TOWARD A COMMON AGENDA: A CASE STUDY OF TEACHER AND STUDENT ROLES IN AN INNOVATIVE SECONDARY SCHOOL

by

Norm Ellis

B.Sc., Simon Fraser University, 1980

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NAME Norman Ellis

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EXAMINING COMMITTEE:

Chair Rina Zazkis

Allan MacKinnon, Associate Professor
Senior Supervisor

Linda LaRocque, Associate Professor
Member

Maurice Gibbons, Professor Emeritus,
Faculty of Education, Simon Fraser University
External Examiner

Date: Nov 10, 1997

Abstract

The purpose of this research was to develop an account of student and teacher roles in an innovative secondary school that had implemented a complex mix of innovations over a five year period. The work sought to examine these roles as they developed during the implementation, and framed the findings within the context of extant conceptions of student and teacher found in the literature. The term role is used holistically and analytically as a set of ideas about the agency of teachers and students as they interact with reform efforts.

This research is based on ethnographic principles. Interview responses from each participant, together with the researcher's insights into the implementation context, are central to the study. Multiple frames of reference were used to verify accounts of the roles. Interviews with six teachers and six students were analyzed and categorized into four emerging themes: "shifting responsibility," "personalizing curriculum," "developing relationships," and "more than curriculum." A fifth theme, "learning to collaborate" was unique to teacher responses. These themes were developed into composite conceptions of teacher and student roles in terms of accompanying actions and beliefs.

Teachers' conception of roles involved a complex mix of knowledge, skills and beliefs. Similarly, students identified that more was expected of them in terms of engaging with their schooling. The results suggest that actions and beliefs of teachers and students had been aligned by various processes over the five years of implementation. Further, by adopting certain aspects of the reform agenda, teachers and students may experience a high degree of personal transformation of practice and their beliefs underlying practice.

This study posits that the alignment of teacher and student agendas may be essential to successful conceptions of reform. The evidence in this thesis suggests that alignment of agendas occurred at NVSS during implementation of the program. This case study provides an example that illuminates some processes involved in "harmonizing" teacher and

student agendas in efforts of school reform, as well as some of the epistemological changes experienced by teachers and students during the five years of implementation.

Dedication

Thank-you Pat, Jana, and Mark.

Acknowledgments

Only an insider can understand the Herculean efforts of the staff of "New Venture Secondary School," who have worked together to build a truly unique educational environment—one that pays attention to the right of all young people to be treated with respect and dignity as they struggle to find their place in the world.

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Chapter 1
The Study of a School Innovation

Introduction

Reforming is a common theme in current educational literature yet there are few case studies that provide insights into the impact of reforming schools on those who interact most closely with them, teachers and students. That schools can be improved is not the issue, reformers must be cognizant of the consequences of adopting certain stances on the requisite roles for these two central groups so as to ensure that what is required of them is realistic, achievable, engaging, and complementary to the reform agenda. This thesis informs the theory/practice dialectic that is central to understanding reform.

The term "role" means "a function or office of someone" (Webster's New World Dictionary, 1972). I use the term teacher roles to include both the actions and beliefs of teachers. Similarly, reference to student roles will rely on the same general definition of roles—the behaviours and beliefs of students. In a sense, it is not reasonable to talk about teacher roles without reference to student roles. Each group, in developing its identity, relies on conceptions of the other. Therefore, in the context of this study, the term role is not a set of guidelines for behaviour, or even a set of empirical claims about the nature of teacher and student, but is used more holistically and analytically as a set of ideas about the agency of teachers and students as they interact with reform efforts. Educational reform emanates from the mindfulness of teachers and students. Therefore, it is appropriate to study how teachers and students interpret reform efforts and how they "identify themselves" in the midst of innovation.

This is a narrative account about change written by an insider. I make no pretense of objectivity, only that I have attempted to maintain an open, critical stance throughout this study. As well, I am highly accountable to my colleagues and students for representing

their meaning. At times, for practical considerations, I adopt a more formal writing style to define the study, situate the literature review, and to outline the method. Otherwise, my voice is heard throughout as a conduit through which the ideas and thoughts of the subjects are represented.

The problem for this thesis is to develop an account of the experiences of teachers and students with a school innovation. This is a case study of teacher and student roles as they emerged during the implementation of an innovative secondary school program. The study focuses on the perspectives of six teachers and six students, and situates the study through extant writings on school reform and my own experiences in innovation.

The Setting

This study takes place in New Venture Secondary School (NVSS)[1] which is located near the downtown core of a medium-sized city in British Columbia. It opened in September of 1992 with slightly over 800 students in grades eight through twelve. Early deliberations about the school and the resulting program design can be found in Balcaen (1993). Foundation documents refer to three features that supported the instructional model: learning packages that gave students more direct access to the curriculum, a system capable of tracking individual student progress, and a teacher advisement program to help students with planning and progress. These are described as the "three pillars" of NVSS (Estergaard, 1991). The school's mandate was to provide a full range of educational programs, while paying more attention to the needs of individual students. The instructional program challenged many of the traditional norms of schooling such as timetables, whole class instruction, the classroom, single-age groupings and teacher independence (Elmore, 1987). It featured a mix of innovations, including Outcomes Based

[1]This study is situated in an innovative secondary school where teachers and students work under a non-traditional model of instruction. The school has been previously studied under the name of New Venture Secondary School (Mehrassa, 1995) and I will continue to use the same pseudonym. The population of teachers and students who participated have been there since the school opened seven years ago.

Education (OBE), self-pacing, mastery learning, teacher advisement, flexible time tabling, learning guides, individual student tracking, and alternative assessment frameworks. The model, as implemented at NVSS, relied upon extensive teacher collaboration, focused more on individual students rather than on groups, and required students to be more responsible for planning and learning. These innovations were all implemented simultaneously when the school opened.

During the seven years that teachers have worked to assemble the instructional program at NVSS,[2] there has been consistent efforts to resolve and clarify aspects of it. In continuing to work with the innovations, teachers have adjusted to working in unfamiliar ways that were, at times, difficult, thought provoking, and professionally challenging. Similarly, as students came to terms with their place in the innovation, they too were expected to assume non-traditional roles and responsibilities.

Justification for the Thesis

As educators move forward with efforts and schemes to reform a system that may be in need of improvement (Emberly & Newell, 1994; Lewington & Orpwood, 1995; Roberts, 1996; Wideen, 1996) it may be informative to look more closely at some of these recent efforts. NVSS represents an attempt to implement many innovations that reformers might find consistent with their agenda. An analysis of the impact of some of these changes on teachers and students may offer important insights into the implications of moving reform in certain directions. Furthermore, the evidence presented in this thesis suggests that these role changes were associated with specific beliefs in both teachers and students which I refer to as their "agendas." Mutually exclusive teacher and student agendas may tend to perpetuate the kind of system that has come under criticism of late, and may serve to

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[2]Although NVSS opened for instruction in September 1992 up to two years prior to this several teachers were contracted to write curriculum, some were appointed as future heads of departments, and others were assured of teaching positions when the school opened. Thus, while the school has been open for five years, the program has been under development for over seven.

undermine future implementation efforts. Conversely, attempts to resolve aspects of this conflict may be essential to conceptions of reform that will have any likelihood of succeeding (Murphy, 1994). Certainly, the evidence in this thesis suggests that more synchronous agendas can result in certain benefits like increased job satisfaction for teachers and more positive attitudes toward school for students.

I propose that an examination of the emerging roles that accompany the implementation of an innovation may also help reformers to identify, anticipate, and deal effectively with some tensions and stages that teachers and students go through during the implementation process. It may also help to determine realistic and achievable teacher and student roles that are more complementary, even providing a mechanism by which researchers can evaluate one aspect of change—the shifting of agendas, either closer together or further apart. This may prove to be a useful criterion for evaluating change because of the centrality of the notion of shared meaning in successful implementation. Although the concept of shared meaning seems to be applied to those in positions of authority, it may also be as important for students to share in this meaning as well (Murphy, 1994). This case study provides an example of "what it looks like" when teachers' and students' agendas move a little closer together. Furthermore, it may also serve to support conceptions of teacher professionalism that include more autonomy in decision-making as well as conceptions of students which grant them more responsibility and "ownership" in their learning; these notions may help to develop a coherent framework within which to conceptualize future teacher and student roles.

Because this was a multifaceted exercise in reform, no single person was able to direct the change. There were high degrees of latitude in interpreting what was to be done both by teachers and by students. As a consequence teachers built the program and defined themselves within its general guidelines. There may be some aspects of the new roles that teachers and students assumed that are highly significant because of their evolutionary development and the experience of the teachers that were involved in determining them. I

consider the nature of these roles to be central to this thesis because they were not prescribed; they were the outcome of a collage of influences and experiences that emerged within a flexible implementation framework. The manner in which teacher and student roles evolved in this setting resonates with notions of reform in the literature that focus on the increasing complexity of teachers' roles, and involving students more in making decisions about their own education. In Chapters Four and Five I discuss the nature and implications of the specific actions and beliefs that were associated with the reform efforts at NVSS.

The political, social, and philosophical perspectives associated with specific innovations appear to be well founded and often contribute to the frameworks within which reforms are situated (Krechevsky, *et. al.*, 1995). However, the personal aspects of change associated with implementation are difficult, if not impossible, to fully portray in research literature. It is the impact and implications of reform on teachers and students, who are most affected by innovation, that is central to this thesis. Therefore, it is the purpose of this study to attempt to define teacher and student roles within the context of implementation of the self-pacing program at NVSS and to explore the implications and possible consequences of these role changes to future practice. Further, I hope to identify some new aspects of practice that may be useful in thinking about the agendas of teachers and students in the broader context of education today. The literature on implementation and educational reform, as it applies to the emerging conceptions of teachers' and students' roles, helps to situate this study. The analysis of the case provides a representation of the teacher and student roles that may be implicit in efforts to reform education.

Situating the Study

Public deliberations about NVSS started two years before the school opened in 1992 (Balcaen 1993). Early descriptions of the model were consistent with the prevailing reform agenda at the time as outlined in the Year 2000: A Curriculum and Assessment Framework for the Future (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1988). This reform appears to

have its roots in a more personalistic philosophy of education (Bertocci, 1979), democratic values as educational aims (Peters, 1979), and in progressive education movements of the past (Beineke, 1993; Dewey, 1944; Lieberman, Falk & Alexander, 1995). The program being implemented at NVSS paid more attention to individual students by allowing them to move through the curriculum at their own pace, at a certain level of mastery, with the guidance of an advisement program and regular monitoring through a computer tracking system. The curriculum was pre-packaged according to a particular format that paid attention to the four unit conception of curriculum organization outlined in the year 2000 curriculum documents (B.C. Ministry of Education, 1988). The program addressed the mis-alliance of management and instructional goals (McCaslin & Good, 1992) when trying to center on the students, while operating within the traditional classroom and curriculum models that focused more on the groups. Certainly, if the goal was to center on the individual, the technologies of teaching and management practices would have to change. The proposed instructional model addressed this. Perhaps even more important than the realignment of goals with management was that the idea of centering on the student seemed to strike a chord of acceptance in many of the teachers who chose to work at this new school. Some teachers recognized that if this was to be a trend (and it seemed to be a reasonable one given the preoccupation with the reforms at the time) then it was important to become involved.

I became aware of the new school program and applied early to be a faculty member, wrote two courses for the school, and attended all relevant pre-implementation meetings before the school opened in the fall of 1992. There was a mood of optimism about the changes that seemed to be a part of something more important than the development of just another school. I believe that, as founding teachers, we considered ourselves to be participating in an innovation that would set a trend for future school programs. As well, I recall thinking, after the pre-implementation professional development activities that had briefed teachers on several aspects of the program, that I had a good idea

about how NVSS would operate even though I had never had any direct experience with a school of this type, or had read any literature on similar schools. Significant attention had been paid to developing a common vision for the future staff (Gusky, 1986; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992) and to staff development that seemed appropriate for implementation (Balcaen, 1993). The principal, superintendent, director of instruction, and consultant (who had been contracted to assist with the implementation) were all aware of the importance of these activities.

Not only was attention paid to constructing a coherent instructional model, the building was specially designed to accommodate the instructional program. It was modern and open with many windows and skylights. There was appropriate differentiation of space to accommodate small, medium, and large student groupings that would support the technologies of teaching that were to be employed.

The instructional program was more student-centred, and featured a self-paced curriculum, OBE, and a mastery-learning model. There was a student advisement program that grouped students cross grade and gave them more contact with the same teacher for planning, goal setting, and Career And Personal Planning (CAPP). There was an electronic communication system. Labs were relatively well-equipped. Administration supported staff as they continually strove to refine the many diverse programs and there was an expectation of excellence that supported the instructional program. Students generally worked in a fostering, resource rich environment, serviced by caring and knowledgeable teachers.

As the staff attempted to resolve early implementation problems, there were a number of dilemmas that emerged. For example, teachers in the science and math open areas managed large multi-age groupings of students. Instruction was one-on-one except when a few students were working together on a project. The Humanities area operated in a similar way some of the time but with seminars built into their instructional model. Students were required to attend these as part of their course requirements. Each system worked, but each was mutually exclusive. While tending to seminars, teachers were

removed from the instructional areas, resulting in accessibility problems for students. Conversely, by not having seminars, the math and science department provided more teachers for individual instruction but were not benefiting from the efficiency gains that teaching groups of students afforded. As teachers constructed their meaning as members of departments independent of each other, foundational dilemmas started to appear as well. One example of this was the association of constructivism with certain aspects of the program by a group of teachers. Mehrassa's thesis (1995) on socio-cultural aspects of knowledge creation in mathematics identified an important belief held by some teachers; that students actively engage with relevant (to them) problems and that they attempt to derive personal meaning from them. Taken literally and to the extreme, belief in constructivism (as it was understood by the group) was incompatible with attempts to teach groups of students and to engage in traditional practice. The math and science teachers were building their program on a foundation of constructivist tenets while other departments were paying attention to the original and perhaps more conservative notions of the NVSS program that had been outlined before the school opened. Significantly, there had been no attention paid to constructivism as outlined by Bereiter (1994), Bodner (1986), MacKinnon and Seatter (1997), Saunders (1992) and others in the early deliberations about the NVSS program. The program was self-paced, it demanded more of students in terms of setting their own agenda, and there was an expectation of collaboration among teachers. The departments operated within these broad guidelines and there was significant latitude for interpretation. But, as departments worked in their own ways to manage the inherent dilemmas, they were each shifting the direction of the innovation.

In retrospect, I recognize some of the implementation stages that the staff were going through, but at the time I believe that most teachers felt that what they were doing was totally without precedent. It was a surprise to me that pre-implementation, the implementation process, transformations, stabilization of use have all been well documented by Huberman and Miles (1984) and seem to describe, at a mechanistic level,

some aspects of this implementation. Further, as with all attempts to implement changes, success or failure seems to depend on many variables that are described in implementation literature. Factors of commitment, user fit, support, pressure, political climate, leadership, and knowledge all can be described clinically but to what end? These early models of change did not seem to have the power to explain what was "really" happening at NVSS. Understanding these changes requires more complex models; socio-cultural perspectives (Sarason, 1982) that acknowledge that at this time it may not be possible to understand change in quantifiable ways. The story of the change and reforming seems to be as tied to the interpretations and experiences of the people most closely involved with it (the teachers and the students) as it is to the theoretical underpinnings of the model itself (Solomon, 1995). Furthermore it could be argued that at least one significant story of implementation and change is within each of the teachers and students who have worked within this restructured school. This could also be a reason for the diversity of roles that may be associated with more "progressive" notions of education.

I remind the reader that it is my purpose to try to represent teacher and student roles as they are manifest in a reform effort as well as to examine the impact of a significant innovation on individuals—some teachers and students, who have been intimately involved with them. I use the framework of implementation only to partially situate this study.

Now, five years after the doors officially opened, we have moved forward with the original model. It is more refined as routines and norms of behaviour become a part of the workday. Associated with the clarification of the details of routine and management have been significant changes in practice. I am reminded constantly by the hundreds of visiting delegations that the school is still very different from conventional high schools and that the staff are engaged in what seem to be routine practices, that are far different from those in mainstream teaching.

Recently I have become more aware of how profoundly the expression of these innovations have affected not only my practice but my beliefs about teaching. Many of

these changes have resulted from trying to resolve dilemmas and contradictions that were present in this environment. In paying attention to students as individuals it was difficult to deal with time, power, efficiency and political dilemmas that are inherent in any attempt to reform education. I looked for validation of what we were doing as we placed our own "signature" on the innovation. I also wondered how teachers and students were reacting after five years of operating within this unconventional milieu, and wanted to know more about the tensions, the perceived opportunity, the dissonance, and personal growth that were associated with this innovation.

Reaearcher's Path

Two years after NVSS opened, I counted eight teachers in the school pursuing Masters programs in curriculum, administration, counseling, etc. Several of them kindly passed on papers and books to me when they had finished with them and two gave me their finished thesis to read. One was about the early deliberations that resulted in the new school and program (Balcaen, 1993) and the other was about the humanistic and social aspects of mathematics and the teaching and learning of math (Mehrassa, 1995). Both of these works were attempts to describe, explain, and to make meaning of the innovations either in whole or in part. But even after reading these two informative thesis, I still could not explain the power that this innovation seemed to have over us all. There was something about it that seemed to go beyond simple implementation.

Two and a half years after the school opened, I decided to enter graduate school and seek some clarification about the reform debate. Although I did not recognize it at the time, my early attempts to make sense of what I was a part of, in implementing the NVSS program, were central in leading me to formulate what was to become this thesis. The area that interested me most of all was educational change, reform, and implementation. I was looking for some guiding principles that might explain not only what was happening to me but that might help to justify what we were doing. Much of what was expected of us as

innovators at NVSS seemed to be consistent new theoretical conceptions of the roles of teachers and students that were implicit in literature dealing with educational reform. Teachers were guides, mentors, friends, and tutors. They were also collaborators—team players working together on curriculum projects, managing work areas together, and team teaching. These were not just behaviours that had been adopted because someone told us that we must do things this way. I think that we believed that what we were doing was better for students and more satisfying personally. Although it was true that in the beginning we had changed to fit the structure, we had, since then, adapted the program to fit us in ways that best fit our beliefs about teaching and learning.

I looked for patterns or generalizations that could be made in identifying these changes or new roles that were emerging. Was there some metaphor that could capture the essence of what was going on? It seemed that there was a paradox at work here. Within the framework of the central unifying vision was implicit permission to come to terms with it in our own way. This may explain why decisions were so difficult for us as a staff to make, why we were so tolerant of the ambiguity that accompanied all of these changes and why we talked for hours about additional systems that we thought should be in place but did not push past the committee phase. Certainly, Sarason's work on school culture (1982) explains that there is an evolutionary process at work in developing new systems. The staff intuitively seemed to be moving along a path, some more willing than others, and was reluctant to superimpose conventional technologies on top of the many changes that were already being implemented. Teachers seemed to be comfortable with the fact that they would have to learn to make meaning of this collage of innovations both as individuals and as a staff. Certainly professional development activities and visiting professionals who were familiar with the idealized system that we were working with helped to focus our collective vision. There were workshops on OBE, on learning styles, on data management for tracking students electronically, and on the working of the model in similar schools. There had been a consultant hired to assist in the development of the learning guides

(instructional materials). But I recall that as we moved forward, in developing our own "homemade" solutions, finding the experts increasingly out of touch with our problems. They proposed solutions that were slightly out of phase with our mutual understanding of what we should be doing. It was obvious to me, and probably to most of the forty or so original teachers, that accompanying our mastery of practice changes were underlying belief changes that even the "experts" did not completely understand. They had an understanding born of particular experiences, and so did we—but ours were different.

Although we are still (after five years since the school opened) working to refine the instructional program, there are many in-house systems and routines that have been added since the school opened. Much of the original model has been implemented and a visitor to the school now would likely recognize that the program had remained faithful to the original conception of the innovation. Nevertheless, the teachers and students have moved beyond the early implementation ideals and definitions. Not only was the program different, the teachers and students who had been at the school for five years were different as well.

This study is about six teachers and six students who have been involved in challenging conventional practice for five years. It describes and interprets their emerging actions and beliefs in such a way so as to inform an important aspect of the reform debate—what might be involved of teachers in terms of actions and beliefs as they interact with the reform agenda and what kinds of process might be influencing their decisions to think and behave in these ways.

Organization of the Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter One has outlined the purpose for the study, provided some background to the NVSS program, and explained how I came to be interested in conducting this study. Chapter Two presents a review of related literature on recent issues and trends in reform as well as developing a composite image of teacher and

student implicit in extant writings about progressive educational change. Chapter Three outlines the method used to conduct the study and situates the researcher and the researched. Chapter Four introduces the participants, summarizes emergent themes, and provides an analysis of the results. Finally, Chapter Five presents conclusions, implications, suggestions, and personal reflections. Included in the Appendices are a list of questions that were used to guide the interviews, and two of the twelve complete transcriptions.

Chapter 2
Review of the Literature

Frames of Reference

The problem for this thesis is to develop accounts of the experiences of teachers and students with a school innovation, and to relate these experiences to some conceptions of the roles of teachers and students evident in writings about educational reform. At this time, there is a dearth of clear and coherent conceptions of teachers and students in the reform literature. In attempting to situate its agenda in political, social, and philosophical contexts, reformers seem to have paid little attention to how teachers and students might have to operate in new educational environments. As a starting point from which to contrast the results of this study, I will be using examples from the literature that lead to an understanding of the practice of teachers and a characterization of students that would be consistent with the reform agenda. The evidence in the literature suggests certain roles implicitly, but few cases have been developed that help to conceptualize and operationalize the role of teachers and students in the throes of school innovation. Before proceeding, some recent contributions to the literature situate reform in a complex milieu of ideas and competing agendas. Out of this apparent confusion about the debate over improving education emerges three epoches in current reform. The following several paragraphs outline the context of current reform.

Interest in the subject of educational reform has generated vast amounts of writing recently (Sarason, 1995). Writers orient the problem of reform many ways. Some are interested in the mechanics of implementation (Huberman & Miles, 1984). Some attempt to assign meaning to educational changes (Fullan, 1991). Others place reform in the context of restructuring (Murphy, 1994), teacher development (Little, 1993), evolving cultures (Sarason, 1982), building communities of practice (Quartz, 1995), and attempts

to establish new norms of practice (Little, 1982). Some identify competing agendas for curriculum (Egan, 1996), the need for change (Lewington & Orpwood, 1995), why reforms fail (McLaughlin, 1990), why reforms persist (Cuban, 1988), what works and what doesn't (Mullan & Miles, 1992), the recurrence of reforms (Cuban, 1990), and even why it may be inappropriate to even conceive of trying to reform at all (Roberts, 1996). I propose that an exhaustive literature review of this subject would be the beyond the scope of one thesis. Furthermore the sheer volume of information would likely do little to clarify the debate. Therefore it is the purpose of this literature review to situate this study in an appropriate (although not exhaustive) introduction to the literature on implementation and reform as it applies to teacher and student roles, while paying attention to some issues that will affect the practice of teachers and the involvement of students in education.

As a starting point, I chose to align current efforts in reform with progressive movements of the past that centre more on the individual student. This movement which has its roots in Deweyan pragmatism described by Soltis (1994) in the following way:

> that it [is] through experience and purposeful action that our understanding of the world is acquired, adjusted, and added to in future experience. (p. 251)

Central to the current reform agenda is that more attention is paid to individuals, their experiences and their construction of appropriate knowledge, skills, and sensitivities within the context of important experiences. This epistemology underscores the importance of focusing upon the individual and paying attention to maximizing the potential of each student. It also legitimizes certain types of practice by teachers that may be asynchronous with current management practices of the past but more appropriate during the current climate of reform that pays more attention to "pesonalistic philosophies" (Bertocci, 1979) and more liberal views of education.[1]

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[1]I consider efforts to characterize teachers and students as being a part of a hierarchical, technocratic, bureaucracy, and the effort by some to return to more traditional, teacher centered practice to be outside the parameters of the reform agenda and beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss.

The argument for reform is weakened by conflicting and controversial sources. The work of Roberts (1996) in dealing with the flawed rationale for reform, and other attempts characterize education as being in need of change (Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Emberley & Newell, 1994; and Lewington & Orpwood, 1995) all contribute to the debate but do little to resolve it. That schools are failing is a conclusion based on tenuous arguments that are likely more political than factual (Roberts, 1996). The implications of a flawed rational for reform may be that the basis for it is unjustified. The argument may perhaps best be reshaped to focus on striving for excellence, paying more attention to the individual, and improving and diversifying what may already be an appropriate system. Nevertheless, efforts to reform education persist.

Three stages have characterized recent efforts to reform schools, the first being the implementation of incremental reforms as a mechanism by which to improve education. Huberman and Miles (1984) describe in detail the factors that come into play during implementation of programs. The failure of incremental reforms (McLaughlin, 1990) led reformers to conceptualize new factors that would increase the success of implementation. The work of Elmore (1995), Fullan (1991), Goodlad (1994), Little (1982), Sarason (1982) and others, who view implementation as being dependent on the formation of constituencies of practice and the development of strong norms of behaviour led researchers to recognize the importance of teachers' changing beliefs and practice as being central to the adoption and longevity of an innovation. Finally, recent conceptions of change involve more than simple implementation, institutional learning and collaborative models of change. They are associated with building new educational communities (Quartz, 1995) and involve a complex mix of factors that may not be easily influenced by external forces.

Quartz identifies three norms of current reform as they relate to teaching and learning. The first is that restructuring efforts prescribe new pedagogical norms that challenge traditional beliefs about the nature of knowledge and the process of learning. She

claims that the move is away from mimetic models of learning based on teacher centred transmission to more personal views of knowledge that are based on constructivist theories of learning. The second is to move away "from individualistic and competitive modes of interaction toward norms of caring, trust and common purpose" (p. 244). This applies to teachers who typically will work more with their colleagues, and students who will engage in more cooperative learning activities. The third norm conceives of changes to "hierarchical, centralized bases for authority to structures that are decentralized, inclusive, and more democratic" (p. 245).

In trying to clarify what the implications of this view of reform are to the emerging picture of teachers and students, I have chosen two central themes and two associated themes as being important in designing and focusing the questions that I will be asking my subjects. These four lenses will serve to situate the theory practice dialectic that I am trying to unravel. The first is the emerging view of the teacher. The second is the emerging view of the student. The third is the changing view of curriculum. The fourth is empowerment, or self-determination, both of students and teachers. This study relies on multiple frames of reference for the interpretation of the interviews that form the data for this study. A review of some relevant literature follows in the next section.

