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FOR  
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TEACHER RESEARCH**



# Learning from Practice

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# **Learning from Practice**

**A Bulletin of Teacher Research, Volume 3, Number 1, November 2005**

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# Foreword

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## Carrying on the Tradition of Reflective Leadership in Education

The McDowell Foundation is proud to bear the name of a man who has been referred to as “a giant in public education”<sup>1</sup>. Dr. Stirling McDowell was a modest man who devoted his life to improving education in Saskatchewan, in Canada and around the world. As it enters into its fifteenth year of operation, which happens to overlap with the centennial celebrations for the province of Saskatchewan, the McDowell Foundation is working to extend the legacy of Dr. McDowell and other pioneers in education. By supporting and promoting teacher-led educational research, the Foundation is providing impetus for the on-going improvement of teaching and learning in the publicly funded K-12 education system.

The McDowell Foundation is an independent charitable organization that was established by the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation in 1991. Supported by donations from teachers, superannuates, corporations, and educational partners, the Foundation is gradually establishing a research fund adequate to sustain a significant level of teacher research on an on-going basis. The fund recently reached the \$1.8 million mark and has provided approximately 150 research grants benefiting hundreds of teachers and students. Recently the Board of Directors allocated another \$100,000 for new research projects in 2005-2006. Information on how to apply for a research grant is available at the back of this bulletin, along with the contact information for the Foundation.

This bulletin features twelve recently completed McDowell Foundation projects that have been carried out in schools across Saskatchewan. It also provides information

about the 2005 recipient of the McDowell Foundation award, which is presented annually at the Foundation’s Learning from Practice Exchange of Teacher Knowledge and Research. This conference, which was recently held on November 18-19 in Saskatoon, is a showcase for the work of McDowell researchers. In addition, it provides a forum for dialogue between classroom teachers, university faculty, and others interested in all kinds of educational research. It is intended to contribute to the building of an educational research community in Saskatchewan and the development of a more prominent role for teachers within that community.

All teachers who are interested in becoming McDowell researchers or discovering what their colleagues are learning from research are encouraged to attend Learning from Practice and read this bulletin. The benefits of teacher-led research can be personally and professionally significant, as indicated below in some of the comments provided by McDowell researchers who have recently completed research projects with support from the Foundation:

*We were exhilarated. It was a very positive experience. The topic itself gave us energy and our research group was very responsive.*

*It really reinforced my pride in the profession. I felt I became a better model to younger colleagues.*

*The students took ownership, pride. They were leaders. They saw themselves as capable of changing the world. They are proud of their ability to cooperate.*

*Personally – I am proud of myself and my team for our final publication. The project was a great deal of work but the personal satisfaction for starting and finishing it sure feels good.*

*Professionally – one of the most rewarding professional development experiences of my career thus far. I learned a great deal about research and its implications for my learning curve as well as students. It was a terrific experience.*

I learned so much! I look at most learning experiences now as a ‘potential research project’.

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<sup>1</sup>Verne Clemence, *Saskatchewan’s Own: People Who Made a Difference*. Calgary: Fifth House Ltd. (A Fitzhenry & Whiteside Company), 2004, p. 41-45.



# Contents

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## **4 Making Our Ancestors Proud: The Isbister Park Heritage Project**

Westview Community School/Kistahpinanihk at Isbister Park, Prince Albert

An elementary school initiates a community education project that brings staff, students and community members together in a study and celebration of the history of the area served by the school.

## **6 Below the Radar: Teachers, Boys and Schools**

Jeff Park, Anne Browne, Barry Gay, Sam Robinson, Vicki Sommerfeldt and Mark Wilderman, Saskatoon

This research study explores the experiences, classroom practice, and pedagogy of four secondary teachers to better understand gender construction through the lens of masculinity.

## **8 Challenges to Implementing Inquiry: In the Senior Science Classroom**

Duane Johnson, Clavet

A high school teacher investigates possible barriers to the use of inquiry learning in science and possible ways to overcome them.

## **10 Moving Together: School<sup>PLUS</sup> and Physical Activity**

Dave Derksen and the Buena Vista School<sup>PLUS</sup> Action Research Team, Saskatoon

School staff, students and community members collaboratively experiment with creative and innovative physical activity options for the children and families in a single school.

## **12 “Collaborating to Make a Difference”: The Adaptive Dimension and Differentiating Instruction in Saskatoon Catholic French Immersion Schools**

Hélène Cook and Elaine Stakiw, Saskatoon

Six elementary French immersion schools are involved in an action research project to create a support system for teacher collaboration in the development and/or adaptation of curriculum.

## **14 Summer Literacy Program**

Lois Scandrett and Laurie Hellings, Moose Jaw

Two primary teachers provide a summer literacy program for students experiencing difficulties with reading and writing to see how it affects their skill levels.

## **16 Building Attachment: Refugee Students’ Reflections on English as a Second Language Integration**

Koreen Geres, Saskatoon

An ESL teacher examines the experiences of a group of refugee students over four years of high school in order to understand what did and didn’t work in their education.

## **18 Addressing Challenges That Impede the Success of Aboriginal Students at Cochrane High School**

Juanita Tuharsky, Nancy Buisson, Sue Burns, Cory Britton and Greg Enion, Regina

High school researchers develop an understanding of the challenges faced by students of Aboriginal heritage and generate theories of why these students are leaving school.

## **20 Community Schools Transition Support Project**

Terry Cratty, Belinda Daniels-Fiss, Sharon Laflamme, Ben Garchinski and Beverley Hanson, Saskatoon

A middle-years teacher studies how maintaining connections with a prominent figure from their elementary school affects the high school experience of at-risk students.

**22 Supporting All Students to Be Successful (PBIS): One Rural K-12 School's Story**

Lori Jeschke and Janet Jackson, Hepburn

A school implements Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and determines its impact on the health, efficiency and effectiveness of the learning community.

**24 Re/Viewing Character Education**

Jody Hobday-Kusch, Megan Hernberg, Gillian Strange, Heather Bahr, Ann Ferre, Sharie Parkinson and Tanya Thornhill, Saskatoon

A group of elementary teachers engage in a year-long examination of values and virtues instruction during the implementation of a character education initiative at their school.

**26 Building Moral Intelligence One Piece at a Time**

Queen Elizabeth School, Saskatoon

An elementary school implements an initiative to build moral intelligence among students based on the work of Dr. Michele Borba.

**28 2005 McDowell Foundation Award**

Information is provided about Doreen Lloyd, the 2005 recipient of the Foundation's award for outstanding contributions to educational research.



# Making Our Ancestors Proud: The Isbister Park Heritage Project

## Westview Community School/Kistahpinanihk at Isbister Park, Prince Albert

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The staff of a newly opened community school became interested in the history of Isbister Park, the area of Prince Albert in which their school was located. They began to learn about the early Métis and First Nations history of Saskatchewan, particularly the history of the early settlement on the school site that was established in 1862 by James Isbister and his wife, Margaret Bear. Gradually, a school-wide heritage project evolved that allowed students to learn about and celebrate their history and their culture. Propelled by the enthusiasm generated by numerous creative learning activities, the project quickly moved beyond the walls of the school to involve local families and the larger community.

### Primary Research

Study of the records available on the early settlement of Prince Albert revealed serious gaps in most histories of the city. They tended to overlook the fact that the area was used for centuries as a traditional First Nations meeting place (“kistahpinanihk” in Cree) and the fact that the Isbister settlement predated European settlement by several years. In developing a heritage project for students, therefore, care was taken to look critically at historical accounts, understand the pain experienced by First Nations and Métis people in recalling this period of history, give visibility to their accomplishments and their culture, and ensure the

contributions of women were recognized as well as those of men.

