a school has more impact in terms of skills development, self-confidence or classroom behaviour, than the personal and professional growth of their teachers. The crux of teachers' professional growth, I feel, is the development of a capacity to observe and analyze the consequences for students of different teaching behaviours and materials, and to learn to make continuous modifications of teaching on the basis of cues the students convey. (49)

It is with all of these findings and the context of schools today in mind that this paper proposes the following new areas of reform to be pondered.

New Reform Directives for Policymakers

1. Increase Teacher Autonomy for Making Curriculum Decisions

Reforms should focus on good teaching. This could be done by allowing teachers to become more autonomous in their decision-making about curriculum in their classrooms. This increased autonomy would allow teachers to use their professional judgement and expertise to make the needed decisions for increasing the learning of their students. Autonomy cannot be felt when the curriculum is heavily prescribed because there is not enough room for choice. Many of the most dynamic and effective teachers need that autonomy to be able to do their job well. These teachers need to feel empowered, creative and valued as professionals. They need to be able to do what they need to do for their students. Curriculum should be designed in a more general way, allowing teachers to find the ways they deem most effective to teach prescribed curriculum and to have enough room to build their and their students' own curriculum based on their collective interests and needs.

2. Value Professional Development and How Teachers Choose to Design It

Another direction reforms aimed at increasing good teaching could take, would be to further promote and support the idea of continuous professional learning for teachers. When teachers learn more about their own teaching by collaborating and reflecting, their students learn. When teachers learn more about their own teaching and reflect upon ways in which to increase their students' learning, they are saying that they want to continue to find ways in which to better meet the needs of their students. This idea could be supported by allowing teachers to use their precious few Professional Development Days (otherwise known as the innocuous "Non-Instructional Days") for topics which they deem important and timely.

Barth (2001) writes of the tremendous loss that happens when teachers miss the opportunity to pass on knowledge and learn from each other. He says of the value of Craft Knowledge and the need to pass it on:

Next June, in almost every school in the nation, teachers and administrators will retire, leave the profession forever. And when they walk out the schoolhouse door for the final time, they will carry with them an enormous collection of experiences, and learnings from those experiences. They will be loaded to the gunwale with craft knowledge -- which henceforth, will be forever lost to the school, to their colleagues, and to the profession. In this way, craft knowledge is continually bled off from our school, taken to the grave -- unappreciated, unwelcome, unrevealed, and unused. What a tragic loss to the profession, to the professionals, and to the cause of school reform. (60)

Two specific examples of how new policy could be developed to honour the impact and importance of Craft Knowledge are detailed in Barth's Learning By Heart (2001). He describes how the faculty and administration of The Galloway School in Atlanta have formed the "Galloway Academy" which is run by teachers. The Academy runs under the credo that teachers teaching other teachers is the highest form of professional development. The Academy meets every Thursday morning and invites any teacher to share or describe a workshop, meeting, class or other form of learning that he or she feels others might like to hear about.

Another example of how the sharing of Craft Knowledge could materialize and become part of schools' routines would be to have groups of teachers and administrators involved in "storytelling", as Barth calls it, in which educators, with a facilitator, tell stories of their school experiences and then analyze and clarify them with the group. Barth cautions that in order for Craft Knowledge to be taken seriously by policymakers, teachers *themselves* need to be sure to treat this valuable source of Professional Development and school improvement with the importance it deserves. He offers these wise words about the pivotal role Craft Knowledge should play in school reform:

One thing is for sure: if we expect academics and policy-makers to value what school people learn from experience in the schoolhouse -- our craft knowledge -- we first must take ourselves seriously and value our own craft knowledge. When school people come to believe in themselves as leaders as well as learners, as reformers as well as those to be reformed -- when they create within the schoolhouse a culture of continual experimentation and invention -- others will come to believe in them too. (63)

Legitimacy needs to be given then, to the value of teachers learning from other teachers. The precious few Professional Days teachers are given need to be valued as a time in which teachers can share their valuable Craft Knowledge, not days in which teachers "have off" without students. Time for sharing Craft Knowledge should be built into school days in schools' routines and culture, in ways such as those described above by Barth. The reforms today which focus on standardization and accountability make this difficult because with the added pressures of accounting for the progress being made on provincial reform initiatives, and the threat of less than stellar scores on student exams, teachers feel the need to use some of these days in order to keep up with the demands of these added aspects of teaching.

