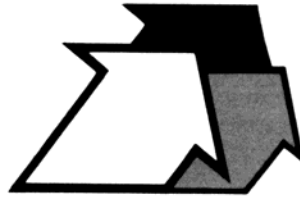


**Martin Browne
Elementary School**

A School Effectiveness Review



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Parents/Guardians/Caregivers and students used the opportunity to provide their perceptions of the school. Their approach was typically open, direct, and balanced.

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CHAPTER 1

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND REVIEW ACTIVITIES



Purpose of the Review

This Review was designed to provide all of those interested in the quality of education at Martin Browne School with a picture of their school as perceived by various stakeholder groups. The Review provided an opportunity for students, teachers, administrators, support staff, and parents/guardians to become involved in thinking about the school and its future.

Specifically, this school effectiveness review was undertaken:

- 1) To identify those areas in which the school is performing well;
- 2) To suggest areas in which aspects of school life can be improved;
- 3) To suggest ways in which the various stakeholders can work more effectively together;
- 4) To provide a picture of the school as perceived by the various stakeholders;
- 5) To celebrate the successes of the school; and,
- 6) To provide information to be used in planning for the future.

At the outset, the Review Team was informed that the perceptions of school effectiveness received from parents/guardians, students, and staff were to provide a database to extend collaborative planning for the future of the school. Such planning was to begin early in 2008. The findings that follow are presented with that objective in mind.

There was no intention to evaluate any individual or individuals associated with the school; rather, the review was designed to look at the total operation of the school with the purpose of highlighting areas of strength and those areas requiring further attention by the school and its community.

Conceptualization

The conceptualization for the School Effectiveness Review is premised on the indicators of school effectiveness and the research relating to professional learning communities. During the past two-and-a-half decades, researchers have identified numerous characteristics that depict successful schools. According to this research, effective schools are characterized by a ‘culture’ or ‘ethos’ that permeates the school and results in positive learning outcomes for students.

In an attempt to address the purposes of the review, the School Review Model developed by the Saskatchewan Educational Leadership Unit (SELU) (Renihan & Sackney, 1992) guided the study team. This heuristic model has been refined, tested, and used in numerous schools and school systems over the intervening years. The version of the model used in this study was updated in September, 2005.

Procedures

A variety of procedures were used to gather information for the Review. These included site visits, observations, surveys, individual and focus group interviews, and documentary analysis. These procedures were deemed appropriate methods for collecting data.

Data Collection Methods

Each of the data collection methods is briefly described.



Site Visits. In order to obtain a picture of how the school works, site visits were undertaken. These involved very general observations of classrooms, the facility, and several ‘walkabouts’ of the entire school and grounds by the Review Team. The writer made an on-site visit on November 7th, 2007 in order to provide an orientation for the staff and school administration to the various aspects and processes of the Review. A second visit by the writer and another Review Team member was made on November 28-29, for the purposes of administering the School Effectiveness Survey, viewing the school facilities, interviewing staff, students and parents, and conducting focus groups.

At these times, informal discussions were held with students, teachers and administrators and staff regarding various aspects of school life. A third visit was made on December 13 by the writer in order to complete interviews and focus group discussions. It should be noted that the research team was impressed by the warm reception provided by the students and all those who work at the school. It was apparent that the professionals here were proud of their work and were willing to share ideas and issues with us.

Surveys. The School Effectiveness Survey was administered to all students, teachers, staff, educational assistants and parents/guardians. All surveys addressed the same school effectiveness variables, but the number of items and wording varied according to maturity level. Surveys were administered to the students, teachers and educational assistant/support staff on November 28-29, 2006. The school staff distributed the parent/guardian surveys on November 28th, with a return deadline set for December 7th. The number of possible and actual respondents for each group of respondents is provided in **Table 1**. (A copy of each survey is included in Appendix A. Appendices are bound separately from the School Effectiveness Report).

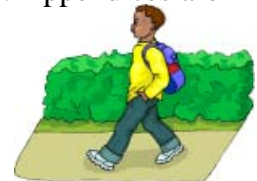


Table 1
Survey Returns for Each Respondent Group

Survey	Possible Respondents	Number of Returns	Percent Returns
Grade 3 Students	42	37	88
Grades K-2 Students	110	109	99
Parents/ Guardians (families)	125	54	43
Teachers	11	9	82
Educational Assistants/ Support Staff	8	5	63

From the information in Table 1, it can be seen that students, teachers and staff were all strongly represented. The parent response to the survey 43 % was average for surveys of this nature. This proportion was further supplemented by a focus group interview involving over a dozen parents.