The primary historical research led the school to take action on several fronts, e.g.:

- “Kistahpinanihk” was officially added to the name of the school.
- School traditions were developed, such as the “Art and Heritage in the Park” celebration on June 3, the date the Isbisters arrived to settle in the area.
- The school adopted the motto, “Making Our Ancestors Proud”.
- A Family Tree Project was initiated to help local families trace their genealogies.
- The school became a site for the display and exchange of historical photographs within the community.
- Representations of the city’s history that omitted or minimized the role of First Nations and the Métis were challenged.
- Information about the heritage project and its view of the city’s history were shared with the local media.

## Action Research

Data about the impact of the heritage project was gathered from journals that staff kept throughout the project, reflection opportunities at staff meetings and planning sessions, writers' retreats for staff and parents, student writing and discussions, feedback from community agencies, and tapes of celebrations, events and meetings. Analysis of the data revealed four major themes:

### 1. Innovative Teaching/Experiential Learning

*The children's quest for knowledge of the past, because of hands-on experience, has increased dramatically.*

– Parent comment

Based on a curricular framework and objectives developed for the heritage project, numerous learning activities were developed for the school and the classroom. They included painting a mural to form a pictorial timeline of the area's history, making a model of a river lot in the Isbister settlement, sewing period clothes for a dress-up trunk, making books that told the stories of the Isbister settlers, using the "storyline" strategy to help students experience history, and working with a drama instructor and students from the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program in a demonstration project on contextual drama. Through the project, valuable lessons were learned about the power of innovative teaching strategies and the importance of experiential learning for student engagement.

### 2. Genuine Interest/Engagement in Learning

*I saw the students wanting to participate, even the shy ones. I saw their true emotions showing through as if they were really there.*

– SUNTEP student comment

The most important and common theme that emerged from the project was the genuine interest that students had in learning about their heritage. Teachers, parents and community members recognized that the students were engaged in learning, and their engagement fed the enthusiasm for the project.



### 3. Pride in Seeing Oneself as Part of History/Making History

*It was seeing pride and the unspooling of a personal history, a connection to the past and to ancestors and a feeling of being more than just an isolated self.*

– Teacher comment

As the project continued, pride in the heritage of the community served by the school began to blossom. Students, staff and parents expressed their pride in being Métis, Cree or a resident of Prince Albert. The school's Métis and Pow Wow dancers were in great demand and students were invited to sing the songs they had written in the Legislative Building in Regina. Parental involvement in the project grew to the extent that it became the most significant aspect of the final year.

### 4. Connectedness

*I have learned that mostly everyone is family cause in some way we're all related. I learned that people's cultures are different a bit from each other and it doesn't matter that we're the same culture or different.*

– Student comment

As the school began to display family trees that connected students to famous ancestors, a sense of connectedness developed among families, the school and the community. A new sense of belonging grew from a shared history.



# Below the Radar: Teachers, Boys and Schools

**Jeff Park, Anne Browne,  
Barry Gay, Sam Robinson,  
Vicki Sommerfeldt and  
Mark Wilderman**

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Two university professors and four teachers from Saskatoon high schools came together to explore the issue of boys in schools. They noted the current concern about the achievement gap between boys and girls and wanted to understand better some of the behaviours associated with boys in school, e.g., disciplinary problems, disdain for reading, avoidance of completing work, and general boredom and ennui. They organized their study around the question: How can secondary teachers identify and address the needs of boys in classrooms?

## **Research Methodology**

The research group began by building a context for their study through a review of “boy issue” literature. The university professors acted

as facilitators by providing articles and ideas for discussion at group meetings. After engaging in a joint consideration of curriculum, school culture, and pedagogy through the lens of masculinity, research goals and directions were determined collaboratively.

The university professors involved the four teachers in a series of group discussions and personal discussion sessions that investigated and examined their interests with respect to boys in school. The use of action research methodology ensured that the teachers were actively engaged in all decisions and initiatives of the project. Based on their particular interests, the teachers carried out various activities and observations in their classrooms, and provided information back to the group for further consideration. Further questions and activities were then generated for the next action research cycle. Eventually, given the diversity of the topics and concerns raised by the teachers, four discrete action research cycles were created to explore each teacher’s interests individually instead of working with the entire group.

## **Narrative Inquiry and Representation**

Given the diverse, individualistic nature of the research project, it was decided that findings would be presented primarily through narrative. Four separate narratives were developed that expressed the views and observations of the four individual teacher researchers. The first narrative focused on the boys who “fly under the radar”, i.e., disaffected boys who do not buy into the dominant school culture and survive in school by doing as little as possible, without making waves. The second looked at the boy issue from a biological and social history perspective, emphasizing the need for schools to connect to the realities of socialization and genetics for both boys and girls. The last two narratives both considered alternative literacies in relationship to gender. Differences were noted in the ways that girls and boys respond to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* and the productivity that can result from literary studies that use digital technologies and teamwork in single-sex groups. It was also suggested concepts of literacy may have to change in our highly visual and graphic-oriented society to include media such as graphic

novels. Taken together the stories of the teachers involved in the project invited a deeper understanding of a very complex issue.

## Conclusions

The narratives offer a series of suggestions for meeting boys' needs that will work for people in different situations. However, they also make it clear that there is no quick fix to the boy issue.

*One of the most important conclusions one can draw from this work is that the situation can not be defined in binary terms. The educational situation is not one of girls versus boys, males against females, or even teachers in opposition to students. Rather, educational contexts are multifaceted and paradoxical spaces that demand a variety of perspectives, certainly in the study of the reality of boys in schools.*

The researchers point out forcefully how serious the stakes are when considering gender in the classroom and schools. One teacher tells the story of a young man who committed suicide because he could not live up to the image of a sports star that he had created for himself in high school. When he was diagnosed with diabetes and was unable to continue his involvement in high-level sport, he felt desolate and concluded that he had no reason to live. Although diabetes is a manageable disease, his identity was so integrated with the jock culture of schools and society that he lost his sense of self-worth.

The researchers invite others (teachers, parents and students) to consider the issue of boys and school in the context of their own classrooms, schools and communities. To facilitate such discussion and reflection, a discussion guide that has been developed is appended to the report.

***I have to go low on the radar screen  
not doing anything so as to save bugging.  
I have to be cool all the time.  
One slip and I might get a nickname.  
But the cool kids don't ever look like  
they have to try.***

- Student Comment

### Joe – Losing It in Grade Nine Drama

Joe, a quiet, smart, interested grade-nine student, changed from a shining star to a surly, disinterested nonentity. I remember a time when Joe would be the first student to get out of his seat in the auditorium to go down to the stage to warm up. He offered creative, original, intelligent performances to me and his audience. He answered questions thoughtfully and appeared genuinely excited about my drama class.

The day he turned, I saw him jump up from his seat to go down to the stage, then stop, and sit back down again. He waited, to be the last to saunter lackadaisically down and plant himself close to the wall, arms folded, head down, and a scowl on his face. That became Joe's demeanor for the rest of the mercifully short five-week drama module. Something wore him down. It wasn't the enthusiasm, kindness, and sensitivity of the intern who was teaching my class at the time.

