

**A Case Study:  
Edward Milne Community School  
1992 – 1996**

**By**

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BA University of Victoria, 1981

A thesis submitted in partial requirement for the degree of

**Master of Arts  
In  
Leadership and Training**

We accept this thesis as conforming to the required standard

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Royal Roads University  
2000

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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<b>CHAPTER 1 Study Introduction and Background .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Background .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.3 Benefits of the Project .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>1.4 The Organization .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.5 Perceived Problems .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1.6 Summary .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2 Literature Review .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.1 Learner Focused Education .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>2.2 Leadership and Organizations .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2.3 Research (Methodology).....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3 Conduct of Research Methods .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>3.1 Research Methods .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>3.2 Data Gathering Tools .....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>3.3 Study Conduct .....</b>	<b>32</b>

<b>CHAPTER 4 Case Study .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>4.1 School History .....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>4.2 The Case .....</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5 Case Study Results .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>5.1 Study Findings .....</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>5.2 Study Recommendations .....</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>CHAPTER 6 Lessons Learned .....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>86</b>
Appendix A Staff Information letter .....	A-1
Appendix B Clark Survey .....	B-1
Appendix C List of Formal Interviewees .....	C-1
Appendix D 62 Blues .....	D-1
Appendix E Architects Credits .....	E-1

# **CHAPTER 1**

## **Study Introduction and Background**

### **1.1 Introduction**

It is clear that in British Columbia as in the rest of Canada there have been dramatic social and economic changes over the past 25 years. These changes have placed new demands upon, and created new expectations for, our schools.

These changes include an explosion in knowledge, coupled with powerful new communication and information processing technologies. The structure of the economy is shifting from being primarily resource-based to becoming a mixed economy with increasing emphasis on the information and service sectors. Society itself is changing and becoming much more diverse. An increasing variety of ethnic groups is represented, family structures are changing, the role of women in society is being redefined, and the age structure of the population is altering as older citizens make up an increasing percentage of society.

In view of the new social and economic realities, all students, regardless of their immediate plans following school, will need to develop a flexibility and versatility undreamed of by previous generations. Increasingly, they will need to be able to employ critical and creative thinking skills to solve problems and make decisions, to be technologically literate as well as literate in the traditional sense, and be good communicators. Equally, they will need to have well-developed interpersonal skills and be able to work co-operatively with others. Finally, they will need to be lifelong learners.

The challenge for the school system in British Columbia is to provide programs that will help students develop these vital skills and attitudes, in such a way that all students will participate and learn.

In early 1987, the Province of British Columbia established a commission headed by Barry Sullivan to study the British Columbia school system. It conducted an extensive province wide study, between March 1987 and July 1988. The Royal Commission on Education found that the school system served the students who intend to go on to post-secondary education at colleges or universities very well. However, the Commission noted that the majority of students did not plan to attend post-secondary institutions, and for those individuals in their secondary years there was an “apparent failure...to offer a non-university preparation program that is valuable in its own right and not simply a second-best alternative... .” The Commission also underscored the “disturbingly high” dropout rate, and concluded “one solution to these problems is to create relevant alternative programs of good quality to attract non-academic students including those who might otherwise leave school early”. (Sullivan 1988, p 21)

Sullivan also pointed out that the high drop out rate may start in the elementary years, where students establish their individual and cultural identities, and develop critically important attitudes and skills. In addition to the dropout problem, a proportion of older students demonstrated a lack of interest and engagement with school learning activities. A variety of factors may contribute to these problems, including the student’s home situation, economic

factors, and the emotional changes that accompany adolescence. And finally, another factor may be a perceived lack of relevance in the curriculum, particularly at the secondary level.

## **1.2 Background**

British Columbia's Ministry of Education's response to the recommendations of The Royal Commission on Education was given legislative form in the School Act of 1988. A Mandate for the School System in this province was introduced in the form of a Mission Statement:

*The purpose of the British Columbia school system is to enable learners to develop their individual potential and to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to contribute to a healthy society and a prosperous and sustainable economy.*

The document Year 2000: A Framework For Learning defined an educated citizen as:

- Thoughtful, able to learn and to think critically, and to communicate information from a broad knowledge base.
- Creative, flexible, self-motivated and possessing a positive self image.
- Capable of making independent decisions
- Skilled and able to contribute to society generally, including the world of work.
- Productive, able to gain satisfaction through achievement and to strive for physical well being.
- Co-operative, principled and respectful of others regardless of differences.



- Aware of the rights and prepared to exercise the responsibilities of an individual within the family, the community, Canada and the world. (pp. 3 - 4.)

Fulfilling the school system's mission through developing educated citizens requires that not only the goals of the system, but also the responsibilities of all participants, are clearly understood. Three key ingredients in this process of the "educated citizen" include the roles of the school boards, the schools and the students.

- *School Boards* are responsible for determining local education policy and developing local curriculum programs in accordance with provincial policies and guidelines, as well as for implementing provincial policies and programs. They are also responsible for governing their districts and schools in a fiscally responsible and cost effective manner.
- *Schools* are responsible for involving students in provincial and locally developed education programs in accordance with provincial and district policy. At the school level, teachers and administrators are responsible for organizing educational programs that meet the needs of each student, for assessing and evaluating student learning, and for communicating with parents about school progress.
- *Students* are responsible for making the most of their educational opportunities, for respecting the rights of others, and for co-operating with fellow students in the achievement of their personal goals. (Year 2000: A Framework For Learning, 1988, p. 8)

Year 2000: A Framework For Learning document continues by listing key principles about the nature of learning, and about curriculum and assessment. Together with the Mission Statement,

the Goals of Education, and the description of the educated citizen, these principles are the foundation upon which the Framework of Learning stands.

### Learning and the Learner:

- Learning requires the active participation of the learner.
- People learn in a variety of ways and at different rates.
- Learning is both an individual and a social process.

### Curriculum and Assessment

- Curriculum and assessment should be learner-focused.
- Assessment and reporting should help students make informed choices. (p. 8)

In light of the information and recommendations provided by the Year 2000: A Framework For Learning, and the direction given by the School Act of 1988, it was determined by the Ministry of Education and by School District 62, that when a new building was required for the high school in Sooke, the new facility would be designed to offer an educational program that would serve the need of students in the twenty-first century. In early spring of 1992, School District 62 was given approval by the Ministry of Education to begin the planning for the construction of a new facility to replace Edward Milne Community School. This new school, it was determined, was to offer curriculum and assessment according to a learner-focused model. Construction of the new Edward Milne School was completed in 1996 and it currently houses 680 students and approximately 40 staff. The architectural design has warranted much attention and has resulted in numerous architectural awards. The basic premise for the school, which was to offer a learner-focused approach to education, however, has not occurred. Some changes in this direction have

occurred, but primarily, instruction and assessment continue to be offered according to a traditional teaching model.

### **1.3 Benefits of the Project.**

In this research project, I will examine the various steps involved in the building of the new school from its inception. I will interview the various stakeholders in an effort to glean information that may prove helpful in determining the reasons as to why Edward Milne Community School has not reached its initial intention of offering to students a learner-focused approach to education. Based on this information and on a review of selected literature, I hope to be able to provide recommendations that may assist Edward Milne Community School in achieving this goal. In addition, I hope that this information may offer School District 62, or any other school district contemplating building a new school and adopting a philosophical approach to education that requires a radical change on the part of district staff, administrators, teachers parents and students a means of achieving this end effectively.

Specifically, the benefits of this project might include:

- A) suggestions as to how the Edward Milne Community School facility can be utilized more effectively to offer a learner focussed program.
- B) methods by which staff acceptance and support of change can be most effectively achieved.
- C) clarification of the roles and responsibilities of the key people within the organization who are responsible for implementing change.

## **1.4 The Organization.**

To assist the reader in understanding School District 62 and in particular Edward Milne Community School, the following section will outline the various structures in place within the school district. Sooke School District is a district situated south west of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada. The district offers educational programs to approximately 5,600 students.

The school district has a total of twenty-four schools, nineteen of which are elementary, three are middle schools and two are high schools. School District 62 also provides students with Co-operative Education, alternative programs and adult education.

The seven elected School Trustees come from two separate communities at opposite ends of the district boundaries. Four trustees come from Langford and Colwood which is an urban area bordering the city of Victoria. The other three trustees are from the more rural Sooke which was originally a fishing and logging community located about twenty-two kilometers from Langford.

The two secondary schools are located at opposite ends of the district. Belmont has 1400 students and offers programs from the grade 10 to 12 and Edward Milne Community School, which has 680 students offers programs from the grades 9 to 12.

### 1.4.1 Organizational Chart

Figure one below illustrates the School District organization chart for the academic year of 1991-1992. This is the structure that was in place at the time of the decision to build the new facility for Edward Milne Community School.

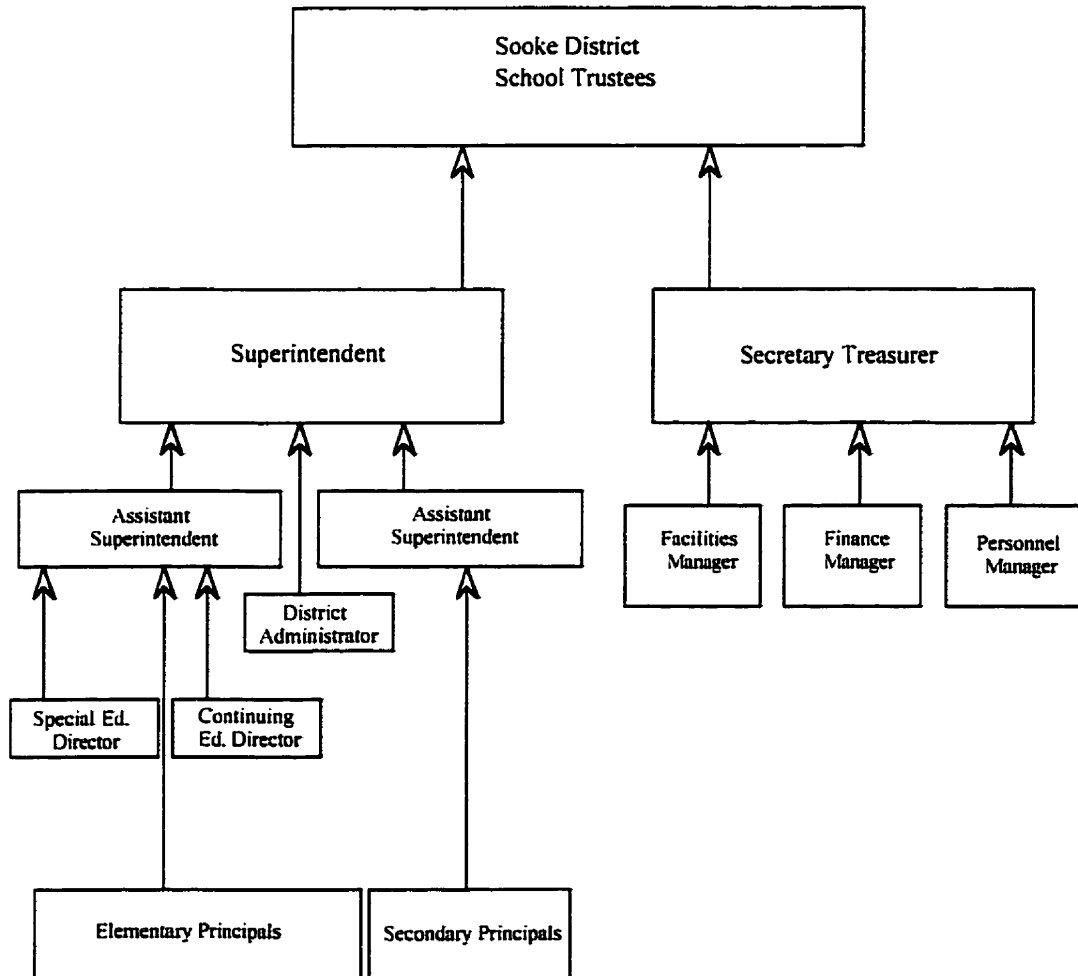


Figure 1. School District Organizational Chart 1992.

## 1.5 Perceived Problems.

In my capacity as a technology, social studies and information technology teacher at Edward Milne Community School, I had the opportunity to be a participant in the planning process of the new school since its inception in 1989. I was a member of the original Steering Committee, the Technology Committee, and the Learning Development Team. I am currently a member of the school Change Committee. I was involved in contributing to the architectural plans and to the mission statement.

*Edward Milne Community School strives to be a learner-focused community resource centre, supported by a unified vision and shared responsibility. The aim is to promote lifelong learning in a caring environment through a variety of educational, vocational, cultural, recreational and social opportunities for students of all ages and abilities.*

Although the new school is designed to promote a learner-focused model of education and despite the fact that our mission statement advocates this educational approach and the Ministry of Education in its document, Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Plan (September 1994) outlines the need for a learner-focused approach, Edward Milne Community School has not, to this point, achieved this goal.