Interviews. Interviews were held with the principal, teachers, EA's and secretary. Focus group interviews were also held with parents and human service providers/counselors. In total, more than thirty individuals participated in interviews, and focus groups. The interviews were structured in such a way that the interview questions were common to all members of the sub-groups. Opportunity was afforded for individuals to elaborate as they wished concerning their own experiences and views about the school. Examples of interview guides are provided in Appendix B.

Document Review. Data pertaining to classroom and school populations, parents and staff, school programs, procedures and policies, attendance, and sample communications were derived from documents and information supplied by the administration and staff. These materials were valuable in supplementing and clarifying the picture of aspects of school life captured in the interviews and surveys.



Data Analysis and Presentation

Survey data were collated and analyzed by computer and the results were presented in the form of frequencies and percentages for each statement and category. For interested individuals, the full set of data (means, standard deviations, modes and item rankings) is included as Appendix C. K-2 students were asked for 'happy/sad' responses to the survey questions while Grade 3 students were asked for 'yes/no' responses. A four-point scale ranging from '1' for 'strongly disagree' to '4' for 'strongly agree' was used for Parents/Guardians, Teachers, and Educational Assistants/Support Staff. The 'agree' and 'strongly agree' rankings were aggregated for each statement as were the 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' categories. The Educational Assistants/Support Staff category included the front office staff and the educational assistants.

As a general guide to interpreting responses to each of the statements in the survey, when more than 70% of respondents indicated 'agree/strongly agree,' it was assumed that there was strong agreement with that statement. A percentage of less than 50% indicated a lack of agreement with that statement. When 25% or more of the respondents used the 'Don't Know' option, the percentages are shown in parentheses next to the aggregated agreement/disagreement percentages.

Information from the interviews, focus groups, and written comments in the surveys was collated thematically, content analyzed, and, together with the observation data, combined to provide a review of the school according to each aspect of school effectiveness. Other documents were subjected to content analysis. A number of actual verbatim comments from the respondents are included in this report. These comments, selected from the verbatim and interview data, were used to illustrate the perceptions of respondents and to provide additional perspectives on the survey data. Throughout this report, the term ‘teacher’ indicates data from members of the teaching staff. The term ‘staff’ refers to the total group of teachers and educational assistants/support staff.

The description of the school effectiveness attributes is generic and is represented in common format for every School Effectiveness Review. SELU has attempted to standardize the reports as much as possible for ease of interpretation.



Organization of the Report

This chapter has provided the background and terms of reference for the review and has outlined the research methods that the Review Team utilized to gather and report the data. Chapter 2 presents the perceptions of a variety of groups and individuals as to the work of Martin Browne School on each of the school effectiveness correlates in turn. A summary of major themes, together with a description of possibilities and planning priorities for future action emerging from this study, is provided in Chapter 3.



Chapter 2

Effective Practices Framework and The School Effectiveness Attributes



This chapter describes the School Effectiveness Attributes within the Effective Practices Framework developed by Saskatchewan Learning. For over two decades, research on school effectiveness has emphasized that in effective schools a number of specific characteristics are evidenced consistently and purposefully. More recently, Saskatchewan Learning has developed a framework for school effectiveness that uses similar research on the correlates of school effectiveness and expands it to include new dimensions pertinent to School^{Plus} implementation. The new dimensions are Authentic Partnership and Comprehensive Prevention and Intervention. The framework and its relationship to the school effectiveness characteristics are described below.

Adaptive Leadership

1. A consistent and clear vision and purpose shared by all stakeholders
2. An empowering and positive leadership style
3. A professional learning community that focuses on teaching and learning

Caring and Respectful School Environment

1. Conscious attention to the maintenance of a warm, caring, and respectful climate that is conducive to learning
2. The maintenance of safe, attractive, and well maintained physical environment

Responsive Curriculum and Instruction

1. A strong, consistent emphasis on academic skills which is maintained in keeping with the school's philosophy of instruction
2. The use of appropriate instructional strategies for student learning
3. The provision of a well-resourced school in support of learning

Assessment for Learning

1. The attention to continuous, consistent, fair, and timely feedback to students and parents/guardians on student academic and social performance with a provision of authentic assessment that uses varied and appropriate assessment strategies

Authentic Partnerships

1. The promotion of active and positive parental/guardian involvement
2. A deliberate provision for the participation of students in the life of the school
3. The provision of supports to learning through school-linked services

Comprehensive Prevention and Early Intervention

1. Early identification of learning problems
2. Provision of prevention programs that are proactive and head off learning difficulties

In this Chapter, the information from various sources of data as they relate to the work of Martin Browne School is presented for each of the above dimensions in turn.