- Anne Brown, Drama Teacher



# Challenges to Implementing Inquiry: In the Senior Science Classroom

Duane Johnson

Inquiry is the fundamental component behind scientific research by scientists. A great question will be the deciding factor in a strong or weak research design. Teachers need to borrow this process, inquiry, from the science community to model as closely as possible the life of a scientist in the classroom. Students asking questions about science will develop substantial research and process skills. These students will understand the nature of science and become understanding science citizens.

- Excerpt from Report

A high school science teacher recognized that education is changing its focus from direct instruction towards other instructional strategies, such as inquiry learning. In his view, inquiry learning provided an avenue for engaging students in the physical, chemical and biological worlds of science that needed to be understood and promoted. He developed a research study that investigated possible barriers to inquiry learning, explored how inquiry learning is understood and implemented in science classrooms, and suggested ways of facilitating inquiry learning in science.

## Research Methodology

The study involved four high school teachers in rural and urban school divisions around Saskatoon. All were involved in teaching senior science and had a reputation for involving students in the classroom using a hands-on

approach to inquiry science. Each teacher participated in a taped, semi-structured interview with the researcher, who then spent a few days conducting field observations in each teacher's classroom. In gathering data, the researcher focussed on how the teachers defined and used inquiry as an instructional strategy, recognizing and overcoming any barriers to successful inquiry teaching. The teachers had an opportunity to reflect on the process in a follow-up discussion with the researcher.

## Understanding Inquiry Learning

A literature review conducted prior to the study revealed that inquiry learning may have many different meanings in the classroom, depending on how it is applied by the teacher. Asking students questions while conducting a demonstration is a simple form of inquiry learning, while a teaching philosophy that asks

students to learn and grow with the teacher by asking questions, reasoning, and thinking critically is based on a more complex concept of inquiry learning.

The teachers in the study all used guided inquiry, but they differed in the degree to which their teaching indicated the following attitudes and abilities:


- To turn student questions into a series of teacher questions that the student must answer,
- To assist students in grasping a concept without loading them down with terminology,
- To allow students to determine the data collection process and the facts to be recorded,
- To give students opportunities to model the process of being a scientist,
- To distinguish between hands-on activities and inquiry activities for students,
- To vary the level of questions asked of students to include lower-order and higher-order questions,
- To use questions to redirect students when they experience difficulties,
- To bring students into a dialogue with the content, not the teacher, and
- To allow students to work through information independently.

### **Overcoming Barriers to Inquiry Learning**

Many of the teachers experienced the same barriers to inquiry learning. The major ones were lack of time, funding and an overwhelming curriculum. In addition, individual teachers experienced barriers related to their specific work context, such as lack of experience, departmental examinations, or pressures within the school department. School culture was recognized as a determining factor in using inquiry learning successfully. Another important factor was teaching experience, since experienced teachers appeared to be more comfortable using inquiry learning in their classrooms.

The study noted the creativity and resourcefulness of teachers in overcoming the barriers to inquiry learning. One teacher overcame large class sizes and a lack of resources by planning lessons to include a variety of experiments in the classroom so that students had adequate materials and space. Other teachers dealt with an overcrowded curriculum by teaching its foundational objectives but not necessarily focussing on all the learning objectives in an individual unit. Still another teacher working within a school culture that was not supportive of inquiry learning taught students the inquiry process and its importance before using it to help students learn material in the classroom.

The research concludes that inquiry teaching is an effective strategy for helping students to learn science content and the scientific process. Some of the implications for teaching practice are discussed, and numerous suggestions are put forward for promoting inquiry learning in Saskatchewan classrooms.



### **Barriers to Inquiry**

- Time Constraints**
  - curricular content issues
  - evaluation issues
- Funding Constraints**
  - lack of materials
  - number of students in classrooms
- Cultural Expectations**
  - school department pressures
  - student traits
- Teacher Inquiry Skills and Attitudes**
  - finding ideas



# Moving Together:

## School<sup>PLUS</sup> and Physical Activity

Dave Derksen  
and the Buena Vista  
School<sup>PLUS</sup> Action Research Team

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*Partnerships such as this are incredibly valuable because they allow for a sharing of ideas and perspectives that normally do not take place. By having the opportunity to talk and work together, we learn to appreciate the viewpoints of people from other professional backgrounds and to create a united vision about what is best for health and physical activity within a community.*

- An elementary teacher

A physical education consultant in the Saskatoon Public school division felt strongly about the need for schools to respond to the physical inactivity crisis among children and youth. He also supported the School<sup>PLUS</sup> model adopted in Saskatchewan, which advocates breaking down the barriers between schools, the communities they serve, and replacing them with collaborative approaches to establishing educational goals and programs. Focussing on his home community, where his children attended Buena Vista School and he sat on the Parent Council, he worked with the school principal to form an action research team to explore physical activity options for the school and its community.

Care was taken to structure the team effectively and minimize any barriers to its effective collaboration amongst its members. It consisted of five teachers, two school-based administrators, five students, five members of the Buena Vista community, and five representatives of support agencies, such as Public Health, the Saskatchewan Physical Education Association, and the University of Saskatchewan College of Kinesiology. Possible barriers to collaboration were identified and minimized, with the help of the financial assistance provided by the McDowell Foundation.

### Designing and Implementing the Research

Together the research team explored innovative and inclusive physical education/activity programming for students and their families. Its experiences were recorded and described in detail as the project moved through five phases over the course of one school year. Priorities and areas of focus were discussed. Challenges were identified that included time, workload, scheduling, safety guidelines, curriculum connections, equipment management, space and equipment limitations, competitive culture, emphasis on sports and games, lack of choice, range of student needs, need for adult assistance, and the activity level of families. Although all challenges could not be addressed in a single month-long physical education initiative, meaningful dialogue took place and five themes were agreed on collectively:

- Healthy Living,
- Gender Specific Activity,

- Adolescent Specific Activity,
- Activity Clubs, and
- Family Activity.

Under each theme activities were planned, organized, and implemented in March, 2004. Feedback on the activities was gathered from participants through response forms and interviews. The research team also analyzed and discussed the collaborative processes that underpinned the project.

## Conclusions

The researchers found that their project had increased physical activity levels in the school and community; moreover, they found reason to hope that it had left a legacy in the form of commitment to the ideals of physical activity. They concluded the project with five recommendations for planning future school/community physical education initiatives:

1. Make use of non-peak times of year, like fall, for programming.
2. Get parents involved in activity and program delivery.
3. Advertise and communicate the program in the whole community.
4. Connect physical education instruction and physical activity programming for the improvement of both.
5. Increase the mass appeal of physical education and activity programming by reducing the level of competitiveness.

The team also noted the benefits of applying the School<sup>PLUS</sup> model and philosophy to encourage shared responsibility for physical activity programming in schools. The project indicated that a better understanding of the issues and possibilities will arise when all stakeholders in a school community work together to provide positive physical activity options for students and their families. Collaboration allows participants to focus their collective efforts to enhance the health and well-being in the school and community even in the face of the inactivity crisis.



Students get physical at Buena Vista School.



### Critical Background Information: Twelve Points from the Literature

- All students need quality physical education.
- A wide range of programs should be provided by the community that are attractive and appropriate for all young people.
- Emphasis on competitive sports is negatively correlated with activity level.
- Instructional and recreational programs must allow all children to experience joy and success.
- Boys are more active than girls.
- Activity levels decline in both genders in adolescence.
- Programs need to be readily available.
- Social cohesion is positively correlated with high physical activity level.
- Schools are encouraged to develop systems to refer students to community programs in which they may be successful.
- The principal's support and vision for physical activity and community partnerships is important.
- Students should receive health education and health services that promote and explain the importance of physical activity.
- Getting outside is associated with positive activity levels.