My observations of the school are that the following list of problems contributed to the failure of the school to adopt a learner-focused model: budget cuts, limited staff input, opposition to

change, little staff development in the area of learner-focused education, the lack of a flexible timetable, and limited development of curriculum learning guides.

## **1.6 Summary.**

The purpose of this project is to help to uncover the underlying problems that may have prevented Edward Milne Community School from offering a learner-focused program when it opened in September 1996. A second purpose is to offer recommendations to school staff, administrators and district staff in School District 62 which may be helpful in gaining an understanding as to why difficulties arose and provide possible solutions to these problems. A third goal is to assist other school districts in a similar situation that are contemplating the construction of a new high school and the implementation of a philosophical change from a traditional model of teaching to a learner-focused one.

Chapter Two reviews the literature related to learner-focused education, leadership and organizations, and action research. Learner-focused education is examined in terms of its efficacy as an alternate model to a traditional educational approach and its viability as a means of preparing students for the twenty-first century is investigated. The topics of leadership, organizations, organizational culture and a team approach are reviewed in relation to their impact on decision making. Research methods are also discussed with a focus on an action research design that supports the use of a naturalistic, qualitative approach.

Chapter Three describes the research methods utilized in this study. The data collection tools are described, ethical considerations are discussed and the various steps that are involved in the progression of the study are outlined.

Chapter Four presents the case study itself, which includes a historical description of Edward Milne Community School from its inception to present day and an outline of the case.

Chapter Five offers an analysis of the data collected and a discussion of the project findings. A list of recommendations are offered in this chapter to assist school districts with future planning and an understanding of the difficulties that can arise if specific steps are not followed. Specific recommendations are offered to Edward Milne staff and administration regarding a means by which a learner-focused model can be adopted and how the school facility can be used more effectively and in the fashion for which it was designed.

Chapter Six describes the lessons learned by this researcher from completing this case study.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **Literature Review**

In order to determine the efficacy of one teaching method over another or to determine the most effective means of implementing change it is imperative to examine the literature in these areas. A review of the knowledge offered by experts in their fields could help to shed some light on the reasons as to why Edward Milne Community School did not adopt a learner-focused approach to education.

Although the original plan was for a transformation when it opened in 1996 it continues to offer only limited opportunities for students to direct their own learning. Through an examination of the literature it becomes possible to provide recommendations that should prove beneficial. The areas I have examined include learner-focused education, leadership and organization and research methodology.

#### **2.1 Learner-Focused Education.**

Teaching, according to current beliefs and practices, is still, by and large, considered a matter of presenting material to be learned and reinforcing correct answers that the learner gives back to the teacher. In this ever-changing information age, however, this delivery model is out-dated and fails to meet the needs of our students going into the twenty-first century. Students today

must be lifelong learners. They must be flexible, be good communicators, effective team members and self-starters.

An examination of the research conducted on the efficacy of a learner-focused approach to learning may prove useful as a more effective alternative to our current system of teaching.

As early as the 1930's, and later in his work on the science of education during the 1960's, Piaget advocated an approach to education based of his research on a child's intellectual development that closely resembles principles associated with learner-focused education.

In *Piaget in the Classroom* (1973) Kamii devotes a chapter to pedagogical principles derived from Piaget's theory of education. In this chapter, she examines the three main principles Piaget deemed necessary for learning and what he believed the role of the teacher should be. Learning, he suggested, must be an active process and one which allows for true discovery by the child and is not restricted to the child discovering only that which the teacher wishes him to discover. Piaget also emphasized the importance of social interaction between students during the learning process. Cooperation among children, he believed, was essential to create an awareness of differing points of view in order to help them move out of egocentricity and to make them critical thinkers. Finally, he advocated that intellectual activity should be based on actual experiences rather than on language. Rather than focussing on words or correct answers he believed that a more effective method would be to engage the learner in actively constructing his own knowledge. Teachers, he emphasized, should not present ready-made knowledge and

morality but, rather, should provide opportunities for a child to construct his own knowledge and moral standards through his/her own learning.

Five and six decades later, much of the research on learner-focused learning concurs with Piaget's theory on education and his recommendations for an effective structure for the learning process.

Johnson and Johnson (1989, 1990) conducted a review of research findings comparing student motivation and achievement when they received instruction through a traditional lecture style approach and alternatively when students had an opportunity to engage in cooperative learning. The findings of these studies indicate that both attitude and achievement are significantly better for those students who were involved in cooperative learning. Cooperative learning, the findings suggest, causes higher achievement, increased retention, greater use of higher level reasoning, increased perspective taking, greater intrinsic motivation, more positive heterogeneous relationships, better attitudes toward teachers, higher self-esteem, greater social support, more positive psychological adjustment, more on-task behavior, and greater collaborative skills. Johnson and Johnson also see the use of cooperative learning as a teaching method, which can engage and empower students who often feel helpless and discouraged. Giving them cooperative learning partners provides them with hope and opportunity. Cooperative learning groups empower their members to act by making them feel strong, capable and committed. (p. 4).

Furthermore, they suggest that co-operative learning can be used as a means of supporting "at-risk" students. Students who are "at-risk" for dropping out and/or failing in school are typically

in need of caring and committed peer relationships, social support, and positive self images, as well as higher achievement. These are obtained from cooperative learning experiences. In order to work cooperatively, “at risk” students need the social skills required to work effectively with others. Within most classrooms, however, the status quo is either competitive or individualistic instruction within which students are expected to listen to lectures, participate in whole class discussions, individually complete worksheets without interacting with their classmates, study by themselves, and take the test. (Johnson and Johnson 1989, 1990)

Similar to Johnson and Johnson, a number of researchers have focussed on the impact of empowerment on student learning. A series of studies by Susan Harter (1980, 1982) shows that learners who perceive a lack of control will naturally “hold back.” The results of other studies indicate, however, that a high degree of student control over his/her learning positively affects the type and quality of learning that occurs. For example, Nancy Atwell (1987) found an improvement in student attitudes toward reading by allowing them to choose their reading materials for sustained silent reading. Similarly, research findings indicate that when students are working on goals they themselves have set, they are motivated and efficient, and they achieve more than they do when working to meet goals set by the teacher (Hom and Murphy 1983, Schunk 1985).

Another group of researchers has taken the investigation one step further to examine the motivating factors which influence student retention, assimilation, analysis and application of knowledge. Bok’s (1989) research findings on knowledge retention indicate that students retain little of what they learn when taught in a lecture format. Furthermore, other findings suggest that

students do not often appropriately use the knowledge they have learned (Schmidt, 1983). Some researchers suggest that this is because students do not value the information that is being imparted because it is not meaningful. Because they have not had an opportunity to construct their own knowledge, it is not seen as relevant to their needs in the real world. According to Robert Marzano (1992) meaningful use of knowledge involves such tasks as decision making, investigation, experimental inquiry, problem solving and invention. Opportunities to apply these tasks in a traditional lecture style, whole class instruction classroom, he suggests, are limited. In addition, he suggests that students should have an opportunity for extended engagement in complex tasks that would allow for the deepest kind of learning to occur. Under the current system, however, this is not generally possible. Tasks rarely take even one or two periods to finish, besides that they are usually directed by the teacher and require little higher order thinking (Doyle 1983, Fisher and Hiebert 1988). Elliot Jaques (1985) supports Marzano's argument and asserts that it is only when we work on long term projects that the full complement of skills and abilities characteristic of effective learning come into play

Theorist Norman Fredriksen (1984) concurs with Marzano and Jaques in the need for students to engage in long term tasks. He points out that there are glaring inconsistencies between: "real life work" and "school work." Tasks we perform outside school often take weeks, months and sometimes years to complete. Marzano also suggests that the characteristic that is most important if a task is to be called meaningful is the extent to which it is self-directed. Students, he asserts, should have control over the construction of tasks and should have control over the products generated from the tasks. He recognizes that some direction may be needed from the teacher when new information is being introduced, however, he believes students should not be

restricted in terms of the ways in which they demonstrate learning outcomes. Most often, under the current system, this is the case. Generally, products in schools are limited to written and oral reports (Durst and Newell, 1989). While useful, these methods should not be used to the exclusion of other methods of presenting information such as video and audio-taped reports, newscasts, graphic organizers and explanations, slide shows, debate and panel discussions which are all valid ways of reporting. A final ingredient that Marzano believes is essential to making knowledge meaningful is that the focus of tasks be on realistic or authentic issues. An assessment expert such as Grant Wiggins (1989) champions this authentic task movement. He asserts that what is needed in education is a shift from artificial tasks, the purpose of which is to cover content to the use of more authentic tasks that are meaningful to students and where the purpose is to engage learners in complex issues that enhance the learning of content and the ability to learn.

A review of the literature on learner-focused education indicates that many students provide more powerful and relevant learning than the lecture model of teaching. Furthermore, it suggests that it is a means of keeping students more engaged and productive. This approach was promoted by Ministry of Education documents from 1988 through 1995. The Year 2000: Framework For Learning, described in this paper, has its foundation in the Mandate and Policy Directions for the school system, and in the School Act, which came into force on September 1, 1989. and later on in The Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Plan (September 1994) Edward Milne Community School currently has a high drop out rate and a low achievement rating provincially. It would appear that a learner-focused approach might.

## **2.2 Leadership and Organizations.**

There exists a significant quantity of research on the topics of leadership and organizations. An examination of selected literature reveals a number of common practices that effective leaders use within organizations, and common practices used within organizations that ensure their success.

One factor which the research indicates is integral to ensuring that an organization remains vibrant is its ability to embrace and adapt to change. Morgan (1997) suggests that an organization must operate as an "open system". He views an organization as an organic system; one in which single cells, complex organisms and populations of organisms all exist in a continuous exchange with their environment. This exchange he claims, is crucial for sustaining the life and form of the system. Without this interaction, he believes the system will deteriorate and die. Open systems, Morgan suggests, attempt to sustain themselves by importing energy to try to offset entropic tendencies. Margaret Wheatley, (1992) agrees with this concept, and suggests that the chaos that energy within an organization causes can lead to evolutionary and at times revolutionary change. This energy can lead to the development of new ideas and increased knowledge. Similar to Morgan, Senge (1990) views an organization as a system which he suggests consists of a number of learning disciplines that converge and create a new wave of experimentation and advancement. Through personal mastery, building a shared vision, examining mental models, team learning and systems thinking, Senge believes that an organization can remain vibrant. An examination of the interaction of these learning disciplines, he contends, is crucial because "organizations work the way we work, ultimately because of how we think and how we interact. Only by changing how we think can we change deeply embedded

policies and practices. Only by changing how we interact can shared visions, shared understandings, and new capacities for coordinated action be established.” (p. XIV) Senge also points out that organizations tend to see the changes needed to be made as being in the outer world and consequently try to redesign the manifest structures of the organization. They tend to neglect to look inward and bring to the surface ingrained assumptions, generalizations or pictures and images that influence how individuals within organizations understand and take action.

Kouzes’s and Posner’s (1995) findings of effective leadership practices indicate that a willingness to take risks, to innovate and experiment in order to find new and better ways of doing things is one of the fundamental practices of a successful leader. Of all the leaders studied not one claimed to have done his or her personal best by keeping things the same. Leaders, Kouzes and Posner state, are not necessarily the creators or originators of new ideas, but they are individuals who recognize good ideas and showed a willingness to challenge the system in order to get new products, processes, services and systems adopted.

A second factor, which the research indicates will determine the effectiveness of an organization, is its ability to develop a shared vision. An effective leader, Kouzes and Posner found, is one who is able to inspire a shared vision. It is important that this leader has absolute and total belief in the vision and that he or she is confident in his or her ability to make extraordinary things happen. Without this enthusiasm, it would appear that a leader is unable to ignite the flame of passion in others.