Central to the discourse is that educational reform is personal, complex, multifaceted and maybe even unmanageable, but that any attempt to improve the system must pay attention to more clearly conceptualizing the agendas of students and teachers and to aim for alignment of the two. The following outlines some of the features of teacher and student roles implicit and explicit in the literature as well as some issues related to curriculum and empowerment.

Themes

Teachers

In developing a starting point from which to contrast the empirical view of teachers operating in innovative educational structures, the literature on reform offers an implicit composite of what it might mean to be a teacher in the context of new and non-traditional ways of educating young people. This section may be considered to be a theoretical construct of the "reform teacher." The lack of explicit references in the literature to the actions and beliefs of teachers may result from more complex notions of what it means to be a teacher thus precluding any blueprint for roles. Nevertheless, the following outlines several considerations that teachers operating in reform environments will have to pay attention to.

> The redesign of teacher work in restructured schools needs to unfold within a supportive organizational climate—one that reflects "schools as stimulating workplaces and learning environments." This larger organizational climate can be thought of as one that professionalizes teaching.
>
> At the micro level—the individual district school classroom system—a professional work environment is one in which teachers are more concerned with the purposes of education than with implementing predetermined goals.
>
> . . . It is also one in which they "exercise greater control over matters pertaining to curriculum and instruction and to the way in which the school's resources are employed to support teaching and learning; one in which there is a decrease in control by authority and an increase in control through professional norms of performance, responsibility and commitment." (Murphy, 1994, p. 33)

The association of teachers with increased levels of professionalism acknowledges that accompanying any attempt to work effectively with educational reform will require greater levels of knowledge and understanding. Furthermore it will place non-traditional

demands on teachers that will require them to interact with students in different ways and in different capacities.

This is quite different from traditional conceptions of teaching which could be characterized in terms of three norms of practice. The first is that teaching is a solitary activity. The second is that teaching exists in a hierarchical framework of school governance. The third is that the theory of teaching and learning does not necessarily drive practice. Each of these traditional norms of practice are being challenged in many different ways by reformers (Cuban, 1992a; Gusky, 1986; Louis, 1994; McLaughlin & Yee, 1988; Murphy, 1991). Although there are questions about the degree to which reformers agree on what the ultimate expression of the "reform teacher" the prevailing notions are outlined below.

The first norm of practice, that teaching is a solitary activity, is being challenged by the model of collegiality. Environments that encourage teachers to work together to determine the best practice of teaching are effective ways to move the reform agenda forward on this front (Cuban, 1992; Elmore, 1995) and has been associated with more successful schools (Little, 1982). Teacher research, an empowering and legitimizing activity and a form of action research, relies upon increased interaction among teachers (Quartz, 1995). Clark, *et. al.* (1996) view it in part as an empowering mechanism that "facilitates engagement in research about students, learning and their own teaching practices" (p. 194). The emergence of recent thinking that teaching should be a collaborative activity, where teachers influence other teachers, is redefining work environments and structures that support the new technologies of teaching (Murphy, 1991). Team building, building coalitions of practice, and including teachers in leadership are some manifestations of this trend (Fullan, 1991; 1994). This trend to view the teacher as one who is in the process of constant renewal and growth by working with other teachers who are engaged in the same process is coherent with reform notions that there is no single way to define what a teacher is and does, but they should do "it" together. The

construction of teacher identity within the context of a community of professionals who have gained legitimate entry into the field demonstrating the requisite initial competencies is an ongoing process. Collaboration among teachers is central to current conceptions of teacher growth and staff development (Gusky, 1986) as well as in establishing new, positive, normative environments that are crucial for improving education through sustained change.

The inability of reformers to anticipate, replicate and sustain changes suggests that teachers cannot be managed. Perhaps new conceptions of teachers-as-reformers should involve some aspects of self-management. Lewis (1994) identifies collaboration with organizational learning where there are structural and leadership aspects of change that are managed to some extent, but are chaotic and anarchistic as well. Collaboration shifts the responsibility for the effects of change to the teachers. Essential for the development of personal and significant change that accompanies the collegial model is:

> dialogue, interaction, and reflection upon traditional ways of working in education, along with openness to continuous reflection upon what is happening within the collaborative group. because formation emerges from within, it is thus fragile and ever-changing; yet its requisite flexibility in the midst of the hard work of interrelating is likely at the heart of the very resilience of collaboration and its power for deep change. (Stewart, 1996, p. 23)

The second assumption that teaching exists within a hierarchical governance structure is being challenged by attempts to flatten administrative structures. Site based management by a variety of names is encouraged to varying degrees by reformers (Fullan, 1991; Murphy, 1991). Teachers are becoming more responsible for determining the agenda in schools and administrators are thought of as being facilitators or even nonessential. Emergent leadership is thought of as a more effective way to improve schools. Various teacher leadership schemes solve the problem of imposition of reform initiatives from the top down that have historically proven to be short-lived (McLaughlin, 1990).

The third challenge to traditional practice is that teachers are more likely to accept innovations that coincide with the ethos of caring, shifting responsibility and technologies

that are more likely to connect students with learning (Glasser, 1990). The teacher role is re-conceptualized as guide, mentor, advisor, and facilitator rather than disseminator of information. Traditional metaphors like "sage" are replaced by "guide" in restructured and reformed schools (Murphy, 1991).

Congruent with this belief is a growing recognition of the misalliance of management and instructional goals in school reform (McCaslin & Good, 1992). They identify three management paradigms that are prevalent in parenting as well as in classrooms. At the extremes are a laissez-faire or permissive style and the authoritarian or ordering style. In between, is an authoritative or empowering approach to managing students. They argue that adopting this approach encourages behaviour that is monitored by self-discipline and self-control. Authoritative management requires that "as students develop more self-control and adaptive capacity they become capable of handling more responsibility" (p. 13). They explain the importance of the congruence of conceptions of authority and the curriculum.

> We believe that the intended modern school curriculum, which is designed to produce self-motivated, active learners, is seriously undermined by classroom management policies that encourage, if not demand, simple obedience. We advocate that a curriculum that seeks to promote problem solving and meaningful learning must be aligned with an authoritative management system that increasingly allows students to operate as self-regulated and risk-taking learners. (p. 4)

Elmore (1987) claims that legitimate authority also involves consent. Conceptions of authority that involve coercion, threats, and punishment are inconsistent with implementation of educational goals. This applies to both teachers and students as they react to reforms. Teachers have authority only to the extent that the student agenda permits. The implications are that a significant determinant of teacher roles will be student roles and vice versa.

The picture of teacher roles that is emerging in the literature on reform is multifaceted. Traditional norms of practice (Elmore, 1995b) that conceive of teachers as technicians, managers, disseminators of information, and implementers of program ideas

that have been generated elsewhere, is being challenged by the reform agenda. The emerging notion is a complex amalgam of attitudes, responsibilities, sensitivities and expertise. The new teacher is engaged in continuous personal renewal and efforts to make meaningful the strategies and programs that are collaboratively developed. They are moral educators (Peters, 1979) who are concerned with the development of the whole child using strategies that place the student at the center of the teaching agenda. This is done in the context of a more cooperative and less competitive environment where groups of students will likely be actively engaged in meaningful activities that have some connection to their personal world view, with the intention that individual students will be working toward the end of maximizing their potential within certain domains of inquiry. Teachers are also pictured as being competent in a range of curricular areas and able to help individual students make these connections to their world. They are conceived of as being guides, mentors, facilitators, developers of and modifiers of curriculum, all of which takes place in a collaborative non-competitive and student-centered environment. Strangely, there is still a generic quality associated with this conception of teachers that seems to pay less attention to specialization. This composite may represent some notions of teacher roles that will likely be required to push the reform agenda forward.

Students

In attempting to determining a theoretical composite of the "reform student" the literature provides little explicit help. The following is an attempt to compile important and consistent notions of what it might mean for students to operate in progressive educational settings.

> Prevailing notions of "normal practice" in schools—teaching is telling, knowledge is the accumulation of facts, and learning is recall—will have to be replaced by more powerful ideals that emphasize the role of the teacher as empowering and enabling students to take control of their own learning, and of students as increasingly responsible for their own intellectual and moral development. (Murphy, 1991, p. 58)

Educational reform will likely require as much in the way of change from students as from teachers (Fullan, 1991, p. 189). Students will be expected to become involved with processes that have traditionally been the responsibility of the teacher. The success of the students will be uncoupled from their achievement within a narrow conception of curriculum. "Instead of thinking of students in terms of learning outcomes, they will have to be thought of as people who are being asked to become involved in new activities" (p. 189).

Egan (1996) associates the ideas of Rousseau with the progressivism of Dewey (p. 18) and more child-centered instruction typical of the current reforms. In paying more attention to the centrality of the child and the importance of experience as it relates to the individual, the practical considerations of working with large numbers of students in progressive learning environments will be that they may have to take on more of the responsibilities that were traditionally in the domain of the teacher. For example, teachers will not necessarily be the primary filter of curriculum. Students will have to provided with, and choose for themselves (with the guidance of teachers, alternatives that are more relevant to their knowledge base and interests.

Another emerging view of "students being responsible workers" seems to have been borrowed from business where restructuring efforts have focused on changing the roles of workers and managers (Murphy, 1994). Historical machine bureaucracy and industrial models of schooling makes comparison between restructuring in industry and restructuring in schooling inevitable. This shift in thinking is significant because it moves the responsibility for learning away from the teacher and toward the student. Teachers have historically shouldered the blame for much of the failure of the system to deliver students who could read, calculate and problem solve. This apparent shift in responsibility may have led reformers to conceive of more cooperative models for student learning. Cooperation and collaboration are important not only for managers but for workers as well.

The students' role is strongly linked another tenets of educational reform, "constructivism," and the emerging acceptance by educators of more constructivist notions of learning. Conceiving the student as being a participant in determining the types of experiences that are of importance to them has links to progressive movements of the past (Dewey, 1944). Learning may be encouraged and fostered but not forced. Cooperative learning, student-centred learning, attempts to assess student work more authentically, individualized progress, outcomes based education, and mastery learning are a few of the technologies of teaching and learning that may be linked to the emerging notion of the student as worker (Lieberman, Falk, & Alexander, 1995).

Peters (1979) outlines the traditional aim of democratic education to be "the growth, self-realization, or self-actualization of the individual" (p. 478). The implications for students is to assume more responsibility for achieving some measure of growth toward these aims. As internal processes that are difficult to measure, students will be asked to participate more in their own moral, ethical, and self-disciplined development.

The current trend among reformers to pay attention to "personalistic philosophies" and democratic values in education may lead to conceptions of the student that require them to take more of an active role in setting and meeting their own agenda. As students make the transition from being dependent and irresponsible, to assuming knowledge, understanding, sensitivities and skills that are associated more with being an adult, they will increasingly define their path through school. The new view of students will depend on the program in which they are operating. Those that are truly designed to accommodate progressive reforms will place value on students that are able to work cooperatively and who are willing engage in the realistic setting of personal agendas with the help of a teacher. This will require them to work with teachers in a more cooperative manner with more equal power bases as the student demonstrates greater independence and responsibility. Students will have to engage in activities that are increasingly outside the traditional school experience as notions of intelligence and curriculum become more

inclusive. The idea of working toward a right of passage from child to adult has been explored by Gibbons in his conception of a "Walkabout" (1974). This may be a useful metaphor to use in association with this process.

The association of student roles with complex processes, constructivism, experience, and walkabout identifying only three of many, serve to illustrate that the reform agenda does not speak with a unified voice. The complex environment of reform has an ethereal quality to it. Therefore, it may only make sense to talk about student roles within the context of specific reforms. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, the conception of the "reform student" may be as complex as the notion of the "reform teacher."

Curriculum

> . . . fundamental discussions about how to restructure educational processes for more effective learning should flow from rich conceptions of teaching and learning and should precede the restructuring of other aspects of schooling. (Sykes & Elmore, 1989).

This is a common theme in the reform literature stemming from the progressive education movement of the past and the work of John Dewey (1944). The philosophical roots in Rousseau as described by Egan (1996) and Dewey lend more solid grounding to learning theory that has been supported by more recent work on cognition (Bruner, 1964). Gardner (1991) has broadened the notion of intelligence. Out of this kind of thinking and other tenets of progressive education stems more personalized visions of education, the variations of which have roots in discovery learning and connecting the world of theory to that of personal experience (Dewey, 1944).

An example of this is the way math and science programs are trying to make the curriculum more meaningful to students through various notions of constructivism (Appleton, 1993; Cobb, 1994; Saunders, 1992). Again these can be linked to personalistic philosophies (Bertocci, 1979) where the ideal of personality is to "persist in orchestrating the value-experiences of life" (p. 506). Constructivism seems to be the reformers guide to

resolving educational problems in ways that are coherent with child centered reforms. Elmore (1995a) links progressive reforms to teacher beliefs in "constructivist" views of learning as described by MacKinnon and Seatter (1997). The reform agenda requires teachers to be more flexible in the interpretation of curricular outcomes and in the way students are assessed. Although building meaning takes more time and may be more inherently satisfying for teachers and students, there are several new dilemmas for teachers who are trying to incorporate a more constructivist approach. Time constraints and challenges to conventional assessment will impact on the degree to which they can be incorporated.

As reformers struggle to situate and define curriculum, there are conceptions of curriculum that would be coherent with the emerging view of teachers and students that are suggested by the reform literature. Conceptions of curriculum that are supported by positivistic notions of knowledge will be replaced by those which are supported by more constructivist views of learning and teaching. Therefore the curriculum, although retaining some of the traditional content, will pay attention to other conceptions of knowledge and the relationship that the student and teacher have to it. This will include broader notions of intelligence (Gardner, 1991) which will enable students to engage and interact with a wider range of experience.

Empowerment

Issues of empowerment are intertwined with each of the above themes. Teacher empowerment is associated with flattening traditional administrative hierarchies, the professionalization of teaching, and teacher research. For the student, it means making more choices, accepting more responsibility, and having access to more meaningful educational experiences. Empowerment is a difficult thing to measure. People feel empowered. It cannot be legislated or implemented directly. Empowerment springs from the new attitudes, feelings, and confidences that can accompany reform.

Increasingly, teachers have become involved in research into their own practice. Conceptions of teachers as reflective practitioners (Schön, 1983) have led to teacher research being an important aspect of validating practices. Sockett and Hollingsworth (1994), assert that this acts as a powerful tool for self-determination of teachers and reform by:

> 1. reducing the gap between research and practice: 2. demonstrating the problematic nature of outsider knowledge in directing teachers' work: 3. emancipating educators from the positivist "domination of thought" through their won understandings and actions: 4. establishing the centrality of teacher—selves in research, challenging the privileged view of traditional research's "objectivity" and therefore, hierarchies of knowledge; and 5. showing how teacher researchers come to trust their own abilities to construct knowledge, to become meaning makers, and to improve their practices. (p. 262)

The principle that teachers should be engaged in the process of continual self-renewal applies to students as well. Both teachers and students will be engaged in personal development, maximizing potential, and self-determination within the limits of acceptable practice, as determined by the environment within which they are working.

The early composite picture of teacher and student roles is closely tied to new conceptions of practice, learning, and organizational change. Teachers become part of the organizational learning process as they work together in designing and implementing programs that pay attention to the student. At the center of the agenda is a view that learning is socially constructed, that is, in accordance with constructivist philosophies and psychologies of learning. Both teachers and students will be involved in the social process of learning. Teachers will work to understand and build systems that foster and promote appropriate student involvement. Students will work to understand and build an understanding of the world around them through appropriate and real experiences increasingly under their own control. The conception of teachers as building knowledge of effective teaching and learning practices that promote learning for both themselves and students, places them as partners in learning beside the traditional client; the student. Ideally, the requisite attitude for approaching the job at hand is the same for teachers as it is

for students. Each must make meaning within the context of their educational environment, take on more responsibility, and rely more extensively on the other for determination of their roles.

Conclusions

> . . . individuals interpret it [theory] in different ways and perhaps even try to implement it in ways that are self-contradictory, or as part of an ensemble of programs that do not form a coherent whole. (Krechevsky, Hoerr & Gardner, 1995, p. 182)

This quote referred to the implementation of programs that were founded on the tenets of multiple intelligence theory but it illustrates an important reality in the modern context of reform. Attempts to implement programs that are founded upon even the most convincing tenets will likely be unsuccessful unless reformers pay attention to the role of teachers and students in assembling meaning from, and building aspects of, new educational systems together. Sarason (1995) explains that although educational systems are difficult to change, we have learned much, "especially about the nature and context of productive learning" and that "the initial object of change is not students, the classroom, or the system; it is the attitudes and conceptions of educators themselves" (p. 84). Quartz (1995) includes students in the equation of change.

> The norms of this new reform culture are readily at hand, themselves embedded in the restructuring agenda. Put simply, the reformed learning environment for children is the same one proposed as a guideline for implementation and ongoing professional development (p. 244)

This conception of reform, that of one being situated within environments that are associated by high degrees of self-determination by teachers and students, requires that teachers and students work more closely together to construct the meaning of that in which they are engaged—whatever they agree it is.

Chapter 3
Method

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and defend my research method. Included are sections on establishing the research paradigm, determination of validity and reliability issues, positioning of the researcher, the role of theory, sources of information including data collection procedures, and finally data management techniques and analysis.

This is a case study that situates a theory practice dialectic using information from the field in contrast with aspects of the literature on reform. It relies on the accounts of six teachers and six students and their experiences at an innovative secondary school.

The Research Paradigm

In trying to devise an appropriate method to research student and teacher roles in a reform environment, I returned again to the problem of this thesis which was to develop accounts of the experiences of teachers and students with a school innovation that would inform the theory of educational reform. This study required meaningful representations from the field as well as a characterization of teachers and students evident in the reform literature. The purpose of the literature was to situate the study in an understanding of what reform had to say about teacher and student roles and the purpose of the data was to provide an example that would serve to contrast the "real with the ideal". In focusing on the theory/practice dialectic, I hoped that the result would be to inform the discourse on reform and help to develop clearer and more realistic conceptions of practice . The problems were now who to involve, where to collect the data from, how to collect these data and finally, to determine the best way to represent, in a meaningful way, the information about teachers and students experiences.

I had decided to use NVSS as the research site early on in the conception of this thesis for two main reasons. First, I felt that as a member of the staff, I could legitimately,

and in good conscience, ask my colleagues and students to participate with me in trying to come to terms with certain aspects of innovation. After five years of working in non-traditional ways, I felt that we had an important perspective from which to examine the impact of reforms on our beliefs and practices. Early discussions with teachers and students indicated that there were many who were willing to work with me to come to a more thorough understanding of "what was going on" at NVSS. Second, NVSS seemed to be a good example of the type of innovative environment within which I wished to conduct the study. I have argued in the introduction that NVSS has implemented a program that many reformers would consider consistent with their agenda. Perhaps as important was that my interest in reform and change had grown out of my association with NVSS. I had been involved in a fascinating roller coaster ride with reform, and the roots of this study lay in my quest to make meaning of the events that I had been connected with for over five years.

After broadly outlining the study, I considered several strategies for gathering information and settled on interviewing as an appropriate way for participants to represent their experiences. There was a pleasing aspect (to me) of mutualism in having direct contact with my sources. Together we would have an opportunity to talk about things that were important to us and perhaps come to a more meaningful understanding of the complex environment that we had been working. Although I felt that this was a important task in its own right, I was concerned about entering into this project with a frame of research that would enable me to appropriately represent the more subtle aspects of change—the thoughts and feelings of the participants. I became increasingly concerned with notions about reform that seemed to be grounded in positivistic notions of truth, and was concerned that much of the research seemed distant and clinical. There was a vacancy in the literature that portrayed insiders experiences with change. Since I proposed to describe rather than to test a hypothesis it was appropriate to align my investigation with more naturalistic paradigms of research. This is a case study that borrows techniques of interviewing,

transcribing, identifying themes and interpreting from the social sciences while allowing for the positioning of the researcher within the study. It is associated with the cultural and social aspects of reform, therefore I borrow some techniques from the tradition of ethnography.

Strauss defined the ethnographic process as one of attributing a theory of collective behaviour to members of a particular group (1987, p. 192). This notion of cultural attribution in societies or groups is a useful theoretical construct in viewing reform (Sarason, 1982) and may provide a way to uncover if and why there appear to be some unique norms of practice that are identified with the school. Furthermore it may offer some new ways to describe and interpret emerging teacher and student roles.

Descriptive research is appropriate for recording and interpreting the subjective experiences of participants and the investigator. As LeCompte and Goetz (1982) explain:

> By admitting into the research frame the subjective experiences of both participants and investigator, ethnography may provide a depth of understanding lacking in other approaches to investigation. (p. 33)

Respondents each have stories to tell about their experiences with reform. Their interpretation of events and reaction to circumstances offers a unique perspective from which to view educational change. The views that they espouse are neither right nor wrong, but they are important to gaining insights into practice as well as providing a rich source of information.

Validity and Reliability

Issues of validity and reliability on qualitative research are problematic but LeCompte and Goetz (1982) address this concern in the following way:

> Attaining absolute validity and reliability is an impossible goal for any research model. Nevertheless, investigators may approach these objectives by conscientious balancing of the various factors enhancing credibility within the context of their particular research problems and goals. (p. 55)

As much as possible I relied upon Sanjek's (1990) canons of ethnographic research: applying theoretical candor to this work, showing the ethnographers' [researchers'] path of research and supporting the study with field note evidence (in the form of taped interviews). James Clifford (1988) addresses the problem of authority in ethnography in a similar way. The strength of descriptive research lies in its verisimilitude. The validity of this study will depend both on the methodology and on the degree to which the above criteria are met.

Position of the Researcher

This research may be categorized in some respects as a confessional tale (Van Mannen, 1988). He identifies inseparability of researcher and the researched, with the researcher being an integral part of the study.

> This process begins with the explicit examination of one's own preconceptions, biases, and motives, moving forward in a dialectic fashion toward understanding by way of a continuous dialogue between the interpreter and the interpreted. (p. 93)

As a teacher at NVSS, my experiences are an important source of material for this study. To increase the clarity and completeness of my responses, I have been keeping notes since September 1995 that identify and elaborate on issues and topics that relate to this thesis. Already, these musings have mediated some of my ideas about how restructuring impacts on teachers and students. The separation of the author from the study is impossible but to identify bias and point of view enables the reader to establish a position about the author. I identify elsewhere in this thesis that I have been interested in the notions of restructuring and reforming schools, and as a teacher who has been attempting to make sense of the numerous and significant changes to conventional practice that exist at NVSS, I tend to be sensitive to inconsistencies in the instructional model that are likely by-products of implementation. Therefore it was sometimes difficult to maintain an open critical stance when listening to the interviews over and over when I heard a comment that contradicted

the way I understood things to be. I recount an example of misinterpreting one teacher's comments later in the analysis. I hope that it was the only time that it happened but I think not. The believability and importance of this work lies partly in my honest attempt to "get it right" and to represent fairly and accurately the responses by the participants.

The Role of Theory

The literature on implementation, restructuring, progressive schooling and empowerment serve to mediate the responses from the interviews. The purpose of the literature is to situate the study in a frame of reference (or frames of reference) without theoretical imposition on the responses of the subjects. Their responses must be allowed to stand on their own. The interviews and my reflections serve to inform the theory about the reality of change as much as the theory will be used to explain practice. The dialectic between theory and practice contrasts with the multiple realities of the respondents. Between the two may be emerging themes about how teachers and students interact with reform efforts that have not heretofore been described adequately. The literature review identifies some important authors in several fields of inquiry that are relevant to this study. As themes emerge from the analysis of the responses, new theory is used to mediate the findings. As theory describes reality, so do the responses of the informants in this study inform the theory.

Sources of Information

The information upon which this report is based comes from four sources: teachers, students, my observations, and the literature. Each of these provides a rich and authoritative position and each provides a different perspective from which to view educational reform.

This thesis is about six teachers, six students, myself and our experiences with change at New Venture Secondary School. I have used purposeful sampling to identify

prospective informants and have chosen teachers who work in several distinct instructional areas in the school. Although this group cannot be completely representative of the whole staff, I have made several attempts to gather together a heterogeneous collection of subjects. They have diverse backgrounds and teaching specialties. I have also chosen teachers from different areas of the school but with no pretense of representing all instructional areas. There is also a mix of gender. The following describes the selection criteria.

The main instructional area at New Venture Secondary is a large open work area with several adjacent, glass-walled classrooms. Most math and humanities teachers work in or near this area daily. Two teachers who work there have been selected. I have also chosen one teacher from special education services. Approximately one quarter of the staff at the school work either fully or partially in this capacity. The third area that could be considered distinct is the technology, arts and physical education wing. Although these instructional areas are physically close together their programs are distinct. Nevertheless, I have chosen one person from this area. Finally, one person was selected from the business education, foods and sewing area. A list of informants includes Jana, Mark, Carl, Sid, Joyce and Jack (all pseudonyms). Other important selection criteria were: that informants had been working continuously with the school since it had opened; that they showed interest and willingness to participate in this study and to work with me in developing an account of their experiences with change at NVSS; and that the respondents had a range of different personalities and backgrounds. Two of the participants are women and four are men.

During my five years of teaching at NVSS I have come to know my colleagues quite well. Although there is no way of knowing for sure how these teachers actually felt about participating in this study, they seemed to be willing and interested participants. When I formally asked each potential candidate, I explained that it would be under the following conditions. First, confidentiality would be protected in several ways. They

would be referred to by a pseudonym in this thesis and they would not be associated with specific departments. Second, informants were made aware of the ethical guidelines for research. They were offered a chance to remove themselves from the study at any time with the guarantee of returned tapes and transcriptions if they requested it. Third, at the end of each interview I asked them if they considered any of their statements to be controversial and if they wished that I not include any part of the interviews. They were all very open and accepting of the fact that I would do my best to represent their comments accurately, sensitively and fairly while paying attention to their expectation that I would take reasonable attempts not to reveal their identity.

I also interviewed six students. They were selected according to the following criteria. First, they had to have been students at NVSS since it opened. Second, they had to be interested in participating in the study and have parent permission to do so. Third, I picked three boys and three girls. Fourth, selected students had to be open and articulate. Finally, I selected students who had had varying success with the instructional program at NVSS. A list of students' names include Margaret, Pat, Scott, June, David, and John (all pseudonyms). After interviewing, transcribing and analyzing the data, I discovered that one of the students had only been at NVSS for four years. Her responses are still included in the data and analysis.