# “Collaborating to Make a Difference”:

## The Adaptive Dimension and Differentiating Instruction in Saskatoon Catholic French Immersion Schools

Hélène Cook and Elaine Stakiw

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An elementary school principal and a school division coordinator developed an action research project to explore the effects of a formalized support system for professional collaboration among French immersion teachers. They believed that professional collaboration would offer opportunities for professional growth and increased student achievement as teachers shared their areas of expertise. Building on existing roles within their school division, they formed collaborative school teams in six French immersion schools, each one consisting of a classroom teacher, the teacher-librarian, the learning assistance teacher and the division catalyst teachers. These teams collaborated to develop and/or adapt two curriculum units to meet the diverse academic needs of students in the classroom. The collaboration focused on differentiated instruction in response to concerns voiced within the division regarding student attrition and grade retention in French immersion schools.

### Project Implementation

A workshop was provided to create a common understanding of principles, goals, and processes for the project, and each school team was equipped with a treasure chest of resources. Teams were encouraged to review the literature on collaboration and individualized instruction, engage in team-building activities, and create a working space for the collaborative process prior to beginning unit planning and delivery. The teams met independently to plan and teach collaboratively and experiment with ideas and approaches related to the Adaptive Dimension of the Saskatchewan curriculum and differentiated instruction. The teams developed and implemented one unit of instruction in each half of the school year. Approximately halfway through the year, a second large-group in-service was held so that team members could debrief their experiences and findings during development of the first unit.

At the end of the project, the teams were asked in focus groups to reflect and identify important issues relating to the effects of collaboration on student achievement and professional growth. The results from the focus groups were used to create continued dialogue both for the group members and their colleagues in French immersion schools. Resources and units that had been developed were put on line to make them accessible to other teachers in the province. Feedback was also provided to the lead researchers through questionnaires, debriefing

sessions, and individual reflective journals. Quantitative data were collected by the school teams as assessments were conducted throughout the units. These data took the form of pre and post test results, anecdotal records, teacher observations, portfolios, rubrics, and student self-assessments.

## Conclusions

The study found that student achievement and professional growth were positively affected by the differentiated instruction that was collaboratively planned by the school teams. With this collaboration, school personnel became aware of the strengths of other team members and their role within the school. Some problems arose when there was a lack of communication due to conflicting and complicated schedules, a lack of team norms, or concerns involving time. However, points of friction tended to decrease in the second half of the year as trust developed within the teams and successes were experienced.

On the basis of the research, the researchers made five recommendations:

1. Collaboration to differentiate instruction within the Adaptive Dimension needs to be an expectation and not an option. The role of the principal is key in articulating and supporting a vision based on a collaborative culture committed to growth.
2. Part-time teaching assignments and conflicting planning times hamper collaborative efforts. Creative ways of doing tasks differently need to be explored.
3. School teams need assistance in developing the skills to set norms, run meetings effectively, handle conflict, and increase communication.
4. Because many immersion settings are small, French immersion schools need to work together to develop and share resources.
5. French immersion teachers should be given opportunities to network with other immersion teachers within and outside the school division.

### The Adventure of Collaborative Research

Participants in an action research project indeed adopt a process of change as they answer a call to adventure, stepping into the unknown. The only known factor in the process is that data will be gathered to answer the research question; what the answer is going to be is unknown. To a large extent, the answer is the quest, and the data-gathering, the journey.

Equipped with strategies, such as team-building, collaboration, and differentiation of instruction, the heroes are prepared to confront the tests and trials, which tend to be cyclical in nature. Theirs is a journey where the leadership role changes according to the talents and gifts of each team member and the nature of the various obstacles that need to be overcome in fulfilling the quest.

This journey contrasts with that of the lone hero who sets forth depending only on his own resourcefulness. Strength in numbers is significant as school staffs face life realities such as illness and other personal and professional demands.



# Summer Literacy Program

**Lois Scandrett and Laurie Hellings**

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Two primary teachers in a community school were concerned about the number of students who were still at a very early stage of reading development at the end of the school year. They knew from experience that those students who experienced the greatest challenges in reading and writing tended to return in the fall with a decline in their literacy skills. Rather than accept this decline, they developed a summer literacy program to see if continued instruction and support would enable these students to maintain their guided reading levels throughout the summer.

## **Summer Reading Camp**

A six-week program was implemented in the summer of 2003, involving ten students ranging in age from six to nine years. The students were all recommended by their classroom teachers for inclusion in the program and chosen on the basis of four factors contributing to school success: attendance, student behaviour, student commitment and parental involvement. The nature of the program was explained to parents over the phone and at a parent information meeting. Students' literacy skills were assessed at the beginning and the end of the program.

A daily, individualized, hands-on program of reading and writing activities was delivered by two university students who had completed their extended practicum. The program was designed to include four characteristics that the research literature indicated were connected with improved summer literacy achievement: small-group or individualized instruction, early

intervention in the primary grades, parental involvement and participation, and careful scrutiny for treatment fidelity.

## **Data Collection and Analysis**

Two testing administrators assessed each student's literacy skills at the beginning and end of the program. However, the pre-test was carried out under favourable classroom conditions, while the post-test occurred in an uncomfortable testing environment. This inconsistency in testing conditions may have affected the test results, which proved inconclusive.

The testing administrators also kept running records to benchmark the guided reading level of each child. The data showed that guided reading levels were maintained or improved for all participants, which may reflect the fact that guided reading was a daily activity through the program.

The most exciting data came from a survey of the parents near the end of the project and the comments that parents offered throughout the program.

*From the parent survey we have concluded that, from the parents' point of view, the program was a success. Their responses indicated an increased interest and enjoyment in reading and an upsurge in confidence in their children. Furthermore, parents observed their children employing a variety of reading strategies and increased reading fluency.*

## Looking Forward to Next Year

As a result of their experience in developing the summer reading program, the researchers developed a series of recommendations to improve the program, which will be run again in subsequent years. The recommendations ranged from changing the format to two three-week programs rather than one six-week program to developing alternative evaluation methods that would more accurately measure what was taught by taking into account different learning styles.

The researchers concluded that ultimately, their work may be a step towards consideration of a “year round” school year:

*School provides the one source of stability in many of the children’s lives and having education available to the children during the entire year may provide academic as well as social gains. While the possibility of a year-round school year has been researched and even implemented in some divisions, specific research about our community and the children it serves would need to be designed and implemented.*

For the benefit of interested colleagues, the researchers have appended to their research report a rich assortment of materials used in the selection of students, contacting parents, planning a theme on “bugs”, developing daily lesson plans, and evaluating the program.



Students in the program enjoy working with bugs and balloons.



# Building Attachment:

## Refugee Students' Reflections on English as a Second Language Integration

Koreen Geres

A high school teacher in an English as a Second Language classroom developed this research project after listening to her students discuss their educational experiences in Canada. As refugees from a war-torn country who had come to Saskatchewan as a large group, they began learning in an ESL classroom that had only students from their country. Later, they were moved into an integrated ESL classroom with students from thirteen countries. They had suggestions and criticisms to offer that she believed should be shared with other teachers and educational administrators. She set out to gather and present information about their experiences in a way that celebrated the successful development of traumatized young people into independent, hard-working Canadians.