Adaptive Leadership: Vision and Purpose

Research has demonstrated that an effective school projects a shared philosophy and a sense of vision of what those involved want to achieve. A school's mission and primary goals are widely shared by teachers, administrators, staff, parents/guardians, and students. Those engaged in the day-to-day life of the school seek to build communities of parental/guardian and student support while keeping their common purpose paramount at all times. In essence, an effective school always keeps students' learning as the focus of its work.

While parents/guardians and other key stakeholders have a role to play in the development and clarification of the school's mission, the professional staff play a pivotal role in assessing the school's performance, discussing priorities, and developing collaborative ways of doing things that matter most in the school. Such a focus on mission is reflected in the following characteristics: shared norms and consistency throughout the school; agreed-upon ways of doing things; clearly stated goals known to all; a high degree of acceptance of the importance of goals; joint planning initiatives; and, data-based decision making. Inherent in achieving the mission of the school is the belief that the professional staff has the potential to change the culture of the school.

Parent, staff and student perceptions of the extent to which these characteristics are represented at Martin Browne School are summarized in **Table 2**.

Table 2**Indicators of Adaptive Leadership: School Vision and Purpose**

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'			% Indicating 'Yes'/'No'
	Parents/ Caregiver	Teachers	EA/SS	Students Gr. 3
The staff has a clear idea of what the school should be doing for students. (i.e. vision).	89/7	100/0	100/0	67/6(28)
Our school has a clearly identified belief and mission statement.		100/0	100/0	
I support our school's vision.		100/0		
Students/parents are aware of the goals and priorities of this school.	80/4	100/0		73/11
Efforts are made to discuss the goals and priorities of this school.	58/17(26)	100/0	100/0	
Improved student learning is the basis for school decision-making.	76/2	100/0		
Staff believes they can make a difference in the lives of students.		100/0	100/0	
The principal and staff are consistent in the way they do things.	68/6(26)	100/0	100/0	

There was exceptionally strong agreement among teachers, EA's and support staff on all items related to this effective schools' correlate. Parents/caregivers were also moderately positive to these items however 26% indicated that they did not know how to respond to two items ("Efforts are made to discuss the goals and priorities of this school" and "The principal and staff are consistent in the way they do things"). Grade 3 students were also quite positive to the two items on their survey related to "adaptive leadership" although 28% indicated they did not know whether "the staff has a clear idea of what the school should be doing for students". (Please note that on the students' survey this item was stated as "My teacher knows what is best for me").

The above perceptions on school vision were reflected also in comments made in the surveys and interviews.

People were asked in what ways this school exhibits a sense of vision and purpose. There was a consistent and very positive response to this question from staff and parents. The following comments reflect the sense of vision and purpose at Martin Browne School:

- *Daily school life lives up to the mission statement. (Teacher)*
- *The school works on a set of values and they incorporate them into their planning and activities. (Human Services Provider).*
- *[The principal] is a good leader who has aligned our school's vision statement with its daily activities (Teacher)*
- *The emphasis on literacy here is very good. (Parent)*
- *Having Multiple Intelligence Days is a good idea. (Parent)*
- *Not having a big gymnasium has in some ways been helpful in that the students are able to go out to have skating and swimming lessons. (Parent)*
- *The mission is to create a caring climate. (Educational Assistant)*
- *There is excellent team work among teachers and support staff. (Teacher)*
- *There is a small school, community atmosphere. Teachers all know the children well. The staff really care about the kids. (numerous parents)*

The Martin Browne mission statement states that **“Our mission is to develop lifelong learners in a collaborative, respectful environment”** while the vision statement reads as follows:

Vision

Students: We shall provide students with a stimulating environment to help them become lifelong learners.

- A. Students will be provided with hands-on learning opportunities.
- B. Students will develop in all multiple intelligence areas.
- C. Students will become confident risk-takers.
- D. When students leave Martin Browne, they will be equipped to make positive, successful contributions.