Data Collection

Of the options available for information gathering, I decided on a semi-structured format (Bernard, 1994) that served to focus the interview while allowing the respondents some leeway in answering the questions. It was efficient, direct, and personal. Previous experience with interviewing and data management suggested if the interviews were to be about one hour in length, the maximum number that I could reasonably manage would be twelve. The questions were developed in such a way as to promote extended discussion about a few topics. I remind the reader that these questions relate to four themes identified

in the literature review: teacher roles, student roles, curriculum, and empowerment. Included was a question on personal background at the suggestion of my advisor. The topics were the same for teachers and students with some attention paid to making wording appropriate for each group. A complete copy of each questionnaire is located in Appendix I (teachers' questionnaire) and Appendix II (students' questionnaire).

To practice my technique and to refine the questions, I piloted two test interviews. After the first one, I decided to pay attention to removing unnecessary jargon.Terms like constructivism were unnecessarily pedantic and removing them served to place me on a more equal footing with subsequent participants. Although I used the word constructivism in the teacher interviews, specific reference to it was removed in the main questions. I made reference to it only after the participants had become comfortable during the interview. The second pilot taught me to pay attention to the details of location, time and pacing of the interview.

After selecting the twelve participants, I provided them each with a copy of the questions that would be used to guide the interview. We agreed upon a date, time and place before each session and in the mean time (usually a few days) they gave some consideration as to how they would respond to the questions. The twelve interviews were conducted in May and June (1997). Each teacher interview was conducted in a mutually agreeable location. These ranged from teacher preparation rooms to a local deli. Some of the interviews were done in two parts. The approach to gathering information from six students was similar but with two important differences. First, parental permission was obtained and, second, the interviews were done in a more public place to avoid placing the student and myself in a compromising position. I decided to use the glass-walled conference rooms adjacent to the teacher preparation area. This offered a public view of the proceedings while providing some sound privacy. It proved to be a satisfactory arrangement.

The resulting interviews averaged over one hour in length with the longest being over one hour and twenty minutes and the shortest being just over forty minutes. The interviews were transcribed verbatim providing over one hundred pages of single-spaced text to code and analyze.

Managing and Analyzing Data

Although I had given some consideration to data management, coding and identifying thematic categories prior to interviewing, it proved to be more difficult than I had expected. The volume of information contained on the tapes and in the transcriptions was overwhelming at first. I considered using a data management program but informed colleagues recommended against it. They considered the learning curve to be too long to make them useful time savers when coding smaller amounts of data. On that basis I decided to use a good word processing program and to manually code the data. Transcriptions were filed under participants' names and pseudonyms. There were two groups of files; one for teacher responses and one for student responses. Each of the six responses (teachers and students were done separately at first) under each category of questions was analyzed and coded for sub-themes until the important ideas within a file were coded. Given that the coding process begins with the structure of the interview, Strauss (1987) defines five purposes of coding:

> . . . (1) follows upon and leads to generative questions; (2) fractures the data, thus freeing the researcher from description and forcing interpretation to higher levels of abstraction; (3) is the pivotal operation for moving toward the discovery of a core category or categories and so (4) moves toward ultimate integration of the entire analysis; as well as (5) yields the desired conceptual density for relationship among the codes and the development of each . . . (pp. 55–56)

There are a variety of analytic procedures that depend somewhat on the type of writing that will be used in the final report. I used the model of theory informing practice and practice to informing theory. By its design, emergent research does not necessarily pre-determine the meaningful themes that may be embedded in the information. Themes are the

basis for new theory about the processes that this research is attempting to inform. Marshall and Rossman (1988) suggest that there are five modes of analysis: "organizing the data; generating categories, themes and patterns; testing the emergent hypothesis against the data; searching for alternative explanations of the data; and writing the report" (p. 113). They characterize analysis as a process of "data reduction." Richards and Richards (1994) offer a more specific approach.

> Verification is both for existing theory as well as for supporting emergent themes.
>
> Working "up" from data is often presented as what qualitative research is especially about. It is done in many ways: building new understandings from "thick descriptions"; reflecting on and exploring data records; discovering patterns and constructing and exploring impressions, summaries, pen portraits. All such efforts have theoretical results. They produce new ideas and new concepts which are sometimes linked and presented more formally as new theories. Most approaches to qualitative research also work "down" from theory. They incorporate, explore and build on prior theoretical input, on hunches or ideas or sometimes formal hypotheses. Many also stress the testing of theory derived from the projects data. (p. 445)

Data management, and particularly analysis, were ongoing throughout the writing of the thesis. Initially, I used several reduction stages to identify important ideas. After listening to the tapes and reading the transcriptions simultaneously, I made notes of every point that was made by the subject. These were coded by a key word or phrase. For example, one subject spoke of the difficulty of teaching at her last school near the end of the year when she was anticipating coming to NVSS. I recorded this as "anticipating coming to NVSS." Each interview was reduced to between sixty and ninety-five ten word entries that were recorded on the right hand page of a notebook. Every few entries, I would enter the tape footage beside the entry and on the actual transcription. The third data reduction stage consisted of looking at these entries and synthesizing them under a more general entry. These were recorded in red ink on the left side of the notebook, with the data now reduced to approximately twenty five entries for each participant. After this stage these data were synthesized again and now included approximately ten to fifteen entries for each

interview. Next, I created a new word processing file that listed the synthesized terms that were features of each interview.

When I had reached this stage of the analysis where about one hundred phrases captured the essence of all twelve responses, I mistakenly assumed that several themes would "magically" emerge from the data. I had followed a procedure that had taken me to a highly reduced form of the data that I felt still represented what the teachers and students were saying. However, I was at a loss for moving to the next stage procedurally. I left the data for several days and thought about the interviews, listened to a few tapes and read some transcriptions. This was a time of reflection with the intention to let my work settle and hoped that unconscious processing might lead to some answers. After several days and exploring dozens of alternatives, I settled on the five themes for teachers and four themes for students. Four of the themes are held in common by teachers and students leaving one theme that was unique to the teacher group. Analysis of data revealed there was a high degree of similarity between the themes present in the teacher and student interviews. However, the teacher interviews were much more varied in terms of the range of experience and content. There was a unique quality to each of the six teacher interviews that was not present to the same degree in the student responses. For this reason I have chosen to include teacher responses, each under separate sections (one for each teacher). Following these sections is a summary of each of the four common emergent themes, as well as the one that was unique to the teacher data. Each theme is presented under a separate heading.

For the purpose of this thesis, the student responses do not warrant individual treatment due to the similarity of experience of five of the six students. Therefore their responses will be summarized within context of the four common thematic categories. Following this section one student interview will be treated separately from the other five because the contents of his responses are central to supporting the themes in this thesis and his perspective is so different from those of the other five students.

Throughout the analysis I have imported segments of the interviews that illustrate important ideas into the text of the thesis. These utterances are all taken directly from the transcriptions. Two of the complete transcriptions are included in Appendix lll (teacher interview) and lV (student interview).

Chapter 4
Findings and Analysis

These data are represented and analysed under three major headings. First, the teacher interviews are summarized under the heading "Teacher Responses" with one subheading for each of the six teacher participants. Second, analysis of these interviews revealed five patterns that are summarized under the heading "Teacher." The third section is a summary of the student themes under the heading of "Student" including "John's Story" which illustrates important aspects of the student and teacher themes that is central to the discourse in this thesis.

Teacher Responses

To avoid compromising the anonymity of the participants, I have included very little autobiographical information to introduce their responses. I recognize some of the limitations of this decision. It denies the reader clues about the character of the subjects from which they can assemble a personality to identify with; details like this can add to the verisimilitude of the analysis. In this case however, the information must stand on its own. Because of the public nature of the NVSS it would take very little information about the personality and specialty of the teachers to enable some readers to identify them. Although, in my opinion, none of the participants made any unethical or compromising comments during the interviews, they have a right to privacy. Thus in each of the following cases, the representation of the conversation will be prefaced by a brief introduction that places the interview into an appropriate context and gives the reader some pertinent but not revealing personal information about the participating teachers.

Carl

Carl and I have spent many hours over the past five years discussing and trying to come to terms with the myriad of innovations that we are implementing. The sheer number of teaching technologies and programs (see the introduction) that we have had to adapt to was the source of many conversations about the relative merits of old versus new and the different interpretations of them that were held by the various departments and individual staff members. We would talk at lunch, during prep periods or during a run, and the conversations were often without closure. We both walked away from these conversations feeling wiser but humbled by the sheer scope and enormity of the task of implementing a coherent program that paid attention to each of the original innovation ideals. We tried to make sense of what it really meant to challenge the status quo. It was partially as a result of these conversations and my need to make sense of the complexity of what we were doing as a school, that I considered entering graduate school.

After enrolling in the masters program at Simon Fraser University, our conversations centred around more philosophical issues like managing dilemmas inherent in any change effort, and the impact of change on the participants. I voiced my concern about the apparent lack of literature written on the subject of reform from the perspective of teachers and students. After expressing an interest in representing some teacher and student experiences with changes that we were implementing at NVSS, he enthusiastically volunteered his services.

We arranged to conduct the interview in a vacant classroom during lunch and when the day came, I had the recording equipment sitting in the middle of a table, with a chair on each side. The space seeming much too large for comfortable conversation; nevertheless, we managed to carry on a relaxed interview. We had not finished when the bell-tone prompted us to return to our teaching duties after deciding to meet next time in a more friendly environment—a local deli where we completed the one hour and fifteen minute conversation.

Neither situation appeared to bother Carl who was quite comfortable talking about issues that we had addressed many times before in casual conversations. The interview began and Carl took charge. It was an opportunity to explain and interpret what he had been a part of for the past five years. The frustrations, the triumphs and the contributions that he had been a part of all came out in spite of my best efforts to keep to the agenda. I capitulated because I was fascinated by what he had to say. In a sense, I was the audience, and was enthralled as I listened to a masterful communicator.

Of the many important sub-themes that Carl identified in the conversation, he seemed to be most concerned with what it meant to be professional and how one came to terms with professional autonomy in a highly collaborative teaching environment like NVSS. As a consequence of assuming more generic roles in large instructional areas, as he monitors many subjects at once, he frequently works with other teachers' students, often assessing their work. As Carl explains, not all teachers are comfortable with this.

> Carl: . . . our problem is not so much developing a system where we'd all agree on what we'll do. We have to understand what that agreement means. And we have to agree to let each other be professional and to work with our students and to work with each others' students in a fair way so that if I say this student knows enough in these two guides and doesn't have to do them, nobody is jumping on me and saying otherwise. They are agreeing, that for those kids, that's right, he's right. And yes, we have a lot of teachers who are going to struggle with that and I think that our whole profession struggles with what it means to be professional. I think we're very insecure with our professionalism.

Carl believes that teachers as professionals should be able to make judgments about students based non-traditional criteria like readiness, understanding, maturity, and previous experience. These decisions must in be made in the context of more flexible interpretations of what curriculum is. For example, Carl's decision to permit a student to move to the next level without "hoop jumping" as he calls it, is associated with increased levels of decision making that he considers to be related to professionalism. But, as he explains, one aspect of autonomy is challenged when more than one teacher is responsible for a student's assessment. There is sometimes a lack of shared understanding among teachers about how

to deal with judgments about subjective aspects of student progress. As Carl observes, teachers are not experienced in working more closely with each other as they wrestle with issues like this. It takes time to develop an understanding and appreciation of a colleague's practice. But even more than that, there should first be an overriding acceptance of it, unless, of course, there are legal issues involved.

A second message that was central to the interview was that the individual student at NVSS is the focus of teacher attention and that curriculum and assessment must be tailored to the needs of that student. He relates this to his first point about professional autonomy that some teachers may be in a unique position, either because of knowing a student particularly well, or for some other reason, to provide some level of instruction or assessment (or both) that is more appropriate for the individual. Again he reminds me of the potential for conflict among teachers who work with that same student. Furthermore, he explains that centering on the student as an individual makes the issue of assessment much more complex within the existing paradigm of norm-based evaluation that teachers are most familiar with. There are no simple answers when dealing with the implied personalized notions of curriculum that are the hallmark of the NVSS program. He challenges traditional assumptions about education—that there is an absolute standard to be achieved by the student; "ultimately education is about the individual; you don't educate a class, you educate the student."

Accompanying the shift in focus away from the group toward the individual student is a corresponding shift in responsibility for learning away from the teacher. Teachers are no longer the boss. Rules become guidelines as students are given more responsibility for setting their agenda and even in determining how they might fulfill curricular expectations. As he explains, the de facto optional nature of student attendance at NVSS has forced teachers to find ways to draw students into the instructional areas. If teachers are confrontational and controlling, students withdraw and avoid involvement with them. Teachers either have to devise systems of forced contact through creating structures like

seminars or attendance checks, or show themselves to be more friendly, interested, personable or pleasant in order to keep the student interested. But working with students, who can make the choice about whether or not to involve their teachers in the learning process, is more complex than just being friendly. It is about involvement. Carl often becomes a part of the learning situation. Although he is still the teacher and has curricular knowledge that the students do not have, he describes this type of interaction as becoming a fellow learner. The modeling that results is important as students move from being dependent to becoming independent learners. The dilemma that Carl points out is that there may be a trade off in benefit as we shift the focus from the class to the individual. The more frequent opportunity to model certain behaviours, that would be available in a classroom, is lost here because of the reliance on one-on-one student teacher interactions. For example in dealing with special needs students or controversial issues like aids and poverty, the classroom may offer some opportunities for discussion that individual interactions may not.

Carl is also concerned that in our excitement and single-mindedness to focus on self-pacing, and individualized instruction we face the dilemma of replacing one restrictive structure with another.

> Carl: . . . We don't want to replace one structure with another and we may have done that . . . we may be doing that more than we'd like . . . And we're hardly at the panacea of education. We're doing an experiment here.

Carl explained more about his view of structures and that the environment at NVSS encourages different technologies of practice that may be considered innovative and different, but not necessarily better.

Looking forward, he identifies two issues, the resolution of which will be critical to the continued growth and improvement of the school. The first requires maximizing the benefits of teacher collaboration as well as further understanding what it means to be professionals working together. He considers teacher collaboration to be an important process that is closely linked to the continued improvement of the instructional model at NVSS and ultimately to the success of the school. But it is not something that can be

orchestrated in a formal sense. He pictures teachers forming liaisons and partnerships to work on projects related to aspects of the instructional program that are of interest to them. They will likely consider some of these projects to be professional development opportunities. An example of this might be two teachers giving workshops on the benefits of a certain aspect of the NVSS program that they are developing. These associations are unpredictable because relationships are dynamic. But Carl is optimistic about the resourcefulness of teachers and the productive liaisons that can result when teachers have a choice about with whom they work. The tension between collaboration and autonomy will never be fully resolved but the physical and program structures of the school do not discourage it from happening.

The second part of the program that he feels is in need of attention is the continued development of the central theme of the school; what it means to be a self-paced, independent and lifelong learner. Carl feels that the implied responsibility shift for learning (to the student) is not clearly understood by all of the staff. The continuum of degrees of responsibility that students are ready to accept can be a source of conflict among teachers. How much responsibility should be shifted to the student? When and how do we take back control if the student is being irresponsible? What kinds of structures are required to develop the outcomes that the staff consider to be important? These are the questions that need to be more clearly understood by the whole staff and Carl acknowledges that there are no simple answers. Because the norms of practice appear to be different than those that exist elsewhere in what he calls conventional schools, our support structures that the staff will develop will likely be different as well. There is no blueprint or manual that can guide staff in these matters.

Carl concludes the interview by reaffirming the potential power of teachers over the lives of students but acknowledges that this power can be abused or used to good advantage. "The school has given us an opportunity to reassess the role of the teacher and the type of student that we would like to graduate." The dilemmas that are associated with

this increased responsibility of the teacher to redefine the instructional program is both exciting and daunting. Furthermore the responsibility shift for learning to the student is hard to monitor but sits well with many staff members. Although "the experiment" is in progress, he feels that as long as the teachers can resist significant pressure from their peers in other schools to return to a more conventional practice, and can continue to collaborate in meaningful ways, the model can continue to improve and develop.

Joyce

Joyce was the next person on my list of subjects and when I approached her about becoming involved with the project, she seemed interested. The difficulty was finding the time for the interview in her busy schedule. We decided to use the one preparation period that we shared in common, and agreed upon the staffroom as a satisfactory location. The interview could not be completed during the hour and we agreed to meet, in the same place, the following week. Meanwhile, I had transcribed the first part of the interview and explained to Joyce that there was some exciting exchanges that contrasted how she had managed and taught in her previous assignments with what she did at NVSS. We both enjoyed the chance to talk about the program and how it had made an impact on many different aspects of our teaching.

Several times during the interview Joyce referred to the interview process as being cathartic, interesting, and fun. Because Joyce works by herself in a classroom-sized instructional area she retains much of the autonomy that is associated with conventional teaching. She missed the opportunity to discuss these matters more often. Nevertheless Joyce was experimenting in ways that were consistent with what she feels is part of the agenda of the school. An example of this is shifting some of the control over curriculum to the students. She calls what she did before as "having my own agenda" or "control-based" and has, year by year, been giving her senior students more responsibility to decide on

how they might fulfill certain curricular expectations. The following excerpt captures essence of some of her ideas on the subject.

Norm: You sound like you are pretty comfortable with having given away this power that you used to have. How long did it take you to do that?

Joyce: . . . we've been here five years now and still sometimes I feel that it would be easier, maybe it's on the tired days, or the down days, if I could only just tell them what to do and they would all listen. How easy it would be. But it is almost like being a parent. It is the same sort of relationship. You wish it but you think about it and you don't really want it. So how long? It's taken five years.

Norm: And it's in progress.

Joyce: And it's in progress, yes. The first three years were, I think, the hardest. This year hasn't been nearly as bad, I'm pretty comfortable with it this year. I must be because I'm trying to give more away now. So I must be OK with it.

There is a strong district culture among teachers of this elective area to do things in similar ways. Moving into more of what she calls "a facilitator role" took her several years to feel comfortable making the change and even now Joyce says that the process is ongoing. Flexible scheduling has allowed her to be less controlling and to be less concerned with efficiency issues that she associates with the traditional "stand and deliver" model of instruction. The students can take as long as they require to complete a task. As a consequence, the structure is now more conducive to doing project work and there isn't the same need for formal instruction. If a student requires some information, they ask her for it. Joyce observes that students are now more involved in work that they have helped to define and those who know what they want have become excellent negotiators. The increased small group and one-on-one contact that is typical of Joyce's interactions with students (outside of the grade eight timetable) she considers to be a positive aspect of the school but it is not without problems. Joyce sometimes misses the teaching of the group. The drawing together of ideas and telling how things work. In other words conventional teaching. Her training and experience prepared her for the old kind of curriculum delivery in which she felt that she was more in control and could draw upon her knowledge and experience to deliver organized and interesting lessons. It was efficient and ordered. The

students were under control and Joyce found it easier in some ways. "But then again," she recollects, "there were discipline issues then that we do not have to face with our students here." The difficult ones do not come now and we are left with a more easily managed group."

The exception is in the grade eight classes where Joyce is now gradually encouraging them to assume more responsibility for defining their activities, although the shift is not as dramatic as it is with her senior students. They are more like children to her and she does more of "the traditional thing" with them. Nevertheless, Joyce considers it "just a matter of time" before the school moves to include the grade eight students in the open structure that the rest of the students' experience.

Joyce returned to the notion of traditional teaching later in the interview and explained that she once thought that everything had to be well thought out and organized before giving the lesson. In the past, spontaneity was considered a to be a weakness. Now, she cannot keep track of all of the ideas that she has during the day. There is just too much to write down when you are working with a student. The ideas come and they could never be contained in the curriculum packages. She feels that there is still a limitation to the curriculum framework that we are using—that there is still a requirement for her to interpret and personalize it with the student and that the learning guides could never replace her. But Joyce is becoming less enthusiastic about curriculum writing. She finds it limiting and repetitive. The learning guides have been rewritten and rewritten "I am tired of it " she says. Originally it was thought that learning guides would be revised once or twice before serving their intended purpose. The conception of the guide now is more fluid and ever-changing. Thus the rewriting process is continuous and involves more work than she thought it would.

Curiously, with all of the changes that Joyce is employing in her program, along with the shifting of responsibility an a notion of curriculum tailored to the interests of students, she does not feel more professional.

Joyce: Do I feel more professional . . . no . . . I feel more like a mother . . . I am a mother, but I do a lot of mothering here whatever age group it is. Helping them find the resources, rereading paragraphs and giving feedback, is that a facilitator or is it a mother.

Norm: Back to the changing roles of a teacher.

Joyce: And what it means to be professional. I guess I am thinking of a professional as a doctor or a lawyer and being able to prescribe something where you make an assessment and a judgment and . . . but I am not doing that . . . I am making the assessment but I am not prescribing because I am letting them prescribe. I am just pointing out the problem so I have to hold back. I see a professional as having a lot of professional knowledge and expertise as being showered on all of the little disciples but I don't do that here.

Norm: Did you feel more professional before because certainly you were "showering" . . .

Joyce: These are interesting questions because I feel that I have more power to do things here but I don't feel more professional . . .

Issues of pay, respect (from the outside community) and less responsibility for menial tasks, like taking care of text books, were associated with professionalism. Surprising to me was that with a feeling of more control over her program, she did not feel more professional. She explained that there was no contradiction here. She suggests, it is ultimately the student that has the power to "decide," not her. Her comments suggest that professionals "decide." Joyce explains that she felt more like a mother than a real professional but that did not mean that she might not have been making more professional judgments.

During the interview, Joyce exuded a strong ethic of caring and she felt that what we were doing in the school prepared the students well for the real world. The responsibility shift to students for planning and being involved in curriculum and learning was a good thing. It "felt right." She feels that she has grown with the school and is more comfortable now with the program, even stating that it would be difficult to go back to a traditional way of doing things.

Later in the interview there was an underlying frustration that came through. Joyce identified some problems with working in her small department. She felt isolated and

wished to be more a part of a larger group. Although NVSS is noted for high degrees of collaboration and collegiality, there are some course areas that only have one or two teachers. As well, the wood, metal and technology labs are at opposite ends of the school from the foods, sewing and business labs. Joyce felt that the physical layout of the campus was limiting and led to some departments', hers in particular, physical isolation.

Joyce: . . . one of the things that I don't really like about my department is that it is so small. I would like to have more minds to bounce ideas off of. Talking about things before actually implementing them is a useful thing to do. Share it with as many people as you can.

Norm: There are several pockets of isolated people in the school aren't there?

Joyce: Yes. I didn't visualize that we would be like that in the beginning.

In spite of this limitation, Joyce feels connected to the larger school community and that she has a role to play in refining and improving the overall instructional program. Curiously, Joyce was concerned about not being one of the original participants in the program and not having written any learning guides before coming to the school. She is over that now and feels comfortable with the philosophy of the school and is in agreement with the program, claiming that "it just feels right." The feeling that she is referring to is giving students more responsibility and moving away from a position of controlling authority. Joyce also comments on the more significant relationships that she has formed with students but feels that there can also be a down side to this. They can be draining when you become more involved with some of their problems.

In general, Joyce is happy with her decision to come to NVSS and explains that it would be difficult to return to a conventional classroom even though some of the changes have been stressful and have taken longer than she expected. She cites several reasons for not wanting to go back. The students here have greater confidence and can negotiate learning contracts with their teachers. This coupled with the more equal relationships and the feeling of being a part of a team are all reasons why she continues to stay.

Sid

A week before we actually taped the interview, Sid and I sat in his work area and spent an hour reviewing an issue that we had debated over the years. We both agreed on the problem but we could not agree on the solution. As we pondered our conundrum, we left our discussion hanging, to be returned to the following week in the same place when we started the "real interview." Sid told me beforehand that he had an agenda for the interview, supposing it to be a forum for defining his position. The interview progressed through the questions for about thirty minutes until Sid "ran away" with the agenda. I felt that there was enough substantive material in the interview up to that point to cover the questions so I let him go. As with the previous interviews, the experience was enjoyable for both of us and when our time ran out I looked forward to our next meeting. Unfortunately, the year was at a close before I could return to some of the detailed questions regarding empowerment and curriculum. I rationalized there was enough substance in the interview to warrant calling it complete.

The first set of questions on emerging teacher roles at NVSS was designed to prompt any feelings of displacement of confusion during the early days of the program. I was curious to see how teachers had adapted to the changes, and anticipated finding related themes or issues among the other interviews. In the first two, Sid and Joyce had raised some interesting points about adjustments that they had felt necessary to make, but to my surprise, Sid claimed to have experienced little practice change after working with the self-pacing and curriculum innovations that had been implemented.

Sid explained that he was already familiar with some of the non-traditional technologies of teaching that were considered to be innovative. Several years before the school opened he had participated in a program that featured modular instruction for "mastery learning," as well as individualized and small-group instruction. In fact his belief in this system of instruction was what initially drew him to NVSS. But the struggle Sid had with the program was the lack of student accountability that were initial and continuing

byproducts of the model. Early deliberations about the school program featured a debate about the readiness of grade nine and ten students for an unstructured timetable (it had always been the case that the grade eight students would work within a conventional timetable.) The "yes forces" won (a year before the school opened) and the decision was made to include grade nine and ten students in the more open model.

> Sid: . . . in our initial meeting I felt that there was some disappointment over how the school was beginning to take shape. The first meetings we had about planning the school revolved around having the grade 11 and 12's as primarily self-paced or competency based and grades eight to ten being more instructional—in that teachers would play a more traditional role. After some meetings and some discussions it was decided to allow the grade 9 and 10's to carry on in that model as well which I wasn't in favor of. But nonetheless I thought that if we were going to be innovative we might as well jump into the raging river.

Sid is still concerned that many of these students do not have the support that they need to become successful students within this system and advocates a more structured program for them. Over the years the staff has experimented with several strategies to deal with this issue but some of them have since been discontinued. He claims that the resulting structures like learning support and planning strategies are insufficient and struggles with the dilemma of who should be responsible for student progress through school, teachers or the students. He feels that if the students are failing because they cannot accept the challenges associated with accepting more responsibility, then more systems should be implemented to take care of the problem. I draw the readers attention to my opening comments about Sid and I agreeing on the problem but not on the solution with respect to this issue. He continues.

> Sid: . . . there's still a large percentage of our population out there that are struggling academically although they like coming here because they find that people care for them in this environment. Academically they are being short-changed in terms of what they need in order to address the needs of the curriculum as defined by the Ministry of Education. They are not getting through their course work to the extent that I think is reasonable and I think there is a problem that needs to be addressed at this school. That problem I think fundamentally lies at the grade nine and ten level. I think that until we address that problem we will not become a model school. We will continue to be an innovative struggling school where many students are finding success, certainly not all, and

> our goal, for all students to seek challenge and experience success, is not being lived out here.