*People from the margins of society are often voiceless. They do not have the English language skills, the confidence, or the political power to make their needs and opinions heard. Although I will include [in the research] my observations and reflections of the students' learning experience in Canada, I believe their perspective is the most important one. The reflections of these young people can only serve to enhance the education of refugee youth in the future.*

### Gathering Information

The researcher first worked to gain insight into the students in her classroom. She learned about the culture and history of the country from which they came, realizing in the process that many status markers, regional dialects, ethnic distinctions, and historical enmities had accompanied the refugees from their homeland. Generally speaking, the students didn't know each other, and some had been separated from their families. Also, there were huge differences in the students' first language education since schools had been closed for years in some parts of the country.

*While one fifteen-year old student claimed he couldn't live if he did not have a book to read at night, a student of the same age held a pencil like a foreign object and did not know what to do when he got to the right edge of the paper. The students from the city talked about a chemistry laboratory, but most of the students found textbooks both a novelty and a source of confusion. One student's frequent comment of,*

*“Teacher, too much paper.” made more sense when another student told me that they usually worked on slates.*

She also reviewed the literature on post-traumatic stress, language acquisition and attachment to school in order to better understand some of the behaviours and attitudes that she saw in the classroom. Turning to administrative records, including her own notes and reports, she was able to document much of what she had seen happening in her classroom over the four years that she taught this particular group of refugee students.

Her efforts to gather feedback from students systematically through interviews was stalled at first by their suspicious attitude towards formal data-gathering.

*. . . the invisible scars of war and cultural degradation are slow to heal. Despite the fact that these youth are working, driving legally, and becoming quite independent, their misunderstanding of situations sends them back to the survival behaviours I thought had disappeared. These students would not stand out in our school crowd; they have adopted the clothing and hairstyles of their Canadian peers. However, the ability to trust is still a test.*

Eventually, however, six students agreed to participate in formal interviews, understanding that the information would be shared with teachers and not used in any negative way. She was also able to interview several refugee students of similar age from the same country who had experienced a higher degree of integration in the school system of another city.

## **Conclusion**

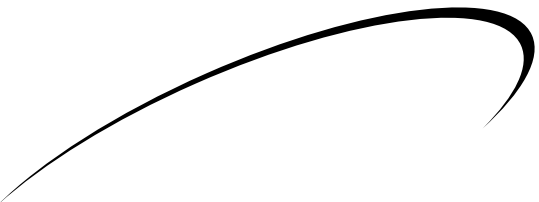
A recurring theme in the research was the importance to refugee students of making friends and feeling accepted by people outside their own

cultural group. Acceptance was necessary to build feelings of security and trust in youth who had learned to survive in an environment characterized by war and terror. It was not easy for many of these young people to take risks in reaching out to other students or responding positively to other’s interest in them.

*Feelings of safety were very slow to form for some students. Most of the boys were going out at lunch and recess, but the girls had difficulty leaving the classroom. It took us eight months to get one girl to go into the cafeteria. We finally convinced her by making a quick visit during class time when there were few students in the cafeteria. Accompanied by a second, more confident student, we took the backdoor route through the kitchen and peeked into the cafeteria. Our wonderful cafeteria manager was waiting with a plate of cookies to offer the girls on their hasty retreat back to the class.*

The research strongly supports integration of the children of refugee groups into a multicultural ESL setting because it enhances their attachment to school. It notes that there is a fine line between providing these students with a supportive cultural community and isolating them. The researcher proposes that, ultimately, the decision regarding integration or segregation should be guided by the “experts”, the students themselves, who in this case spoke clearly about the value of making friends outside their cultural group and the educational benefits of a multicultural environment. Even “Jason”, who at first resisted the move to an integrated ESL classroom, realized these benefits:

*From now on, whoever comes to this country, you do that. Get them mixed up with other people. I don’t think it’s good to let them stay together all in one class.*



# Addressing Challenges that Impede the Success of Aboriginal Students at Cochrane High School

Juanita Tuharsky, Nancy Buisson, Sue Burns, Cory Britton and Greg Enion

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A team of teacher-researchers at Cochrane High School in Regina was aware that students of Aboriginal heritage continue to be over-represented among those not succeeding in or completing school. In their own school, approximately 50% of self-declared Aboriginal students left school between Grade 10 and 11. While 38% of the overall school population was of Aboriginal ancestry, the percentage dropped from 52.5% in Grade 9 to only 22% in Grade 12.

The researchers wanted to develop an understanding of the challenges faced by these students and generate theories of why they were leaving school prior to Grade 11 and 12. One of their main research goals was to look at what administrators, teachers and community partners can do to lower the high drop-out rate for Aboriginal students. In addition, the project addressed the need for schools to plan for the projected increase in Saskatchewan in the proportion of the school-aged population with Aboriginal heritage.

## The Study and the Students

A qualitative study was developed and implemented with twelve students of Aboriginal heritage. The study targeted students who had dropped out of school, students who had dropped out and returned, and students who had remained in school and were successful.

Half were male and half were female. Five were Cree, three were Assiniboine, two were Saulteau, and two were Métis. Five were parents and they ranged in age from seventeen to twenty years of age. Only one of the students graduated during the study.

Each of the twelve students was interviewed, the interviews were transcribed, and the interview data were analyzed by the research team. As reflection on and examination of the data were carried out, commonalities and themes emerged. They included:

- **Racism**

*As the youth struggle to deal with racial incidents that they have experienced, they second-guess their self-worth and place in society. They may recognize an experience as a racial incident, but they do not have the tools or the wherewithall to deal with it directly.*

- **Knowledge**

*Students value caring teachers who build meaningful relationships with them. Students value teachers who are knowledgeable, flexible and humorous.*

- **Self-concept and Identity**

*A sense of mastery and self-worth is needed through development of learning strengths. Developing a bicultural identity supports students as they discover where they belong within mainstream society.*

- **Support Systems**

*Support systems [at the school level] need to be inclusive and student-centered. They should include access to the knowledge and cultural wisdom of the elders.*

- **Substance Abuse**

*The use of substances is a coping mechanism for students unable to deal with daily challenges of life. Problems may arise as a result of self-identity, self-esteem issues or disenfranchisement from the education system or society.*

## **Directions for the Future**

The research team believed that educators need to re-examine their practices and challenge existing beliefs and understandings about educating youth in our schools. The data collected from these students was used to drive school-wide action research from which a plan has been developed. The plan outlines supports that affirm Aboriginal students' culture and experiences and respond to their needs and ambitions.

The following list of recommendations to educators was compiled from the data collected:

1. Enhance students' sense of belonging in schools through:
  - student empowerment,

- safe community,
- acknowledgement of achievement,
- spirit building,
- facility ownership, and
- relationship building.

2. Provide opportunities for professional development in the area of First Nations education.
3. Develop and provide programming aimed at the needs of the students as voiced by the youth and community.
4. Provide experiential learning and curricula that are both relevant and meaningful.
5. Create equity of opportunity for all students through learning and extra-curricular activities.
6. Examine the relevance of one's own teaching. Use varying teaching styles to meet the needs of all learners.
7. Examine hiring practices for Saskatchewan schools with a view to making the number of Aboriginal teachers and administrators proportional to the number of Aboriginal students.



# Community Schools Transition Support Project

**Terry Cratty, Belinda Daniels-Fiss,  
Sharon Laflamme, Ben Garchinski and Beverley Hanson**

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A Grade 7 and 8 teacher was concerned about the difficulties that many of his students appeared to have when they entered high school. Most of his students had Aboriginal ancestry, and they reported feeling isolated and intimidated by the number of students and the size of the school. He noted that most programs seemed to focus on how high schools could ease their transition without exploring the contribution that elementary schools might make. He developed an action research project to determine whether or not a continued connection between at-risk students and a prominent figure from their elementary school would help these students experience greater academic success, a smoother transition, and a feeling of belonging in high school.