Personnel: In-school personnel demonstrate the qualities necessary to establish a professional learning community. Our professional learning community will:

- A. Increase the reading levels of students on a school-wide level.
- B. Schedule regular collaborative planning time.
- C. Provide relevant professional development to school and staff.
- D. Reflect the belief that everyone has a voice and everyone hears other voices.
- E. Recognize that the primary roles of the teachers are as model and facilitator of lifelong learning.
- F. Assist colleagues in meeting students' individual needs.

Curriculum and Instruction: Martin Browne School provides students with Saskatchewan core curriculum complimented with a variety of effective teaching styles and instruction in the multiple intelligences utilizing current technology.

- A. Staff will be supported in understanding and implementing new curricular.
- B. Staff will work collaboratively to establish practical and relevant core activities reflective of curriculum.
- C. Teachers will implement a variety of teaching styles to support students' development in multiple intelligence areas.

Assessment: Our professional learning community recognizes that student assessment is on-going, multi-faceted, and that to truly measure student achievement, grading practices should grow from a respect for student differences and should reflect individual growth. Our professional learning community:

- A. Uses assessment techniques that reflect instructional practices.
- B. Will implement a reporting format that reflects both personal and comparative growth of students to grade level and curriculum standards.
- C. Stimulates and encourages consistency/consensus among colleagues so as to guide evaluation and reporting practices using curriculum standards.

Climate: An exemplary school provides a safe and caring learning environment. All students are accepted and valued as individuals. Our school:

- A. Promotes a strong sense of community among all members.
- B. Promotes an appreciation of students' intelligences and differences.
- C. Encourages home support for every child and promotes parental involvement.
- D. Provides space conducive to learning.
- E. Deals with discipline issues collaboratively among those involved to develop effective solutions.
- F. Is respected in our community as a learning organization.

Where “**values**” are concerned, Martin Browne says “In order to advance our shared mission and vision, we...

- A. Provide students with a stimulating learning environment, with a focus on multiple intelligences, in order for them to become confident risk-takers and lifelong learners.
- B. Work collaboratively in planning for instruction and assessment, and relevant professional development.
- C. Work collaboratively within the curriculum utilizing current technology and using a variety of teaching styles, to support students in the development of their multiple intelligences.
- D. Work collaboratively to develop and implement multiple assessment techniques, using the results to report and direct the process of continual improvement.
- E. Promote a school climate that encourages acceptance, respect, and caring, by involving staff, students, parents and community as partners in education.

Mission, Vision and Value statements are practical tools intended to define criteria for decision-making. Each staff member must internalize and personalize these professional beliefs and resulting directions if consistency is to be maximized. There is little doubt that this has been done very well by the staff at Martin Browne School.

The above mission was evident throughout the interactions with individuals and groups, and through the observations made by the Review team on its visits to the school. It was also reflected in many ways in the comments of students, parents and staff, and in the school newsletters and other communications, suggesting strongly that the mission and vision of this school is a dynamic one that drives school life and is an inherent part of the culture at Martin Browne. This of course provides an important standard against which the points of distinction and continuing challenges of this school should be gauged.

Adaptive Leadership: Empowering and Positive Leadership

Effective schools invariably have effective leaders who are a visible and active presence in the school. They display common leadership qualities of assertiveness, willingness to assume responsibility, high standards for staff and students, personal vision, expertise, role modeling, and strength of character. Effective leadership, however, does not reside solely in one or two people. It is also a team quality and is therefore, a reflection of the professional staff and how its members are empowered through a culture of shared vision and shared decision-making. The opportunities for, and acceptance of, leadership among staff members is an important consideration in achieving school effectiveness. In sum, leadership in effective schools is *shared*, *collaborative*, and *empowering*. Parent, teacher, E.A. and student perceptions regarding aspects of leadership are summarized in **Table 3**.



Table 3
Indicators of Leadership

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'			% Indicating 'Yes'/'No'
	Parents/ Caregiver	Teachers	EA/SS	Student Gr. 3
The principal accepts responsibility for the operation of the school.	76/11	100/0	100/0	76/0
The leadership in this school is effective.	81/8	100/0	100/0	86/3
The principal is available when needed.	76/4	100/0	100/0	65/5(30)
The school staff work as a team.	74/4	100/0	100/0	
The school staff serve as good role models.	83/4	100/0	100/0	
Leadership in this school is distributed.		100/0		
The principal is fair.	66/6(27)	100/0	100/0	89/5

There was strong affirmation across all groups that the leadership at Martin Browne School is effective. Noteworthy is the uniform nature of the responses by the teachers and EA's to all statements regarding this "effectiveness" correlate. Interestingly, 27% percentage of responding parents indicated "don't know" to the statement "the principal is fair". As well, 30% of responding Grade 3 students noted they did not know if the principal was available when needed.