After talking about the positive features of the instructional program he would return to this issue several more times before the end but in different ways.

> Sid: In our enthusiasm to keep up with the original plan of the school that we become a self-paced environment, allowed us to put aside some of the shortcomings that the school has come up against. And until we start addressing those problems we will not have the school that I think it could become.

Sid referred to the process of students facing the challenge of trying to mediate their own progress and making decisions about things that had been previously out of their control (like working at their own pace), as "trial by fire." The students who adjusted and took control of their learning and who had learned to assume responsibility were fine examples of what an innovative school could bring out in students. But his concern was for the students who found the "flames to be too hot" and who suffered the consequences. Either they progressed slowly through their course work or they left the school. Sid claims that some parents in the catchment area are concerned about the amount of freedom that the students in grades nine to twelve have, and choose to send their students to other high schools. The inefficiencies of the system, as Sid refers to it, is the reason that these students are not being successful. If a structure is put into place that will force accountability in these students then it will be an improvement.

In spite of the perceived problems with certain aspects of the instructional program, Sid is impressed by the high quality of the graduates. Part of this he attributes to students having had the chance to develop wholesome relationships with teachers. He finds working one-on-one with students, and jointly engaging in problem solving, a high point of his job. Unfortunately, the curriculum packages are not seamless and require teachers to interpret and to adapt it to the interests of the students. But, then again he muses, this may not necessarily be a problem because it involves the teachers more in the learning process. He explains that school is a place where we highly value the skills of communication and

problem solving. These are generally fostered within the framework of our curriculum along with a teacher who can mediate the content.

Sid also commented on the lack of discipline issues within instructional areas. Because students set their agenda, those who are in instructional areas are there because they have made the choice to be there. Those who are uninterested, or who have a disposition to act out in classes, often choose to go elsewhere. Our failure to deal effectively with these students worries Sid. But there is a positive consequence in that teachers do not have to manage discipline issues to the extent that they had to in conventional schools which results in more time for effective interactions with students.

In general, Sid credits the self-paced mastery learning model that shifts responsibility for learning to the student to be an excellent way for some students to make the transition from immaturity to being self-directed independent learners that are good negotiators, effective communicators who are well prepared to meet the challenges of the workplace and higher education. But Sid is concerned that there are too many students who cannot cope with this responsibility shift and there need to be more structures in place to help them to make the transition.

It was obvious during the interview, and in my many interactions with Sid over the five years that I have known him, that he is thinking of the best interests of the students and cares deeply for the innovative environment that NVSS represents to him. There are, he suggests, a few obstacles to overcome before the school can move from being a good school to being a very good school.

Jack

When I approached Jack about the possibility of interviewing him, he enthusiastically agreed. I looked forward to the event and we chose his classroom as the setting. I recall thinking that I knew him well before the interview, but some important details of what he said, I misinterpreted at the time, and it wasn't until weeks later that I

resolved what Jack meant about shifting responsibility. I had assumed that since this was an emerging theme in the data, his comments verified that things were falling into place nicely. Meanwhile I found some ambiguity of meaning in his responses that contradicted my earlier assumption about what he meant. I soon realized that it was too early to form judgments and tried to return to a more open critical stance. The issue was one of my misinterpretation rather than any lack of clarity by Jack. What he meant by shifting responsibility was in terms of management issues. In fact this has been an experience of mine as well that there is not the same pressure to maintain an effective working environment for students because in the open instructional areas and elsewhere in the school it is a shared responsibility. Over the years we have developed a mutual understanding of how to manage certain instructional areas. It is rare to see teachers engage in the same kind of controlling behaviour that is stereotypical of the types of classroom management used by teachers in conventional schools.

During the interview, Jack revealed much about himself. He explained what he was like as a teacher before he came to NVSS, why he came to NVSS, and why he stayed. He returned several times to the theme of responsibility shifts, not just to students, but to the team of teachers with whom he worked. As he explained, when working in conventional schools he had always felt a strong sense of responsibility for the order of the classroom, both in a physical and behavioral sense. There was no one to share this with and if order broke down then he felt that it was his fault. He explains that the situation was always so fragile and sometimes small interruptions or situations spoiled the order. He continued. The sharing of responsibility for managing a learning environment, the increased opportunity for teaching in more satisfying ways, and the implications (for him) in working in more collaborative ways with teachers and some power issues were all important features of NVSS that he felt were an improvement over what he had experienced before. But they required corresponding adjustments in his practice. The following exchanges illustrate some of the personal changes that Jack has undergone over the five years. He admits that

they have not all come easily, and certainly they were born of a high degree of personal reflection and also from working so closely with other teachers.

Jack: I'm not sure that I was going to something as much as I was running away from something. I enjoyed my years teaching in traditional conventional type schools, don't get me wrong. But I just always felt that I was somewhat out of my element. I always felt that I was being very artificial and as soon as they closed that door of the classroom and there you are and you've got 30 kids. I felt a tremendous responsibility to make sure things went OK rather than, or certainly not as much as, that kids really learned.

I think that's what is really refreshing in coming here. I've been able to get away from that a lot and I think my role is certainly not one of imposing order. I don't see that as my job individually. I see that as a collective job and I realize that there's a lot of people that can obtain the necessary degree of order without the same sort of militaristic approach that I used to take in a classroom. And it's not that I abrogate my responsibility. I think I participate as much as anyone around here in jumping in where I see I need to jump in whether its somebody acting inappropriately in the hall or somebody off task in a classroom or whatever it happens to be that is inappropriate. But I don't feel anywhere near the same pressure and I don't feel my time is being monopolized by that; by maintaining a classroom aura of organization and order.

Finally I found that not having to address the issue of classroom management so much, I got to do what I liked doing and again that was espousing information. I enjoy personalizing learning and like talking about the fur trade and using my experiences. But I think what I've learned to love doing as much as giving the information is listening to the kids more and learning from them more and discovering that we've all got something to share. I don't think that I had enough time to spend with kids in the traditional system to accept that and realize that. That's been great. Just sitting down with a kid and listening to what they bring to the learning conversation. I mean I even get a lot of enjoyment out of breaking the ice routine when you are on supervision in the _____. You sit down when you see that someone is off task and you don't jump in there with both boots. You idle in there and chat about hockey and if they are on a school team you ask how the team is doing and just anything to break the ice and then gradually get around to why you are there officially.

. . . when I was in the adversarial position in the traditional classroom I just kind of fell into the idea that there had to be a degree of aloofness, otherwise you would be showing favoritism to some of them. I don't know what it is.

Norm: If you went back would you carry this friendliness back to a classroom.

Jack: Oh yes! If I had to go back to the traditional system, and god help me if I ever had to, I would be much different than I was.

> . . . So much of being in the traditional school was closing the door and closing the world behind you. You were isolated and insulated. That's easy to do emotionally and in terms of your relationships with your colleagues too; it is very easy to do. What are the interactions? Well maybe lining up at the photocopier or the odd interaction in the staff room, and things like that.

Norm: Do you have to be more expert with human relations here?

Jack: Yes. I feel that I abused it when I had that power and I probably do things a little differently in a lot of respects but I still felt that I needed the power to control things in the classroom. I don't think I could have that chaotic looking classroom. Here you don't have that power because you can't do anything without it being visible to your colleagues and you can't do anything that doesn't impact on your colleagues somehow so you are consciously thinking about that all of the time. Gosh if I do this what is John (pseudonym) going to think or what if I do this.

Norm: And yet you said that you feel more comfortable about dealing with kids here.

Jack: I was just going to say if you look at power as not so much a negative thing but a positive thing do I feel a sense of power in counseling and supporting kids . . . do I feel a greater sense of that kind of power . . . sure and I haven't experienced that before. I really feel that I am much more powerful . . . I don't know if that's the right word but I am much more effective at being of assistance to kids here.

> If everyone is doing what we are supposed to be doing there is no need for imposing control. It is self-control and that motivation that we have been talking about . . . other than perhaps in the halls sometimes, when you encounter kids out of the class. In the lab and in the other instructional areas I don't feel the need to be controlling. I don't feel that I need power. I don't feel that I have to be on somebody's back. The number of times that I interject from that point of view is very infrequent.

Even Jack has difficulty articulating the full extent of these practice changes and his developing sense of what it means to be a teacher in the NVSS environment. The instructional program, as it was originally conceived and as it has developed over the five years that the school has been in operation, places pressure on teachers to behave in certain ways. The norms of practice have changed according to Jack. What was once generally considered to be a solo effort, teaching at NVSS is highly collaborative enterprise, with groups of teachers making hour-by-hour decisions about how they are going to deal with situations that they might have been more autonomous to make in a more conventional classroom. Furthermore, the drawing in of students and encouraging self-discipline and

self-motivation places some of the responsibility for effective work environments on the students. There is a culture that has been developed either consciously or unconsciously over the years that the teachers and students seem to understand. In one exchange that illustrates the degree of practice change, Jack joked, "Do we teach here? The kids learn but do we teach?" The implied responsibility shift to the students is a feature of the instructional program. Jack consciously encourages this shift. The students are becoming different as they adjust and in spite of the many adjustments that Jack has made, he concludes that it would be difficult to go back to a traditional school because he is different too.

Mark

I had targeted Mark as a potential participant early on in the formulation of my methodology. He teaches in several disciplinary areas and I consider him to be a "student" of the NVSS system. By that I mean that he seems to be able to separate himself from the rhetoric and deal with the issues in an objective manner. I was curious to know how he would respond to my questions.

There were two unexpected exchanges in the interview with Mark. The first was his refusal to attribute any positive attributes to the structures of the NVSS instructional program over those at conventional schools. Secondly, he gave all of the credit for any positive change associated with NVSS to the individuals in the building. As I was considering the notion that there must be some alternative structure embedded in the NVSS program that had influenced his practice in positive ways, I probed to little avail.

Norm: The missionary zeal that I assumed you would be defending the NVSS program with was conspicuous by its absence.

Mark: (laughs) Sure.

Norm: But you don't want to go back.

Mark: No.

Norm: So what makes NVSS such a great place to be?

Mark: The people, the staff and the kids. I think this is a rather magical staff.

Norm: What if you had this same staff in another building or program?

Mark: Then you'd have the same school.

Norm: Is there a structure at NVSS that enables them to get to know each other better.

Mark: Maybe. I don't think the structure is as important as the people are. I think what makes NVSS special is its staff. Not its timetable nor its fig trees in the great hall.

Norm: So we give some credit to our founding father. Did he work some magic there [in hiring the right mix of staff]?

Mark: No, I think this has been something that people with strong personalities on staff have built.

Norm: What did they build?

Mark: An edifice.

Norm: But it's an edifice you like.

Mark: What it is is a change. It was a change that had no positive or negative spin to it until the people went into it and gave what it was going to have.

And so it continued. Mark explained that the most important aspect of the school was the teachers, and that the program had resulted from them. When I searched for some elements of the program that might be beneficial, thinking that there might be an opportunity to gain insights into a successful restructuring effort, the consequence of which might be the duplication of the program, he explained that would be impossible to do so because it was the staff that was the main determinant of the program.

The second unexpected feature of the dialogue with Mark was his claim that the program had made little or no impact on his teaching. To him, teaching had always been about kids, relationships and "taking a student from one place to another." He had always done it, and this had not changed as a result of coming to NVSS. He summarized what he considered to this important aspect of his teaching—one that had not changed since he had started in the profession.

Mark: It is I think my ability to relax with the student and to try to find out where he or she is and to move them to another place that isn't of my

> choosing necessarily, but a place where the student and I think is worth while.

Whether the exchanges took place one-on-one, with small groups, or in the classroom, the essence of Mark's practice was to pay attention to the individual. The show (as Mark called traditional classroom teaching) was a structure with its limitations within which Mark also felt comfortable. NVSS merely represented a different structure that is accompanied by another set of limitations. Yet, Mark concedes that it may be more conducive to relationship building. The open schedule permits exchanges between teacher and student without the interruption of a conventional timetable. These interactions can now go to their natural conclusion. Further, the TA program, though undeveloped according to Mark, is another structure that helps to develop this relationship. It is a place where students can learn how to talk to people and to negotiate, which is empowering for them.

Mark identified curriculum packages (learning guides) that were supposed to facilitate continuous progress, as being as much an encumbrance as they were a benefit. Many of the potential interactions between teachers and their students have been replaced by a reading and writing exercise. Mark is concerned that if these assignments are not accompanied by a debriefing process that involves a teacher, then the full value of the exercise is unfulfilled. He refers to it as "going no where with the assignment." He repeated the message that structure was limiting.

> Mark: NVSS has, or I thought it would, give me an opportunity to put in to practice some of the ideas that I believe are important in the relationship between teacher and student and what the relationship should be. Some of the expectations I had aren't being met. In the past five years I have found that I have done too much bad marking and not enough good teaching. We have hamstrung ourselves and our goals and outcomes by the nature of our delivery and it is more difficult to use professional integrity, insight and flexibility and the teachable moment. That is harder to do with this model than it was in the classroom where you had control of the show a little better. There are some trade-offs that I am not happy about. My teacher role has not changed because I think teaching is for me second nature and doesn't follow a prescribed set of guidelines. It is more an intuitive activity and it's what I've always done.
>
> The structure of the school, no matter whether it is NVSS or any other public school, acts as more of an imposition. It creates the opportunity

> for teaching and it creates the opportunity for learning and engaging kids but it also builds the structure for imposition and gets in the way of that. It doesn't matter which system it is. The notion that NVSS is somehow innovative is, I think, a little short of the mark. If we were aiming for innovative we would be attacking the political notions about the sanctity of some of the curricular ideals and some of the ideas about housekeeping and housing of people while they are learning important things that frankly NVSS doesn't deal with at all.

The interview with Mark was interesting but frustrating. I found it necessary to move away from the apparent contradiction that Mark liked it here but there was no identifiable structure that was associated with his satisfaction. I considered his ambivalence to be as a result of his interpretation of NVSS as being a school with different but nevertheless equal amounts of structure. It was the concept of structure that seemed to bother him. I found myself trying to imagine how someone could justify being an educator without some acceptance of the requirement for structure. My conclusion as it applied to Mark was that here was a teacher who felt that he either knew enough or was confident enough to do what was required in educating the child without the conventional school or program as it existed at NVSS or in other schools. I considered this line of questioning to be completed and moved on to student roles.

Mark's responses were articulate and measured and the message to me was clear. Mark was talking about maturity, self-awareness and growing up. I was curious to see if there was any connection to the structures or technologies of NVSS that he would associate with students gaining these attributes. Mark mentioned the TA program again.

Norm: Let's try student roles. Let's talk about the ideal student at NVSS.

Mark: There is no such thing as an ideal student. There are a whole bunch of people who want to leave somewhere to go somewhere they would rather be. Teachers are helping them along the way. They are then taking the knowledge about their place in the world and are trying to make intelligent decisions about how to get from where they are to where they want to go. Throw into that the variable that society needs for people to be able to make effective worthwhile change in society and the more the better. And so given that and given the fact that it's the student who wants to move, then the ideal student would be somebody who can try to solve the problems that are stopping them from getting to that new place. Some of those may have to do with knowledge and some may have to do with skills and many of them may have to do with attitude. So the ideal student is somebody who can find out how to

identify who they are and some of the paths they are going to take to get to where they ought to go personally and as a member of a society.

Norm: You are talking about growing up.

Mark: That's right.

Norm: Do we pay attention to that?

Mark: If we don't, we're nuts. We do it in TA. There are high school teachers all over the province doing a much better job of TA than some of our TA's. For me the TA program is the glue that holds NVSS together. Without it we would be no better or different from any other high school. Except for the timetable.

I had recognized early on in the interviews that the TA program at NVSS would be referred to by the participants, however I had placed it beyond the scope of this study for two reasons. First, to engage in an appropriate dialogue about TA programs either at NVSS or elsewhere seemed to be a thesis in itself. Secondly, it was becoming an integral part of conventional school programs and was not necessarily a unique feature of the instructional program at NVSS. I was interested in the aspects of our program that were non-traditional and were associated with the non traditional structures—how our own unique structures were influencing teacher roles and student roles. The decision to exclude the TA program in this discourse in no way diminishes its importance to NVSS.

When the interview was over I had the sense that Mark had enjoyed the "game" as much as I had. Some of his responses had been deliberately controversial. As he pointed out, in spite of criticizing structures, he recognizes that he is a product of "the system" and continues to enjoy teaching within it, whatever structures are associated with a program.

Jana

Jana was the last teacher on my list. As I explained what I was attempting to do, she seemed interested and enthusiastically agreed to participate in an interview.

Jana referred to herself as a veteran teacher who has taught in "conventional schools" all of her career except for the past five years. As she closed out the last year at her previous school and was preparing to come to NVSS, she had become increasingly

concerned about her practice and the conventional wisdom about what teachers were supposed to do. She felt that she was not preparing students for the world outside of school. The systematic routine of school, and the "little boxes," as she referred to the system of organization, were not conducive to the total education of the student. She felt that students were leaving high school prepared only for the world in which they had been a part of for twelve years; that of the classroom. Jana became impatient with the limiting environment in which she had worked for so long and was looking forward to the more progressive system at NVSS. As she reflected on her changing role as a teacher, and the shift of focus from the class of thirty that existed at her old school to the one-on-one and small group interactions that are typical of what she experiences now, it was apparent that she had found a much more satisfactory structure in which to work. Jana found that she was more able to deal with the learning styles of the individual and able to tailor the curriculum somewhat to their requirements. She associated the personalizing of the interaction, and making more decisions about what is best for the individual student, with increased feelings of professionalism. During the interview, she explained that sending the student away feeling good about themselves was of paramount importance, even more important than learning the curriculum. "If students feel good about themselves and the exchange, they will come back and they will enjoy the subject."

Along with more meaningful exchanges with students was the risk of becoming too friendly, or in Jana's words becoming "buddy buddy." There is a fine line that is difficult to maintain. When I asked her about maintaining this balance at NVSS compared to elsewhere, she explained:

> Jana: Uhmm . . . yes it is harder here because over there you didn't have that kind of relationship potential. Over there you were always the teacher and you didn't have to worry about the balance. You were the teacher and they were the students and they knew that they should not cross the line. Here, the fact that you do meet with them you get closer. You almost become a buddy but you can't. So some students don't know when they cross the line. And as a teacher you have to be careful also. You can be a mentor, you can like them, you can joke with them and laugh with them but they have to remember that you are still the teacher.

As Jana attempted to define the role of students at NVSS, she used several terms to describe their acceptance of responsibility that she felt was central to growing up. She used the terms "self-discipline", "self-sufficiency", "hard working", "self-awareness" and "honesty" about personal needs. Jana felt that students often know what they need in terms of teacher intervention. Sometimes all they require is just a quick answer or affirmation that they are on the right track. Other times they wish to be taught. You learn to listen to what they want from you. As the responsibility for learning is shifted to the student, she explains that there are two other important participants—the parents and the teacher advisor. The responsibility for learning is not on one individual. It is a team approach where ultimately the student has to make the decision to work. If they do not accept the responsibility, there can be a period of transition that has the potential to be quite frustrating for all those involved. Jana felt that if the student is at this rebellious stage and all reasonable strategies have been used to "bring them around," it may be necessary to let the them fail for a short period of time; sometimes months. Then if there is no improvement it might be necessary to reconsider the appropriateness of the school for that student. Not all students go through this stage, but it often occurs in the grade nine or ten. As Jana says, "NVSS is not going to hold your hand forever." This is precisely the concern that she had while teaching in conventional schools; that the system holds the hand and "spoon feeds" the students. It doesn't prepare them for the world outside of school and it doesn't prepare them for life by requiring them to accept responsibility.

During one humorous exchange when we were discussing our views of curriculum, Jana explained that she pictured it as a total grade eight to twelve package. She admitted to often rearranging some of the outcomes between grade levels and felt that re-sequencing was important for some students but felt guilty whenever she did it. When I admitted to doing the same thing, we laughed at how unnecessary it was to feel that way. What we were doing was right, in the context of working in the best interest of the student. The holistic view of curriculum helps her to deal with some students who are stuck on a

particular aspect of the prescribed course. She may decide that it is in the student's best interest to revisit the concept later, sometimes a year later. This is only done if the omission does not compromise the ability of the student to succeed in the course and if she knows that missing the concept will not really affect future success in either. The feeling that these are appropriate decisions to make adds to her feeling of professionalism.

Throughout the interview, I had a sense that Jana had a clear and developed idea of what she was trying to do with students and that these ideas were consistent with what she felt that parents wanted for their children.

Jana: Parents are demanding, I think, a wider education for their children without the little boxes. They want them to be successful. They want individual learning styles to be recognized so that all students can be successful, perhaps not in the same way because some will be more successful than others. But given a chance, I believe that every child can be successful and that is what every parent wants for the child. At NVSS I believe that everybody can succeed and I think that we prepare them not only for university but also for the outside world. Its a big world out there and they have to make mistakes. They might as well make them here in the first year or even the second year and then be on there way.

Norm: That is an amazing feature isn't it.

Jana: It's incredible. It's true it certainly is.

There was a warmth and caring about her students that came through the interview. Jana felt that the most important aspect of teaching was working in the best interests of the students. This attitude coupled with her experience and knowledge justifies how she works with students. Feeling that she has permission to make judgments about curriculum, teaching strategies, and how to act in the best interests of her students were important factors in job satisfaction.

At the end of the interview I asked if she felt that any of her responses were compromising.

Norm: I want to ask you a last question about the candid nature of this interview and how honest you feel you have been with me.

Jana: I hope I have been. I have nothing to hide. I believe I have done a good job since I've been here. I don't care what the other people feel about whether I have done a good job. I know that I have done a good job.

With my dealing with my students and the success I've had with them and the success I've had in my course. I have nothing to hide. Whatever I have done I have done for the students, not for me and not for the system. I've done it for them so that they can be successful. If I have done anything wrong that's just too bad because I'll do it again and I don't care who knows it. It doesn't bother me.

Norm: It sounds like you might have been working a bit for the system before you came here.

Jana: Oh certainly! You had to. You had to fit in. Like I said in the last few years I was rebelling against that because I felt that it wasn't working. I knew there was another world over there at NVSS and yet you still had to put in the time. I was not always as free and honest as I am now because I was playing the game but now I don't play the game and I don't care who knows it.

This last comment was typical of the other participants responses to the same question. They had all been honest but careful, even though I knew some of them quite well. All were very professional in the sense that no names of other teachers were mentioned and no compromising information had been revealed. We were educators wrestling with some interesting issues that affected our practice.

Teachers

These are the individual participants. The brief outline of what I consider to be the unique quality of the interviews serves as a prelude to a more comprehensive analysis of the data. There was much more in each of the dialogues—a collective of common beliefs that threaded their way through each of the interviews. Taken together these interviews formed a composite view of what it meant to be a teacher in a school that paid attention to the agendas of students while challenging conventional practice. That is the purpose of this section of the analysis; to describe what they said as a group and characterize it in a way that might form a coherent conception of what teachers have become after five years of working in an innovative school. After implementing and coming to terms with the many aspects of the instructional program at NVSS these teachers have become more than individuals acting out an old script. They are beginning to talk with a common voice that addresses how one must think and act when implementing certain reforms. What follows is

an attempt to represent them as a group that was moving forward within the reform agenda; a group that was and is attempting to come to terms with what it means to be a teacher in reform environments.

Recall again the methodology section that described the analysis process. This reductive process re conceptualized the content in the interviews as fitting into five themes. The next five sections revisit each of the teacher interviews through these five lenses. I remind the reader that I make no claim that to have represented these interviews completely, only that the path that I used was rigorous and thoughtful. Further, my position as an "insider" has given me the unique privilege to share the meaning of much that was said. What follows is a view of the teacher conversations as interpreted by an insider.

In considering how to write this section, I was concerned about the misalignment of emergent themes with the stated purpose of this thesis which was to explore teacher and student roles along with empowerment and curriculum issues as they relate to the reform agenda. There seemed to be a problem in trying to fit the data into predetermined categories. It made sense to simply present them as I found them. So that is what I have done. If these were the themes that emerged, then so be it. What follows is an analysis of the data within the five theme categories that resulted from a synthesis of the six teacher interviews. They are discussed, in no particular order of importance, under separate headings: Shifting Responsibility; Personalizing Learning; Relationships Between Teachers and Students; More Than Just Curriculum; and Learning to Collaborate.

Shifting Responsibility

The instructional program at NVSS places grade eight students on a fixed timetable (similar to a five by eight schedule). In their grade nine to twelve years, the students set their own agenda with the help of a teacher in a TA group at the beginning of each day. Afterwards they are free to move within the building to get on with the day's business with a high degree of independence.

The theme, shifting responsibility, captured what teachers were saying about students and teachers assuming nontraditional responsibilities. It seemed at the time that they were talking about a partial role reversal. Students were expected to take on more of the responsibility for planning, determining where and when they would work on tasks, what level of curriculum mastery they would be happy with, and so on. Teachers played a supportive role. They were guides, mentors and tutors but with a difference. The traditional control over students was absent. Most of the teachers did not even want it any more.

The following expressions were used repeatedly in the interviews: self-control, readiness, making the transition from teaching to learning, encouraging students to negotiate different types of assignment and evaluation criteria, growing up, student planning, and teachers acting as facilitators. The varied terminology that was associated with this theme indicates that although there was a shift in power, control and responsibility to the student from the teacher, these references lack cohesion. Each teacher used different language and the essence of shifting responsibility seemed to mean different things to each of the six teachers. Although this was a recurring theme in each interview, there does not appear to be a clear consistent conception of the kind of roles that are specifically associated with this shift in responsibility. The wide range of behaviours that fit under this category may indicate a developing notion of the specific actions that are required of teachers and students as they engage in this process.

Shifting responsibility away from the teacher did not necessarily mean that students were accepting it. Several responses indicated mixed results about the success of this attempt, claiming that students were having to accept either too much responsibility altogether, or too much for their age. Nevertheless, all six teachers were actively participating in this process and indicated that they were moving away from a controlling approach to one that required students using self-control. Teachers believed that students understood that responsibility for learning and planning was being transferred to them.

Teachers all identify the early recognition, by the student, of this attempt to shift responsibility, was associated with their level of success at the school.

Of significance was the lack of teacher reference to any systematic attempt to teach students what was meant by, and how to accept more, responsibility. The actions of responsibility were associated with students working more independently, behaving appropriately without teacher direction, and generally demonstrating more adult characteristics around the school. It was valued and encouraged by teachers in different ways, but there was no systematic approach identified in the interviews to building it. How students acquired responsibility may be a question that needs to be addressed more systematically if it is to become engendered in all students.