Another way that policymakers could honour the idea of teachers as learners, or reflective practitioners, would be to create programs, such as British Columbia's Burnaby School District's "Professional Growth Program", in which teachers are asked to choose an aspect of their own practice in which they wish to grow and improve, and develop a "growth plan" for themselves for that school year. Teachers work with colleagues of their own choosing, and devise their own plans for how they will work on developing in that area, what they will

need in order to do so and what will they deem as signs of success. Teachers meet with their principals to discuss this Professional Growth Plan and they are given one full day in the school year (with pay) in which they can work on this plan. Such policy honours teachers and their professionalism. It acknowledges the fact that teachers know best on what it is they need to work and that when teachers are learners it is more likely that their students will be learners.

Teacher Research Groups, or Action Research groups, are also ways in which school districts can show they value teachers' ability to choose their own topics on which to develop professionally, and with whom they should work. These are groups in which teachers work collaboratively by meeting with other teachers on a regular basis for the purpose of examining a chosen aspect of their teaching. They do their own research into a "burning question" they have about their own practice, collect data and then analyze the data and reflections with this group of colleagues. This is purposeful, pertinent research into one's own practice. It values the professionalism and autonomy of the teachers and it allows for the important collaborative factor in teacher learning.

3. Value Care and Relationships as Viable Components of the School Curriculum

Reforms could focus on new policy created to build caring and relationship skills in students, such as promoting volunteer hours or educating parents about the value of group or cooperative work, so that when activities such as these are done in school, they are seen as more valuable in the eyes of the public. Although one hesitates to suggest that there should be any more prescribed curriculum, the curricular area of Social Responsibility could be brought to the forefront in schools, since it is an area in which caring attitudes and behaviours at school and in the community are fostered. The four categories of the Social Responsibility curriculum are designed to foster social, emotional and empathic skills and encourage character traits such as fairness, honesty, tolerance and respect. The four categories of Social Responsibility used in B.C. schools are: contributing to the classroom and school community, solving problems in peaceful ways, valuing diversity and defending

human rights, and exercising democratic rights and responsibilities. These strands of this curricular area focus on behaviours and values which many authors and researchers have deemed worthwhile pursuits in the education of our young people.

In British Columbia, Social Responsibility is fortunately gaining more credibility in school districts as a subject area which includes valuable skills to foster in students, as is evidenced through the increasing amounts of inservice and guest speakers becoming available in the province. Despite the growing credibility and interest in Social Responsibility however, this curricular area still does not hold as much clout as those seen as the “core” subjects of schooling. By high school, the “testable” subjects, which arguably can be said to be those which are deemed most important (because of the time and energy teachers and students are expected to give to them), do not include this area of the curriculum.

Until the perception of what is really important for students to learn at school changes, the weight which aspects of the school curriculum such as Social Responsibility are given, will not change. Without this shift in priority by policymakers and the public, teachers will have to continue testing in the core areas and then continue to feel that spending time on these peripheral areas is not only wasting their students' time, but possibly affecting their all-important test scores.

Eisner (2003) says that curriculum should be based, not on the premise of preparing students for an unknowable future, but on the premise that because we cannot prepare students for a world and a future which will be completely different from the one they are living in today, we should enable children to better deal with the world they now occupy. He proposes a curriculum that would be genuinely meaningful to all children, “challenging them with problems and ideas that they find both interesting and intellectually demanding” (8). He believes that schools should focus on teaching children judgement, critical thinking, meaningful literacy, collaboration, and service because it is these skills that will help them deal more effectively with the present and have an important role in developing the minds of our students. Again, however, policymakers would have to shift priorities drastically in order to give credence to these loftier goals for our education system.

Doyle (2003) proposes that curriculum not be too heavily scripted because if it is too prescribed, it will limit the creativity of both teachers and students. He says balance is the most important thing. He proposes:

Compose a curriculum in broad strokes, specific enough for clarity, general enough for flexibility. Easy to say, hard to do. But well worth trying.

My own take is that there should be two parts of a curriculum -- one visible, the other invisible. The visible curriculum is made up of the formal courses of study;¹....