Yukl(1994) and Senge (1990) concur with the notion that an effective organization builds a shared vision. They suggest, however, that it is crucial that the vision reflects the dreams, hopes and aspirations of all the members of the organization and that these individuals have been involved in the building process. In this way they will become committed to the vision rather than simply compliant, or in some cases, opposed to it. Effective leaders, Kouzes and Posner (1995) say, model their support of the vision through relentless effort, steadfastness, competence and attention to detail and encourage individuals to carry on if they become frustrated or disheartened. This encouragement can come from simple or dramatic actions. "When striving to raise quality, recover from disaster, start up a new service, or make a dramatic change of any kind, leaders make sure people benefit when behaviour is aligned with cherished ideas." (p. 14)

Senge (1990) agrees that the leader in an organization plays an integral role in supporting the vision by helping to create the time and safety for individuals to develop their own sense of it. He emphasizes, however, that it is important for individuals to have the freedom of choice to accept or reject it. Efforts to persuade others to become enrolled and committed to the vision may in fact be seen as manipulative and actually preclude enrollment and commitment. Furthermore, he contends that a shared vision can remain a living force only when people believe that they can shape their future. Too often, he says, organizations are dominated by linear thinking, not systems thinking. The dominance of focusing on events tells people that the only option they have is to react to change rather than to generate it. Senge suggests that, "as people in an organization begin to learn 'how' existing policies and actions are creating their current reality, a new more fertile soil for vision develops. A new source of confidence develops, rooted in deeper understanding of the forces shaping current reality and where there is leverage for influencing those forces." (p. 231)

A third and final factor that the literature suggests helps to create an innovative organization is its willingness to learn and to apply the knowledge it has gained in an effort to become more effective. In effective organizations (Yukl, 1994; Senge, 1990; Robbins, 1992) there is a high level of activity to develop and refine shared conceptual tools and mental models for understanding how things work, how to adapt to the environment, and how to achieve the organization's objectives (Yukl, 1994; Senge, 1990; Robbins, 1992). Resources are invested in promoting learning at all levels and embedded in the culture of the organization is recognition of the value of innovation, experimentation, flexibility and initiative. Reward and appraisal systems are always present. People at all levels are empowered to deal with problems and find better ways of doing things. Knowledge is diffused and or made easily available to anyone who needs it and people are encouraged to apply it to their work. Top management creates and sustains processes to nurture ideas and support changes initiated by people at lower levels in the organization. (Yukl, 1994; Senge, 1990; Robbins, 1992)

The results of Kouzes and Posner's (1995) studies, indicated that to individuals at the lower level of the organization a leader's willingness to enable them to be actively involved in decision-making was the most significant of the practices of an effective leader. For these individuals, the feeling of trust and confidence that such empowerment gave them prompted a sense of ownership within the organization. In addition to identifying the role played by top management in the creation of a positive learning environment for individuals, Robbins also revealed another way in which leaders effectively ensure that the values and aspirations of the organization are maintained. He suggests that leaders achieve this through their selection process. Individuals,

he acknowledges, are selected who have the knowledge, skills and abilities to perform the jobs within the organization successfully. But typically, he suggests the final decision is significantly influenced by the decision-maker's judgement of how well the candidate will fit into the organization. Additionally, the selection process provides the applicant with information regarding the values and aspirations of the organization. If they perceive a conflict between their values and those of the organization they can self-select themselves out of the application pool. In this way, Robbins suggests, the selection process sustains an organization's culture by selecting out those individuals who might attack or undermine its core values.

A examination of the literature on leadership and organizations reveals that within an organization work cannot be accomplished as well, if at all, by individuals working alone. Various stakeholders have a vested interest in the activities and performance of the organization. To ensure its success an organization must be an open system that offers an opportunity for learning, for the sharing of ideas and decision-making, for the development of a shared vision and above all for experimentation and innovation. The role of the leader in an organization is to articulate its vision and values and to create an environment within which things can be accomplished.

## 2.3 Research.

Merriam Webster defines research as: “ a studious inquiry or examination; especially: investigation or experimentation aimed at the discovery and interpretation of facts, revision of accepted theories or laws in the light of new facts, or practical application of such new or revised theories or laws” (1999). In this project I investigated a period of time at Edward Milne Community School. Wheatley (1992) states, “In a chaotic system, scientists now can observe movements that, although random and unpredictable never exceed finite boundaries” (p. 123). As suggested by Wheatley within these boundaries energy can be chaotic, causing evolutionary and, at times, revolutionary change. New ideas can be formed and increasing levels of knowledge can be acquired. Once the vision or pathway has been created, energy will have a focus and can be self-directing enabling educators a clear route to learner-focused education.

The methodological literature reviewed focused primarily on Action Research, drawing heavily on Stringer (1996), Palys (1997) and Merriam (1998). I also reviewed “Ethical Considerations and Evaluation in Action Research”, a learning module constructed at Royal Roads University by Dr. Graham Dickson.

Morgan (1983) provides the following general definition of Action Research:

“As an approach to organizational change and development: Action learning is both a concept and a form of action which aims to enhance the capacities of people in everyday situations to investigate, understand and, if they wish, to change those situations in an ongoing fashion, with a minimum of external help. Action learning is concerned with empowering people in the sense that they become critically conscious of their values, assumptions, actions,

interdependencies, rights, and prerogatives so that they can act in a substantially rational way as active partners in producing their reality” (p. 9).

Organizations are about people; with the researcher involving members of the organization in varying degrees of analysis, fact finding, conceptualization, planning, execution, and evaluation. The findings of the initial study can then later be used for follow up or further study.

Stringer (1996) suggests that “Action research is based on the assumption that the mere recording of events and formulation of explanations by an uninvolved researcher is inadequate in and of itself” (p. 7). Stringer goes on to say, “action research works on the assumption, therefore, that all stakeholders...should be engaged in the process of investigation” (p. 10), and that “action research is a collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with the means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems” (p. 15).

This project, based on an action research model, deals with people, leadership and decision-making within an organization. Primarily, the study focuses on how people interact within an organizational structure to make decisions. This type of the research is not conducive to evaluation on a numeric basis. A qualitative, rather than a quantitative approach, is best suited to this project. In Palys’ book , “Research Decisions: Quantitative and Qualitative Perspectives” (1997) he discusses differences between quantitative and qualitative research methods. His first chapter questions the purely scientific form of research based on achieving “scientific facts”. Palys states that, “Scientific facts are very special entities; they are valid bits of information” (p. 4). Palys suggest this statement is true as long as “behavior is not random and chaotic, but rather governed by ‘casual laws’ or principles that are not ephemeral, transient entities (as we assume),

*then* repeated measurement of a phenomenon should yield consistent, enduring ‘truths’ – scientific ‘facts’” (p. 4). A qualitative approach seemed appropriate for the evaluation of a case study when the key focus is on people making decisions.

Case studies, especially qualitative case studies are prevalent throughout the field of education. Few areas of practice offer as many opportunities for research as does the field of education. To begin with, education is a familiar arena. Having an interest in knowing more about the field and improving the practice of education leads to asking researchable questions some of which are best approached through qualitative research design. Case study research focused on discovery, insight, and understanding from the perspective of those being studied will offer contributions to the knowledge base and practice of education (Merriam, 1998, p.26 ).

Yin (1994) defines a case study as: “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 13). Merriam (1988) narrows the definition. “A qualitative case study is an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single instance, phenomenon, or social unit (p. 21). The case study focuses on holistic description and explanation. As Yin (1994) observes, case study is a design particularly suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon’s variables from their context.

The researcher in this case study used a historical case study model to understand the event and apply that knowledge to the present practice. Therefore, researching the context of the event, the

assumptions behind it, and perhaps the event's impact on the institution or participants were of prime importance.

This case study can be defined in terms of the process of conducting an inquiry into the bounded system at Edward Milne Community School between the period of 1992 to 1998. Merriam (1988) suggests that the inductive form of research, "hypothesis-generating", versus "hypothesis-testing" focuses the researcher on discovery, and insight into human perspectives (p. 3). Palys (1997) states, "Accordingly, qualitative researchers emphasize inductive approaches where observations in the field precedes the generating of theoretical concepts.... For qualitative research theory isn't something you start with, it's something you build" (p. 19).

In summary, a qualitative naturalistic research approach, using action research through the case study model seems to be the appropriate method of approaching this project. Hypothesis generating versus hypothesis testing is an intuitive approach that can focus the researcher understanding and discovery.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **Conduct of Research Methods**

#### **3.1 Research Methods.**

“Action research involves participants in planning action (on the basis of reflection); in implementing these plans in their own action; in observing systematically this process; and in evaluating their actions in the light of evidence as a basis for further planning and action and so on through a self-reflective spiral.” (McTaggart, 1992)

A naturalistic, qualitative approach to research was taken for this project. I followed the model offered by Sharan B. Merriam, in her book Qualitative Research and Case Study Applications in Education. This report is a case study of Edward Milne Community School between June 1992 and September 1998. Data collection occurred through interviews, observations at meetings, and an analysis of documentation and information pertinent to the project.

Naturalistic inquiry, which focuses on meaning in context, requires a data collection instrument sensitive to underlying meaning when gathering and interpreting data. Humans are best-suited for this task – and best when using methods that make the human sensibilities such as interviewing, observing, and analyzing. (Merriam, 1988)

Through interviews, surveys, observation, participation on various committees involved in the change process, and as an active member of the technology committee, I used the process of



induction to clarify problems associated with the construction of the facility, and with the implementation of a learner-focused model at the new school site.

As in any research, validity, reliability, and ethics are major concerns. Since a qualitative approach to research is based on different assumptions and a different world view than traditional research I used three criteria to assess my findings: internal validity (the extent to which research findings are congruent with reality.), triangulation (checking interpretations with individuals interviewed or observed, asking peers to comment on emerging findings), and involving participants in all phases of the research.

Reliability, or the extent to which there is consistency in the findings, was ensured by my explaining the assumptions and the theory underlying the study, by triangulating data and by describing how the findings were derived from the data.

Finally, I tried to be conscious of the ethical issues that pervade the research process, and I conducted this research within the guidelines and regulations as laid out in the Tri-Council Working Group, 1996. Code of Conduct for Research Involving Humans. Three important ethical considerations were taken into account when conducting the study. Confidentiality and privacy were ensured, free and informed consent was obtained, and an effort was made to limit discomfort and to promote the benefits of this study to our organization. As I am a colleague of many of the participants in this study, special attention was paid to providing information to all participants as to the full nature of the research. The Tri-Council Working Group (1996) states, "What is crucial is that the subject have the information she or he needs to make a meaningful

choice” (p. 2-9). I believe that the integrity of the research was not marred as a full disclosure of the research project was given. All participants were able to understand the implications of the research and thus none required third party consent.

According to Palys (1997), “You should try to make participation a positive experience; at the very least you should do no harm” (p. 97). Knowledge will be created that will enable decision-making and safeguard the organization, to some degree, against liability for poor or uninformed decision-making. This project which examines the failure of a learner-focused program to be implemented at Edward Milne Community School has the potential to be seen as a threat by some. The knowledge gained from this project will hopefully out weigh the potential discomfort of change.

### **3.2 Data Gathering Tools.**

Three data gathering tools were used for the project. One tool used was the interview process. Questions were generated and used as a guide for one-on-one interviews with key participants in the project. The main purpose of the interview was to obtain a special kind of information that enabled me to examine various stakeholders perspectives. This type of information is integral, Merriam says.

We interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe... We cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an observer. We cannot observe how people have organized the world and

the meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. We have to ask people questions about those things. The purpose of interviewing, then, is allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. (Merriam, 1998, p. 72).

Combinations of structured and open-ended questions were used to conduct one-on-one interviews. These interviews aided in understanding the initial planning process for the new school, the group culture at the time (1989 –1995) and the desired process. “Face-to-face contact typically provides two things: higher response rates; and the chance to clarify ambiguities or misunderstandings, and to monitor the conditions of completion” (Palys, 1997, p. 146). One of the benefits of face-to-face interviews is the ability of the interviewer to “immediately clarify any confusion about particular questions, and encourage verbally stingy respondents to embellish further” (Palys, 1997, p.154). This project was no exception. Clarification occurred during every interview. During the interview process new information was uncovered. The advantage of action research is that a cycle that improves with each additional move through the cycle. “Qualitative researchers view the data-gathering process itself as informative, maintaining that one must be open to any new directions that may emerge in the context of the interview because of the unique perspective of the participants” (Palys, 1997, p. 155).

One pitfall, which can occur when there is direct and personal involvement by the researcher in the study being examined, is that a researcher can inadvertently inject his/her own bias during the interview process. According to Palys (1977), “interviewer's interactive nature also means that one must be more careful about reactive bias.

Interviewees can be attentive to cues that the interviewer emits, since they want to know

whether they are ‘doing well’ as participants” (p. 155). Palys (1997) also identifies a further downside to interviews, citing the interviewee talking about what they think the researcher wants to hear and the general sense of anonymity. During the interview process effort was made to generate questions that were unbiased and care was taken not to lead the participants answers in any particular direction. There did not appear to be any evidence during my interviews that suggested a desire on the part of the participants to “please” the researcher or to “get the right answer”. A very clear desire was apparent to share their insights regarding the problems that were associated with the transformation of the school from a traditional educational approach to a learner-focused delivery model.