These data were borne out in the many comments made on these issues in the surveys and interviews. The following observations reflect the above assessments:

- *The principal is approachable and organized. (Teacher)*
- *Our principal is gifted in her ability to make everyone feel valued and an important team member. She is very supportive of her staff and listens to them before deciding on what course of action to take in situations. When new and/or innovative ideas are initiated people feel comfortable trying them out as they know they have support from their principal. (Teacher).*
- *There is excellent team work among teachers and support staff. (Teacher).*
- *The principal still teaches and connects with the students. (Educational Assistant).*

- *There is camaraderie, mutual respect, and openness among staff members. (Teacher)*
- *People [other than the principal] take leadership roles all the time. Everyone leads because we all have our little areas where we have strengths. (Teacher).*
- *The staff respect each other! We constantly collaborate, asking opinions, asking each other techniques, lessons, etc. (Educational Assistant).*
- *The leadership in this school is a strength. (Educational Assistant).*
- *School functions are usually led by teachers. (Parent).*
- *My children seem to like [the principal] but I wonder if in some cases she avoids parent contact. (Parent).*
- *We feel the principal could perhaps take a more active public role. [She] often seems to be behind the scenes at school functions. (Parent).*
- *The Principal and teachers do a great job with my children and I am sure the other children at Martin Browne School. (Parent).*
- *The Principal knows all the students. (Parent).*
- *[The principal] is very approachable. She is “down to earth”. Very gentle. She is like a mother to these kids. (Human Services Provider).*

Adaptive Leadership: The Professional Community

Much research on school effectiveness has been devoted to the concept of teachers working as a community of professionals. In particular, careful attention is given to the nature of staff collaboration, the opportunities for continuous teacher learning, and the extent of professional development initiatives. As well, the extent to which teachers jointly plan, engage in dialogue and discourse on teaching and learning, share their mental models, develop a shared sense of vision and purpose, are important determinants of student learning.

In recent years, numerous writers on school effectiveness have devoted serious attention to the professional community within the school, and its implications for collaborative cultures, as a significant enabling factor in school effectiveness. Following the work of Judith Little (1987) in clarifying the nature of professional collaboration, Barth (1990), Sergiovanni (1994), and Fullan and Hargreaves (1991), have shed light on the dynamics of this important dimension. This quality has also been related by writers such as Rosenholtz (1989) to an attitude of continuous self-renewal that becomes an integral part of school life. Most recently, Dufour (2001) has done significant work in

demonstrating the value and the nature of professional learning communities as vehicles for enhancing student learning.

Table 4 presents Teacher and EA/SS survey data with regard to the quality of the Professional Community in this school. Teachers and support staff were positive regarding all aspects of their professional work-life.



Table 4
Indicators of Professional Community

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'/ % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'	
	Teachers	EA/SS
I feel empowered in this school.	100/0	100/0
Our school staff works collaboratively.	100/0	100/0
I have an adequate say in decisions that affect me.	100/0	100/0
The quality of work life is high in this school.	100/0	100/0
Continuous improvement is expected of us in this school.	100/0	100/0
There is a high level of trust on staff.	100/0	100/0
Planned professional development is supported and encouraged.	100/0	
Expectations for teachers' work are clear.	100/0	
My work is fairly supervised.	100/0	100/0

It is very rare that an entire staff (support and professional) respond as positively to questions related to “professional community” as the Martin Browne staff does. The data suggests that the work environment in general and staff collegiality in particular makes this school a good place to work. Effectiveness research suggests that if the workplace is happy, yet properly focused upon students, then children benefit. The comments of various individuals points to Martin Browne as having a very positive professional community:

- *I still love Monday mornings. I always come to work with a smile. (Teacher).*
- *Great place to share ideas. (Teacher).*
- *Teachers are given many opportunities for collaboration. (Teacher).*

- *Collaboration is encouraged and facilitated by giving time for collaboration within our school day once a week. (Teacher).*
- *We don't feel we are any lesser than the teachers. (Educational Assistant).*
- *The teachers let us use our brains here. (Educational Assistant).*
- *Everyone looks forward to coming to work. (Educational Assistant).*
- *I am proud to work here. (Educational Assistant).*
- *The professional climate is excellent. The entire staff works as a team where compromise and cooperation are constants. Collaboration happens both formally and informally and is ongoing. Every staff member has input and all are treated with respect. (Teacher).*
- *This school has a good principal and staff. They work well together. (Human Service provider).*
- *The teachers and staff are exceptional. (Parent).*
- *The staff is top notch. (Parent).*
- *The teachers are willing to take risks and try new things. (Parent).*