## **Research Methodology**

Preparatory work was done to develop understanding and support for the research among the six students making the transition to high school, their parents, administrators from the high school, the high school counsellor, and the high school learning assistance teacher. A change in teaching assignment changed the research plan somewhat, but actually made the project economically feasible for most elementary schools to consider by lessening the number of days the researcher spent in the high school. In all, the researcher needed four or five substitute days to carry out high school visits connected with the project.

The visits were made at regular intervals with the students and staff members involved in the project. Meetings with teachers and staff from the high school focused on identifying students who were having difficulties and discussing strategies to assist them. Meetings with his former students focused on discussing their feelings about how school was going, their personal achievement, and the goals they had set for each semester. As well, the researcher helped the students identify and connect with supports available to them within the high school. Twice the students also met as a group to share their experiences and reconnect with one another.

## **Impact on the Students**

A year after the conclusion of the project, four of the six students involved were still attending the same high school. One had moved and was attending a high school in Victoria, B.C., and one had dropped out after completing Grade 9 with honours in Calgary, Alberta. Some of the students had already surpassed their parents' level of education. It proved impossible, however, for the researcher to compare these students' attendance data with those for students who had made the transition from his Grade 8 classes to high school in previous years. Virtually all earlier students had either dropped out of school or moved away.

Whereas none of the earlier students had passed all their Grade 9 classes, and many had

failing averages, only three of the students involved in the project failed a class in the first semester and only one failed a class in the second semester. Two of the students had averages above 80%.

Moreover, as the year went on, the researcher heard less and less from the students as they made connections within the high school to receive the help and support they needed.

The researcher states:

*I firmly believe that these six students would not have adjusted to high school life as successfully as they did had I not stayed in contact with them. Through my contact, the students reported that they felt someone cared about how they did. When other students would ask them who I was, they would tell the students that I was their old grade eight teacher. The students would often reply that they wondered why their grade eight teacher never came to see them; it was easy to see the pride in the face of my students. My presence at the high school also gave these students a guide and an assistant in knowing how to and who to approach for help.*

### **Impact on the High School**

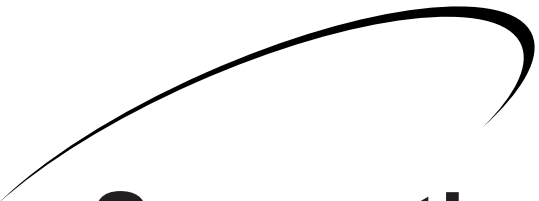
The following observation was made about the impact of the project on the staff of the high school:

*Personally, I felt that my ability to come to the high school greatly increased staff and teacher awareness of particular students. I was also able to act as a resource for teachers, who would often ask*

*me about how these students were doing and how they might help. I felt that a bond was beginning to form between the elementary and high school that had not previously existed. It was a wonderful way to help build vision and partnerships between the elementary and high school. As well, many teachers mentioned that they wished that they had the type of background information about other students that I provided about the students involved in the project.*

### **Final Thoughts**

The researcher suggests that the project's importance comes from the fact that it built on strengths that were present in the students' lives before they went on to high school, and it built bridges for those strengths to accompany them into high school. This project also combined effectively with other programs that work from the high school level to the elementary level. In his view, further exploration is necessary into how elementary schools can become increasingly involved in the transition process in order to increase the ability of at-risk students to succeed in high school.



# Supporting All Students to be Successful (PBIS): One Rural K-12 School's Story

Lori Jeschke and Janet Jackson

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The staff, students and community surrounding Hepburn School recognized that one of the major building blocks of effective classroom management is proactive behaviour management. They implemented Positive Behaviour Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in order to enhance the health, efficiency and effectiveness of their learning community. Initial results indicated that the initiative had a positive impact on school culture; however, an evaluation of its impact was undertaken to ensure that ongoing learning, improvement, and monitoring remained part of the school's approach to behaviour management.

## **PBIS**

The U.S. Office of Special Education Programs developed PBIS as an alternative to aversive interventions with students who misbehave. Its goal was to approach behaviour positively and preventatively, respond to displays of positive behaviour in a way that models and teaches behavioural expectations, and encourage the continuation of positive behaviour. Encompassing a broad range of systemic and individualized strategies, PBIS provided a flexible, integrated approach to behaviour management. In it, the school saw more than another fad in administrative practice or another program adding to the workload of teachers.

*PBIS is the container that holds together all the great character education activities that many schools, ours included, already deliver. All the*

*numerous curricula that incorporate the teaching of values can be tied together by PBIS. The many great and positive ideas and concepts, already being taught in our school finally have a common thread weaving them together to form the fabric of what we believe, what we do, what we expect.*

*(Excerpt from research report)*

By shifting their thinking to view behaviour preventatively, the school staff hoped to reduce the number of disruptive student behaviours, thereby increasing teaching and learning opportunities for all students.

## **Changing and Analyzing School Culture**

Led by a team from the school that had received training in PBIS, teachers worked together to establish common language, expectations, and priorities for student behaviour. Their discussions were distilled as the Hepburn Hawks High Fives, which seemed to cover virtually all desired behaviours. The staff also identified school locations or activities that warranted special focus with respect to behavioural expectations. These locations/activities included the classroom/ gym, commons and hallways, library, computer lab, bus, and extra-curricular activities. Efforts were made to convey behavioural expectations in age-appropriate ways in the classroom, school-wide, and in relationship to specific locations. A system was developed to recognize students who displayed positive behaviours and provide them with public recognition.

### The Hepburn Hawks High Fives

1. Be respectful and caring.
2. Be responsible.
3. Be safe.
4. Choose to learn.
5. Celebrate success

Data were gathered on the impact of PBIS through the examination of school records, reflective discussions with teachers, students and support staff, a survey of teachers designed to provide a snapshot of student behaviour and suggestions for improvement, and student reviews of behavioural expectations at the key locations in the school.

### Results

PBIS resulted in a marked reduction in the number of behavioural incidents that resulted in suspensions from school (e.g., bullying, disrespect, truancy, non-compliance, defiance or physical assault). The number dropped from 22 incidents in 2001-02 to two incidents in 2002-03 and one incident in 2003-04. Moreover, incident records kept by the school showed that 70% of recesses and noon hours now passed without incident.

Teachers, students and support staff indicated overwhelming belief in the benefits of PBIS and support for its continued implementation. Some of the changes that they saw in the culture of the school were:

- Greater focus on being positive and proactive,
- Provision of support for students who struggle behaviourally as well as students who struggle academically,
- Greater attention to teaching students behavioural expectations,
- Development of common concepts and language for talking about behaviour, and
- Consistency and simplicity of a systematic way to teach, respond to and redirect behaviour.

It was noted that the success of PBIS is dependent on “buy-in” from all staff and students. Students in the middle years and high school grades are more likely to accept PBIS when they are treated differently from primary and elementary students in the ways that they are recognized for positive behaviour. In a K-12 school, staff are challenged to develop ways of recognizing positive behaviour that are equally meaningful for all students without compromising the integrity of PBIS.

It was also noted, that a “behaviour curriculum” is like any other curriculum in its need for on-going review and adaptation to maintain its effectiveness. Reflective opportunities and connections between teachers are keys to ensuring that PBIS continues to thrive.