A second method used to obtain data for this study was by recording my own observations of school staff, administrators and district staff opinions and attitudes. Throughout the planning process for the new school and the general change process I was a participant on numerous committees such as the steering committee, Learning Development Team, teacher training committee, and technology committee. Key to this study was the third method used to gather data for this study. Information was gleaned from the following documents: the Year 2000: Framework For Learning, the School Act Third Edition (1989), The Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Plan (September 1994), Preparation, Partnership and Flexibility. Educational Specifications and Space Programming for the New Edward Milne Community School (October 1992) and the architectural drawings and plans for the new school. Also examined were processes,

financial records, school district correspondence and policies used by the Sooke School District.

### **3.3 Study Conduct.**

As described in Section 3.2 above, the study was conducted through the use of interviews, observations and evaluation of pertinent documents. Planned steps were taken to conduct the research which began with a sponsor sign-off and ended with the proposed findings to help initiate a model for learner-focused education at Edward Milne Community School.

Before the research was undertaken a proposal was developed, negotiated and agreed-to by the project sponsor and signed off by both the sponsor and the faculty advisor. The project included timelines and deliverables as well as an identification of key milestones. Funding was not required, as the costs were minimal and were subsumed within the office of the sponsor.

The first step in the research was the development of a framework around which the interview questions were constructed. The following specific objectives were used to assess whether all of the participants understood the reasons for the new approach to teaching at Edward Milne Community School and why the building was designed as it was.

- To determine if there is clarity on the purpose of learner-focused education.
- To determine if the key participants on the planning committee felt that they had adequate information to make team decisions.
- To determine if all of the stakeholders felt included in the decision making process.
- To determine if there were adequate resources available for this project to be successful.

Palys (1997) suggests that an interview should have both structured and open-ended questions, and that it should begin with the open-ended questions. He states, "Part of the rationale for using open-ended items is an interest in hearing respondents' words and concerns in a way minimally affected by the researcher. Putting closed or structured items first can subvert this aim by focusing the respondent's attention on certain attributes of the topic" (p. 166). Ten participants were interviewed for the purpose of this report.

Following the identification of the objectives and the development of a questioning strategy, I formed a list of appropriate participants who could participate in interviews and provide relevant information. "Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most" (Merriam, 1988, p. 48). The following were chosen as participants' integral for this project:

- Members of the School Planning Committee.
- Parents of students in the community.
- Representatives from the Architectural Firm.
- Representatives from the School Board
- Representatives from the teaching community.

Details regarding individuals can be found in Appendix C.

The one-on-one interviews were approximately one and one-half hours in length. I met with each of the participants in a pre-arranged location and all of the interviews were audio taped and transcribed.

Following the interviews and an examination of relevant documents the data were analyzed. An analysis of this data uncovered a number of common threads:

1. A lack of sufficient funds and poor use of the funds available.
2. A lack of direction from the School Board regarding the construction of the new school and the change process and an inordinate amount of responsibility placed on the Principal.
3. A lack of sufficient knowledge and training for staff regarding learner focussed education and a strong opposition on staff to change.
4. A lack of adequate utilization of the facility.

A final step involved the generation of a number of recommendations as possible approaches to these problems .



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **Case Study**

#### **4.1 School History**

According to the handbook The 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Edward Milne School, the shores of Sooke Harbour have long been home to the T'Sou-ke people who educated their youth according to their culture and traditions. In 1872, however, formal public education was established in this area. Sooke School, a one-room structure, partially built of logs, set in the sparsely settled village, was one of the earliest public schools in the province of British Columbia. Early in the new century, a new frame structure was built in central Sooke and that site remained the center of education for Sooke the first half of this century. With the advent of World War II, there was a marked increase in population in Sooke and small one room rural schools sprang up throughout much of what was to become School District 62, encompassing the area from Port Renfrew to Colwood and Langford. An increase in population throughout the whole of the province at this time prompted the Cameron Report in the early 1940s which led to the establishment of central schools with greater facilities and busing of children to access those facilities. The closure of one-room rural schools soon followed. The main source of funding for the development of the rapidly expanding facilities in the district came from the forest revenues from this resource-rich western area.

Throughout the mid to late 1940's, two high schools were established in the School District #62. The first one, Milne's Landing High School (later to become Edward Milne Community School) was situated at Milne's Landing and the second was Belmont High School, which was located in

the Colwood/Langford area. Representatives from the inner, or Belmont zone, and representatives from the western or Milne's Landing zone, comprised the Board of Trustees for the school district; a tradition which continues today.

In the early 1880's the Milne family from Greenoch, Scotland settled in Sooke. By 1895 Edward Milne was operating a general store and post office at the northwest corner of what is now Sooke Road (Highway 14) and Sooke River Road. This pioneer family played a large role in the history of the district. The Milne land holdings ran from the Sooke River eastward to the boundary of Sooke Indian Reserve No. 1. In addition to their business and running a horse stage to Victoria, they operated a dairy farm and grew their own grain. The first telephone exchange was located in the family home, and the first telephone operators were daughters of the Milne family. The house still stands today, at the northeastern edge of the Sooke River Bridge.

During World War II, the federal government expropriated the western wooded portion of the Milne farm and an army training camp was established there. At the close of the war, the government made the land available to the newly formed School District, and Milne's Landing High School was established. Classrooms were originally set up in the old army huts and conditions were very rustic. A new structure was built, however, in 1946. In 1947, the first graduating class of Milne's Landing High School numbered five students, one young man and four young women. Throughout the following years the school continued to grow and expand. In 1900, the name of the school changed to Edward Milne Secondary School in recognition of Edward Milne's contribution to the community.

By 1980, Edward Milne Senior Secondary had served the community of Sooke, British Columbia for 38 years and now had a graduating class of 80 students. At this time, however, it was becoming difficult to maintain a sufficient enrollment as many grade eleven and twelve students were being enticed away by more varied courses offered at Belmont High School. The principal, Jim Gauley, recognized something was needed to keep “the small rural school alive”. As the mid-80’s were approaching he points out that there was a groundswell of support from the school, the community and district staff office for Edward Milne to become the first grade 8 – 12 Community School in British Columbia and that this could be a way of revitalizing the school. In 1987, through the direction of Jim Gauley and later Carol Chandler, (Mr. Gauley’s successor) the school did indeed become a community school and became known as Edward Milne Community School. This step enabled an increase in funding for the school due to its changed status and provided increased learning and leisure opportunities for the community. Due to this increased funding and a recognition of the fact that the size of the current school was not sufficient to accommodate the 500 plus students. Jim Gauley began to ask the ministry for funding to do renovations on the school. Ms. Chandler took the concept further and began to agitate for a new school.

It was clear to the community and the school board that if money for renovations or for a new building were to be sought from the Ministry of Education, a leader was needed who had both the technical knowledge and leadership capabilities to achieve this end. Mr. Del Clark was seen as a logical choice for a number of reasons. First, he had had previous experience overseeing extensive renovations at Belmont Senior Secondary during his tenure as Vice Principal at that school. Secondly, he lived in the Sooke community and his children had graduated from Edward

Milne or would be graduating from that school so he was known by the community and was seen to have something invested in it. Thirdly, he had worked at the district level as a district administrator for School District #62 and his administrative skills were well respected. Finally, he had a reputation as a person who could get things done, and was open to change and always had the best interests of students at heart.

In 1989 Del Clark was appointed as Principal of Edward Milne Community School. During his first year as Principal, Mr. Clark put together a request for some major renovations to the old school. He had looked at demographic studies and it became clear that the student body of Edward Milne Community School was going to grow substantially over the next ten years. It was also clear that the economy of the community was changing, as was the type of families who were moving into the community. Originally Sooke was composed of people who were employed locally either in the fishing or in the forestry industry, Demographics were changing, however, as more young families who worked in Victoria moved into the community. These families generally seemed to be more involved in the community and the school.

Mr. Clark, along with the District Superintendent, and the Secretary Treasurer of Sooke School District, approached the Ministry with their request for funds for a new school. As Mr. Clark explained, “to put forward our case based on population, age of the building and the things we wanted to do, in terms of, for example, upgrading the technology, but we couldn’t because the building was a hodge-podge of framed construction and concrete block construction and it was really difficult to unite the whole thing”. The Ministry of Education decided that the Edward Milne School was a viable structure and indicated that money was scarce. Twelve thousand

dollars were designated by the Ministry, however, to enable the district to do a feasibility study in 1991.

At this time, changes within the administration at the district level were occurring. A new Superintendent was appointed, and Mr. Tom McCrae became a District Administrator with responsibilities to research and oversee the distribution of technology within the district.

Although the feasibility study concurred with the arguments put forward by Mr. Clark, the Ministry reiterated that the building was viable for renovation. Mr. Clark in turn began to lobby the Sooke community and approached particularly active and influential members; Mrs. Phoebe Dunbar, the Community School Coordinator, Mr. John Farmer, a local businessman and Mrs. Lori Messer, a parent. The School Board resubmitted its request to the Ministry, adding that it was impossible to meet the new fire regulations and earthquake standards with a structure that was built in 1946. Mr. Clark was not going to give up until “he had his new building”. Sooke’s Member of Legislative Assembly, Mr. Rick Kasper, was also convinced to become involved in the move for a new school. The Ministry of Education finally agreed to forward thirty-five thousand dollars, to enable Ministry engineers to survey the building and to talk to staff, community members and students. By December 1991, the Ministry agreed that it was uneconomical to renovate and upgrade the old school building. The difference between the upgrade and new construction was three hundred thousand dollars. Planning for the new building began to take shape in the spring of 1992. Mr. Clark stated to this author that after final approval for a new school was given, he was told by the school board that the planning process

was completely left up to him. "Once we got final approval to go ahead and do the planning, then the ball was in my court," he said.

## **4.2 The Case**

Mr. Clark believed that the Sooke community wanted a change in approach to learning at the high school and he was directed by Superintendent to conduct a survey within the school catchment area to confirm this belief. Around June 1992, Mr. Clark and the Superintendent met and determined that a school opening date would be September 1995. At that meeting it was decided that the district would hire Mrs. Lori Messer, a parent in the Sooke community, to act as a facilitator for the change process within the school and the community. Mrs. Messer had had previous experience in this area in the health sector in British Columbia and was also well known within the Sooke community. She was offered the contract around the 15<sup>th</sup> of June 1992 and began on 22<sup>nd</sup> of June 1992.

A management team was formed to work with Mrs. Messer. This team consisted of Lori Messer, Planning Facilitator, Del Clark, Edward Milne Community School principal, Bob Meikle, Edward Milne Community School, Vice-Principal, Phoebe Dunbar, Edward Milne Community School Community School Coordinator, Dianne Dawson, teacher, Edward Milne Community School, Julie Davis, Principal Journey Middle School, Rod Windjack and John Neilson, Architects, Des Sjoquist, Assistant Superintendent School District 62.

In the report prepared by Lori Messer entitled, Preparation, Partnerships and Flexibility, it is clear that “A timeline had been set, June 22<sup>nd</sup> to October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1992 to complete a planning report which was going to act as a guideline for the transformation of Edward Milne Community School from a teacher led educational model to one which was learner-focused.” Because of the restrictions of a school year (September to June), the timeline was tight to enable a move into the new building by September 1995.

The team recognized the short time in which they had to publish the planning report, but reassured everyone concerned that the findings represented the views of the community and of the staff. “Every attempt,” Lori Messer says, “was made not to sacrifice the range and quality of the input in light of the condensed and somewhat urgent time frame. There is no question, however, that the timing of this process over the summer months limited participation in terms of quantity by both community and staff. The rather frantic pace, coming as it did in the peak work months of June and September, put considerable stress on both the staff and management. The quality and consistency of responses as well as the final validation of information reassures us, though, that this report accurately reflects the intentions of both community and staff.”

The information that I have been able to collect suggests that there may have been some oversight on the team’s part in understanding all of the concerns of the stakeholders. It became clear that the members of the management team itself were not all in agreement with the direction of the learner-focused model. Bob Meikle, the Vice-Principal, was not in total agreement with the philosophy of learner-focused education. He felt that there was a need for a traditional education model. A teacher on the committee, was in support of Bob’s notion that a less radical change

was required. One of the team members commented, "...this is a personal observation. I never felt Bob bought into it as strongly as Del thought. ...But that's just sort of a personal observation from sitting through meetings and things with him." It would appear that the management team was run by Mr. Clark and survived on his energy and vision. The architects were on contract with the school district and the Assistant Superintendent did not appear to have a real commitment to the learner-focused model. Mr. Clark appeared to be the engineer and driving force of this project.