For the second part of the curriculum, I borrow from the Quaker tradition that 'values are caught, not taught.' By this I mean the invisible curriculum, which teaches students by example, and through which the students practice the elements of citizenship and character formation that make civilization possible. (96)

He proposes a liberal education because it builds students' character while at the same time, teaching them how to think. He says that a "narrow, technical education -- or worse yet, a vapid, 'general' education -- does not prepare young people for citizenship, the demands and opportunities of the workplace, or a fulfilling professional life." (96)

Besides valuing the importance of the skills needed to build caring and relationships in students' own lives, valuing the importance of the relationships between the teacher and student could be another area in which policymakers could make some real differences to student learning. Students who feel a bond, or connection, to their teachers will learn from them. The work Neufeld has done on the role which attachment between parent (adult) and child (student) plays in the a child's ability to learn, as well as the classic work renowned authors and researchers such as Goodlad and Lortie have done (and many after them), have stressed again and again the vital role which a positive relationship between the

¹ Doyle prefers what he calls a "liberal arts" curriculum. He defines it by saying: "By liberal arts, I mean the old-fashioned definition; an education that suits men and women to live the lives of ordered liberty. Language arts, mathematics, foreign language, science and social science."

student and teacher plays. Teachers need to be given permission to spend time getting to know each student, to find out what motivates each child, and to find out what it is that would help each child make connections to the subject matter being taught. They need to be able to do these things which good teachers know they must do to help students learn, without feeling they are wasting time or taking time away from the “testable” subjects.

4. Highlight the Importance of Pedagogical Learner Knowledge in Teacher Training Courses

Grimmett and MacKinnon (1992) see a need for an amalgam of pedagogical knowledge and knowledge of the learner which they call “pedagogical learner knowledge” in Teacher Education programs. They say this kind of knowledge, although related to the kind of knowledge that is taught in a lecture hall, is “formed over time in the minds of teachers through reflection” (387). Although this kind of knowledge currently has a place in Teacher Education Programs through parts of the programs which have Student Teachers in classrooms observing their Sponsor Teachers for a few weeks, more importance could be placed on the fact that many aspects of learning how to teach cannot be learned through textbooks or lectures. Grimmett and MacKinnon say where as pedagogical content knowledge is more to do with subject matter and how a teacher can best teach it, “pedagogical learner knowledge revolves around procedural ways in which teachers deal rigorously and supportively with learners” (387). If emphasis is clearly placed on this aspect of learning to teach, then new teachers will begin with the notion that teaching is about helping students to best learn something, not just about knowledge of the curriculum one is supposed to “cover”.

Those who design Teacher Education Programs should ensure that Student Teachers’ practica honour not just the traditional pedagogical content knowledge, but also this pedagogical learner knowledge. Practical experience in classrooms needs to be seen as not just a time in which teachers plan around the prescribed curriculum and have clear learning outcomes that reflect these curricular goals, but as a time in which teachers are learning

how students learn, and how to meet the individual learning needs of these children by creating the necessary conditions under which they will best learn.

Research clearly points to the importance of several factors regarding teacher effectiveness. It would be prudent, if cultivating and supporting teachers who are deemed “effective” is understood, as it should be (based on the plethora of research on teacher effectiveness), as one of the most important ways to improve student learning in schools, that those designing Student Teacher education programs design experiences for these new teachers which reflect these findings. The need for teachers to connect to the students and to get a “sense of each child’s life” as van Manen (1986, 46) says, is echoed in much of the research on teacher effectiveness. Goodlad states in his respected book, A Place Called School (1984,248) that, “Good teaching builds bridges to individuals. It is much more than the honing of mechanics.” Teacher training courses need to emphasize the need for teachers to connect with each student individually. Student Teacher programs need to ensure that new teachers are aware of, and are including, practices in their teaching that allow for these personal connections to be made.

Legitimacy should be given to the fact that teachers need to connect with students if they want them to learn. This legitimacy would mean that besides having well-planned lessons based on core curricular outcomes, Student Teachers should be expected to have well-planned lessons which allow the voices of the students to be heard so that individual connections can be made and the student more fully understood. It would also mean that Student Teachers would be expected to observe and *reflect upon* what their Sponsor Teachers, or School Associates, are doing in the classroom in order to create vibrant learning environments for students.

These Teacher Training Programs could include readings for the on campus program which highlight ways in which teachers build these connections to students. Components of the Student Teaching Program should also have the Student Teachers observe their Sponsor Teachers for the ways in which they form relationships or connections, with students, by

doing focused observations to look at what structures or routines their Sponsor Teachers include in their programs to foster a closeness to, or insight into, individual students.

Besides learning “at the elbows” (MacKinnon, 1996, 653), or at the side of an effective, experienced teacher, the *idea* of pedagogical learner knowledge at least, could be learned through the reading of the works of some exemplary teachers, such as Vivian Paley, Herbert Kohl, Eliot Wigginton and Sylvia Ashton-Warner. Required reading of some of the writing and experiences of these educators would help impart the notion of what effective teachers do: the connections they make with students, their ability to find ways in which each child can learn, the respectful, reciprocal relationships they build in classrooms, the importance of care and relationships in the classroom curriculum and the elusive “teaching sensibility” which is often talked about and referred to in education literature.