The shift in responsibility was not associated with traditional student and teacher roles. Students were asked to accept responsibility for many routines that were givens in traditional timetables. They decided who they would work with, where they would work, and the rate at which they would proceed through their courses. As well, they were often asked to participate in defining the learning demonstrations and meet curriculum expectations in different and self-determined ways like participating in decisions about how their work would be assessed. Some of these ultimately led to them making, either explicitly or implicitly, important career path decisions. Shifting responsibility was generally considered by these teachers to be a positive aspect of the school program although some of them shared concerns about accountability and the extent to which students were accepting the challenge.

Personalizing Learning

This theme underscores the importance that each teacher held for adjusting the curriculum and teaching styles to best accommodate the needs of the individual student. Teachers emphasized the importance of getting to "where the student was" before moving forward with any new learning. This was best done during, what was often called, a

learning conversation or a one-on-one meeting with the student. Once the teacher had established what the student knew, he/she could guide, mentor, facilitate, explain, or teach the student, in more appropriate ways. In addition to developing a conceptual starting point, teachers also considered it important to adjust teaching style to best fit the learning style of the student. Although all teachers did not make specific reference to learning and teaching style, they all did suggest that knowing the student and finding some means to make the curriculum more relevant to them was important.

Teachers associated personalized learning with making decisions about the specifics of curriculum and evaluation. This seemed to lead to a greater feeling of professionalism in several of the participants. Of primary importance to all teachers was paying attention to the understanding of the students. If they understood the essence of the curricular expectations, teachers would often move them to the next level through some kind of negotiated agreement. One science teacher referred to the understanding of the concept as being the "most important thing." If the student could go directly to the concept without first learning all of the details then he considered that significant learning had taken place, the associated details of which could be worked out later.

This theme is almost synonymous with the term "student centered." Although incomplete in its coverage of what was said by the teachers, the ideas in this theme are consistent with focusing the attention on the student as an individual rather than in a group. The difference here seems to be that the teachers are talking about working in the best interest of the individual and paying attention to learning style, interests, and understanding. They seem to be identifying a very specific way of centering on the student.

Working primarily with individuals implied that the needs of the rest of the group were otherwise being met. Teachers felt that this was at least partly the case. Discipline issues within the instructional areas were considered to be rare. The curriculum packages seemed to be adequate to facilitate independent learning while teachers worked with individuals or small groups, often for considerable lengths of time. Teachers all found

these exchanges to be mutually beneficial and generally more satisfying pedagogically. They were able to more accurately target their teaching rather than teaching to the theoretical middle of the class as they had so often done before. Ironically, the irresponsibility of some students who chose not to work in instructional areas seemed to make these lengthy exchanges possible. When instructional areas were full, teachers mentioned that they had little time to engage at length with any one student. As more students continued to learn to accept responsibility and worked at a reasonable pace through their curricular material, the teachers were starting to feel the tension of having too many students to work with in this way. They were addressing efficiency issues in ways that they hoped would be consistent with the evolved instructional model and identified that it was not easy to provide both one-on-one and group instruction. The time required for one task was reduced by deploying teachers in group instruction. Personalizing a student's program was not easy given the other responsibilities that each of these teachers had. The role of the teacher appeared to be multifaceted as they work one-on-one with students while having to be teaching groups and fulfilling other duties, sometimes simultaneously. The teachers all identify the dilemma of trying to work with students as individuals while paying attention to groups of students and tending to other duties.

Relationships Between Teachers and Students

Teachers characterized their relationships with students at NVSS in ways that ranged from friendship to parenting. Commonly used terms included: more intimate contact, mutualism, wholesome relationships, friendship, not too buddy buddy, friendly, developing strong relationships, drawing students in, modeling, breaking the ice, developing relationships, intensity of the relationship, mothering, parenting, being on equal terms, and becoming fellow learners. One teacher said that he had never been unfriendly with his students and had always formed friendships with them. Another talked about being aloof before but being more friendly now. Teachers identified a pragmatic aspect to

forming relationships at NVSS. Because of the optional nature of attendance in instructional areas and the choice students have to select whom they go to for help, it was necessary for teachers to be approachable. Whether or not the teachers had always been this way or had changed to accommodate the norms or practice as outlined by these teachers in the school was difficult to conclude; some said that they had changed and others claimed they hadn't. But each teacher seemed to be engaged with students in ways that were not typical of the traditional teacher-student relationship. Teachers talked of a genuine affection for their students and several teachers used the words mothering or parenting to describe this relationship. The relationships that the teachers described were strong, fostering and focused on the individual. There was also a non-traditional power aspect to it as well.

Several teachers describe working with students, getting something from the conversation with students and even feeling like a student. There was an aspect of "mutualism" in the exchanges. Whether it was talking about what was done on the weekend, how the team did in the last game, or curricular in nature. Several of the teachers characterized their interactions with students as being more equal and less formal.

The evidence suggests that the six teachers enjoyed the opportunity to form relationships with students that went beyond what might be considered traditional. They were less hierarchical—of the type shared by equals. The question of teacher effectiveness as one moves away from hierarchical relationships did not seem to be an issue for these teachers. Discipline problems were rare in instructional areas because students that tended to "act out" did not come.

More Than Just Curriculum

The participants all referred to curriculum as being something that they were paid to teach but it was often associated with something unnecessarily prescriptive. Comments about curriculum included: "you have to teach the curriculum," "the curriculum is a guideline," or "it is my job to teach the curriculum." Teachers confided, however, that they

modified, re-sequenced, and left out parts as long as it did not compromise the students' ability to succeed in the following years. In some specialty areas the curriculum was considered to be a set of flexible guidelines. In the academic areas, especially in grade twelve, teachers felt compelled to teach the whole curriculum because they were highly accountable for their student's results on government exams. Four of the teachers were familiar with the entire grade eight to twelve curriculum in their subject specialty and commented that they often re-sequenced some of the concepts as long they didn't leave out the important material for the next level. Those teachers that did not teach government examinable courses felt less accountable to the curriculum and referred to it as being "that secret thing that they did in the classroom."

All teachers agreed that there was more than one way to interpret the curriculum and considered the recent move by the Ministry toward more general guidelines in the recent publication of the instructional resource packages (IRP's) was an improvement over what they had worked with in the past; although one teacher thought the process had gone too far and too much was left for the teacher to invent. Several teachers considered the curriculum to be a small part of what they did with students. "Preparing students for life" and "helping them to grow up" were common comments. Others included helping them to: "assume more responsibility," to "become knowledgeable," become "critical thinkers and problem solvers" and to "take initiative" were considered to be important adjuncts to the curriculum.

Teacher seemed to be curriculum mediators. The learning guide packages fulfilled that role of defining the curriculum but some teachers were unenthusiastic about the restrictive and one dimensional form of delivery. Teachers still felt that they had an important role to play as intermediaries or filters for the students as they interacted with the curriculum. But there was more to the responses that involved the "unwritten curriculum".

All of the teachers felt that it was their responsibility to help the student to "grow up." The instructional program at NVSS , by virtue of its design, forced students to take on responsibility, to be problem solvers, and to take initiative. It encouraged more adult ways

of communicating and in general expected students to act in a more adult fashion, albeit that these requirements are implicit in the instructional program and that they are not necessarily formally taught. This unwritten "curriculum" was referred to by each participant in different ways but the common goal was to develop a sense of responsibility in students and to help them to grow up.

In summary, the curriculum, although described as being somewhat arbitrary, is not necessarily considered to be an the central feature of each teacher's job. It is thought to be incomplete, open to interpretation, expression and sequencing, and is considered to be only a part of what is to be learned by the student and taught by the teacher. The degree to which teachers felt that they could make decisions about the scope and sequence of the curriculum was associated with empowerment and professionalism. These two concepts are discussed in the next section.

Learning to Collaborate

Although each teacher considered collaboration to be central to the day to day operation of the NVSS program, their responses included varied interpretations of what it meant. The message was that teachers were coming to, but had not arrived at a shared meaning of what collaboration meant . Although participants identified collaboration as being a positive feature of the school, an example using Jack and Mark illustrate how the notion could be viewed from different perspectives. Jack felt that he was subject to peer pressure to conform as he worked to define his role in one of the large instructional areas. Becoming more aware of the requirements of the group and acting on that awareness was difficult for him in the first few years, although he now considers it to have been a positive event in his life. Several practice changes that he considers have made him more effective have resulted from the observation of and interactions with his peers and learning how to work together in co-managing the instructional area. The net effect of collaboration in Jack's mind has been to grow professionally, but it has not been easy.

In contrast to Jack, Mark finds collaboration to be both limiting and developing in different ways. On the one hand, he refers to the attempts to define the curriculum packages and associated evaluation practices as being restrictive, thus limiting his ability to make professional judgments of what students require to complete a course. For this reason he sometimes misses the classroom where he enjoyed a greater sense of autonomy. Despite this negative effect, Mark agrees that in terms of building the overall instructional program at NVSS, the effects of collaboration have been positive. He has experienced a sense of empowerment by participating in program design and professional development activities as well as in working more politically with other teachers to move the school in certain directions. These examples, by no means, identify all subjects' experiences with collaboration.

All teachers considered the chance to be a part of a team that shares certain philosophical consistencies to be a positive change that has been both exhilarating and exhausting. But some teachers would have liked to be even more involved with collaborative efforts. Two examples of in-house collaborative efforts that the subjects consider positive include curriculum development and co-management instructional areas. Considered to be both difficult and challenging, collaboration was often associated with conflict.

Teachers considered that collaboration sometimes challenged what it meant to be a professional. They explained that the nature of the NVSS program places teachers in positions of potential conflict when working on curriculum, assessment and management issues because of the high degree of consensus that is required. The structure of the school forced teachers to work together and it has in general been a challenge to the human relations. As Jack stated, conventional schools are not structured to encourage teacher interaction whereas at NVSS, the whole day can be spent working with colleagues. The exception to this may be in the elective areas where the physical separation of the instructional areas and the small size of some of the programs encourage high degrees of

teacher autonomy. One teacher felt that as more emphasis was placed on integration, there would be more opportunities for teachers in these areas to work together on projects with other teachers.

The teachers all had a strong sense that they were part of a team that has played an important role in building and defining the program at NVSS. There is a history of strong departmental autonomy at the school possibly because it was one of few structures that was in existence in the early days of the school. As teachers needed to come to terms with management of instructional areas and development of curriculum, they did so as members of departments first. Collaboration within departments seems to have resulted in strong intradepartmental relationships and identities. For example, all science teachers used the same curriculum for each course, be it science nine or biology twelve. The instructional area was co-managed by a minimum of three teachers at a time and project work was often marked by more than one teacher. In spite of five years of working together more closely with colleagues than they had previously, participants still struggled with what it meant to work together. In struggling with issues involving personal autonomy, identity, and professionalism teachers indicated that bonds among teachers within their departments were stronger and more intense than they had experienced elsewhere.

In an effort to reduce isolation that is being experienced by some staff members, a cross-curricular structure has been implemented by staff consensus. This was viewed as a positive addition to the overall instructional program and offers new opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration and joint decision making. The teachers in this sample have had mixed experiences with collaboration but feel that it is an important feature of the school and one where the net effect has generally been positive.

Students

The interviews with students were analysed for patterns and four themes were synthesized from the data using a similar methodology to the one applied to the teacher

interviews. The resulting themes were similar enough to be given the same title as the teacher themes although students were obviously speaking from a different point of view. For example, teachers had identified, by various utterances, that shifting responsibility for learning to students was an important feature of the way they worked. Likewise the students identified being given and accepting responsibility as being important to them. Again the four themes are presented under the headings: Shifting Responsibility, Personalizing Learning, Relationships Between Teachers and Students, and More Than Just Curriculum. One student who appears to have a different story to tell about his experiences is presented under the heading "John's Story", which serves to illustrate the centrality of these themes from a different perspective.

Shifting Responsibility

June: Definitely in this school you have to be self-motivated. If there is no self-motivation your grades will drop and you won't be able to complete high school on time. Personally I think that the lower grades should be set in a classroom and once you get to the senior level then you should be able to work on your own. I think that the students in the younger grades just think that WOW! this is a school where you don't have to be in classes and they just tend to goof off and they don't care about their marks and they don't care what they are doing. But once you've reached that senior level you say I have to put a stop to this. I have to understand that no one can make me complete my courses unless I want to. So you definitely must have that self-motivation.

Norm: Do people come to that realization sooner or later?

June: Some do and some don't. I know there are still some people in grade 12 that still have the same feeling that it doesn't matter. But definitely I know that I have changed because in grade nine, the first time I came to this school, I wasn't that successful. I did some work but now I realize that I have to do it. I set this goal for me. I think NVSS is all about setting goals.

All students talked about the importance of accepting responsibility. They considered it to be a desirable quality—one that was valued at the school. Although none of them identified any formal curriculum that taught them how to be more responsible, each student had gone through some process, after which they considered themselves to be more grown up. Before the change they described themselves as being out of control, needing

structure, goofing around, wishing to be caught, avoiding responsibility, defiant or frustrated, not recognizing the impact of the flexible structure at the school, getting behind, hitting rock bottom, and avoiding responsibility. After the transition they described themselves as: goal setters, being in control, accepting of responsibility, self-disciplined, recognizing consequences, taking the work into my own hands, proving things to myself, being honest with myself and having a sense of achievement. The period of transition was always difficult and was associated with a lack of academic performance. Students mentioned getting behind in their courses, not being in control, not caring and being immature as the precursors to the shift. Afterwards the students said they had the energy, the motivation, could set and meet goals, and were in more control of their studies and life in general. Responsibility was associated with something positive and all of the students exuded a sense of pride in the degree to which they had acquired this characteristic. But the acquisition of this sense of responsibility was not controlled by external means. It involved personal growth and experience with being irresponsible.

Each student felt that this responsibility shift should be managed more effectively by the school. Because the students viewed responsibility as something that you grew into, they all suggested that the transition to the "freer" structure of grade nine to twelve be more gradual and controlled. For example, they refer to the grade eight program as a place where students learn to work with the new curriculum format and learn to take control of their learning as well as to become more effective planners. But the participants all question the lack of transition structures for grade nine and ten students. The change from complete structure to complete responsibility happens too quickly for the students in this sample. Each of them had experienced the freedom and had, in their words, abused it. However, each of them realized after differing time periods that to be successful they had to learn to manage and take control of themselves. The paradox of attaining responsibility was identified by several students who recognized the importance of going through an irresponsible stage first. One student claimed that if she had not hit "rock bottom" then she

might not have learned to accept responsibility to the degree that she had learned to at NVSS.

Students equated the increased sense of responsibility with growing up. However, it was not something that they felt that all teenagers were capable of. There was a pride of accomplishment demonstrated by each of the participants and each of them claimed that they were in a better position to continue with life after graduation than their compatriots in neighboring high schools.

The alignment in themes between the participating teachers and students may indicate strong cultural norms within the school. I feel that this agreement between students and teachers is an important aspect of this study and will return to a more complete treatment of the subject in the conclusions. I remind the reader that John is not represented directly in the themes. His responses will be reviewed under the separate heading, John's story.

Personalizing Learning

Teachers identified one-on-one teaching and personalizing instruction as being a more satisfying way to teach partly because of the lack of management issues. The students enjoyed the opportunity to work with teachers in this way as well. One student associated one-on-one instruction with the development of her self-confidence. Another claimed that teachers often sat with her until she understood. These interactions were associated with building increased levels of understanding and "being taken to a new place." The flexible time paradigm, in which the school operated, permitted exchanges to go to their logical conclusion.

One student contrasted her experience with a teacher at another high school.

Pat: He thinks he's teaching everybody but he is not teaching you a thing. At home I would think what was the point of me sitting there when I put my hand up to ask a question he doesn't answer.

After two years at NVSS Pat transferred to a neighbouring secondary school. Two weeks later she reapplied to NVSS and returned. As she recalled her short experience there, she was concerned that the teachers in traditional schools did not pay attention to her needs the way that those at NVSS did. Upon returning she recounted that she started to realize "just how good I had it here." As she was wrestling with what the teacher had taught them, the bell would go and she would have to go to her next class where she would experience the same thing. Often she would seek clarification of a point during or after class and felt that the teacher would sidestep the issue or avoid the question because of time constraints.

Although there were several responses highlighting the importance of one-on-one instruction, students all recognized that they were responsible to initiate the process. The nature of interaction with a teacher would vary with the requirements of the students. They could range from questions and answers to longer teaching sessions.

All students referred to seminars, which are attempts by teachers to avoid duplication of lengthier teaching of important concepts, like paragraph writing for example. They appreciated the efficiency aspect and liked the balance between one-on-one and small group instruction (seminars). One student identified seminars as being more important in the junior grades and but all considered them to be useful structures. Other students identified the problem with deployment of teachers in seminars which took them out of circulation for one-on-one interactions. All participants recognized the strain that increasing numbers of students place on the model and suggest that more teachers or re-deployment of teachers in low demand areas might help. But all students agreed that one-on-one interactions with teachers made learning more personal, relevant, satisfying, and led to better understanding.

Instruction that paid attention to students' learning styles and interests was considered to be important. Students also referred to alternative assessment strategies, like portfolio's, presentations, posters and interviews, that they felt enhanced their learning and was better than tests. Understanding was considered to be paramount in any kind of

learning or assessment and students made comments like "without understanding what good is learning." It seemed to be important for the teacher to pay attention to the context in which some of the expectations were developed. Several students referred to the importance of linking the curriculum with real world experience like going on fieldtrips.

Based on the evidence of the six conversations, students felt that they had a responsibility to help in he design of activities that would show demonstrations of mastery of the curricular expectations. They also felt that teachers encouraged them to learn how they learn. Customized assignments that encouraged students to make links to personal experience were also valued by the students. Teachers often helped students to do this by assisting students to interpret assignments and also through direct instruction. But teachers seemed to perform a less central role in determining the agenda for the students as they grew older. Relating this to the first heading, Shifting Responsibility, the evidence suggests that the teachers have attempted to do this with some degree of success.

Finally, all students agreed that mastery learning was important in making sure that they understood important concepts before moving on the next curriculum package. The chance to redo assignments and to negotiate for a higher grade was something that each of the students felt was an important feature of the program and had enabled them to achieve better marks. The evidence was anecdotal, but two of the students cited improvements of twenty percent in their cumulative averages compared to what they had accomplished in their previous schools.

Relationships Between Teachers and Students

From the teachers' perspective, the instructional model at NVSS encouraged more prolonged engagement with individual students. The evidence in the interviews suggested that teachers were comfortable with this and many had formed closer attachments with their students than they had previously experienced. Student responses were consistent with this

finding and they all referred to the importance of positive and more significant relationships with teachers that went beyond curriculum and instruction.

I use the term relationship in the positive sense to include any interaction with a teacher where the student feels that there is a caring adult focusing their attention on them. For example, the following responses were consistent with the positive meaning of relationship found in the responses: being on a first hand basis or friend basis, teachers are interested in me, they model learning, they are friendly, they treat me as an equal, I don't mind hanging around teachers, they are fun, they are interesting, I am able to talk to them as human beings, I have better relationships with them, there are two-way interactions, they take an interest in me, they are helpful, and I can socialize with them. Not all of the participants referred to their teachers as friends but three did. Students described relationships ranging from friendship to mutual respect. Some of the students talked about relationships with teachers that would be consistent with the types of relationships they might have with their own parents.

Students associated relationships with higher grades and increased enjoyment of school. It may be significant that four of the students who were most enthusiastic about the school and claimed that NVSS had been fun, interesting and the best for them, had the most to say about positive relationships with teachers. One of these students attributes much of his success in determining a clear career path to the relationship that he had with one teacher whom he perceived as a mentor and model. One student who claimed that he was somewhat positive toward the school said "I don't mind hanging around with teachers." The sixth student (John) who had avoided the opportunity to form any significant relationships with teachers said that he had always got along with teachers. By this, he meant that they assigned the work, he did the work, they marked the work, and told him that he had done a good job. That was the end of it. Later in this section under the sub-heading John, excerpts from the interview illustrate some important aspects of

relationship formation, how important it seems to be to students, and what effect the lack of significant relationships with teachers can have.

More than Just Curriculum

Norm: So what is expected of you here by teachers and parents and the institution. What do we expect of our students.

Pat: I don't know.

Norm: What would be an ideal student?

Pat: Like if a teacher could create their own students?

Norm: Not even that because I am not sure that we would be the best judges of it.

Pat: That's true.

Norm: What would be the best set of attributes for you to be successful here?

Pat: My success is not based on my academics. It is based on what I do outside of school. I like to be a well-rounded person. So whether I am really smart is not a concern of mine as long as I have the intelligence to get on with life. I like to volunteer, I like to play sports and be active in the community. These are more important to me than becoming number one in the class and being the student who gets 400 learning guide a year done. It is the person who completes their work with good grades, takes the time to make friends in the school, has relationships with the teachers and is able to stand up for themselves when something isn't going quite right. Being involved in sports, helping tutor smaller kids and doing stuff outside of the school like holding a job. All of those things are to me the things that makes a well rounded student. We can all be smart if we don't want things in our life, but if you want the lifestyle that I like then I think that is the best.

This response is one of several that illustrated an important element in the curriculum theme. The students referred to many interests outside of school including jobs, hobbies, sports, community involvement and coursework at college and at other institutions. School was important to these students but their sense of success was not based solely on their grades in school. The students did identify several school responsibilities that they associated with curriculum. They were places to learn, demonstrate your knowledge in different ways, prepare for life and develop a well rounded intelligence. Although students thought that curriculum at NVSS was the same as

curriculum in conventional schools they said that it was being taught differently. They included preparing you for next year, keeping the curriculum fresh. They also included metacognitive statements like learning how to learn, learning your limitations and teaching you how to learn as being associated with curriculum.

Students were ambivalent about the learning packages (learning guides). Whether they were learning from expectations, learning by doing activities, or learning from a teacher or other experience it didn't seem to matter. One student felt that the junior grades (grades eight, nine, and ten) should be exposed to a more flexible curriculum and that students should be given an opportunity to thoroughly understand a few key concepts before moving to the more specific syllabus that they would face in their senior years. In general, curriculum was considered to be similar at NVSS compared with other schools, but there were some aspects that were different. The interpretation and selection of activities that students could negotiate with their markers was one difference. As the curriculum was tailored to the individual there were some decisions that teachers could make that gave the students a sense that they were receiving a customized curriculum. The expectations were established in the learning guides and in some courses there were required activities to be completed that satisfied the requirements of the learning guide. One student commented that the science program was more flexible in their approach in the junior grades and that the humanities had more structured activities that you had to work through. Another student found the specific activities in the science curriculum to be too rote in nature. Each student had a different interpretation of the role and relative importance of the learning guides. Some students claimed that as you became more familiar with the system you would be able to work through more of the course doing projects and that would reduce the requirement to see your teacher and do prescribed activities. Of course, at the end of a unit (25% of the course) there would be a meeting with a teacher to debrief and assess what had been done.

In general, students' views of curriculum were much more liberal than those of teachers. I could not help but think that many progressive educators would approve of their comments.

John's Story

I have referred to John as the outlier of the six student participants. Five of the students' responses aligned with the four themes (shifting responsibility, personalizing instruction, relationships with teachers, and more than just curriculum). Analysis of the interview with John revealed that he had important things to say about these themes as well but the message was from a different perspective. Where the five students had generally associated positive comments with these features of the program, John did not.

John is unusual in this sample because he talks about a control shift that never happened. He claims that he rarely worked with teachers and they did little to personalize subject matter for him. He avoided forming any relationships with teachers for reasons that are still not completely clear to him. His views of curriculum differ from the other students as well. John felt that he had been, in his words, "thrown a curriculum slider." What he meant was that in spite of being involved for a lengthy time with the more open model at NVSS, and the greater attention that was placed on group work, project work and understanding, he was used to an older system; one that existed before the reforms of the year 2000 report had made a significant impact on the elementary school instructional program. He is two years older than the other students and did not experience any of the transitional effects of the reforms until he faced them in full fruition when he arrived at NVSS in his grade ten year. He explained that the effect was devastating for him. The rules had changed. The more traditional paradigm in which he had been so successful (straight A's every year until grade nine) by listening and "parroting" back information, had changed and he could not adjust. The following is a transcription of the last five minutes (approximately) of the interview that revealed some clues about how difficult this transition

had been for John. As he fell behind in his studies and avoided teachers, his world at school fell apart.

Norm: Did you feel in control or did you feel out of control?

John: I felt completely out of control. I felt that I didn't have control over everything. I did have. I had complete control over everything. If I wanted to I could have worked but it always seemed like I was behind so I didn't bother catching up. Its like when you borrow five dollars from somebody and then a month or two passes and then you don't feel like paying the five bucks back because it has been so long and it was kind of like that I think. I didn't do work for so long that I didn't feel like doing it at all.

Norm: What if we had been a little more diligent at catching you when you were not progressing?

John: That would have been a good thing . . . that would have been a good thing. Students that are like me, that are lazy and who procrastinate and leave work. . . there should probably be more teacher dealings with them to get them to do work because they obviously don't have the responsibility. They can't handle the responsibility.

Norm: Will they eventually come around . . . some of them?

John: I haven't come around.

Norm: Well you've come around at College (John was taking a course at a local college).

John: Yes. I haven't yet been able to figure out . . .

Norm: You haven't come around to what . . .

John: I haven't come around to being able to figure out what exactly screwed me up at NVSS.

Norm: Do you feel screwed up?

John: Well it took me five years to do three years of curriculum. I'm behind in my studies for life— well, not for life, but for the things I want to do in life. I'm two years behind. . .Now that I think of it, two years is not bad.

Norm: You're also taking some college courses?

John: Yes, so I didn't completely get behind.

Norm: What would you have liked NVSS to have done for you?

John: To catch me. To catch me from goofing off. At the time I was trying to escape the teacher's ties.

Norm: And you were good at escaping. Did you feel like you were escaping at the time?

John: We would always work in a room and then we would eventually . . . we would socialize quite a bit . . . and when a teacher would come and say to do some work we would leave, and then after a while we wouldn't be allowed to work in there any more. So we found a new place, and we migrated to find the unsupervised area. That's exactly it. We always worked in the same area all day and no work got done.

Norm: Do you feel angry toward the school? I'm going to ask you some questions and you don't have to answering them . . .

John: I'm fine [the tears were welling up in his eyes].

Norm: You are not angry towards the school.

John: I'm angry at myself. It's basically my fault for falling so far behind.

Norm: Carrying around this huge load of guilt . . . is NVSS partly responsible for that do you think?

John: The conditions of NVSS made it conducive for me to fall behind.