During the spring of 1992, the staff at Edward Milne Community School was also caught up in the idea of change and many were committed to the Year 2000: A Framework For Learning document. A committee was struck to investigate the technology that was available for tracking student progress. It was felt that in order for a school to be truly learner-focused it had to be linked by technology. The technology team began to shop around for existing software that would make the transition easier. Some teachers began to experiment with the idea of learner-focused education in their classrooms. There also existed, however, a group of teachers who were opposed to the change. This group consisted primarily of those teachers who had been at the school for many years, who as one staff member told me, "had seen the wind of change come a number of times and believed that this new notion will just go by." It was also suggested that, "The parents that were involved in the change were just leftists in the community who really didn't understand education." As the thrust for change became stronger, these teachers, I have learned, formed a group "who would stop or at least slow the process down so that it would not be successful."



Mr. Clark was aware of this group and had gone to the Superintendent and asked if he had any alternatives to staffing. Mr. Clark states that he asked the Board, ““How much flexibility am I going to have with staffing because there is not going to be everybody on staff that wants to be part of this? And the response at that time was that the staff that you have, is the staff you are going to have, barring leaves of absences and the usual kinds of things that occur. We weren’t amalgamating schools or taking students from two or three schools.” It would be fair to say that because of the restricted timeline, Mr. Clark decided that he would have to deal with staff as confrontations arose.

In the mean time, the architects began to come up with plans for the new school in consultation with the planning committee. There were consultants brought into the school to work with staff in trying to determine what the technology needs were for the entire staff. Peat, Marwick, Stevenson & Kellogg, an international consulting company, was contracted by the School Board, under the direction of the District Administrator Tom McCrae. This contract was to complete a study concentrating on the hardware requirements needed in the new school and focussing on an appropriate infrastructure which needed to be in place to prepare the building for the educational demands of the future. This report was submitted to the architects who in turn incorporated the concepts into their plans.

Mr. McCrae, who was responsible for technology within the district, had a personal desire to see learner-focused education get a foothold in the Sooke School District. Discussions with administrators at both Thomas Haney Secondary School and Dr. Knox Middle School, were schools that had adapted a total learner-focused approach to education, had convinced him that,

“learner-focused schools require significantly more sophisticated management information systems than did traditional schools. Functions such as developing learner profiles, tracking progress and reporting require increased computer support.” Mr. McCrae also recognized that “as a result, management information systems in learner-focused schools were more costly and more challenging to implement due to the increased complexity of software, hardware, networking and human resource factor.” Mr. McCrae felt that with his expertise in technology and as our district representative, he should take on the responsibility of helping Edward Milne Community School find a software program that would enable the new school to operate under a learner-focused model.

In September 1992, the focus was on the architectural design of the school. The staff was given materials to read over the summer regarding the structure and was asked to consider the needs of their departments. Each department met in the fall with the architects and members of the management team to give their input specifying space requirements for their area. Not all members of the staff, I have learned, were clear as to what these measurements meant and the ramifications for their future work place. One staff member said, “I was not sure what they meant when the architects talked about a classroom being 60 m<sup>2</sup>, and labs were 65 m<sup>2</sup>.” All they seemed to ask was would that be all right. I wasn’t sure of what was meant by it being right for what? I felt like things were steamrolling and I just went along with the gang.” Another staff member mentioned, “they threw these numbers out about sizes and windows, and I just couldn’t visualize what they were talking about but I wasn’t going to say anything against Del’s project.”

Cowichan School District, on Vancouver Island was also in the process of building a new school with the intention of providing a learner-focused model. One of the key members of the district, Mr. Geoff Johnson, the Deputy Superintendent, was used as a resource person for our planning committee. It was felt that his knowledge of the Year 2000: A Framework For Learning document and planning experience made him a valuable resource and he was willing to come down and help anytime he was asked. Mr. Johnson assisted in the preparation of the planning document that was submitted to the School Board.

In October 1992, the planning team released the document Preparation, Partnerships & Flexibility. It was taken to the School Trustees, and the project was given the go ahead in November 1992. The direction for the new Edward Milne Community School in Sooke was outlined in its Mission Statement:

*Edward Milne Community School strives to be a learner-focused community resource centre, supported by a unified vision and shared responsibility. The aim is to promote lifelong learning in a caring environment through a variety of educational, vocational, cultural, recreational and social opportunities for students of all ages and abilities.*

The next stage was for the architects to proceed with the actual drawings in consultation with the Ministry. It was clear to the architects and Mr. Clark, that this school was going to have to be very different from a traditional school to accommodate a learner-focused model and negotiations with the Ministry were going to be more complicated. The planning committee envisioned a school that would accommodate a flexible timetable. It would be one that enabled the provision of large group lectures, small group seminars, on-line access to the school,

extensive community partnership and work experience, students working on learning packages and teachers acting as facilitators and advisors. Consequently, classroom size would be smaller than a traditional classroom and teachers would be more mobile throughout the school. Teachers would have preparation areas clustered according to their discipline. Folding doors for each classroom would be included to accommodate small groups and could act not only as a centre for the arts but also as a lecture hall with folding doors to close off sections when required. A large central congregation area would be designed for students and study areas would be placed throughout the school. A cafeteria with an industrial kitchen, a daycare for single parent students attending Edward Milne Community School and a large gym would be included in the design of the school.

After much negotiation with the Ministry of Education with some compromising on space and costs the design of the new school as described above was agreed upon. There is an indication from the architects to suggest that departments to accommodate the theatre sacrificed space allocation, daycare and gym and that these compromises were made without any consultation with teachers. “.... The Programming Committee then had to find a way of coming up with the area to do that without jeopardizing any of the other programs. So, things like the multipurpose room were thrown in that area allocation, a couple of classroom allocations were thrown in, some of the other areas or departments each contributed a little bit of area to the lecture theatre to make it happen and the reason why and the whole push behind it was that it would be used as educational space.”

There is also evidence that the issue of space allocation and teacher mobility within the school was an issue for some members of the Planning Committee itself. These members expressed their concerns and felt that they were not taken into consideration. Bob Meikle, who was Vice-Principal at the time, recalls: "One of the things I most vividly recall, right at the very early parts of the design process... 'What about teachers having their own classrooms?' That won't be the way anymore... Del said that was not a part of what teachers should be expecting... A teacher and I were particularly concerned about this... it's not as if we were building a brand new school on a site that had never been used before, it's dealing with an existing staff, an existing student population, set of parents and so on. So there are expectations, particularly amongst the staff. There is a whole kind of teaching culture that is built up around that. One teacher has a library that she couldn't pack around with her. Another with all his learning resources, materials, flags and everything that he puts up in his room. It is not practical for that teaching culture to move into an environment whereby they're going to be here for a little seminar and in another classroom for a lecture... But that was kind of subjugated... And yet I don't think you can, if its part of the way people operate, its part of the culture of the job that the people do".

It appears that the committee members were not that comfortable about disagreeing with Mr. Clark in these early stages. Mr. Meikle: "Del was not the kind of person that you could have a conflict with easily. Del always took the lead. There were a few times that I sort let him know that I was in extreme disagreement. But that didn't happen very often. And he wasn't the kind of person that would take kindly to that either. I think the Vice-Principal for him was very much a manager. Keep the train on the track, keep things going."

Throughout this time the school was beginning to offer workshops for teachers to begin to get a handle on criterion-referenced assessment, which was a stepping stone to a learner-focused model. Workshops were also being offered for teachers who were interested in technology. The idea of going into a brand new school was winning the support of the teachers. The literature from the ministry, and the professional development of the staff led the majority of teachers to at least make the commitment to change even though they may not have had the vision. It appeared that things were moving along, as they should.

The next phase in this process involved a determination as to how student attendance and progress could be tracked if a learner-focused model was to be adopted at Edward Milne Community School. Having read a project report, Implementing Management Information Systems at Learner-Focused Schools, prepared for the Education Technology Centre of British Columbia, on the implementation of information systems at learner-focused schools. Mr. Tom McCrae concluded from its recommendations, that a software package was required at Edward Milne Community School to assist teachers in tracking student progress. At this point, Mr. McCrae investigated the availability of such a software package. After extensive research, Mr. McCrae reported back to the school technology committee that there was not a software package such as we were seeking available within North America that would do what a school of our size needed in order to track students.

After discussions with Mr. Clark, Mr. McCrae decided to contact Peat Marwick, the management Consultant Company that had written the project report for the Education Technology Centre of British Columbia. This company was then contracted to conduct a second

study specifically designed to determine the software requirements for the administrative support systems needed in the new school. This report was completed and the document was published in April 1993 entitled Requirements For Administrative Computer Systems At The New Edward Milne Community School. Shortly after this document was published, Mr. McCrae sent a memo to the Superintendent which pointed out a number of variables that he described as critical success factors for the implementation of information management systems at learner-focused schools. These were listed in the Peat Marwick document for the Education Technology Centre of British Columbia. They included the following recommendations:

- Develop key operating principles.
- Project Management techniques must be emphasized.
- A capable project manager is required.
- New software modules are required.
- Projects will not succeed without good quality software.
- Sufficient investments in technology must be made.
- Internal technology skills are required.
- Extensive training is a challenge.

In the memo, Mr. McCrae asks for money to come from the district in addition to and separate from capital costs.

<u>Stage 1 Development</u>	
1993/94	\$150,000
1994/95	\$150,000

1995/96           \$ 50,000

Stage 2 – Implementation (hardware, software, training)

1994/95           \$600,000

1995/96           \$100,000

At the conclusion of this memo Mr. McCrae states:

Bottom Line

“If we accept that EMCS must be a learner-focused school and if we accept the Peat Marwick summary report statements, then we must make a budget commitment of about \$150,000 for the 1993/94 to begin Stage 1 immediately. However, if it is not possible, and the district is unable to fund the amounts indicated, EMCS will almost certainly not become a learner-focused school.”

During the spring of 1993, the provincial government released a press notice announcing all capital construction of new schools in the province was put on hold. This had a devastating impact on the plans for Edward Milne Community School. The staff felt abandoned, and even though Mr. Clark and the few teachers who championed the change tried to keep the momentum going, there were staff who began to characterize this as a typical educational screw-up. A teacher commented, “We felt that this was proof that no one really knew what the hell they were doing. God knows how much money was spent on this new stuff, when we were running out of text books, and they kept cutting back our operating budgets”. The small number of staff who



were opposed to change began to become more vocal, not just about the school being put on hold, but also about the idea of changing our model. In short, the impetus for change stopped.

Although the ministry did not give a date for when or if building would commence, Mr. McCrae continued to search for software for the new school. At a conference he came upon a vendor, Information Management Systems (IMS), out of Knoxville, Tennessee, whose system seemed to have all of the components that Edward Milne Community School required. Mr. McCrae managed to set up a meeting with Mr. Mike Burger, the principal behind IMS, and the officials at the School Board to discuss the software.

Initially, the IMS representatives met with members of the school technology committee and later with the entire staff. Mike Burger talked about learner-focused education, his work at Texas A and M University in this area, and how and why he developed his software package. Although the software itself was complicated, it contained training modules, and a procedural manual on how to facilitate change within the school. A number of staff agreed that it was the best package that we had encountered and that it would be wise to purchase the package. The cost of the program was never made public. School board records indicate that the actual cost of the software contract between 1994 and 1999 totaled \$78,912.54 US.

In an effort to prepare for the change process six staff members established a Leadership Development Team (LDT), and met weekly to begin to develop training strategies to implement the management system outlined in the IMS manual. It was determined by Mr. Clark and Mr.

McCrae that if any money were to be available for in-service it would go to this committee, which in turn decided it needed to learn the software and to begin designing learning guides.

In- service days were given to these committee members to work on curriculum development. A trailer was set up behind the old school and this location acted as the team's headquarters. "Other staff appear to have resented the LDT committee members and the special status they seemed to have." Mr. Clark feels, "and that is why, I think, that there was this rift between the sort of, the have and have nots. The people that were doing the work, getting the attention. I mean I met with them weekly. We discussed, there was a lot of learning going on and I thought some real development of individuals in that process but it left the rest of the staff out." Some staff appear not to have had any idea that committee was working on a new educational model. As one staff member told me "I thought they were out there fooling with computers."

Late in May 1994, the steering committee made recommendations to the staff planning committee, with recommendations that the school timetable be changed to assist teachers "to develop teaching strategies for using larger blocks of time and put a plan in place for the incremental steps to teacher advisement". These were seen as the first steps towards a different teaching model where the teacher was to be a facilitator.

Meanwhile, the architects and the Planning team continued to meet. The community once again began to put pressure on the local MLA, and approximately one-year later, the government gave final permission for construction to proceed.