5. Value the Impact of Craft Knowledge in Teacher Training Programs

Grimmett and MacKinnon (1992) speak of the need for novice teachers to learn alongside experienced teachers because the important “Craft Knowledge” which effective teachers develop, is learned through *experiences*, not textbooks. The time in which Student Teachers “observe” in their practicum classrooms should be seen as an integral part of their practica. In reality, it is deemed primarily as the time in which the classroom students are to become familiar with the Student Teacher before he or she begins immersion. This time should be treated with greater importance -- as the time in which the Student Teachers get the chance to learn “at the elbows” (MacKinnon, 1996, 653) of their Sponsor Teacher. Student Teaching programs should give this time in the practica more emphasis and more validity. Structured observations could be taking place; the Student Teachers could be closely scrutinizing what these experienced teachers are doing. What happens in classrooms of talented, seasoned teachers, is not something that Student Teachers can learn from a book. This opportunity is often missed in teaching practica and it is an opportunity that cannot be regained through course work at a later date. Barth (2001) calls this lost opportunity for the sharing of Craft Knowledge, “ a tragic loss to the profession, to the professionals, and to the cause of school reform” (60).

6. Ensure Student Teachers Become Familiar With Programs That Encourage Democratic Ideals, Citizenship and Caring

Student Teaching Programs could ensure that developing teachers work with some of the current programs and documents that would have students developing skills for living in our democratic society. Besides the core prescribed academic curriculum, issues of citizenship, well-roundedness and character education could become important foci for these new teachers. Highlighting these areas in teacher training would help convey the importance of educating the “whole child” rather than just the academic aspects of students' education.

There are many different resources circulating which are an excellent source of information and background in these areas. The Social Responsibility document deals with issues relating to citizenship, honouring diversity and contributing to society and has lesson plans, assessment tools and lists of related resources available for grade K to 12. The Primary Program document is an excellent resource for a succinct collection of research about how children learn and developmentally appropriate practice. This document espouses the value of focusing on all areas of students' development, not just on the academic area and it includes philosophical statements about educating the whole child, learning outcomes for all of the curricular areas (including intellectual development), and resources to use with the students as well as their parents. Unfortunately, some Student Teachers placed in primary classrooms are not familiar with this document by the time they are doing their practicum work. This is an excellent resource, not just for ideas and strategies, but for synthesized articles explaining the philosophical basis for theories and approaches such as active learning and developmentally appropriate practice.

There are many programs circulating currently which are an excellent resource for teaching character education and designing learning experiences which foster character skills. If we take seriously all of the research and writings about the importance of care and relationships in our classrooms, then programs such as these should become more visible and valued in public schools. If the policymakers in the government asked for reports on how schools were attempting to develop moral, social and cooperative skills when they asked for the reports on

the progress of achievement in academic areas, the validity of such programs and focus on these skills would be legitimized. If it becomes more legitimized and valued, then student teachers will become more apt to value this in their classrooms, teachers will take more time to design learning experiences in these areas, and it is likely that the students who graduate from our schools will be more well-rounded, leaving school with not only skills which are useful solely in a classroom setting, but leaving with skills that will help them deal with their lives. An added bonus of course, for students who are learning about caring and relationships and who have teachers that care about them and have created bonds with their students, is that students who feel cared for by their teachers and who care about their teachers, are more apt to learn.

Part Six Conclusion

Surely we should demand more from our schools than to educate people to be proficient in reading and mathematics. Too many highly proficient people commit fraud, pursue paths to success marked by greed, and care little about how their actions affect the lives of others.

(Noddings, 2005,10)

Schools need to focus on the *whole* of the child: the intellectual, social, emotional, physical and the artistic parts. Our perceptions of what are deemed “core” courses and subjects at school needs to change, and we need to foster the relationship between the students and the teachers once again by allowing teachers more time and freedom to do what they do well and to focus on what they deem as most important for their students. Inherent in this idea is the need for a greater *trust* and *respect* of teachers by the parents, school boards and the policymakers. Effective reforms would involve more freedom for the teachers to teach that for which they feel passion, more freedom for children to pursue areas of interest and show their learning in different ways, a better balance of school subjects offered (not just those which are measurable) which reflect our greater goals of what an educated citizen in a democracy looks like, and a greater respect for the teacher's expertise and judgement about what a student needs and has learned, rather than such heavy reliance on standardized test scores.