Norm: So in another setting . . . you would not have been a different person, you just wouldn't have been allowed to fall behind.

John: Like if I was at another school I wouldn't have had an opportunity to fall behind and would have finished high school two years ago and I would have been in my second year of college.

Norm: Goofing around at college?

John: Yeah, right (laugh) and . . .

Norm: I'm serious about that statement though.

John: (Long silence and he is obviously thinking.)

Norm: You were . . .

John: Oh . . . I see. . . I see. . . If I'd have stayed there I never . . . from the mistakes I've made at NVSS I have learned more about the significance of being responsible.

Norm: Have you?

John: Yes . . . yes . . .

Norm: There are a lot of 19 and 20-year-olds who are going to the pub every night, putting all of their money into cars, not doing any schooling at all . . . It's just an observation . . .

John: You're right . . . they were like me only with that old school they never learned responsibility. They are waiting for life to teach them that and I've learned that earlier. I see . . . thanks for . . . revealing that for me.

Norm: Or you revealed it to yourself.

John: It got revealed!

Norm: It got revealed . . . hey this is neat. [I recount a story about some of my friends wasting their first year at college or university]. Do you feel a need to do that . . .

John: To get booted out?

Norm: To go to university and do what you did here again.

John: I don't think that would happen again. I don't think I would let it happen again just from remembering how I have felt this last year here. Especially this last two months. I have felt the extreme load that having to finish high school when you are still 19 . . . its just . . . it sucked. But I'm feeling better now.

Norm: What are you going to do to get your graduation? Or do you have to get your graduation? You can enroll as a mature student in college and carry on with your education from there.

John: Are you talking about graduation from high school? . . . I only have to do the final exam for English and I have finished chemistry so I'm finished high school tomorrow. So my graduation is tomorrow. I went to graduation ceremonies last year and it didn't mean a thing and I wore the robe and . . . what's that thing called?

Norm: The cap and gown.

John: And it didn't mean a thing. I feel bad because I missed that kind of closing. I missed that.

Norm: Why don't you close it with your folks. Have a private celebration.

John: I'd like that. Well my birthday is on Sunday too. I was quite pleased that I would be finished before I turned 20 . . . three days before I turned 20.

Norm: You have been really honest with me. I feel that you have. Thank you.

John: I feel so relieved. I've got a lot of stuff off of me. I feel, I feel much better.

As John recognized the significance of experiences that led to his ability to accept responsibility five years after arriving at NVSS it is important to note that five of the six students experienced varying degrees of success with the program in their early association

with it. Furthermore, five of the six participants will take between two months and two years longer to complete their graduation. But each of these students will graduate with very high grades.

The interview with John was difficult and revealing at the same time. His comments, especially the last ones, haunted me as I was searching for a way to make sense of them. I asked the question of whether the program at NVSS had failed John or John had failed the program but the line of questioning only led to blame and not to understanding. So I asked myself if there was a lesson to be learned? The answer of course was yes, several, but in the context of the responses of both teachers and students which placed shifting responsibility in such a central position, it seemed that we as teachers might not be paying enough attention to the associated processes that could help to move students to this "new place". The evidence suggests that teachers understand the importance of giving students more responsibility but need to know more about what is involved in students accepting of it.

I remind the reader that the small sample size is not necessarily representative of the feelings of all staff and students even though I made an effort to select a heterogeneous group. As with all samples there are some biases in terms of selection which are outlined in the methodology chapter. However, the participating teachers represent over one hundred and thirty years of teaching experience with thirty five of it spent building the instructional program at NVSS. The students, all of whom were in grade twelve, had been in school for a total of over eighty years, with twenty-nine of it spent in the developing program at NVSS. For this reason I attach considerable significance to their comments.

Chapter 5
Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

This study investigated teacher and student roles as well as associated issues of curriculum and empowerment in a five-year-old secondary school that offers an alternative educational program. Each of the six participating teachers and students (except one) had been at the school since it opened. Examination of these data revealed four recurring themes in all twelve interviews. A fifth theme (Learning to Work Together) was unique to the teacher responses. One student was identified as an outlier. His story was told separately.

In Chapter Four, I presented some of the participants' responses and categorized these data into themes that were central to the discourses. In the present chapter I address four main objectives. First, I present the conclusions that can be drawn about teacher and student roles that are warranted given the analysis. Second, I explore some implications of these findings. Third, I propose several suggestions and cautions to the educational community that I believe are justified based on the experiences of the participants. Finally, as participant and author, I include my reflections on roles.

Conclusions: Teacher Roles

The evidence presented in the analysis supports the notion of roles that I outlined in the introduction of this thesis. Teachers describe their roles in terms of the actions or beliefs. The actions of a teacher include managing, instructing, interacting with students, and decision making about students as well as collaborating, researching and administrating. The beliefs of teaching include attitudes, sensitivities and philosophies that help to define and lend purpose to their actions. Making this distinction only serves an organizational purpose while teasing out a representation of the roles of teachers and students evident in these data.

The roles assumed by teachers as described by themselves and identified by the students, support implications in the reform literature that the role of teachers, as they engage in efforts to improve education, becomes much more complex. Although a monolithic, singular, or coherent view of teacher roles does not appear to be supported by these data, several consistencies of practice provide a departure point for further understanding the implications of reform on the actions of teaching. The intention of this section is not to prescribe that teachers must behave in certain ways if they are to be reformers, but to provide a starting point or example grounded in practice from which to further explore the meaning, implications and coherence of embracing certain aspects of the reform agenda.

Actions

All teachers agreed that working with students was central to their role. This was manifest in their practice in many ways but usually with the center of attention being the individual student. Interactions were of a pedagogical nature or a social nature with some obviously being both. The indication from several teachers was that there was a blurred line of distinction between these two types of interactions with students.

When teachers were engaged in pedagogical exchanges they were dealing primarily with individual students. These one-on-one interactions fulfilled several functions. First they helped to encourage students about the task at hand. Teachers were paying attention to the importance of developing positive attitudes and self-confidence in students as they interacted with the curriculum. Second, the exchange had to establish a "where the student was" in terms of their understanding, as a point from which to start the student moving along on their way to mastery of a topic. This required that teachers engage with the students in some kind of preliminary discussion that would result in a demonstration of their level of knowledge or understanding. Closely associated with the diagnosis was establishing, together with the students, a finishing point for the exchange which could be

an explanation or evaluation. Finally, the exchanges were focused on the student demonstrating an understanding. Teachers paid attention to the students' growth in problem solving, building, creating, designing, or many other activities, with the end being to understand the concept behind the activity.

These exchanges featured some level of curriculum modification. The term used most frequently to describe this was "personalizing curriculum." The students prior experience and interest was the starting point for the adaptation of the expectations to suit the students' learning styles. The degree to which this was done by the teachers in the sample varied between extremes of letting students chose option "A" or option "B" within one learning package, to letting students design an entire course, including appropriate evaluation strategies. This required teachers to be more familiar with the grade eight through twelve curriculum and to have a wide range of personal experience that they could draw from to lead students to appropriate avenues of inquiry that would still meet curricular expectations.

Interaction with students had a social quality as well. They were described by teachers as being less formal and less hierarchical in nature. Teachers did not rely on traditional authoritarian methods in their exchanges with students and students were encouraged to bring something to the conversation like an experience or interest that could be used to help the teachers modify the curriculum appropriately. Interactions were more friendly and fun as well. Teachers characterized these relationships as being essential to developing positive attitudes about the course and the students' self-image.

In giving the students the choice to become or not to become involved with teachers, the school program had unintentionally required more friendly and sociable demeanors of the teachers. Teachers may have had the appropriate disposition to start with but it was clear in the interviews that being aloof, distant, authoritarian, and too traditional was not an effective way to act with students.

Although the primary mode of teacher/student interaction was one-on-one, teachers referred to several other modes of working with students, examples of which include small group teaching, seminars, class teaching, and managing. The intention of each of these types of interactions was to pay attention to the efficiency gains in dealing with larger groups of students. Each teacher identified efficiency concerns in working predominantly one-on-one with students. Teachers were comfortable with the new mode of instruction; however, three teachers missed the opportunity to face a class and engage in "the show."

There are several aspects of collaboration that are identified within the interviews and each addresses a particular aspect of the actions of teachers that characterize "working together." The role of the teachers at NVSS involves engaging in several activities that may be typical of conceptions of collaboration found in the literature. They include curriculum writing, program development, joint management of instructional areas and researching.

All of the participating teachers had been involved to some degree in the writing and development of the learning guides. Early conceptions of the guides required them to all follow a prescribed format with an introduction, list of expectations and so on. Since then each of the learning guides have been rewritten several times and according to evolving and inconsistent criteria. As teachers assume responsibility for rewriting, they are negotiating meaning with their colleagues who will also use the learning guides. Collaboration on curriculum writing is done in two ways; either joint writing, or individual writing with group input. Teachers in small departments address this concern to a lesser degree.

Each teacher felt that they had contributed to the evolution of the overall instructional program as well as to a curricular program. Teachers also worked together on several other fronts. They team taught, chose curriculum materials, assessed students work, and managed instructional areas together. The actions of collaboration were many and varied including researching about the school in the pursuit of advanced degrees. Collaboration has been described by the participants as being both positive in terms of

professional growth opportunities and negative in the sense of being restrictive and challenging to professional and personal autonomy.

Central to all interviews with all teachers were repeated references to shifting responsibility from themselves to students by having students plan their schedule or participating in designing activities. However, there was an ambiguity of meaning associated with this term. It is used synonymously with phrases like "taking control" and "growing up." The wide range of terminology used in conjunction with this phenomenon may indicate ambiguity either about what it means, how teachers should act to achieve it, or both.

Beliefs

Each of the teachers' interviews contained clues about their beliefs either implicitly or through direct statements. This section outlines some of the teacher beliefs about practice and their relationship with students that are indicated by their responses. The five themes, shifting responsibility to students, personalizing learning, forming relationships, broader conceptions of curriculum, and collaborating, each frame the beliefs of these teachers about educational processes and helps to further delineate teacher roles. Each of these themes can be translated into a simple statement of belief that is substantiated by the evidence in the interviews.

Teachers believed that the shifting of responsibility to students was an important process. Shifting responsibility meant different things to each of the respondents but there were some common areas of thought. It was considered to be a good thing, it could be accepted by students, it was associated with growing up, it had to happen eventually, and it felt right to do it. The disagreement had to do with when and how much to shift. The teachers in this sample were all coming to terms with the types of action that would be associated with shift responsibility as well as the implications of these actions to

accountability, both theirs and students'. Accountability issues relating to student progress and acceptance of responsibility by students have not been fully resolved by these teachers.

All of these teachers believe in personalizing learning. They agree that students must make meaning themselves and that they as teachers can facilitate this. Four of the teachers were unfamiliar with the term "constructivism" but their teaching actions and beliefs support some tenets of it. Differing beliefs seemed to be a matter of degree and not substantive. Teachers needed to work out what it meant to personalize learning in terms of two other issues; efficiency and the nature of curriculum. Efficiency attempts include the development of various strategies like group instruction and seminars to coincide within the individualized instruction model. This may need further conceptual clarification in how to best use group meetings to complement individual instruction. In terms of curriculum, teachers need to come to a clearer understanding of what it means to adopt constructivist beliefs. Whether or not they adopt this philosophy in its entirety is less important than having a common frame of reference for modifying curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of the students.

Developing relationships with students was important to each of the teachers. There was a conceptual clarity and consistency of meaning about the importance of establishing a meaningful connection with the student within legal parameters. From this connection followed at least two benefits for the teacher. The first was in helping to establish a realistic starting point from which learning could proceed. The second was that these teachers could relax with the student. Teachers were comfortable in assuming non-traditional and more equal power relationships. However there is an undercurrent of a dilemma suggested in the interviews. Teachers found that maintaining requisite levels of institutional control over the students while working with them in this way was difficult.

The fourth belief involves the nature of curriculum. At one extreme a teacher challenged the outdated curriculum and suggested throwing it out altogether (he didn't of course). The consensus view was that curriculum was the same at NVSS as elsewhere but

with one-on-one instruction that featured an attempt to show some connection to real experience and an expectation that students should work through many of the expectations on their own. Evidence suggested that there was a lack of conceptual consistency among these teachers about the relative importance of the formal and informal curriculum and how to demonstrate mastery. Comments about assessment indicated that a variety of strategies were used including personal judgment.

Finally, the fifth belief relates to the power and benefit of collaboration. All teachers agree that collaboration was generally a good thing, but that teachers had to learn how to "do it" better. All agreed that there were positive and negative effects associated with collegiality. Responses support that forced collegiality was no improvement over traditional ways of working. However, when there was an open and honest attempt to develop ideas together and to work together to develop new and consensual norms, the benefits of collegiality were great. Fullan describes these positions appropriately:

> In the one, it is a tool of teacher empowerment and professional enhancement, bringing colleagues and their expertise together to generate critical yet also practically-grounded reflection on what they do as a basis for wiser, more skilled action. In the other, the breakdown of teacher isolation is a mechanism designed to facilitate the smooth and uncritical adoption of preferred forms of action (new teaching styles) introduced and imposed by experts from elsewhere, in which teachers become technicians rather than professionals exercising discretionary judgment. (1991, p. 143)

The teachers in this group were struggling with what it meant to collaborate and to work in a collegial environment. There were staff members who did not have the opportunity to regularly participate collaboratively and others who seemed to want to work more independently. The challenge to professional autonomy was the most commonly cited negative effect of collaboration.

The degree to which these beliefs were shared by the participants may illustrate another important factor in developing joint meaning about the instructional program and their roles within it. The responsibilities, sensitivities, behaviours and epistemologies of each of these teachers had been challenged by the reform agenda that supported the

program. What was required of teachers was that they not only behave in different ways, but think in different ways as well. The importance of beliefs, not only prior ones but emerging beliefs that pay attention to the prevailing dogma of the time may be have been an important element in the successful implementation of this program. Responses from the teachers suggested a high degree of consensus about many issues and correspondingly high levels of similarity in beliefs about five important aspects being a teacher at NVSS.

In attempting to implement an array of incompletely conceptualized reforms, the collaborative environment seems to have forced teachers to agree on acceptable ways to operate as they made sense of the overloaded agenda. The high levels of agreement on actions and beliefs may indicate a focused selective process in the choosing of the foundational staff. It also demonstrates the power of collaborative environments in synchronizing beliefs.

Conclusions: Student Roles

Actions

The actions of the students were identified partially through their responses as well as through my experience with each of them. After five years at NVSS, each had demonstrated that they now could operate within the context of the program. However, during the five years that NVSS had been open, each student had gone through a difficult time in adjusting to the open timetable. Their grades had dropped and they had stopped attending instructional areas regularly. They all spoke about feelings of dislocation and being out of control. Often they would leave the school early with a group of friends and meet at various locations. Some would play "cat and mouse" with teachers by moving around to unsupervised instructional areas. As they reflected on this time in their development, they all spoke of some "coming of age" realization which they considered to be the beginning of their success at the school. This usually happened in their grade nine or

grade ten year. It took each student between several months and up to five years (in the case of John) to "turn things around" or to "grow up."

Students identified working one-on-one with teachers as being the primary mode of interpersonal instruction. Most of the day however, each student was engaged with learning expectations from curriculum packages called learning guides. In the large open instructional areas, they worked at tables with their friends. In elective areas, they worked in a variety of modes; they were taught, they worked independently or with groups. All of the students agreed that one-on-one interactions, although useful, were a problem too. They complained about lineups for teachers, teachers trying to defer questions, and other problems that they thought could be improved by having more teachers available. Each of the students agreed that the use of seminars helped not only to relieve the pressure on teachers but provided increased opportunity for instruction. All students considered limited access to teachers to be a problem sometimes.

All of the students (except John) had formed meaningful relationships with teachers. They referred to teachers as being interested in them and referred to many of them as friends. Each of the students found that they were engaging with teachers more as equals and that the traditional power differences that they had experienced in their previous schools were absent. The students also indicated that they had not always felt this way about teachers at NVSS. They explained that the teachers had grown into this more casual, friendly way of dealing with students just as they had adjusted to working on a more equal basis with teachers.

Students worked at their own pace through the learning guides with varying degrees of success. Some required regular personal feedback from teachers and others took the learning packages home during the day to remove themselves from the "buzzing" activity in the two large open instructional areas. Students worked by themselves or with partners on many different projects and enjoyed the opportunity to talk to teachers about

their work. All students mentioned being involved with alternative assessment strategies like portfolios and interviews.

Perhaps significantly, five of the six students were employed in various capacities and mentioned several times during the interview that these jobs were an important addition to their life. Although this may not be considered to be a "student role" in the traditional sense, it is associated with their overall conception of "self." Five of the students mentioned the value of work experience and related their successful experiences to their general feelings of being successful in school.

Beliefs

Overall, the most commonly cited reference, by teachers and students, was to a responsibility shift away from teachers to students. Although referred to in several different ways that conveyed varied meaning, the essence of the analysis was that students believed that they should be demonstrating increasingly more adult characteristics as they progressed through the system. They believed that teachers were to assume a supportive stance in helping them to achieve their goals but that the agenda should be set increasingly by themselves. The students were all concerned that this had happened so quickly and they had all had found it to be difficult. The problem was compounded when students transferred into the school after grade eight because they had to make that transition immediately.

Associated with the rapid transition and high expectations by teachers of students regarding their acceptance of responsibility in determining such things as attendance, rates of progress, mastery level and so on, was a longer time to graduate. Five of the six students will take more than five years to complete their graduation program with one taking seven years. This was rationalized by teachers and students alike as being "worth it" because of the resulting higher maturity rates that appear to be evident in graduates.

Nevertheless, shifting responsibility for learning to the students, was a feature of the program that teachers and students felt was important and both groups associated it with growing up. Along with centering upon the individual student was a more complex view of what it meant to be a student. Of course in an individualized program that focused upon maximizing the potential of each student, this meant different things to different students.

Taking into account learning styles, interests, goals and maturity levels means that teachers must be more sensitive to teaching each individual instead of the class. The students all recognized that they had to make a contribution by being more self-aware and capable of forming relationships with teachers so that an effective learning partnership could be developed. According to these students, their ability to do this was dependent upon the willingness of teachers to be receptive to their needs. This required that teachers and students be more skilled with human relations—more able to form meaningful and productive bonds with teachers, and to believe that this was important and productive.

So much of how a student approached the school program had to do with attitude, and these could change dramatically during the teen years. However, the essence of the student roles at NVSS, as described by the students and teachers alike involves any action or belief that resulted in shifting responsibility for setting the agenda away from the teacher toward the student. It was equated by all with growing up and making the transition from being immature, irresponsible, young, and developing to being a more self-directed individual who has perhaps more in common with an adult than a child. The students all believed that this was important.

Students placed relationship forming high on their agenda. The importance of the teacher student relationship had significance for at least two reasons. The first of which was to establish a working relationship that facilitated curriculum and assessment adaptation by the teacher that, in essence, customized the curriculum to the individual. Secondly, students considered relationships to be fun. The joking around, feeling as more of an equal made them feel more adult as they attempted to make the transition from being a

teenager to being an adult. These students believed that it was important to engage with their teachers and believed that it was important for the teacher to be receptive to their needs. Although this was difficult for them when they were younger, each of the respondents indicated how important they felt this to be. This is consistent with comments by Michael Fullan about new conceptions of the student.

> We should stop thinking of students just in terms of learning outcomes and start thinking of them as people who are also being asked to become involved in new activities.
>
> Earlier I said that implementation frequently involves role change by the teacher in the classroom. The more sociologically accurate statement is that implementation actually comprises a change in the role relationship between teachers and students. (1991, p. 189)

Perhaps it is not appropriate to be talking about teacher and student roles as being independent but rather as being interdependent and highly related to the goals of the program. If the program is interested in developing more responsible students, then the technologies of teaching should be explicitly formed to do this and the respective roles of teachers and students should also reflect a common agenda. This appeared to be the case at NVSS. Previously, reformers have asked the question of how to design systems that encourage students to engage with their learning. Perhaps a subtle and important shift in this question is appropriate in light of this research; that is how do we design a system of education to encourage students to want to learn and that teaches students how to engage in ways that they believe are important.

Toward a Common Agenda

It may be possible to associate the term "agenda" with roles; agenda being another way of looking at the actions and beliefs of teachers as they move forward with reform . It might also be possible to conceive of teacher agendas that would be counterproductive to moving forward with reform. Authoritarian management or conceptions of teaching that are more technocratic in nature would likely not support the kinds of actions that are required

of teachers as they pay more attention to the needs of students. Fullan (1991) outlines two contradictory images of teacher:

> The technocrat or bureaucratic image conceives of teachers as giving knowledge and following and applying rules. The moral actor as artisan and craftsperson sees teaching as transforming students. (p. 142)

The evidence in this thesis supports the second notion of teacher as being more compatible with moving the reform agenda forward and seems to describe the beliefs and actions of the teachers in this study.

If teachers are to be in the business of transforming students then it is the business of students to recognize that they have some responsibility to participate in this process. Their conception of roles has to be based on an agenda that supports their growth and transformation. The evidence in this thesis suggests that at least some students do indeed have an agenda that includes this conception of what it means to be a student.

Reforming education will require clearly set agendas for both important groups of participants—the teachers and the students. But even more important may be for these agendas to be complementary. Certainly, the agendas for students and teachers as represented by their roles are highly complementary at NVSS. Paying attention to the model and the means by which this degree of consensus was achieved may warrant further investigation. If this is a good example of an attempt to reform traditional practice then educators would be wise to take note of the emerging notions of teacher and student not only in an absolute sense but in terms of how they complement each others ability to meet their respective agendas. Certainly, given a reform environment like NVSS that features many learner centered reforms, the roles for teachers and students cannot be mutually exclusive.

Implications for Teachers

The conclusions presented suggest two implications of the complex and non-traditional role of teachers at NVSS. The first involves the Professional Development of current teachers and the second involves the education of future teachers.

If schools such as NVSS move away from normative practices associated with conventional teacher roles, teachers will have to pay ever increasing attention to the corresponding belief changes that will be required. The teachers in this study were aware of the importance of alignment of action and belief. As they move forward to refine current structures and to develop new structures that are coherent with the established ones, not only will they will have to more thoroughly understand the framework within which they are operating, they will also have to come to terms with how far they can reasonably shift their personal beliefs about practice. Professional development opportunities that enable teachers to work together to establish and reinforce common beliefs will be essential for teachers to continue to "speak the same language" of reform. Some aspects of these new roles will be more compatible with their personal philosophy and prior experience and some won't. Although the expression of teacher roles at NVSS may offer clues to conceptualizing more satisfying and effective teacher practices in general, paying attention to the alignment of the action and belief compatibility may be more crucial to the adoption and continuance of reforms.

A variation of this notion of professional development would involve schools like NVSS that offer alternative programs, offering their services to experienced professionals to come "home" to an environment where belief and practice are more aligned. The interested reader may refer to Appendix lll for a full transcription of the interview with Jana in which this phenomenon is illustrated.

The second implication of conceiving more complex and belief laden teacher roles involves the education of future teacher professionals. Teacher education programs that rely

heavily on a mentorship model may have to pay attention to matching the beliefs of the incoming students with those of their mentors/teachers.

As the agenda for teachers becomes more complex and varied in environments such as NVSS, new teachers will be exposed to the a more complex model of what teaching is and what they are expected to be able to do. The increased responsibilities, and the requirement for competency in the area of curriculum development, relationship formation, assessment, collaboration, supervision, and administration may be beyond the current ability of teacher education programs to deliver, and certainly beyond the experience of many conventional classroom teachers. Furthermore, to expose developing teachers to this intimidating list of required competencies and epistemological debates about practice, may be daunting and premature. As teaching practices become more diverse, as they are likely to become with the development of ever increasing fundamental belief changes required of teachers (Quartz, 1996), one could even entertain the notion of having epistemological streams within teacher education programs. This would serve to match belief systems of incoming teachers with the type of teaching environment they would be most comfortable working in.

The deconstruction of current norms of practice and the replacement of new and more diverse ones at NVSS may foreshadow an education system where teachers have to always redefine themselves in terms of the milieu in which they are working. Certainly, they will increasingly have to pay attention to defining themselves in terms of a wider range of criteria. Not all teachers will be comfortable with the future of teacher roles as foreshadowed by progressive schools like NVSS for they will likely be forced to challenge their core beliefs about teaching. The six teachers that participated in this study have all done this. Some have decided to practice in much the same way, some have changed, but all have had their beliefs challenged because of the freedom that they had to define themselves as a group.

Implications for Students

If teachers are in the business of preparing students for life then students have to pay attention to growing up. Once again in this environment of more complex notions of education it becomes incumbent upon the student to assume some of the responsibility that was previously the domain of the teacher. But students must assume more than just responsibility for learning the curriculum. At NVSS, a high degree of maturity was required for students to work their way from grade eight through to grade twelve. If they accepted this responsibility they were ready, we hoped, to assume a place beside adults in the world of work or higher education. Of course, not all students will accept the opportunity to move into the "adult world". At NVSS, as demonstrated in the discourse with the participants, the challenge was implicit. It may therefore be important to develop a clearer conception of what factors might be involved in a well crafted transition process.

The challenge for educators in the future will be to further define this phenomenon of growing up and the associated behaviors that must be assumed by students as they make the passage from childhood to adulthood. Even NVSS with the centrality of the responsibility shift in the program goals, can do more in this regard. It might be possible to more carefully guide students through this transition. Nevertheless, it is incumbent on teachers to clarify both the phenomenon and the process.

In the future, students have to make decisions about the appropriateness of certain placements in alternative programs based on the fit between what the program requires of students and how far they are willing to adjust their agendas.

Recommendations

In considering the future of educational reform I make five recommendations, each of which involves formulating clearer conceptions of some central processes of change that

are evident in this research. They involve transition, collaboration, personalizing instruction, aligning agendas and harmonizing actions and beliefs. Although these processes are multifaceted and are likely related to each of the others, clarifying each in terms of the requisite actions and beliefs of teachers and students may help to keep reform efforts realistic and achievable.

The first recommendation is that educators should now, more seriously, take up the challenge to further clarify what is involved in helping students to make the transition from childhood to adulthood. Perhaps part of the job has been done by Maurice Gibbons (1974) in an essay titled "Walkabout: Searching for the Right Passage form Childhood and School." In it, Gibbons develops a model or framework within which the varied agendas of teachers and students could work in concert. He identifies the essential problems of the transition or walkabout along with conceptualizing accompanying teacher and student roles. Gibbons outlines how a school like NVSS might facilitate a meaningful rite of passage experience for students in a more managed and less "hit and miss" way.