***Kids are more encouraged  
to do the right thing  
instead of being punished for  
doing the wrong things.***

***- Student comment***



# Re/Viewing Character Education

Jody Hobday-Kusch, Megan Hernberg, Gillian Strange,  
Heather Bahr, Anne Ferré, Sharie Parkinson and Tanya Thornhill

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A teacher-research group was formed in an elementary school during a sustained initiative to implement character education. The teachers were interested in learning how values, such as respect, responsibility, caring and excellence, were internalized and modelled on the school premises. They also wondered what they could do to ensure character education initiatives were realized beyond the confines of the school to support students and their families. It was hoped that as a result of the study and its emphasis on character education, some parts of their school lives and work would be improved.

## Implementing and Analyzing Character Education

Over four years, the school engaged students in lessons, activities, assemblies, and hallway art displays related to character education. Teachers discussed respect, responsibility, caring, joy, excellence, kindness, cooperation and other values and virtues with their students. Parents/caregivers and inter-agency support personnel, both inside and outside the school, participated in the initiative.

In September, 2003, many of the teachers responsible for school assemblies and “values” projects came together as a planning and research group for the school. The teacher-researchers spoke informally about character education initiatives in the school with teachers, students, and their caregivers. They also

gathered information through a survey of staff members, student focus group discussions, a survey of parents/caregivers, and discussions with the school social worker, Indian/Métis Education Worker, and public health nurse. Data-gathering and analysis occurred throughout the project, with results shared with school staff to support reflection and further direct energies related to character education.

## What They Said...

Staff, parents/caregivers and inter-agency support personnel supported the school’s attention to character education. For example, they said:

*I believe that this is of vital importance!!! With everyone’s busy schedules, it is great to have children exposed to positive values from many directions.*

– Parent/caregiver

*My students use the vocabulary that I teach . . . they frequently use my teaching examples in their play and conversation with others.*

– Teacher

*I believe that direct instruction of values is necessary as well as integrated instruction. We often expect students to just know what is right without explaining it to them, and that is not enough.*

– Support worker

The response from students was more mixed. Generally, students had noticed the values/

character education initiative in the school, but some did not believe that it had influenced the behaviour of all students. Some students enjoyed the discussions, lessons, activities and assemblies related to virtues and values while others, particularly in the older grades, found them boring. Only some students talked to their families about character education at the school. While younger students overwhelmingly supported continuation of character education, older students supported its continuation but suggested that there should be more classroom-based discussions and more attention to activities that appeal to older students.

### Reflecting on the Results

The researchers were energized by the positive comments that came forward regarding the multi-faceted emphasis placed on character education in the school. In reflecting on what they had done over the year, they could see numerous changes in themselves and their teaching practice. One of their conclusions pointed to the importance of teachers exemplifying the values and virtues that they are trying to teach:

*We recognize that even with the best lessons, hallway art, and assemblies, it is the staff members themselves who prove to be the ongoing character role models in the building, every day they show up for work. We reaffirmed our commitment to be models of good character. That being said, we identified concerns about possible “burn-out” of character educators – this hard work we are doing!*

Several possible directions for the future were identified, including:

- A “multi-faith” approach to values and virtues.
- A switch in focus from thinking about values and virtues to practising them.
- Greater inclusion of all stakeholders (students, staff, parents/caregivers and school support workers) as planners for initiatives in and out of the school.





# Building Moral Intelligence Once Piece at a Time

Queen Elizabeth School Staff, Saskatoon

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In 1999 the staff of an urban elementary school engaged in action research on an anti-bullying strategy for their school. While the initiative resulted in positive changes in student behaviour, staff noted that the students did not seem to understand completely why they should treat others well. They did not yet seem able to “do the right thing” on their own with no adult watching. As a result, the staff searched for a program that would help students extend their moral understanding. They came to focus on Dr. Michele Borba’s book, “Building Moral Intelligence: The Seven Essential Virtues That Teach Children to Do the Right Thing”.

## Classroom and School Activities

The staff began to teach the seven essential virtues identified by Borba: empathy, conscience, self-control, respect, kindness, tolerance and fairness. Staff retreats and discussions in staff pod groupings assisted in planning learning opportunities, integrating them into the curriculum, and identifying indicators of progress. A virtue a month approach was used to organize many activities related to building moral intelligence (BMI). Eventually a BMI committee was formed to spearhead and coordinate various pieces of the project, which eventually expanded beyond the walls of the school to include the community. Another committee took responsibility for professional development, while a third committee worked to expand teacher knowledge of strategies, compiling and sharing

strategies within the school and with other schools. One staff member oversaw the development and updating of BMI information on the school website at <http://schools.spsd.sk.ca/queen/BMI/BMI.html>.

Numerous activities were undertaken over the three-year life of the project. They included:

- Presentation of certificates to students exhibiting virtues,
- A section called “BMI Blossoms” in the school newsletter to celebrate the good things happening in the school,
- Monthly school assemblies highlighting the virtues that were opened and closed by two BMI-related songs,
- Stickers identifying resources related to the virtues in the school resources centre,
- A bulletin board facing the school’s front door on which one class each month created a display on virtue-related words,
- Development of a virtues booklet with age-appropriate work from different classes,
- A display case for students to showcase what they were learning about BMI, and
- Fundraising and communications with a partner school in Teshie, Ghana.

Parents were actively encouraged to become part of the BMI initiative. A parenting day was held at the school to support parental involvement in teaching the virtues at home. A library for parents was developed in the school's learning resources centre and some resources for parents were kept on display in a cabinet in the front hallway. The Parent Council provided funding for a new school sign on the front lawn that promoted project-related activities. Information about BMI was provided regularly in school newsletters and on the school website in order to build more parental acknowledgment, understanding and support for virtues instruction in the school.

Innovative ways were found to celebrate the BMI project within the school and community. At the end of the first year, a committee was formed that crafted six quilts for display in the school. The quilts consisted of 180 squares, each one bearing a student-created design related to a



virtue. The second year of the project opened with the creation by each staff and student of T-shirts on the virtues that they could wear to assemblies and other school activities. The year ended with the creation of four giant jigsaw puzzles to be hung on the walls in the school. Each puzzle consisted of



pieces designed by students to represent the virtues. At the end of 2004-05, BMI and celebrations of Saskatchewan's centennial were combined in the creation of a patio by the main entrance to the school. Embedded in the concrete base of the patio were stepping stones about virtues, each one designed and created by a student or staff member.

## Data Analysis, Reflection and Conclusions

To assist in analyzing the impact of BMI, data were gathered from staff, parents and students. Staff looked for evidence of its effects in their pod meetings and reflected at key points in the project on what was working and what was not working among the strategies and activities being implemented. Parents who participated in a survey on BMI provided encouraging comments about the initiative. Data that were gathered from students in teacher-led focus groups was also generally positive. However, while students indicated that they thought of their school as a safe and caring place, only half would say that they felt included on the playground or they thought BMI was making a difference in their school.

Reflecting on the data, the staff realized that it takes time and follow-through to effect lasting change in an institution like the school. While significant changes could be seen in student behaviour and parent understanding as a result of BMI, more time and continuing emphasis was needed to turn new behaviours and understandings into habits. Principal Jayne Hudson observed:

*In many ways we have succeeded in our goals but we also recognize that building moral intelligence is an on-going initiative. It will always need to be at the center of what we do. We will take what we have learned through this project and continue making goals for our school based on the information we have gained.*



# 2005 McDowell Foundation Award for Contributions to Educational Research

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One of the goals of the McDowell Foundation is to promote a sense of community among educational researchers in Saskatchewan. Not only does the Foundation fund and publish research, it attempts to bring together teachers, university professors, education officials, and others to exchange experiences and information and acknowledge each other's research accomplishments. In 1998, realizing that too little recognition is usually given to the important work of educational research, the Foundation decided to create a new award that would be given annually at its Learning from Practice seminar. The McDowell Foundation Award is intended to celebrate and publicize a variety of outstanding contributions to the field of teacher-centred educational research.