The bottom line is that what we want to do for students is to help them become better learners -- to improve student learning, not just their achievement. The reforms which pervade our school system today are deemed by policymakers to be designed to improve student achievement. Is the improvement of student achievement what we as a society really want, or is it that we want to try and improve student *learning*? I venture to say that most parents would want their children to become better *learners* who will continue learning throughout their lives, rather than just higher *achievers*. The improvement of student achievement will be marked by the scores on standardized tests being measurably higher and can therefore be more confidently compared against other classes', schools', districts' or countries' scores. Are the higher test scores reason enough to focus so completely on this single purpose when the costs to teachers and their students are so dear?

This paper has shown that the push for standardization and accountability in schools has ballooned the curriculum so much that there is little room for anything but the prescribed core subjects in our students' classrooms. It is clear that there should be far more to a child's education than just the core academic subjects! Research and even common sense show

that students need to be interested in what they are learning in order to learn it. They need to feel that what they are doing is purposeful and they need to construct their own understandings by connecting the new to what they already know to learn something for the long term. Rote learning produces *short term memorization* and not *long term learning*. Because of this push to perform well on these standardized tests, teachers feel tremendous pressure to teach to these tests, often having students memorize content to regurgitate the correct facts.

The most damaging effect of this push for standardization and accountability in the name of improving student achievement, is that the preoccupation with this goal has pushed aside many of the most salient aspects of what creates a thriving learning environment for students. As has been outlined in this paper, there is little time left for building relationships with students, for allowing them to study and pursue areas of their own interest, to represent their learning in different ways, to focus on the non-core subjects in the curriculum, such as Art, Music, Drama, Social Responsibility, cooperative learning, and other important aspects of education. It is the reality right now that school seems to primarily value literacy and math skills, at the exclusion of many other subjects. Noddings (2005) wisely points the short-sightedness of this approach:

[s]urely we should demand more from our schools than to educate people to be proficient in reading and mathematics. Too many highly proficient people commit fraud, pursue paths to success marked by greed, and care little about how their actions affect the lives of others. (10)

Eisner (2003,10) argues that for significant change in curriculum to really happen we need a “radically different conception of what matters in education”:

Test scores need to take a back seat to more educationally significant outcomes. As long as schools treat test scores as the major proxies for student achievement and educational quality, we will have a hard time refocusing our attention on what really matters in education. (10)

The push for these reforms aimed at increasing student achievement could very well be the cause of the “malaise” that was described at the beginning of this paper. Teachers can no longer focus on what they are so good at -- creating interesting learning experiences for

children based on their passions and their students' interests. The possibility of autonomy, instinct, judgement and a bond with students is eroding and the shadow of a heavy-handed, misguided prescription for academic achievement is looming over classrooms.

Many good teachers feel burned out and devalued. Their students feel their frustration and the receding presence of the caring and interested teachers with whom they used to feel a connection. These teachers know what is important about learning and sadly, they know that it is precisely those things which are becoming harder and harder to hang onto in their practice. Neufeld and Mate (2004) explain how teachers are feeling:

To encounter chronic resistance is a sure recipe for burning out. Teaching harder is not the answer. Getting into the attachment business is the only way teaching can be made easier. What fulfills a teacher is to open a student's mind. And to open our students' minds, we need first to win their hearts." (274)

The need to demonstrate achievement is creating conditions which, unfortunately, make the instances of real learning fewer and fewer.

If "winning our students' hearts" is the way to have students learn, then let's get on with trying to achieve that. Teachers need to connect with students and they need *time* and *permission* to do it. Neufeld and Mate (2004) say that many parents and policymakers look across the ocean at more authoritarian and structured approaches to learning where student achievement is high, and they want our school system to emulate these systems. The authors say, though, that these systems work in places where, for the most part, adult attachments to children are still intact and that is what gives these systems their power and effectiveness. Here those attachments are breaking down at home and now at school and so that approach to learning does not work. The authors say, however, that even those authoritarian educational systems are showing signs of breaking down as their societies' priorities change. They argue:

No post-industrialized society seems immune. Once a society begins valuing economics over culture, breakdown is inevitable and the attachment village begins to disintegrate. Teachers in authoritarian educational systems

have not yet realized that *it was connection, not coercion, that facilitated learning.*
(173, emphasis mine)

Student *learning* should be the primary goal for Public Education, not just student *achievement*. The new reform directives proposed in this paper would not only improve student achievement, they would likely improve student learning. These reforms would allow teachers to do their jobs well, and teachers doing their jobs well means students are more likely to learn. Teachers would be able to connect with their students and get to know them as the diverse learners that they are so that they could provide learning experiences that would meet their needs and do whatever it is they need to do to motivate these students to learn and to *keep learning* even after they have left their classrooms.

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