> What sensibilities, knowledge, attitudes, and competencies are necessary for a full and productive adult life? What kinds of experience will have the power to focus our children's energy on achieving these goals? And what kind of performance will demonstrate to the student, the school, and the community that the goals have been achieved?
>
> Success in our lives depends on the ability to make appropriate choices. Yet, in most schools, students make few decisions of any importance and receive no training in decision making or in the implementation and reassessment cycle which constitutes the basic growth pattern.
>
> The test of the walkabout, and of life, is not what he/she can do under a teacher's direction , but what the teacher has enabled him/her to decide and to do on his/her own.
>
> It (the walkabout) should involve not only the demonstration of the student's knowledge, skill, and achievement, but also a significant confrontation with himself; his awareness, his adaptability to situations, his competence, and his nature as a person. (p. 598)
>
> The basic principles-personal challenge, individual and group decision making, self-direction in the pursuit of goals, real-world significance in activity, and community involvement at all stages of preparation and conclusion-can be accomplished in a variety of ways.

> . . . real change does involve new freedom for students, but that independence must be combined with a vivid personal goal and a framework within which the student can pursue it. If we remove the structure of subjects, disciplines, courses, lessons, texts, and tests, it is essential that we develop superstructures which will support the student's efforts to create a structure of his/her own. Autonomy, like maturity, is not a gift but an accomplishment of youth, and a difficult one to attain. (p. 600)
>
> [it provides] an opportunity to establish a new, more facilitative relationship between staff and students . . . and a device for transforming the nature of schooling to combine freedom and responsibility, independence and clearly directed effort. (p. 602)

Whether or not this could become the framework within which teachers help students to achieve greater responsibility, matters not as much as having some sort of framework that pays attention to students making some meaningful transition toward adulthood with some associated knowledge, skills and sensitivities. The term "walkabout" may be a useful metaphor for identifying this notion. Defining the specifics will be the job of educators and students with Gibbons' essay conceptualizing a mechanism through which students' growth could be more effectively directed.

The second recommendation is that further examination of the tensions and benefits of collaboration will be necessary for further shifting conventional paradigms of teaching. Teacher autonomy and inertia are encouraged by isolationist teaching practices yet professionals have a right to work with other professionals and to participate more fully in defining their collective practices. Working together is a powerful tool for identifying and reinforcing the best practices of teaching. This coupled with incorporating some aspects of self-determination and administrative responsibility may be a powerful model for changing practice and beliefs. Unfortunately, collegiality can also exert an inertial force. Studies that identify benefits, limitations and other issues associated with collegiality will help to appropriately place this technology into practice that best serves the interests of the students while offering teachers expanded opportunities to grow professionally.

Recommendation three is that the implications of one-on-one instruction and a truly individualized program must be more thoroughly examined. The apparent efficiency losses

may be associated with unknown and valuable improvements in student attitude, maturity rates, and readiness for integration into society as productive citizens. The debate should be broadened to include affective gains in students and improvements in understanding that may result form more meaningful and sustained contact with interested and knowledgeable adults. Longitudinal studies that follow graduates of progressive and conventional schools would inform the debate.

The fourth recommendation is to pay attention to the alignment of teacher and student agendas. The social cost of competing agendas in conventional schools may be unnecessary stresses on human relations. Instead of teachers and students working apart, analysis of systems that feature, complementary roles, may offer reformers some important parameters within which evaluate reform efforts.

Finally, recognizing the importance of the harmonizing practice and belief within teacher and student groups may be central to keeping reforms alive in reform environments. Professional development, education, teacher research, and collaboration all involve teachers in processes that have the potential to align belief and practice. As well, designing systems that pay attention to the student's need to make transitions are potentially harmonizing practices. While there is no evidence to suggest that this is related to higher student achievement, it may be important in fostering positive attitudes in both groups.

Reflections

Now that the process of writing this thesis approaches conclusion for me there are several lessons that I have learned in working closely with reforms both as a teacher and a researcher. The following comments synthesize my experiences.

First, I am concerned about attempts to formalize educational reform in terms of mechanistic conceptions of change. These trivialize the experiences of teachers whom are engaged in continuous attempts to make things better while often working within the confines of very limiting structures. Coming to terms with multiple changes can be difficult

and soul-searching work that often involves profound transformational change. While each person may adopt a facade of similar actions, the true meaning of the change is only known to the individual. The unpredictable nature of real innovation and change is of concern to me because it identifies the essential paradox of educational reform. Productive and predictable educational change cannot be legislated, orchestrated, predicted or implemented because teacher beliefs, which are central in defining the direction and continuance of change, cannot be manufactured. Just because a program encourages teachers to establish new norms of collegiality and suggests that students should assume more responsibility doesn't mean that it will necessarily happen in productive ways. Reformers, caught in the theoretical rhetoric, fail to consider the changing roles of teachers and students implied by their visions. This study pays attention to those who are charged with putting their own beliefs and actions up against the theory. As the battle for the meaning of reform is being waged in schools, those who have the most to gain and lose are the teachers and the students. They should have the most to say about the ultimate expression of their roles.

Second, my association with the implementation of a new school program has taught me that it is important to rely heavily upon the professionals that are responsible for the program. The years of experience held by them will temper, adapt and fit any worthwhile attempts at change to suit their purposes. I suggest that their purposes are noble and human ones. Ones that serve the best interests of the students. Given a chance, teachers and students can work together to form new educational communities if they are willing and are provided with appropriate resources and collaborative leadership. I am in awe of what a group of committed professionals can do to make school a more humane and personal experience for young people but I am also deeply concerned that as we move forward on some fronts of reform, we may be forgetting that not all is wrong with more traditional practice.

Third, from what moral authority do reformers justify changing existing systems of education that are born of tradition and experience, limited resources and increasingly

difficult social circumstances? I challenge educators from outside the classroom, those who are not on the front lines of schooling to involve themselves more intimately with change efforts—to become a part of the process and to witness first-hand, not through research, but through "hands on" experience with attempts at change. It will only be then that they will come to a more thorough understanding of the benefits and risks associated with changing schooling. More should be demanded of the rhetoric and a merging of the real with the ideal should help to create clear, engaging and realistic conceptions of how teachers and students can work together to achieve common goals.

Finally one which I hope adds a cautionary element to the discourse on change. What is more tragic, the student who fails in a conventional school or one who fails in an innovative school? And who benefits more, a student who is successful in a conventional program or one who experiences success in an innovative program? While there are still students who are not well served in any system, there is a need to move forward cautiously and with teachers making the day to day decisions that are necessary to make the learning process meaningful for students. Further, teachers are in a good position to recognize the limitations of systems and to help to design new ones to solve old problems.

In terms of my journey, I have learned a great deal about innovation and implementation that is surprisingly well represented by the reform literature. But these are just words. The experience has had a profound personal impact as I have tried to come to terms with issues involving assessment, different types of instruction, curriculum, integration of curriculum, collegiality, progressive education, student centered instruction, professionalism, flattened administration, school within a school, independent learning and self pacing, TA programs, shifting authority, the nature of learning and teaching, relationships between students and teachers, flexible time tabling, experiential learning, the walkabout and year round education—all within the context of one innovation. After five years at NVSS I have used a term perhaps more than any other to summarize my attempts to understand. It is "on the other hand." By this I mean that for every shortcoming I

identified in doing things our way there was a corresponding positive effect and whenever I thought that we had it right, new problems became evident. To me the paper by Larry Cuban titled "Managing Dilemmas While Building Professional Communities" (1992, b) explains what is involved in educational change as well as anything that I have read on the subject. He explains that being an educator is being in a position to make judgments, not about black and white issues, but about the continuum of possibilities. There are trade-offs and compromises but most importantly, the experienced educator enters the debate aware that there are no absolute answers, only ones borne of experience, knowledge, and good judgment. By confronting the confusion of the educational debate as it was so evident in the NVSS program, I feel like a door has been opened and the broad expanse of possibilities has been revealed. I know that each of those who participated in this study feels the same way as though it were the ultimate professional development experience. If for no other reason than to give teachers and students an opportunity to set a common agenda, this attempt to reform traditional practice has been successful.

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Appendix I

Questions For Teachers

Question one: teacher roles

Could you tell me something about your teacher role at THSS and how it has developed or changed over the past five years? Have these changes been easy for you?

Associated questions:

a) Tell me something about the types of interactions that you have with your students?

b) What has changed for you and what remains the same?

c) Can you give me an example to illustrate this

d) Do you have any skills now that you did not have 5 years ago?

e) Do you see yourself changing as a teacher in the future?

f) What kind of influence has teaching at THSS had on you as a teacher?

Question two: student roles

What do you expect from your students at THSS?

Associated questions:

a) How are they different and how are the same?

b) What kinds of attributes would an ideal THSS student have?

c) Are all students able to be THSS students?

d) What kinds of tacit expectations do you have for the students that come here? Are students informed of these expectations?

Question three: constructivism

Tell me something about the curriculum at THSS. Could you compare it to a conventional school?

Associated questions:

a) Are the ministry expectations being met to the same way at THSS as in other schools?

b) What are the differences?

c) Is it possible to articulate what the school does with curriculum and how the students interact with it? How is it different and how is it the same?

Question four: empowerment

If I use the word empower or power in terms of how you feel about what you do here, is it meaningful to you?

Associated questions:

a) Do you feel a sense of power at THSS that you have not experienced before?

b) Could you be specific?

c) Do you feel powerless at all?

d) Can you identify any other power issues that come to mind as being new to you as a member of the new school?

e) What processes support your experience of being empowered?

Question five: background

Could you give some background about why you decided to come to THSS? Did your philosophy of education have anything to do with your decision to come or to stay?

Associated questions:

a) How have you found the experience in general?

b) How honest do you feel you can be with me given he sensitive nature of what I am writing and given your role as a teacher?

Appendix II

Questions for Students

Question one: teacher roles

How do your interactions with teacherscompare with your experiences in other schools?

Associated questions:

a) How are the teachers different and how are they the same?

b) Can you be specific?

c) Why do you think they are different?

d) Do you think that this is a good way to interact with teachers?

Question two: student roles

What kinds of expectations are placed on you at THSS?

Associated questions:

a) Are you expected to be different or the same?

b) What kinds of attributes and skills would an ideal THSS student have?

c) Can all students do these things?

d) What has your schooling done for you ?

e) Are these changes for the better?

Question three: constructivism

Tell me something about the curriculum at THSS. Could you compare it to your last school?

Associated questions:

a) Are the ministry expectations being met to the same way at THSS as in other schools?

b) What are the similarities and differences?

c) Are you asked to make more decisions about what you learn and how you learn it?

Question four: empowerment

If I use the word empower or power in terms of how you feel about what you do here, is it meaningful to you?

Associated questions:

a) Do you feel a sense of power at THSS that you have not experienced before? What stops you or blocks you from feeling you are in control.

b) Could you be specific?

c) Do you feel powerless at all?

d) Can you identify any other power issues that come to mind as being new to you as a member of the new school?

Question five: background

Could you give some background about why you decided to come to THSS?

Associated questions:

a) How have you found the experience in general?

b) How honest do you feel you can be with me given sensitive nature of what I am writing and that I am a teacher?

Appendix III

Jana, June 26, 1997

N. Introduction. Do you feel that your role as a teacher has changed, developed or evolved while working here.

J. It has certainly changed and evolved I would think. In this school when you deal with students you deal with them differently in different situations. In a traditional school I spent 20 years at G you only deal (most of the time) with a group of students and in that group you have different types of students. Students who have different learning styles, but you deliver the same thing to everybody. So some grasp what you are trying to teach them and others never do. At NVSS it's very different. You deal (in F anyway) with students in small seminars and most of the time it's simply one student at time that comes to see me for seminar clarification or explanation of a grammar point or something. What I do in each case, I have to deal with that specific student and find out what his or her style of learning is and it doesn't take long before you realize who that student is and how he best is going to learn. So you adapt your teaching style to the students learning style. So when he leaves the seminar or she leaves the seminar that student feels good about himself. Some students when they come to a seminar or whatever they come and see me for (the ones who understand very quickly) all they want is something is quick, to the point. They don't want me to waste their time explaining things they already know. All they want to know is yes I'm on the right track and know what I am doing. While others want more explanation. They come and see me because they want me to tell them they are on the right track also but those students who are not sure they are on the right track they want me to tell them that and others come because they are totally lost. What I do instead of making them feel that they are lost is to try to get them to explain what they understand at least and then I expand from there. So when they leave they still feel that they knew what they were doing even if they didn't. I was never able to do that before. The students who did not understand when I was teaching a class of 30 you could not see them individually. So I am enjoying my role as a teacher so much more here

N. I was going to ask that . . . Is it more satisfying?

J. Oh so much more satisfying because every student regardless of the level of their ability when they leave that seminar or visit I always feel that they feel good about themselves because I was able to interact with them and show them in different ways that they did understand even if they didn't pick up every nuance. That is very important.

N. You talked about kids going away feeling good about themselves . . . is that more important or as important as the curricular knowledge that you are trying to get across.

J. Certainly much more important! You know curriculum is just something that somebody has decided up there somewhere that the student should know and should learn. We didn't decide, it came from a higher authority. To me I think that it is much more important how they feel about themselves rather than completely mastering the actual curriculum. As teachers we prepare them not only for the subject, for the test, we prepare them for life and if they don't feel good about

themselves, how are they going to go out there into the world and seek something they are going to enjoy.

N. Did you prepare them for life at G?

J. No! I didn't even prepare them for university.

N Did you think that was part of your job to prepare them for life.

J. No. Not over there. Over there I was a teacher and I tried to cram as much as I could to prepare them for the exam. This is why I came to NVSS. I felt very unhappy with what I was doing. I knew that it did not even prepare them for university never mind for life because I was spoon feeding them constantly. They came to my class and except for bringing a book and a pencil they didn't have to do anything but listen to me. But here it is different. I spoon fed the constantly and then when they left my class they went to another teacher who probably did the same thing. But at the end I was preparing them for the exam but nothing else. I think that many of the students did not feel very good about themselves.

N. Towards the end of your time at G when you decided to come to T you identify this dissonance or this difference between belief and practice. Did you think about that earlier in your career as well?

J. No not really. No, I think I had doubts. You know the longer you teach you begin to wonder if you are doing the same think year after year. New students came in but the curriculum didn't change that much. You still delivered things the same way because there was no other way you could do it. You had that class in front of you that you saw 3 times a week and you did things a certain way with what you had the students and everything. But as I knew I was coming to T and I knew what T was going to be about, I couldn't wait to come to T and start doing things differently. It was an exciting time.

N. Back to when you were teaching at G . . . did you think that you were doing things right . . . when you were in the middle of your career or that you had a strong sense of what your role was as a teacher. Whether it was right or wrong or good or bad in an absolute sense. Could you say "this is what I have to do as a teacher, this is my job and you could decide at the end of the day whether or not you did a good job as judged against this criteria. My class was organized, my tests were well written, the year schedule was posted and my lesson was interesting. Things were pretty clear.

J. Yes, I felt good about myself because I knew that I was doing a good job and I was doing the best I could. My students were there. They seemed to be interested. I had good results on the provincial exam. The students were paying attention to my lessons and were doing their work. So I felt good about that part. But down deep, the more I was teaching the more I felt that there had to be more to it than that. I felt that I was doing everything in little boxes and everything was nice and neat and the results were good.

N. Was it mechanical?

J. Yes. It certainly was. And even before T came along I was beginning to wonder if there was more to it than that . . . there has to be more to teaching than this. I felt that I was not really reaching the students even though I was doing my "job." I was

not reaching the student individually. The ones that did not learn that quickly, I felt bad that could not do more for them and yet I couldn't.

N. I've used this question later on and have had mixed response to it but could you relate any of what you have just said to professionalism? Did you feel professional there or do you feel professional here?

J. I feel much more professional here because of the way I can do things. I have so much more freedom to teach the kids the way I feel they should be taught based on their different learning styles and I think that as a professional that this is what you should strive to do is reach the students so that they do well but also (for me that is very important) that they feel good about themselves.

N. What kinds of skill do you need to be able to reach the students?

J. I think that it involves allot of practice. I feel myself that you have to be in the profession for a few years before you realize all that and at the beginning when you c come out of university and everyone has told you that this is the way to do things and its come out of a book and everything. But you have to be around students for a few years before you realize that this is what it's all about that what you were told at university and what you read in books doesn't always work out. You are working with people and that is different than theory and you realize that it does not always work that way.

J. Were you the queen of your classroom and you were up here and the students were down there?

J. No I wasn't. But my role is very different from what it is now. I was not the queen but I was the teacher and I was up here and the group was down there.

N. There was a real power difference.

J. Oh! Very much so! I never did get to know the students the way I know them now because I never had that opportunity to meet with them individually and to find out who they were and why their learning style was different. I couldn't because I had a big class and after that one was gone, another one came in so I could never do that. I didn't feel that I was the queen but I think the students saw me as such and I think most of us felt that way because we were up there and the students were down there. There was no "lets sit down and discuss things."

N. That distance is less here.

J. Oh far less! There is almost no distance. Of course I am still the teacher and they know that and you don't fool around with me and they know that (laugh). I demand respect and I respect them but there isn't that separation. We sit down and we joke and we laugh and we have a good time and they see me in the hall and they say hello and that is something that did not happen at G. They might have said hello in the halls but not with a smile on their face like here. I have developed a very strong relationship with the students here that I never did there. That is very different . . . I would find it difficult to go back . . . I would miss this interaction with the students.

N. There was an old metaphor that teachers were the sage on the stage and the literature on innovation talks about teachers moving more to a guiding role. That does that

describe anything? (J asks for clarification and I use the term again along with guide on the side as well)

J. It describes something but it is much more than that. I think that being a teacher is a very complex thing. You deal with the subject matter that you teach. You deal with the individual students so of course you try to be a mentor but you still have to be a teacher and I think that you can do both. I have seen teachers who can go too much one way or the other. Even here I have seen teachers who are still very much the teacher and knew the students and I have seen others who perhaps lean too much the other way and become too buddy buddy with the students and when this happens I think that there is something missing whether we like it or not we are still the teacher and we know a little bit more about life than the students do and if you become too much of a buddy, not only do students lose respect but they try to get around things and get away with murder and they don't do the assignments because they think that " you're my friend" and I don't have to do this and that. so you have to be very careful that you don't cross the line.

N. That is a hard balancing act.

J. It is a very hard balance!

N. Harder here?

J. Ummm . . . yes it is harder here because over there you didn't have that kind of relationship potential. Over there you were always the teacher and you didn't have to worry about the balance. You were the teacher and they were the students and they knew that they should not cross the line. Here, the fact that you do meet with them you get closer. You almost become a buddy but you can't. So some students don't know when they cross the line. And as a teacher you have to be careful also. You can be a mentor, you can like them, you can joke with them and laugh with them but they have to remember that you are still the teacher .

N. This is very consistent with some of the things that I am finding out through the interviews. You are not talking about something that is just unique to you.

J. So I'm normal (chuckle).

N. Lets move on to student roles. When I designed this question I had thought it possible to design an instrument to screen students for T. I don't think that way anymore. I wonder what your feelings are about that. Is it possible to describe the ideal T student.

J. OK student roles, I feel that to be successful at T and not everybody is successful and I hope not anybody is upset if I say that T is not for everybody just like the traditional school is not for everybody. It would be nice if we could,before they come to T that we could put them through some sort of a stage where they go in one door and come out and are suddenly a T student and know exactly what it's all about. To be successful here first of all you have to be disciplined, self sufficient and you have to want to succeed and work hard at it. Because suddenly, although we are there to help them, they are on their own more or less.

N. Do we teach them how to do those things?

J. We try to and . . . very few are successful during the first year. Lets not include grade 8. Let's start with grade 9 where they are in the GH for good. I would say that very few of them are successful in grade 9. It's a bad year and some do grow into the role of a T student and perhaps the second year or the third year they are successful. Some are never successful.

N. Do students have to go through that grade 9 stage.

J. I have had some students in my TA who did not go through that stage but they are the minority . . . they are special. They want to succeed, they want to do well whether I was here for them or not. We have very few of those. But most of the others do go through that stage. Grade 9 is a learning year and in grade 9 they learn what T is all about.

N. Are they better off having gone through that stage?

J. I would think so . . . most of them because life is like that. You don't always succeed right away. If you succeed right away in life you must be very lucky because most of us don't. We make mistakes and we learn from them hopefully and I suppose that makes us into a better person. I think that grade 9 is a learning for many students.

N. They are learning to take control.

J. Exactly. Taking control of their life and the learning and the that's what it's all about here. It's totally different. They've been to primary, elementary spoon fed to some extent and suddenly in grade 9 its a totally different world for them and we have to let them make a few mistakes and not really get that upset. We have to guide them but not be totally upset with them when they don't succeed. I mean this is a tough world.

N. We watch and let them make mistakes.

J. Yes! We guide them but if after my guidance they are still making mistakes I think we have to let them make those mistakes because if we always fight every battle for them they won't be any better in grade 10 and grade 11. They will wait for you to come and rescue them and we can't always do that. They will never learn if we keep on doing that. I let some of mine make mistakes. Yes I help them, I guide them and do all I can for them but if after all that they are still not successful and not meeting their goals, I think "let them fall" and we will pick up the pieces the following year. And I think they will be better T students after that.

N. How long do you let them fall?

J. Not too long because I hop that I will be able to rescue them at the end to some extent maybe not totally. I let them fall for a few months and when they suddenly realize that they are in trouble and had better do something about it. Some do something about it and I'm there to help them as much as I can but others don't. No matter how much you try to help them they just won't come back and pick up the pieces. But if we were in a traditional school those students would fail anyway.

N. Or might have been invisible

J. Exactly! This is why in a classroom you don't know those people in a traditional school where you have 30 students. You don't know why some students are not doing well. While here you can deal with them individually you learn why they are not being successful.

N. Do we as a group of teachers let students founder too long in their grade 9 or 10 year.

J. I think we do. Exactly!

N. Is there anything that we can do to fix that.

J. This is a tough question. I think that we've tried everything we could but I'm sure that there must still be other things we can do. I don't know what they are. I wish I knew because I'm probably as guilty as anyone else as I have let some slip through my fingers and I don't know if there is an answer to that but I think we need to look for one.

N. And yet you are talking about this having to ultimately come from inside them.

J. Exactly. There is only so much you can do. Even if you had a magic solution, if the student does not meet you half way he is not going to be successful. It has to come from him to start with. He has to want to be successful and do whatever it is he has to do and then we help them along the way. But we cannot keep doing it for them. Otherwise they might as well be in a traditional school because this is not T. T is not "well we'll do it for you, every step we'll be with you." We cannot do that.

N. When we are talking to parents who want to send their kids to T do we warn them about the grade 9 year.

J. I think we should. I think this is a big problem that at the grade 9 level because in my course this is where the students really do not progress as fast as they should and parents either accept or are afraid of what will happen to their child. I think we need to educate parents about grade 9 and say this is what we are doing and this is what your role is as a parent. Perhaps this has not been explained to them either . . . what T is all about and if the students fall behind a little bit not too much, don't be upset, it's not the end of the world. He can go to summer school or pick it up next year or if he's only half way through the year if he works hard he will be OK at the end of the year. But when parents are not used to seeing the students fall behind and when they do they are very upset and I would be too as a parent if somebody had not explained it to me. We need to educate parents about grade 9. This to me is the worst year. Parents are not aware of what grade 9 is all about.

N. Is the responsibility shift that we are talking about one of the key features of NVSS?

J. Yes. Lets face it, in the traditional school I felt that I was in charge of the whole thing. If the student failed it was my fault because he was there 3 times a week in my classroom. Although I did my best I also felt it was my responsibility, total responsibility. Of course sometimes the student did not meet me half way but because I did not know why that was then I thought that maybe my course was not interesting or I was not doing things the way I should to meet the need of the students. But I don't feel that way anymore. I am more relaxed in this school because I know that the responsibility is not totally on me. Ifeel the responsibility is

really 4 ways: the students, the parents the TA and the teacher. So I feel that I am not the only one. Other people are there to support me I suppose. We support each other and I think it has made it easier. I'm sure we have a long way to go but I think it is better than in the first year. I feel better about my role than I did then

N. Certainly the transition from childhood to adult hood or taking responsibility is a very important theme and I remember as a kid that transition seemed to take place at university for allot of kids and they would waste a year.

J. Exactly! Especially coming from a traditional school because even in grade 12 I was still spoon feeding them. They came to my class and I gave them everything. Everytime I reminded them what their assignments were due and when the tests were due they didn't have to think for themselves. It was always me

N. Lets move on to curriculum. I've used the term constructivism because it is a term associated with certain views on curriculum. Is curriculum thought of as being different here?

J. I don't think that the curriculum is different here. It is perhaps taught differently but curriculum is curriculum every where you go. Curriculum has to take place but it is certainly done in a different way here. It is approached differently and handled differently and I think for the better. Look at the results we've had at the grade 12 level. That's good. So which ever way we teach the curriculum or handle the curriculum I think that's the way to do it I suppose **[726]**

N. Do kids have more direct access to the curriculum than they had before. Were you a filter.

J. I would think so. Here they have access to the whole curriculum. At G I would look at the curriculum myself and filter and give them more or less of something as I thought it important in my subject. Things have changed here. The curriculum is out there and I think that students have access to the whole curriculum. Maybe now they themselves decide what is important and what is not. Which part of the curriculum they are going to spend more time on rather than me making the decision. I think its fantastic that students take that and decide what is important to them.

N. Do they have some choices even within a specific part of the curriculum.

J Sure they do. Look at those other subjects where this is the curriculum and this is what you have to do but they are given choices to do this or that. If it is something that you are very good at you do one thing and the one you are weak at you do more of that . At G everybody in the class was doing the same thing.

N. Curriculum is more tailored.

J. Certainly! To the need of the students. Between the marker and the students we decide together what is the need of the student because they know what they need. I think we thought that we knew better and we knew better what they need. But I think when they get to grade 11 and 12 maybe some grade 10 they know what they need.

N. That leads back to student roles. Maybe honesty and self awareness are important.

J. Its very important for a T student to be successful.

N Teaching grade 12 courses I have found that I have less latitude to play with the curriculum. Do you feel some right to play with the junior curriculum. Do you make changes to it, do you alter it perhaps from its original intention as prescribed by Victoria. How flexible are you with your interpretation of curriculum?

J. I agree with you. At the senior level you are very limited. You have to complete the curriculum because you know they have to write the provincial. At the junior level yes I do make changes I make within the context of the whole 8-12 program because I know the curriculum. I know what they need for the next level and I make sure that nothing has been left out. I might leave little things out that I think they might not need or will pick up next year or the year after. So I have the choice to do that.