The award is given to individuals who have made contributions as a builder, a researcher or a supporter. Builders are those visionary people who have played an important role in the growth of the Foundation or educational research through organizational development and/or volunteer service. Researchers are those who have conducted exemplary research, either through the McDowell Foundation or in another context that may be characterized as excellent or innovative, teacher-centred, timely, and significant in its impact on teachers and education. Supporters are those indispensable individuals who have provided significant financial or public relations support for the McDowell Foundation or educational research.

Each year a recipient of the award is selected by a committee of representatives from the McDowell Foundation's Board of Directors, Advisory Committee, and Project Review Committee. Past recipients have been:

- 1998 Art McBeath
- 1999 Lillian Forsythe
- 2000 Jane Macleod
- 2001 Fred Herron
- 2002 Angela Ward
- 2003 David Friesen
- 2004 Karen Henderson

This year's recipient of the McDowell Award is Doreen Lloyd, a superannuated teacher who helped to build the McDowell Foundation by fostering supportive connections between its work and the membership of the Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan.

## *McDowell Foundation Award 2005*

# *Doreen Lloyd*

Doreen Lloyd has been an unstinting contributor to the McDowell Foundation since its inception. When the Foundation was created in 1991, Doreen was a newly retired teacher with enormous energy and a strong inclination to maintain her involvement with the teaching profession. Fortunately for the Foundation, she chose to invest part of her warmth, good sense, and enthusiasm in the new organization that had just been created to support professional research and inquiry by teachers.



Doreen began teaching in 1951 after graduating from the Saskatoon Normal School. Returning to her birth place, Prince Albert, she taught all grade levels in three school divisions. Among her favourite assignments were those at the junior high level where, as she once put it, "you never have time to think about getting old". She spent twenty-four years teaching Grade 9 English and Home Economics.

Her teaching was complemented by extensive work with and for other teachers. Doreen was active in the Prince Albert Teachers' Association, serving at one time or another as president, vice-president, staff representative, and chair of every local committee. She also served provincially as an STF councillor, a member on various STF committees, and an executive member of the Saskatchewan Middle Years Association. For her exemplary service to the professional organization of teachers, Doreen has been awarded honorary life membership in both the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation and the Prince Albert and Area Teachers' Association.

Her active professional life did not diminish upon her retirement in 1990. She became an active member of the Prince Albert chapter of the Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan. She also continued to serve at the provincial level, representing superannuated teachers as an STF councillor or vice-councillor for ten years. She has been a member of the STS executive since 1991, she has held office as president and vice-president, and she has chaired or co-chaired STS committees responsible for conference planning or the constitution and resolutions.

When the McDowell Foundation was created, Doreen quickly became part of the fundraising work needed to establish a sound financial and organizational base for the fledgling organization. She teamed with Bert Gordon as the co-chairs of the Superannuates Track of the Teaching for Tomorrow campaign. For more than two years, she and Bert visited many, if not most, chapters of the Superannuated Teachers of Saskatchewan (STS), explaining the Foundation and soliciting their financial support. Her professional credibility and her enthusiasm were major factors in building the solid base of support that the Foundation has enjoyed among the superannuated teachers of this province.

As an active member of the STS, Doreen also helped to forge valuable connections between the Foundation and the provincial organization representing superannuated teachers. She became the STS appointee to the McDowell Foundation Board of Directors in 1991 and is the

longest serving board member to date. In her capacity as director, she has kept superannuates informed about the Foundation and found numerous opportunities to include the Foundation in STS events. The Foundation regularly brings greetings to the STS convention and its research projects have been featured as sessions at the convention. The value to the Foundation of maintaining strong connections with superannuated teachers, which Doreen has fostered and promoted, cannot be overestimated.

In her volunteer work on behalf of the Foundation, Doreen has typified the importance

of collaborative relationships and a sense of community in both education and research. She represents the “supporter” of research, the invaluable person who appreciates the research interests of a wide range of colleagues and willingly gives time, energy and approbation to their professional efforts to improve teaching and learning. Through her longstanding, unselfish work on behalf of teachers and the McDowell Foundation, she has made an outstanding contribution to educational research that has earned her the McDowell Foundation Award for 2005.



# Applying for a McDowell Foundation Research Grant

The McDowell Foundation has an independent Project Review Committee, composed of a majority of teachers, which screens, selects and evaluates research projects. It is the committee that decides which proposed projects will be approved each year, within the budgets, terms, policies and guidelines provided by the Board of Directors.

In order to be considered for funding, proposed research must contribute to knowledge about teaching and learning, focus on teaching and learning in the context of the publicly funded K-12 education system, and consider the dissemination and application of the research among teachers in Saskatchewan and elsewhere. McDowell research must also meet established ethical and academic standards for research and respect the rights of all individuals and groups. In addition, preference will be given to research projects that can be seen to do any of the following:

- provide direct benefit to teachers in Saskatchewan and elsewhere;
- affect positive change in teaching and learning;
- involve teachers in a way that extends their ability and motivation as researchers;
- encourage individuals and organizations to reflect on and identify important issues related to teaching and learning that require study and discussion;

- address teaching and learning issues of wide scope and significance;
- create opportunities for dialogue about teaching and learning;
- involve experimentation with innovative ideas and methodologies for teaching and learning; and/or
- utilize innovative research methods and approaches.

More information regarding selection criteria and processes may be found in the awards guide and form for applying for a research grant, which may be downloaded from the Foundation's web site or requested from the Foundation's office (see contact information on the next page).

The next deadline for applications for research grants is March 31, 2006, with the Project Review Committee authorized to award up to \$100,000 in research grants for projects beginning after July 1, 2006.

*Teachers are encouraged to apply. Preference will be given to researchers who are also classroom teachers. Experience is not required. The Foundation will endeavour to supply researchers with advice and assistance where needed.*





# Getting in Touch

## General Information

General information about the McDowell Foundation may be found on the World Wide Web at [www.mcdowellfoundation.ca](http://www.mcdowellfoundation.ca). Summaries and full reports on each McDowell project may be found on this site, along with information about applying for a research grant, attending the Learning from Practice conference, or making a donation to the Foundation.

## Research Bulletin and Reports

Copies of McDowell Foundation research reports may be downloaded from our website, borrowed from the STF Stewart Resources Centre, or requested through the Foundation office. Additional or past copies of this bulletin are also available through the Foundation office while supplies last. To obtain any report or bulletin or to request a copy of any article for publication, please contact:

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## Additional Information

If you have additional questions or feedback for the Foundation, please contact us at the above address and contact numbers:

Verna Gallén, Research Coordinator  
or  
Earle Robertson, Consultant

Teachers and others who are interested in applying for a grant from the McDowell Foundation are invited to contact Verna for assistance. She is also available to provide or arrange presentations and workshops about McDowell projects or action research.

If you are interested in having a display or presentation about the McDowell Foundation at a teachers' convention or educational conference, contact Earle. He would also like to talk with you if you are interested in making a donation to the Foundation or see an opportunity to promote its work. The McDowell Foundation is an independent charitable organization that relies on the generosity of volunteers and individual and corporate donors to support its research program.

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