Administrators at the School Board Office decided that a project manager was needed to oversee the construction of the school and chose Mr. Clark for the job. Mr. Clark was relieved of his duties as Principal of Edward Milne Community School and Mr. Meikle was appointed as Acting-Principal during the construction phase. Construction began in the spring of 1995. In September 1995, Mr. Meikle officially became Acting-Principal, however, Mr. Clarke continued to work out of the premises and attempted to some extent to play both the role of Principal and Construction Manager. Mr. Clark explained the necessity for his presence as follows, "Well in reality what happens is that the Facilities Manager would look after the construction, but I am fairly knowledgeable in construction and I think what happened is that he let me sort of take a lead role. Like I found out things that were wrong there and talked to the construction bosses about it. I said, you know I found a beam that was 12 inches out of place. Well normally a school administrator wouldn't find that kind of stuff. So I was heavily involved in that and where there were problems and things, I was really handy because I was right next door. And when there were things that came up in construction and I would go through the building with the foreman, and we would talk about well how is this going to work and this needs to be this way and if they wanted to change something. I would say 'if you change it then this is the impact,' and that is not good. So is there some other way to do it. There were lots of things that came up, that I was able to do because I was close and much handier than the Facilities Manager who was at the board office."

Mr. Clarke also felt that the school needed his presence for some other reasons, "Well, it is a case of what you let go. Because I ended up not being that involved with students, other than the disciplinary stuff which I did my share of that and I had to do that, but I didn't get out to see kids

in the halls and in the classrooms, the way I would have liked to have done. I didn't get into see teachers teaching the way I would have liked to have done. I did all the stuff that was required from a legal perspective, but I was on the phone between architects and board office, and user groups and preparing reports, summaries of statistics, summaries of enrolments. I had sheets and reams of stuff that I was doing that I wouldn't normally have had to do." He also felt that there was no leadership at the school to prepare for the change particularly when the change was based so heavily on technology. "Bob didn't have a good grasp of Information Management Series (IMS) but I think part of that was his choice. But everything else he was involved with. He was on the steering committee. He was part of the work that Lori Messer did. He was part of all the discussions that occurred. As far as the philosophy of the new building and the Year 2000, Bob was aware of all that stuff. We even talked about all those kinds of concepts at administrators meetings at different levels, and we would break off into secondary, elementary, intermediate and have discussions and impact implications and all that kind of stuff. He was aware of all of that. He didn't attend all the meetings that I attended with the architects. I mean, somebody had to mind the store. I think he only came to a couple of IM Series meetings. And part of that is because he was not particularly interested in technology as a tool. I mean he started to use it towards the end because he found it would help him do all sorts of stuff, but as an educational tool. Well he may be now, but at the time he didn't appear to be that interested in it, whereas I have always thought it was the tool that kids would be able to use."

By November 1995, Mr. Clark became ill. He often only managed to get into the school for an hour or two a day. Everyone involved in the project recognized that his illness was going to set the change process back. When asked if he felt if his illness set the project back Mr. Clark

responded, “Oh, I would like to say that it didn’t, but that is not true. I don’t know. I can’t quantify that.” He went on to say: “I couldn’t keep up the pace anymore. Being off for six months in the middle of it didn’t help. Bob had to look after the running of the school and he wasn’t really that enthusiastic to begin with. And there was no one else that was on staff that could pick up that leadership role. And in my case I thought I was coming back and then it just got worse.”

When asked if he thought Del was asked to do too much by the Board office, Mr. McCrae responded, “I don’t see it that way. As I remember, and I could be wrong, Del was released from his duties as Principal of Edward Milne for a full academic year. Bob Meikle was put in as Acting-Principal. I tried and I think Lori Messer did as well, to get Del to move his office out of the main school office while he was in charge of the construction planning. ...I could see, as well as others did, that Del is the kind of person who has a tremendous buy in to whatever he believes he is responsible for, ...in my view, he couldn’t release the leadership of the school to Bob Meikle for that year and go and be the project manager for the construction.” When Mr. McCrae was asked why a separate project manager was not appointed, he replied that the School Board and the Superintendent felt that they had done so and had put a substantial amount of money into Mr. Clarke’s salary which had come out of the School Board’s operating costs for construction and not out of the school’s operating costs. He pointed out that the architect did have a project manager. Mr. McCrae did indicate, however, that despite this fact, Mr. Clarke had substantial difficulty keeping track of the financial status of the building due to many changes made at the School Board level, “Del could never find out, and I sympathize with him greatly on this, what the financial status of the building project was as it went along..... they [the contractors] would

come to him and say, you have got to get rid of this and this and this, for a total amount of this. He would go and work really hard to get rid of it...Then two weeks later he would look at the building and they hadn't made a change at all." Also, Mr. McCrae pointed out that there was often a lag time between working out financial decisions with the School Board and discussing changes with the contractors. This often resulted in the construction expenditures being greater than had been anticipated which meant that Mr. Clarke then had to make cuts elsewhere.

While Mr. Clarke was trying to overcome his illness, the Learning Development Team (LDT) continued to meet and to try to determine whether their first step should be to learn about the software or whether it should be to gain a basic understanding of learner-focused education. The group began to have difficulty reaching a common understanding as to what the direction of the project should be. Mr. McCrae began to come to all of the meetings and assisted with research and staff development ideas but he was never officially given a role. He explains it this way, "...because I was never ever appointed to any kind of position if you like, I had to fight for the time from my work at the Board Office to support the school in the technology. I knew some curriculum as well, I just thought that this Year 2000 stuff was just tremendous because of the way it focussed on individual kids. So I was committed to that stuff, but on the other hand I had no authority, if you like. I was the bridge, I was the link between the Board Office and the school with respect to technology and in some ways, with respect to staff development too, but I had no authority to do anything, or change this. The best I could do was lobby, whether at the Board level or with Del and the staff." Mr. McCrae did recognize the difficulty the group was having, "I think there was confusion on the part of folks on the LDT and everybody else as well, about what the role of the LDT members was, whether it was simply to get the technology in and

get it working or whether it was somehow to do the instructional change, to in-service everybody to help them figure out what it meant to be part of a learner-focused school and so on. And for me, as I think back on it now, I think that the Learning Development Team tried to do too much, took on too much was expected to do too much, because everyone of you folks was doing this in your spare time. Volunteer, after school or whatever.”

During the five or six months of Mr. Clark’s intermittent illness, anxiety grew among members of the school community. The architects began to hear discontent among the School Planning Committee. One of the architects, Rod Windjack, remembers, “I remember the exercise when that transition was happening and all of a sudden the school was almost done and there seemed to be a lot of uncertainty, a little bit of panic whether it was actually going to begin to work because all along, up until sort of the 11<sup>th</sup> hour, it was going to be that dramatic change to self-directed learning. That was the intent. Then as we got closer and closer, whether people weren’t buying into it or what the reason was, we began to hear things from Del and other people”. The architects were beginning to be asked to do studies and help decide if traditional education could be offered in the building. “Things like how will this work under conventional sort of teaching methods, like the way we do it now? Will it work, how many classrooms do we have? Like, I know we’ve got lecture theatre, I know we’ve got seminar rooms. Would it work as a traditional school? ... We were a little surprised, and we began to do various bits of analysis for that, and I guess the school is flexible enough to, in a compromise situation, work that way. But ultimately the school was intended as that self-directed learning centre.”

At this point, teachers in the classrooms were beginning to become concerned that they were not prepared for the move. As the construction continued, staff was invited to go over to the school to have a look and some became very concerned about classroom size. Some typical comments made by staff members included, "I could not believe the size of the classrooms particularly in the science and math wing. How did they expect us to put thirty kids into a room that size? I thought every one had lost their mind".

During this time each teacher was issued a laptop computer. The School Board contributed \$ 43, 669.65 from its operating budget to finance this cost. In addition, workshops on the use of the new Information Management Series (IMS) software and on the operating system of the portable MacIntosh Computer were given. Members of the Leadership Development Team offered workshops to staff, and a mentoring program was put in place which was designed help teachers overcome their fear of technology. At this point all training was offered on a voluntary basis. No time or money was made available. As the construction continued, however, teachers in the staff room and in the hallways were voicing comments such as. "I didn't feel that I was ready to go into the new school. I don't understand IMS and I don't like computers". Members of the Learning Development Team were divided in their opinions as to how the dissatisfaction which was being voiced by the staff should be addressed. A few members felt that getting the teachers to a stage where they felt comfortable with technology was sufficient at that point. The majority of the team members believed that it was important that curriculum be put into the information management system software program. In-service time was offered to departments to develop lesson plans for teachers to use when the transition to a learner-focused model was adopted. The lesson plans that were put into the software program were, as one staff member



pointed out, “the same as teachers had been using for years, and many teachers were wondering what was the point of all of this stuff”. Mr. Clark was concerned about the widening split amongst the staff. He began to question the efficacy of the change process which had been used up to that point. “There is an apparent lack of equity of opportunity that I think didn’t help any” he said. “But you know, when you are starting new programs and you get a group of people that are keen and gung-ho and on board, that is going to happen”. He also stated that he felt that the time lapse between the beginning of the change process and the opening of the new school had a negative impact on staff attitudes toward change. “As I said, I think the problem was that ours was too long in the process. I mean if we had been ready two years earlier, there wouldn’t have been a problem, because two years prior to when I left there wasn’t a rift on staff. There was still interest, enthusiasm, and so on, all there. So if we could have done it that would have been great, but it just didn’t happen.”

According to Mr. Clarke, he decided sometime in April or May of 1995, that the staff would move into the new school and would continue to offer a traditional model of teaching. Although some changes were planned, it was felt that teachers had not been adequately prepared to offer a learner-focused approach. Furthermore, the training in technology was believed to be insufficient. There was a shortage of computers, and other forms of technology, and opposition to change was continuing to mount.

As September 1996 approached, teachers began to feel more and more rushed. They were expected to pack their own belongings and to discard any property that they felt was unnecessary for the new school. The administrators began to advise teachers that when they moved into the

new building they would no longer have their own individual classrooms. Rather it was explained, the departments were to share classrooms, and teachers were to set up their desks in teacher preparation rooms. These rooms were clustered, in the various wings of the school, adjacent to the subject areas they were teaching. This caused a great deal of concern for some of the staff who was opposed to the change. In fact, some teachers ignored this new concept and proceeded to move into classrooms with all of their books or aids and set up shop, despite the fact that the room was to be shared. These teachers made it very clear to others that this was their room and that no one else was to use their materials. This was a complete reversal of the notion of a collegial atmosphere where staffs were going to work as a team in the different subject areas, and offer Learning Guides to students as a unified department. It was clearly demonstrated that a number of senior staff had drawn their mark in the sand. A special staff meeting was called in October and a number of issues were addressed but there were no clear resolutions. As I have mentioned earlier, the administrators in the school had different opinions as to the efficacy of a learner-focused approach to education. At this point an impasse had been reached.

Due to the stress imposed by the move into the new building, Mr. Clark has stated he decided not to compound this stress by expecting staff to experience more change in terms of adopting a new model of teaching or changing the timetable at this time. The staff was very divided in their opinions regarding learner-focused education and had been in conflict over classroom space. In fact, some staff members were not talking to each other. Finally, the day before Christmas break, an unsigned letter was circulated amongst staff. The "'62 Blues' Far West Edition:" (Appendix D) was published by a staff member(s) who was not in agreement with the new

direction of the school. Members of the staff, who supported change and rejected the method used to express such concerns, immediately came to Mr. Clark's defense. The local representatives of the Sooke Teachers Association, upon pressure from staff, immediately issued a memo, "We, the STA representatives, do not approve of this method of communication regarding staff concerns. We find this letter both unprofessional and unethical." It is clear that the two sides were clearly at loggerheads.

When Mr. Clark returned from Christmas vacation, he was not convinced that a majority of the staff was totally opposed to the new model. To check this he designed a survey to help assess how teachers were proceeding with the change process. He has stated that he hoped that the publication of the results of the survey would encourage teachers to continue to change their practice. Of the thirty-seven staff members surveyed, only fifteen responded. Ten respondents indicated that they were willing to change their practice. Although the results of the survey were disappointing he felt that he had to carry on with the project. He did recognize that the chances for success were slim. Mr. Clark suggests that a lack of funds and training was partially responsible for the failure of the school to adopt change "...that it all boils down to dollars and cents." He continues, "In the last three years, this district has had a deficit, which they are trying to eradicate. There is no money. So when you say, from the district perspective I would say we need to free up some teachers, to get it going. You can't if you don't have the money to do that. And I am not talking about just a day here and a day there. I'm talking about, like here is a semester, so instead of teaching four blocks or three blocks, or whatever it is, your whole day is designed to achieve these goals".