N. What if they are not going to the next level.

J. I don't know that until they decide that they are not. There are certain things that they need and hoops that they have to jump through but not all of the hoops at the junior level. It is easier to change things and to delete things and put more emphasis on something else. But when you do that you have to make sure that if that student goes ahead to the next level that you did not delete that important part of the curriculum. It is just the frivolous things that can be removed.

N. Your concern is with the big picture.

J. Oh yes! I think that big picture has to be paid attention to. You have to see, not only the grade 8 for example, I see the grade 12. Of course not all the grade 8 are going on to grade 12 but I do not delete anything that they might require later on. Any frivolous thing that they might pick up the following year then it doesn't bother me to remove that. As a teacher I have the right to make that decision. I have been teaching long enough that I think I feel OK about making those decisions.

N. Is there a bit of a breakdown in the grade distinctions in your courses. Are you starting to look more at the curriculum as a continuum between grade 8 to 12. Could you see being able to deal with the curriculum without a grade distinction. Would that be workable.

J. Certainly! Iwouldn't have a problem dealing with the whole picture without saying that something was grade 9 etc. as long as you know that at the end of the course you have covered everything . . . it really does not matter when you cover it. I am not a person who likes to put things I little boxes.

N. Do you do that now a little bit.

J. I do (chuckle). Please don't tell anybody (laugh) People don't know about that but I do it and I feel good about it. You cannot put language into little boxes. I have taken the time to develop my own curriculum over the years and no one knows anything about it and the results have been very good. And I think that as a teacher that I should be able to do that.

N. I'm chuckling because I do the same thing and I would be surprised if the experienced teachers in this school didn't.

J. And when you do that I only have the students in mind. What is the best for them. How can I best meet their needs and the curriculum does not always do this . . . I'm sorry who ever designed the curriculum but we all know that. The curriculum is not always great and as teachers we know that. But those people over there who decide what the curriculum should be some of them have not been in the classroom or have been away form the classroom for so long I think they have lost touch. While we working with the students especially in an environment like T, we know what the students need and what their needs are and their needs are not always what the curriculum says they should be learning. So I am glad that I am not the only one breaking the rules so I won't go to jail and I won't lose my job (we both have a good laugh at this).

N. We still feel beholden to this curriculum. Its our job and its the law.

J. Exactly. Certainly there is no way out. You have to teach the curriculum and people remind you all the time. In the learning guides we follow the curriculum. So whether we like it or not we are still putting things in little boxes but when students come and see me, all the time because every learning guide has a seminar, I can easily move away even if the curriculum was in the learning guide I can change things when they come and see me based on the individual student.

N. In science, our old IRP's were very specific, while our new ones are very general.

J Same here. They are so vague.

N. Do you like that.

J. No I don't, I'm sorry. I think there should be a happy medium and that is what I was waiting for in the new curriculum. The other one was far too specific and this one is so general that I don't know what to teach any more. The old course is obsolete. I have to start my learning guides from scratch and I really don't know what to put in them because the new curriculum is so communicative in approach. At T how do you do that? It is very difficult.

N. Your guidelines for evaluation are all new.

J. Everything is all gone. I find it far to vague. I find myself thinking how am I going to teach the grade 12.

N. What about grade 11 or 10.

J. Same thing but I don't worry so much about them because they don't have the final exam at the end.

N. You still use the grade 12 exam at the end to determine the content.

J. Well they still have the grade 12 exam. Also the exam has changed and it's so vague also that it makes it difficult to determine what they should know to be successful on the exam because it's all over the place. Before the students knew exactly where they were going, what they needed but now things have changed. I wish they had stayed in between the two.

N. To an outsider who knows nothing about teaching languages, I would think that if somebody could speech fluently and write something that made some sense that would be a good indicator of their ability. And that might even be called an A

J. Oh I agree with you.

N. But that is a very general way of looking at it.

J. And also the exam is now a reading and writing exercise. That's all. The curriculum does not mention teaching grammar. How can you expect students to write two paragraphs on the exam and yet there is no grammar to be taught in the curriculum in grade 8 to 12. You have to make your own curriculum along the way. Things have change.

N. Empowerment. When I use that term I don't mean having power over somebody. This is a personal term. I think we talked about successful students at T having that internal motivation. Do you feel empowered as a teacher. **[1127]**

J. Oh yes! Because of all of the things that I have mentioned like dealing with the individual, changing the activities to meet their needs so that they can be more successful. I am able to play with the curriculum. Something I was not able to do before. Before, I was teaching and had to cover the course and I was teaching the course the best way I could and was teaching to the middle of the class. Here I have been given the power to do things my way to some extent. I mean that I do not always have things my way but when it comes to deal with students and to make them successful and to help them along the way, I have the power to do it.

N. It feels good professionally.

J. Yes! Its wonderful because of the success that I have had. I don't mean that I am more successful but it is so satisfying to see students who hated French because of the way it was taught before, suddenly enjoying it. They can come and see me and I can explain it to them and change things and suggest that they do it this way and look at it that way because you are better at that. Its great because they leave and they feel good and they want to take French next year and its a good feeling for them and for me and its wonderful. It would be impossible for me to go back to a traditional school after being 5 years here I don't see how anyone can go back. I would find it very difficult to go back in my little boxes.

N. You could go back but you wouldn't want to go back.

J. Yes. I would be very unhappy.

N. What would you change if you went back?

J. Oh boy!

N. Would you be a revolutionary.

J. I would be a trouble maker.

N. Would you try to change the system?

J. I would certainly try to show teachers who have not gone through this system how successful students can be with the system we have here. I don't know if I would be able to change them because you really have to be a few years in this system to understand how successful the students can be and how good the teacher can feel about themselves. So I would probably hit my head against the wall trying to explain something that they probably couldn't understand. I would be a trouble maker and they probably wouldn't want me there because I would want to change the whole system. I don't believe that I would be able to.

N. Has T led the way for education in the future? Do you see schools being more like this place in 20 years.

J. Certainly. I have a feeling that in 20 years there won't be any traditional schools as we know them. I think that students, teachers and parents are going to demand that things change and I think that T is the voice for what is out there. We needed a change.

N. What are they demanding?

J. Parents are demanding I think a wider education for the students without the little boxes. They want the children to be successful. They want their individual learning style to be recognized and everybody can be successful, not in the same way and some will be more successful than others. But given a chance I believe that every child can be successful and that is what every parent wants for the child to be successful. At T I believe that everybody can be successful and I think that we prepare them not only for university but also for the outside world. Its a big world out there and they have to make mistakes and they might as well make them here in the first year or even the second year and then be on there way.

N. That is an amazing feature isn't it.

J. Its incredible. Its true it certainly is.

N. I want to ask you a last question about the candid nature of this interview.

J. I hope I have been. I have nothing to hide. I believe I have done a good job since I've been here. I don't care what the other people feel about whether I have done a good job. I know that I have done a good job. With my dealing with my students and the success I've had with them and the success I've had in my course. I have nothing to hide. Whatever I have done I have done for the students not for me and not for the system. Ive done it for them so that they can be successful. If I have done anything wrong that's just too bad because I'll do it again and I don't care who knows it. It doesn't bother me.

N. It sounds like you might have been working a bit for the system before you came here.

J. Oh certainly! You had to. You had to fit in. Like I said in the last few years I was rebelling against that because I felt that it wasn't working. I knew there was another world over there at T and yet you still had to put in the time. I was not always as free and honest as I am now because I was playing the game but now I don't play the game and I don't care who knows it.

Appendix IV

John, June 14, '97

N. Teacher roles.

J. That was what I was having trouble with because it has been such a long time since I was in a normal school. I think you spend less time with the teacher here. You spend more time one on one which is good but overall you are spending less time with the teacher.

N. Has that been your experience?

J. Yes.

N. Would you like to have spent more time with teachers here?

J. Yes, probably. I spent more of my time self studying but that way of learning works here too.

N. Did your teachers ever try to pull you in. I know that you tended to be quite independent. Did any of your teachers put a little pressure on you and say "John, I'd like to meet with you more often.

J. Ms ___ Back in grade 10 she used to lock me up so that I would get my work done.

N. So there was a teacher that tried to lock you away and felt that this was going to be beneficial.

J. It was beneficial at the time because it put me into a situation where I had to work instead of having the choice of goofing around which was the choice I often took.

N. Why didn't she keep it up?

J. Because . . . I guess . . .

N. Did she get tired?

J. I guess that's it.

N. Did you resist?

J. No.

N. Were there any teachers that you worked really well with?

J. . . . long pause. I worked well with Ms B. But it always seems that she is so high above me and she is always analyzing what I am saying. I don't really work with teachers much . . . Yes there was another teacher that is related to my field of interest, accounting, I am going to be an accountant.

N. Why, was there anything different about them?

J. It just seemed to be a more relaxed environment. (can't understand)

N. Did you do allot of stuff on your own with the accounting. Did you have to sit down with the teacher much.

J. Most of it was on my own. That was the quickest courses I took and the math courses.

N. You must have talked to some of the math teachers. Did you ever have questions to ask them.

J. It was a while ago. All my math courses were done first. They were easy.

N. This is very strange (L acknowledges) When you think of when you think of kids in a conventional school they all have some stories to tell about teachers. They hate this one or they like that one . . . this one is funny etc. Here you don't have anything to say about our teachers except this one that locked you away. And then you say some nice stuff about her for the time that she locked you away and that relationship . . .

J. I have always had good relationships with teachers. I have never had problems with teachers at all except when I started slacking off and they would get mad at me but basically my whole educational life I've always had good relationships with them.

N. Did you have good relationships with teachers at NVSS.

J. Yes.

N. What kind of relationship is it if you never talk to your teacher or spent time with him or her.

J. I always thought they looked at the work I did and say that it was good work and that I was a good student.Well I wasn't a good student, I was just . . . I'm quite smart like things come quickly to me. Like I learned chemistry basically in a week. I can pick up things quickly . . . I don't know . . . we would have to start talking about a different subject.

N. Lets talk about a different subject because the relationship between the teacher and student here is not all that applicable to you.

J. No.

N. Because there was very little relationship. There was this informal or tacit understanding that John did a good job. Mark his learning guide and say hi and by and have a civil exchange.

J. Is there still that weekly compulsory contact time. Because I never checked in with my marker.

N. Any type of forced contact you wouldn't buy into.

J. No. If I had a problem which was seldom I would go to them. Usually for textbooks and learning guides. That's it.

N. You never had an opportunity to form a bond with a teacher.

J. Well, my TA teacher . . . thats nor really (????)

N. What did you think your role as a student was here? It sounds like that message is coming through loud and clear in what you are saying. Get the learning guide, do the work, hand it in and that's it.

J. It wasn't that easy though. I wish it were that easy. I just, when given the choice to do work and to socialize and put tables next to each other and jumping over them and see how many tables we could jump over and things like that I always chose the thing that was more fun.

N. Did you goof around allot.

J. Yes!!!!!!!!

N. Did you ever get caught?

J. No. I was very careful.

N. did you have lots of friends with you who were goofing around with you or were you goofing around with a select group.

J. A select group. It varied but usually a small group of 4 or 5 students.

N. Did you ever feel guilty?

J. Not at the time, no. It never bothered me. I just kept making excuses like next day or next week or I'll do a bunch of work over the summer or I'll do a bunch over the weekend. It started with doing it over the weekend.

N. How many hours over the years would you have worked at your studies in the building.

J. You mean on average? When I was in this school how many hours a day . . .

N. You've been here for 5 years excluding your grade 8 year . . . how many hours a day would you be sitting down and doing learning guides.

J. Usually in the morning I would do work and in the afternoon I would start getting bored and would start goofing off.

N. Did you have fun.

J. Yes I had lots of fun.

N. could you give me an example of what you would do when you goofed around that does not incriminate you or your friends?

J. I mentioned earlier about the table jumping. We did that in a classroom and there were tables arranged like this . . . and me and a friend of mine would see who could jump the most tables. We didn't get caught. We went out into the hall ways to get a goofed run at and didn't get caught.

N. Did you have a sense of responsibility as a students or was student a term that applies to you.

J. I don't think you can apply student. Responsibility neither is or was a quality that I possessed. I think that I still have a problem with it but I'm learning and getting better. Learning to plan.

N. Do some of those lessons that teachers were trying to get across to their students about the importance of planning and being organized and sitting down and getting the work done for at lease part of the day, regularly attending. Are these lessons that went over your head at the time.

J. They just went in one ear and out the other. I knew I was supposed to I just didn't want to and didn't feel I needed to.????????

N. Did you go to seminars and did you like seminars because this would be a teacher role wouldn't it.

J. Yes it would. They gave me contact with that certain English teacher which was good. I think maybe this school needs more seminars.

N. For people like you . . . Does everybody need them?

J. I don't know. I can't speak for other people.

N. But you have friends. Do they like that aspect of what goes on here? Do they like seminars or would they have rather been left on their own like you.

J. I have one friend that I still talk to that still goes here and he's had the same problems as me.

N. He likes to be invisible too. Could you describe that as being invisible. What you did?

J. Yes . . . not really because I still handed in the work. I just didn't talk to them . . .

N. Lets talk about the curriculum. Did you like working with learning guides?

J. ????????its just the responsibility of having to do it by yourself. Of having to give myself deadlines??????????. The self pacing or whatever it is turned me off.

N. Had elementary school been very easy for you.

J. Oh yes!!! Elementary school is . . . it was really boring.

N. Was it a joke. I goofed off allot in class and made loud comments all the time but I always got straight A's.

N. Were you ever challenged . . . to push yourself to perform on some kind of project or debate or research or presentation.

J. I remember one project in grade 8 and M . . .

N. You went there in grade 8?

J. Grade 8 and grade 9. I came here in grade 10.

N. So you've been here for 5 years.

J. It was a big project and the class kept getting the deadline pushed ahead and my partner and I hadn't done it and we left it until the last weekend and much like this weekend when I studied for my last unit of chemistry. We did that and did a wonderful job and got a great mark on it but we left it until the last minute. I don't know what that means.

N. Did you get straight A's at R.

J. No actually I didn't. I got allot of A's but I got less.

N. Was the ease of school starting to fade.

J. It was the SS side of it that didn't go so well. The Math and Sc. was easy it was always easy.

N. So anything that you didn't really like to work at that required you to work at it you wouldn't do well at.

J. Yes.

N. And there you actually had to produce material and here you have to produce material.

J. Here I learned that I can produce good quality material in English and SS. I just have to try . . . I have a question. Has the ministry of education changed the curriculum and started it at grade 1 and carried it on like that. Because I've noticed that as I have fallen behind that new things seem to be coming into the system. I always remember when I was in my grade 7 year that there were changes just the grade below me that they were changing it.

N. You are talking about the content or the way that they did it?

J. The way they did it.

N. What do you mean by the way that they did it?

J. Less textbook question and answer and more hands on projects.

N. I think that the answer is yes. They were changing the mode of instruction. I thing they were shifting allot of the responsibility for learning to kids and giving them some flexibility and freedom to pursue interests within a more general framework.

J. So more structure.

N. It was more difficult for example for teachers to write tests on the expectations because the expectations might involve doing some research on something or becoming an expert on something and being able to apply your knowledge of different forms of government to such and such. Understand relationships and not necessarily know that for example that, in ecology, that a particular animal is this way but that there is a hierarchy.

J. That is a good thing I think. Because then you don't all end up knowing the same thing. Each person could do a different animal.

N. Or you might be looking at history and the history of great people's contributions and the old curriculum might say that you have to know that particular person and the new curriculum might say that you should know the importance or the role of important individuals and these are the people that you might do some work on. So it is a little bit different. Do you notice that in our curriculum at all or was ours very specific?

J. Notice what?

N. This trend that you noticed in elementary school or the change in curriculum behind you. Did you notice that at NVSS?

J. Yes I noticed that the curriculum had changed. It was more projects.

N. What about evaluations?

J. You've got me.

N. Are we getting away from tests and more emphasis on presentations and projects.

J. Yes, that's what I noticed.

N. Interviews. Do you like that and do you think that's a good trend?.

J. I think that its a good trend but they way I was brought up and the way I was taught to learn it isn't like that.

N. How were you taught to learn?

J. I was taught to learn the old fashioned way. Read a book and do some questions and get tested and give the notes back.

N. were you good at that?

J. Yes, very good that's why I did so well earlier.

N. T didn't appreciate that brilliance of yours.

J. (laugh) I don't know about that .

N. But it didn't appreciate that . It didn't keep teaching you the same way that you were an expert at.

J. Yes????

N. You're sitting there looking at a learning guide that says . . . using these ideas, incorporate them into an essay or a project or collage . . . discuss with your marker and work with a partner . . . this kind of stuff.

J. Its like all these things require creativity . . . but I am creative . . . it doesn't seem to fit. I try to figure it out myself what happened???????.

N. Could we say that you did not like the way that the curriculum worked here for you, that you didn't like the way the learning guides were written.

J. Shakes his head affirmatively.

N. Could you have designed a learning guide format that would have enabled you to progress through your curriculum. To get your A's and what would that curriculum have looked like.

J. It would look like read chapters 2 and 3 and answer the questions at the end of the chapters.

N. You were trained to do that in elementary school. Did you go to private school?

J. Math was exactly like that. Read the book and do a bunch of questions then write the test.

N. Here math was like that.

N. Did you do math 12?

J. No.

N. Math 11.

J. Yes.

N. Easy time with math 11.

J. Yes and math 10 was very simple. That was the first course I got done at the school and I figured judging form that I'll just breeze through. I thought that self pacing would be good when I was at R. I thought that I'm a good student and I get A's and it would be good but it didn't work out.

N. Here, they through a curriculum curve ball at you.

J. Yes . . . a curriculum slider.(we both laugh).

N. Fascinating. You are a what we classically call a teacher pleaser. And that is a terrible term used to describe kids that can listen in class and then write all the correct answers to the questions that you ask on a test.

J. That is what I have been. That's the way I've been. I was never a suck up or anything I was taught easily.

N. A sponge. When someone is directing you can be a sponge.

J. It is on my resume I learn quickly.

N. Tell me what to do and I can do it.

J. Yes.

N. Don't tell me what to do and give me choices and . . .

J. (Laugh) cause then I'll just mess it all up.

N. Probably hurdling tables (both laugh . . . a good gut laugh.

N. Have you found a good career path as a result of that. Accounting sounds like its perfect for you.

J. That's what I'm planning to and I'll probably excel at it. The courses I've done at college I do well in. Having deadlines for assignments has helped allot.

N. You're taking courses at college. I thought that you hadn't graduated yet.

J. Concurrent studies. The magical term that enables you to take college courses while still in high school.

N. What courses?

J. Accounting and economics and computer information systems.

N. You did well in them?

J. Yes I did well in them and got A's.

N. These are courses with 20 year old

J. Most of them are my age.

N. So you can't do the high school curriculum but you can do college courses.

J. (laugh) I know its weird. It was the deadlines, the inclusion of deadlines that helped me because I never missed an assignment, I never missed any work. It was always "by next class you have to have this assignment done and hand it in" I always left it to the last day but I always got it done.

N. Are you having fun with this?

J. Yes.

N. So am I. Empowerment. Does this mean anything to you.

J. At NVSS students are given most of the power over their education???? I don't think I was ready for that having the power over my own education. I think I prefer to let that responsibility rest with the teacher . . . because I was such an easy learner I needed someone toteach me. Having the power to teach myself???????????

N. Have you heard the term deep processing of information.

J. No.

N. You can know things at a superficial level or you can really understand them or you can apply the concepts or you can analyze and evaluate.

J. You mean like deeper than memorization?

N. Yes. Do we at NVSS encourage that with our leaning guides or are we trying to get to that.

J. Yes, yes I think so because I have noticed in some of the learning guides that.I can't think of examples but I have just notices that the things that are in them like certain projects like the periodic table project. That's like a good project because students can know the elements and . . . It takes longer to learn things that way but you know them allot better and you'll remember them for a long time.

N. Are you going to remember this stuff (organic chem. stuff)

J. Laugh) some of it but definitely not all of it.

N. You will remember some patterns and similarities

J. But not the specific things. But a quick review down the road and I will know it again. I always keep my notes and my file cards.

N. we call this hoop jumping. You jumped through the hoops successfully. I made you perform and you got the cookie.

J. Yes.

N. To really deep process the stuff you have to work with it. do some lab activities and do some research and you have to have some interest in the first place.

J. Yes . . . I don't know that I have allot of interest in doing it.

N. But you did it in accounting.

J. I am interested in math and those were the first courses that I finished. But science I don't know. Chemistry was really fun. I like rules and structure and chemistry is like that. Less than math but more than English.

N. Was NVSS trying to force you to become something that you would eventually have become anyway. Were they trying to do it too soon. In other words were they trying to place too much responsibility upon you too soon.

J. I think so . . . I think so I have always thought that students like teenagers aren't really ready for the responsibility that NVSS thrusts on you. I wasn't ready. There's probably students that can handle that responsibility but I have never really had any responsibly and suddenly at NVSS I had to accept tons of responsibility and I couldn't do it????

N. Did you recognize at the time that you were being given lots of responsibility or did you just say whoopee I have freedom?

J. Yes . . . Did I notice at the time that I had allot of responsibility . . . It was so long ago.

N. It is hard to recall.

J. What I remember form then is always having work that I had to do but I kept putting it off.

N. Did you feel guilty?

J. Guilty?

N. Did you at the time?

J. Oh did I . . .

N. You were in TA and people were getting g back their assignments and pink slips and . . .

J. Yes and then the TA teacher would always . . .

N. Lock you up . . .

J. That was a different teacher. My TA teacher was different. She never locked me up or told me that I had to work in a specific place. Later on like last year I would work alone in her room because that was the only way that I could get work done was alone.

N. Did you feel in control or did you feel out of control.

J. I felt completely out of control. I felt that I didn't have control over everything. I did have. I had complete control over everything. If I wanted to I could have worked but it always seemed like I was behind so I didn't bother catching up. Its like when you borrow $5 from somebody and then a month or 2 passes and then you don't feel like paying the 5 bucks back because it has been so long and it was kind of like that I think. I didn't do work for so long that I didn't feel like doing it at all.

N. What if we had been a little more diligent at catching you?

J. That would have been a good thing . . . that would have been a good thing. Students that are like me that are lazy and who procrastinate and leave work there should probably be more teacher dealings with them to get them to do work because they obviously don't have the responsibility. They can't handle the responsibility.

N. Will they eventually come around . . . some of them.

J. I haven't come around

N. well you've come around at D College.

J. Yes. I haven't yet been able to figure out . . .

N. You haven't come around to what . . .

J. I haven't come around to being able to figure out what exactly screwed me up at NVSS.

N. Do you feel screwed up?

J. Well it took me 5 years to do 3 years of curriculum. I'm behind in my studies for life well not for life but for the things I wand to do in life. I'm 2 years behind. Now that I think of it 2 years is not bad.

N. You're also taking some Douglas Coll courses

J. Yes so I didn't completely get behind.

N. What would you have liked NVSS to have done for you?

J. To catch me. To catch me from goofing off. At the time I was trying to escape the teacher's ties.

N. And you were good at escaping. Did you feel like you were escaping at the time.

J. We would always work in a room and then we would eventually . . . we would socialize quite a bit . . . and when a teacher would come and say to do some work and then after a while we wouldn't be allowed to work in there any more. So we found a new place and we migrated to find the unsupervised area. That's exactly it. We always worked in the same area all day and no work got done.

N. Do you feel angry toward the school? I'm going to ask you some questions that you can say that you don't feel like answering them . . .

J. I'm fine [the tears were welling up in his eyes].

N. You are not angry towards the school.

J. I'm angry at myself. Its basically my fault for falling so far behind.

N. Carrying around this huge load of guilt . . . is NVSS partly responsible for that do you think?

J. The conditions of NVSS made it conducive for me to fall behind.

N. So in another setting . . . you would not have been a different person, you just wouldn't have been allowed to fall behind.

J. Like if I was at MRSS I wouldn't have had an opportunity to fall behind and would have finished high school 2 years ago and I would have been in my second year of college.

N. Screwing around jumping over tables in college?

J. Ya right laugh and . . .

N. I'm serious about that statement though

J. Long silence and he is obviously thinking

N. You were . . .

J. Oh . . . I see! I see! If I'd have stayed there I never . . . from the mistakes I've made at NVSS I have learned more about the significance of being responsible.

N. Have you?

J. Yes . . . yes . . .

N. There are allot of 19 and 20 year olds who are going to the pub every night, chasing women, putting all of their money into cars, smoking dope not doing any schooling at all . . . Its just an observation . . .

J. You're right . . . they were like me only with that old school they never learned responsibility. They are waiting for life to teach them that and I've learned that earlier. I see . . . thanks for . . . revealing that for me.

N. Or you revealed it to yourself.

J. It got revealed!

N. It got revealed . . . hey this is neat. I recount the UBC pub story. Do you feel a need to do that . . .

J. To get booted out?

N. To go to university and do what you did here again.

J. I don't think that would happen again. I don't think I would let it happen again just from remembering how I have felt this last year here. Especially this last 2 months. I have felt the extreme load that having to finish high school when you are still 19 . . . its just . . . it sucked. But I'm feeling better now.

N. What are you going to do to get your graduation? Or do you have to get your graduation and enroll as a mature student in college and carry on with your education from there?

J. Are you talking about graduation from high school? . . . I only have to do the final exam for English and I have finished chemistry so I'm finished high school tomorrow. So my graduation is tomorrow. I went to graduation ceremonies last year and it didn't mean a thing and I wore the robe and . . . what I that thing called?

N. The cap and gown.

J. And it didn't mean a thing. I feel bad because I missed that kind of closing. I missed that.

N. Why don't you close it with your folks. Have a private celebration.

J. I'd like that. Well my birthday is on Sunday too. I was quite pleased that I would be finished before I turned 20 . . . 3 days before I turned 20.

N. You have been really honest with me. I feel that you have.

J. I feel so relieved. I've got allot of stuff off of me. I feel I feel much better.

N. I'm not a psychotherapist but I think there's something about these things that having a receptive listener that helps. The tape stopped.

John and I were talking about stuff for 5 minutes and basically this idea of kids having to go through a kind of irresponsibility to find out how to be responsible and John had a question.

J. Do you think that learning responsibility is a lesson that all people have to learn and to go through.

N. Yes but in very different ways. Story again about responsibility

J. And they never went through that.

N. That same kid might have to go through what you did in a different environment.

J. Responsibly was never really put into my daily life style. It never became a habit so it was something that I would have had to have learned through mistakes

N. Some people are so sick and tired of parents telling them what to do . . . tape ends