Mr. McCrae also raised the issue of money being diverted from the project. "Now those were the days, of course, where the thing [construction of the new school and move toward learner-focused education] got passed by the Board but through the rest of the year, they said, we have to cut this and cut that, because we are going to have all those deficits and everything. ... Del would start out the year believing he had \$ 100,000 for teacher preparation time or whatever, to do a certain piece of inservice work. By about December, he would get the word that this has been cut down to \$ 35,000. The Superintendent would come to me and say, 'look we need some money, can I take \$ 60,000 out of here.' And my response to him was, 'you can't take it out if you want this kind of school. Now you make the decision about what you are going to do.' I think there was a lot of that kind of stuff, where money was taken away or things were done which was almost like, we hope nobody notices, or we hope they can tighten their belts, or we hope they can make things work". Documents released by the School District accounting office substantiate these diversions of funds. These documents reveal that money spent on release time amounted to only \$ 8,500 for Teachers on Call, another \$ 4,100 for training and conversion and finally \$ 2,100 on clerical time between 1994 – 1996. Records for any monies spent prior to 1994 could not be found.

In September 1998, Tom McCrae was appointed Assistant Superintendent, and this addition to his duties meant that he became more isolated from the Edward Milne Project. Mr. Clark felt isolated, and the District had a deficit of one million dollars.

Mr. Clark announced in June of 1997 that he was going to retire the following June. Although he continued to try to carry on with the change process at the school, many of the teachers who

supported him lost their drive. To some, it seemed as if the five years of hard work had been for nothing. As one staff member said, "Many of us were very angry, feeling that the district had abandoned us, also having an uneasy feeling towards other staff members who were responsible for the blocking of this program". Others felt more entrenched in their positions that change would not and should not occur. One staff member was heard to say, "Hopefully there was going to be a stop to changing the education system." And another individual said, "Why fix the wheel if it's not broken."

For some there was a last hope. A new Principal was going to be hired who, it was hoped, would rekindle the transformation. The district advertised for the position nation-wide. Mr. McCrae was concerned about the principalship of the school. "I never had a chance to speak to the School Board about that issue," he said. "But I have spoken in no uncertain terms about that issue to the Superintendent's educational group that he met with every week. You have a chance here to make a decision. If you want Edward Milne to be the kind of school that it was designed to be, it was built to be, and which has a capable staff, to put it [a learner-focused approach] into place, although they may be very unhappy about it now, then you have got to advertise for a Principal who has certain qualities. He has to believe passionately in this way of doing business and is prepared to take a lot of flack and be there for a number of years, to get this school changed around." Mr. McCrae has stated that he feels that although their options were limited in terms of a selection of candidates, the Board and the Superintendent failed to take advantage of the opportunity to hire an Administrator who could have redirected the school back toward a learner-focused approach. He states, "And I did listen to a number of the individuals. Incidentally, I have to tell you there was not a lot of people to pick from, but the Board, I would say, and the

Superintendent, did not grab hold of that thing and say, we are determined to make this school what it was set out to be.”

The School Board made a final decision and Mr. Bob Meikle was appointed as the new Principal at Edward Milne Community School in September 1998. At this time, Mr. David Felker was brought in as Vice-Principal. In the two years that these two gentlemen have been administrators at the school, some steps toward a more learner-focused approach have been taken. Weekly tutorials, which were in place under Mr. Clarke’s administration, have continued, a flex program has been introduced, Career and Personal Planning has become a self-paced program and a change committee has been established.

In response to Ministry of Education direction and the Year 2000: A Framework For Learning, and in a recognition of the need to provide increased and more varied support to students, School District 62 staff, school administrators, staff and community members made the decision that the new Edward Milne Community School would offer a learner-focused approach to education.

It is apparent from the data collected during the process of this research study that many factors influenced or had an impact on decisions made by individuals involved in the change process. Despite the considerable effort on the part of certain individuals, many factors, some of which were simply circumstances over which there was little control, impeded the change process which resulted in the failure of Edward Milne Community School to achieve its goal of offering a learner-focused education to students when it opened in September 1996.

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## **CHAPTER 5**

### **Case Study Results**

#### **5.1 Study Findings.**

An analysis of the data collected from interviews, observations and an examination of various documents pertinent to this study revealed a number of common themes. These themes indicate possible reasons why the new Edward Milne Community School did not initially offer a learner-focused approach to education as it had intended, when it opened in 1996, a goal towards which it is still working. These themes include:

- a lack of sufficient funds and concern regarding the allocation of existing funds
- a lack of direction from the School Board regarding construction of the new school and the change process and the inordinate amount of responsibility placed on the project manager.
- opposition by staff to change, a lack of sufficient technological in-service and support and a lack of adequate training in the area of learner-focused education.
- poor utilization of the facility.

In this section I will discuss each of these concerns in more detail and will summarize the facts and opinions made available to me.



### 5.1.1 Lack of Sufficient Funds and Allocation of Existing Funds

The architectural design of the new Edward Milne Community School was state of the art. The facility was technologically wired to accommodate computers in every classroom to provide extensive internet access, to equip a testing room with computers with access to testing banks and to provide access to a software program that would assist in tracking student progress and attendance. Funds were also to be available for technological in-service and support and for staff training in the area of learner-focused education. Construction cost over runs, a school district budget deficit and a reallocation of funds appear to have prevented these plans from coming to fruition.

According to an architect involved in the design of the new school, extensive technological wiring in the infrastructure resulted in construction costs going over budget. The Ministry of Education was not willing to provide the additional funding required to complete construction of the school as it was originally planned. Consequently, when the school was opened in September 1996, it was not fully completed. There was no money for the track and tennis courts planned nor was there money available for a playing field. To this day, students in Physical Education classes must use the local park. Furthermore, much of the technology needed to operate a learner-focused model was not available in the school. The school is wired for the technology but there was no money available to purchase computers for the testing room and for classrooms and consequently Internet and computer access is limited and a test bank is not available. In addition, it appears that some funds earmarked for staff development at Edward Milne Community School were diverted to cover other costs in the district.

Participants in this study identified a further problem regarding expenditures of money earmarked to accommodate the change process at Edward Milne Community School. A software package designed to track student progress and attendance, entitled Information Management Series, was purchased from a company in United States at the cost of \$79,000 US. A considerable sum was spent on researching the tracking system, on flying the sales people and staff members back and forth from Knoxville Tennessee, on substitutes to enable staff to input curriculum into the program and to organize future training for the staff on how to utilize the system. This tracking system has never been operational within the school, however, due to a number of unforeseen circumstances.

Initially, when the Information Management Series (IMS) was purchased, it was expected that this software program would be capable of time-tabling students and would be able to track student attendance and progress. Unfortunately, when the Ministry of Education changed its graduation requirements in 1996, it required school districts to upgrade their computer software programs to enable them to transfer graduation information to the Ministry. Previous to this, it had been expected that graduation information recorded by the Information Management Series at Edward Milne Community School, would be transferred to the school's "Columbia" software program and would then be rerouted to the Ministry of Education as "Columbia" was compatible with the Ministry's software program. The vendors of "Columbia", however, were not willing to upgrade their program to match that of the Ministry's and it became necessary to purchase a new program that was compatible. The new software program, HARTS, that was purchased by the School Board for School District 62, unfortunately, is not compatible with IMS. Consequently,

Edward Milne Community School did not have a system in place upon which it had been counting to track student attendance and progress and which was deemed necessary to implement a learner-focused program.

#### 5.1.2 Lack of Direction from the School Board and Responsibilities of Project Manager.

Several participants expressed a concern that there did not appear to be much direction given from the School Board regarding the construction of the school and implementation of the change process at Edward Milne Community School. Also, they felt that an inordinate amount of responsibility for these things fell on Mr. Clark's shoulders.

When the Ministry of Education in 1992 gave approval for the construction of the new school, Mr. Clark, who was currently principal of Edward Milne, was appointed as the project manager. It would appear, according to Mr. Clark's recollections and opinions expressed by Mr. McCrae, that Mr. Clark was expected to be the primary person responsible for the planning of the new school and for implementation of the change process. When Mr. McCrae became the District Administrator responsible for technology, he became involved with the school project to assist with the technological planning. Gradually, he became more involved with the planning of the change process itself in addition to the technological aspects. Information gathered from interviews with Mr. McCrae, Mr. Clark and other members of the Learning Development Team seems to indicate that Mr. McCrae became an advocate for learner-focused education and that he took it upon himself to act as a liaison between the team and the School Board. It does not appear from the information gathered that any individual was assigned this role officially by the

School Board. Both Mr. Clark and Mr. McCrae expressed a concern that regular communication did not occur between the two groups. They also stated that funding decisions made at the School Board level sometimes appeared to be made without consultation with Mr. Clark, who would then have to alter previous decisions based on these funding changes. Another concern, and one which was expressed by numerous of the participants in this research project, was that the School Board did not appear to provide a clear delineation of Mr. Clark's role as Project Manager. Although Mr. Meikle was Acting Principal, Mr. Clark continued to be involved in the school as the director of committees involved in the change process in addition to being involved with architects and budgeting decisions. Many individuals expressed the opinion that this lack of clarity of roles may have resulted in Mr. Clark's becoming ill and in his eventual retirement in June 1998.

Participants in this study also questioned the School Board's commitment to the adoption of a learner-focused model at Edward Milne Community School. The withdrawal of funds from accounts earmarked for staff training to cover other district costs and the School Board's failure to address concerns expressed regarding the extent of the opposition to change amongst numerous staff members at the school were seen by individuals who supported the change to a learner-focused model as an indication of a lack of commitment.

### 5.1.3 Staff Opposition to Change and Insufficient Training and Technological Support

Staff opposition to the change process required by the adoption of a learner-focused model and a lack of sufficient technological knowledge and support, and training in learner-focused education

were concerns voiced strongly by all participants in this study. Both concerns were seen by staff and administrators to be major contributors to the failure of Edward Milne Community School to become a learner-focused school.

Approval for the building of a new school in 1992 prompted a re-evaluation of the school philosophy and an examination of the efficacy of the current model of teaching offered at Edward Milne. Community members, parents, students and teachers were consulted and a direction for the school was envisioned. A vision statement was written which emphasized a learner-focused approach to education and lifelong learning. To accompany this vision statement was a report that outlined the means by which this vision could be reached. At this point, the staff spent time during professional development days, prioritizing various points mentioned in the vision statement. In addition, some teachers and administrators were visiting schools that offered a learner-focused approach and were examining samples of learning guides. When construction of the school was delayed for a year, all exploration stopped. Once construction commenced, the Learning Development Team, was established to investigate a tracking system and to devise a plan for implementing the school vision. Teachers in the school were all given laptop computers and some training in the use of the software package designed to track attendance was offered.

One concern expressed by some teachers regarding this process was that they did not feel included in the decision to adopt a learner-focused model of education. In fact, when they were asked through a survey if they supported learner-focused education, they felt that they did not fully understand the concept or its implications. Furthermore, some teachers on the school

Steering committee voiced their concerns and felt that the Principal ignored them. Other staff members stated that they were not aware that the Learning Development Team was doing anything other than investigating a tracking system and were resentful when they discovered that this group was also engaged in planning the future of the school. Amongst the Learning Development Team members themselves, opinions were often divided and many members felt as if the committee was too directed by the Principal.

In conjunction with those staff members who were experiencing confusion and uncertainty, was a group of teachers who were philosophically opposed to any kind of change and were actively engaged in ensuring that it did not occur. The School Board was made aware of this opposition prior to the completion of the new school but decided to deal with any problems as they arose.

#### 5.1.4 Utilization of the Facility

A fourth and final thread, which arose through an analysis of the data collected in this study, was recognition that the facility is being used inadequately as a result of the difficulties outlined above. As was mentioned earlier, the school was designed to accommodate large lectures, small seminars, and frequent student movement both within the school and within the community. To date, the facility continues to be used in a fashion which best suits a traditional model of teaching.

Once the school was completed teachers had very little time to pack up their materials and to move them over to the new school. When they moved into the building the original timetable was still in place and there were no learning guides. Common preparation areas were available

to teachers according to the discipline in which they taught and the expectation was that teachers would all share classrooms. Many teachers brought in their materials, however, and set up their rooms in much the same fashion as they had in the old school. Most teachers remain in these same rooms today. Furthermore, as the timetable remained the same as it had been at the old school, and no learning guides were available, a traditional teaching model continued to be used. Teachers were very stressed by the size of their classrooms and many of them continue to feel this way. Classrooms designed to cater to small seminar groups are being used to house thirty students. Dividing walls in classrooms designed to be opened for large groups are seldom opened with the exception of examination periods. The theatre, which also has dividing walls, is seldom used for lectures.

Participants in this research project who are proponents of learner-focused education, have expressed a fear that unless change occurs soon and dramatically, opposition will become more entrenched, and staff will not have any incentive to change. They believe that the building will continue to be utilized in its present form as long as the timetable remains the same and an alternate method is not offered by means of training and technological support.

## **5.2 Study Recommendations.**

The purpose of this case study is to examine Edward Milne Community School from 1992 to the present in an effort to determine the reasons why this school has not, to date, adopted a learner-focused approach to education. The Ministry of Education recommends this approach, the school's mission statement advocates it, and the school was designed with this approach in mind. Some inroads have been made in this direction since the opening of the school. For example,

tutorial sessions are offered four times a week for students. The Career and Personal Planning Program and Grade Ten Equivalency Program for students sixteen and older both have learning guides and are self-paced. A Flex Program which was offered to grades nine and ten this year is expanding to include some grade eleven courses next year. Despite these changes, Edward Milne Community School continues to offer a primarily traditional style of education.

In studying the opinions and perceptions of those individuals who were involved in the planning process of the new school, from the establishment of its vision, throughout its construction and, finally, to its daily operation since its opening, and by examining the documentation relevant to this study, it has been possible to identify a number of reasons why this might be the case. To reiterate the findings outlined at the beginning of this section, an analysis of the data collected revealed four main themes, which indicate possible reasons why Edward Milne School was impeded from adopting a learner-focused model of teaching. They are:

- a lack of sufficient funds and concern regarding the allocation of existing funds
- a lack of direction from the School Board regarding construction of the new school and the change process and the inordinate amount of responsibility placed on the project manager.
- opposition by staff to change, a lack of sufficient technological in-service and support and a lack of adequate training in the area of learner-focused education.
- poor utilization of the facility..

To conclude this section I will provide some recommendations which may aid Edward Milne Community School in reaching its goal of becoming a learner -focused school. In addition, I



hope that they may also serve to provide some insights into the building of a new school and the implementation of a philosophical change in approach to education.

- i. Ensure that sufficient resources to cover the cost of construction, staff training and other support mechanisms are provided. This will signal a commitment on the part of the Ministry of Education and the School Board that both organizations are serious about the change process.
  
- ii. Provide leadership at the School Board level in terms of clearly delineating the roles of the facility coordinator, project manager and Principal of the school. Furthermore, consider appointing a project manager who is not connected with the school. These actions will assist in preventing an overlap in responsibilities and will prevent the potential for burn out. The task of both overseeing the construction of the facility and trying to implement the change process may prove overwhelming. The appointment of a district liaison person between the Board and the various stakeholders in the project will assist in the creation of greater and more consistent communication at all levels and further indicate a commitment to change.
  
- iii. Create a vision for the school in a progressive and interactive fashion involving all the key stakeholders and ensure that it reflects the values, hopes and aspirations of the majority of the people in the organization. If this vision engages everyone it will be supported.

- iv. Ensure that all members of the school administration support the vision and the strategies used to implement it. Otherwise, what may happen is that opponents to change may go beyond passive resistance and develop and grow strong enough to prevent the new system from being implemented successfully.
- v. Provide extensive training for staff in the area of learner-focused education prior to implementing this educational approach. Investigate other programs (timetables, learning guides, and success rates) already in place at other schools to help prepare people for the change. It may help them to cope with fears and anxieties based on a lack of knowledge and may also erase their doubts about the efficacy of such a program.
- vi. Involve the staff in all aspects of the process. Delegate the authority to deal with problems to individuals and teams and give them the responsibility for implementing the change. Individuals will be more open and willing to change if they are involved rather than having the details dictated to them.
- vii. Co-opt new staff or move those staff members who are opposed to change. If these individuals cannot be swayed to support the change process it may become necessary to devise a method of allowing them the opportunity to transfer out of the school without any impact on their level of seniority. This arrangement may be possible to negotiate through the district Teacher's Association. Continuing resistance will only serve to make it more difficult to implement change. Under a similar arrangement with the Teacher's

Association, teachers who support a learner-focused model of teaching could transfer into the school.

- viii. Ensure that all preparations for adopting a learner-focused approach to education have been made prior to moving into the new building. Preparations such as a flexible timetable, prepared learning guides for each course and grade level, a system to track student attendance and progress, computers and technology to accommodate student needs and a building that is versatile. This will establish a positive direction for the school from the start and will help to prevent entrenchment and an unwillingness to change from a traditional style of teaching to that of a more learner-focused approach.
  
- ix. Change the timetable and teaching model at Edward Milne Community School and utilize classroom space differently. In order for the building to be used in the fashion for which it was designed, it will be necessary to change the timetable from a four by five design to one that allows for greater flexibility. The classrooms are too small to house thirty students at one time. A flexible timetable would allow for greater movement throughout the school as students would be attending required classes with each teacher twice a week only. The remainder of the time they would be positioned throughout the school in the library, study areas, the theatre or classrooms dependent upon their choice and their need. This change in timetable will consequently demand a change in teaching style. Teachers will spend less time in front of a class lecturing and will act more as facilitators. They will teach less in isolation as they will share curriculum compiled in the form of learning guides and their teaching assignments will be determined within their departments. Teachers will also have

to be technologically adept in order to input curriculum and tests into computers and will need to use a software program to track student progress.

It is hoped that these recommendations will serve as a guideline for future planning and that they are of assistance to Edward Milne Community School staff and administrators. The recommendations offered are based primarily on an examination of the literature written in the areas of learner-focused education, and leadership and organizations. Some of the information has also been gleaned from the experiences expressed to me by individuals who are currently working in learner-focused schools

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Lessons Learned**

#### **6.1 Research Project Lessons Learned.**

As a result of carrying out this action research project many important themes have emerged. I have chosen to focus my final comments on the personal lessons I have learned in working with my colleagues. Most significant is recognition that personal involvement in many of the aspects of the case study has both its advantages and disadvantages. In my experience, the disadvantages required careful consideration for them to be overcome. A second lesson that I learned was that it is important to obtain all the information before forming an opinion on a matter.

One advantage to being directly involved in the events surrounding the case study is that I was able to contribute my own observations and perspective. A second advantage is that familiarity with the organization and individuals involved in the case probably enabled easier access to information and documentation and may have encouraged a more candid expression of opinions amongst the interview participants.

One disadvantage of personal involvement lies in the fact that it is sometimes difficult to maintain neutrality. A second disadvantage is that the findings and recommendations in a case study may appear to be unfavorable to specific individuals, which consequently may result in a

negative response. In recognition of these facts, I had to be very wary of these pitfalls and very conscious of my actions and words.

There were three areas in particular to which I had to give careful consideration. In an effort to try to ensure that my bias did not unduly influence the results of the study I was careful that the wording of the interview questions was neutral and that I did not demonstrate my feelings through my body language. Also, I paid particular attention to ensuring that an analysis of the data collected and the findings of the study were balanced and that they reflected the facts rather than simply my opinion. A third area of consideration was the way in which the findings and recommendations were worded in the project report. Initially, I was not as cognizant of the impact that this information may have on individuals. I learned, however, that dependent upon the results of the findings they might be viewed as offensive or upsetting to individuals with whom I was friends, with whom I worked and indeed for whom I was an employee. In an effort to alleviate this problem, I tried to present the findings and recommendations in an unthreatening manner.

A final lesson that I learned from this research project is that it is important to keep an open mind and important not to form an opinion without obtaining all the facts. Having been an active participant in the planning of the new school and a teacher at the school I felt that I knew most of the reasons why Edward Milne Community School did not offer a learner-focused program when it opened in September 1996. I now know that there existed numerous other factors that influenced the decisions and actions of individuals involved in the change process. I recognize that it can be dangerous to form an opinion based on a preconceived idea.

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## **Appendices**

**Appendix A: A letter sent to all staff prior to the any interviews or discussions.**

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January 1, 2000

Dear Staff:

As some of you already know, I am currently working on my Masters Degree in Leadership and Training through Royal Roads University. I have completed my course work and am in the process of writing my thesis. The focus of the thesis is on the process of change and more precisely will involve a case study examining the steps which Edward Milne Community School has taken toward implementing a change from a teacher-centered model of teaching toward a more learner-focused approach. This paradigm shift was recommended in a document prepared for School District 62 by a team consisting of various stakeholders entitled: *Preparation, Partnerships and Flexibility Educational Specifications and Space Programming for the New Edward Milne Community School - October 1992.*

In my case study, I will examine the variables which may have had an impact on the progress of this change in approach at EMCS and will give recommendations based on the data collected and on the literature available on the topic of effective change. In order to be able to complete a thorough and balanced examination of this situation, it is imperative that I access numerous sources. To this end, I am seeking your help in the completion of this study. If you are willing, I would very much appreciate your assistance in the completion of surveys, in the participation of personal interviews and in other such activities. Any information given will be recorded but at no time will individual names be mentioned. Ethical obligations in the collection of data require that the privacy of individuals is maintained at all times. Similarly, all information gleaned from this study will be available for perusal throughout the writing of this thesis. My intention for this study is simply to gather information, to report a balanced account of events and to provide possible recommendations for effective change to the school change committee.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this process please feel free to come and talk to me. I am open to any suggestions you may have.

Dick.

**Appendix B: Survey sent to staff by Mr. Del Clark - January 1997**

---

Emcs Teacher Survey

Staff:

Please fill out the following questionnaire, and return to the principal's office as soon as possible. We shall use the responses to allocate funds for further teacher in-service.

Del.

1. How have you changed/ modified your teaching style? Or did you feel you were already learner focused.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

2. Have you changed the way you assessed students? How?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

3. Have you modified student activities / assignments? How?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

4. Are you a lecturer, a facilitator or a combination? In which role are you most effective?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

5. How are you accommodating students' different rates of learning?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

6. What do you do to address the principle that "Learning is both an individual and a group process"?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

7. If you have or need to develop a personal professional growth plan, what are or would be your top three priorities?

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

I teach in the following areas:

Fine Arts:  Math Science  Humanities:  Special Ed:  Tech Ed:

When you have completed the survey, please return it to my box.

**Appendix C: List of those who participated in the taped interviews.**

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**Interviewees**

- Mr. Tom McCrae** - Assistant Superintendent, School District 62 (Retired).
- Mr. Del Clark** - Principal, Edward Milne Community School (Retired).
- Mr. Bob Meikle** - Principal, Edward Milne Community School.
- Mrs. Lori Messer** - Community School Coordinator, Edward Milne Community School.
- Mr. Geoff Johnson** - Superintendent, Cowichan School District.
- Mr. Rod Windjack** - Architect, John A. Neilson Architects Inc
- Mr. John Neilson** - Architect, John A. Neilson Architects Inc



## "62 blues" far west edition:

a few thoughts from the editor: how come when you are so appreciated, you feel like a used car that goes down in value with each passing admin. memo / i thought the new emcs was suppose to be built on a promise of collaboration and team work, rather than the antagonism and animosity that has been foisted upon us. we had a special staff meeting several months ago to discuss pressing issues, a long list of concerns was developed and ? earl morrison is on leave and will retire this january. did the physical environment in the science-math area have anything to do with his departure? how many more of us will succumb before the problems are addressed in a meaningful way. / our commons area feels more like a mall than a school. why do we tolerate the large number of truant students who use it for a dry place to hang out during class time. i guess that is what some people think inclusion means. while we are at it... ever wonder why phoebe has students swearing at her out on the road and does not turn the names in. would anything happen to those responsible, or would she be asked if she had any witnesses to prove her allegations? remember when teachers, counselors and administrators use to roll kids who were skipping and failing courses, to get to class, get to work, or go out and find a job. when did the change in philosophy take place? when i look at the paradigm shift that has taken place in our school, i am afraid i have grave concerns about whether we have made changes that are in the best interests of our students, staff and our community. we use to have a staff and administration who were not afraid to kick seat warmers out. what ever happened to us. where did the collective strength we once enjoyed go? while i am on the topic, why is the health of the office staff more important than the health of the new photo copy staff. if there is a problem in the office, why try to fix it by placing extra work on the backs of teachers. we, as educators, are the primary professionals responsible for educating students. all others should be in support of that effort. this school has so much potential to be a special place to work and learn. what a shame it is not moving in that direction with more cohesiveness. we need a "we can make it happen" type administration leading us. we don't need a "you can't do that" and "we would never win the law suit" type philosophy" as our guiding light. i am not sure if this is the last edition of the "62 blues", but all of you are more than welcome to pen your own version. maybe some frank and honest dialogue will come of this. i hope it is not too divisive, but there are times when surgery is called for. the good news is that the patient usually survives, and in most cases, is healthier after the operation. i guess only time will tell us if the problems we face can be addressed with minor day surgery or whether more drastic measures are required.

merry Christmas

1997 ASBO INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURAL EXHIBITION

# *Certificate of Excellence*

*presented to*

**John A. Neilson Architects, Inc.**

*In recognition of outstanding architectural design in the project*

***Edward Milne Community School  
Sooke, B.C.***

*The Association of School Business Officials International  
is pleased to present this certificate in appreciation of your efforts to improve  
the quality of schoolhouse design and the education of our nation's youth.*

*Clair O. Belsher*

Clair O. Belsher, CASBO  
1997 President, ASBO International

*Don Tharpe*

Don J. Tharpe, Ed.D.  
Executive Director, ASBO International