Details about EA/support staff perceptions of their work-life are summarized in **Table 5**

Table 5

Adaptive Leadership: Educational Community

Indicators of Educational Assistants and Support Staff Work Life

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' / % Indicating 'Disagree and 'Strongly Disagree'
I am provided with adequate opportunities for on-the-job training.	80/20
This school provides adequate preparation for me in dealing with individual student needs.	100/0
I am well qualified for my work.	100/0
In this school, there is good communication between support staff and teaching staff.	100/0
Teachers in this school are well prepared for working with support staff.	100/0
I feel that I am respected as a member of the educational team in this school.	100/0
I have a good working relationship with the teachers I work with.	100/0
I feel that I am recognized for good work.	100/0
I am clear about my role as a support staff member in this school.	100/0
Expectations for my performance are made clear.	100/0
I am given advice and assistance in working with children.	100/0
Expectations for my work with students are reasonable.	100/0
I get along well with other EA's in this school.	100/0

With the exception of possibly providing more opportunities for “on the job” training, the EA’s responses were once again uniform in regard to their work life at Martin Browne.



Caring and Respectful School Environment: School Climate.

In effective schools, concerted attention is devoted to the creation and maintenance of a safe, caring environment that is conducive to learning. This includes the establishment of a climate in which students can enjoy school and the various relationships they experience within it. It relates, in turn, to the nature of school rules, school discipline, how people get along with each other, and the overall school spirit which prevails. In these contexts, very specific regulations and guidelines are laid down and they are clearly understood by everyone. A summary of parent, teacher, EA, support staff and student perceptions of the school’s climate is recorded in **Tables 6 and 7**. The K-2 perceptions about aspects of their school environment are summarized in **Table 6**.

Table 6

Indicators of Climate (Grades K-2)

Item	Like	Dislike
My teacher	100	0
How much I am learning	95	5
Caretaker/Janitor	99	1
My school	98	2
Other children	94	4
School rules	94	6
School work	84	12
Reading	92	6
Drawing	95	5
Recess	94	6
The playground	95	5
Our building	95	2
The secretary	95	3
The library	98	1
Myself	95	4
My classroom	95	1
My principal	97	2
Noon hour	93	5
Other teachers	97	1
The gym	99	1
I feel safe at school	96	3
The school is a happy place	99	1

As is frequently the case in studies of this nature, the K-2 students were typically very positive concerning all aspects of their school lives, particularly their teacher, other children, the playground, gym and building, and that the school is generally a happy place for them to be. They were least positive on the items ‘school work,’ and reading.

Table 7 contains a summary of the survey responses of parents, teachers, EA’s and students regarding various aspects of school climate at the school.

Table 7
Indicators of School Climate

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'/ % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'			% Indicating 'Yes'/'No'
	Parents/ Caregiver	Teachers	EA/SS	Students Gr. 3
Students enjoy school most days.	89/7	100/0	100/0	76/14
This school has a caring atmosphere.	89/8	100/0	100/0	73/4
Expectations for student behaviour are fair.	91/6	100/0	100/0	81/11
Discipline is fair.	81/8	100/0	100/0	83/3
Students show respect for one another in this school.	93/4	100/0	100/0	86/5
This school has good school spirit.	85/8	100/0	100/0	84/11
The school provides a safe environment for students.	92/4	100/0	100/0	89/3
Teachers respect students at this school.	85/4	100/0	100/0	86/11
Students respect teachers in this school.	85/2	100/0	100/0	78/3
Bullying is not a problem in this school.	55/11(33)	77/0	100/0	54/22
Bullying is dealt with in this school.	50/6(44)	100/0	100/0	76/11

As illustrated in the data in **Table 7**, many very positive assessments of aspects of school climate were given by all respondent groups. The data suggests that Martin Browne's climate is a very positive one. While Grade 3 students are somewhat more reserved in their response to the statement "The school has a caring atmosphere", the K-2 students, as noted in **Table 6**, were overwhelmingly positive in their indications as to how much they like their school. The only statement which appears to require further analysis relates to bullying. With the large percentage of "don't know" responses by parents (33 and 44%) and students with 24% responding they "don't know" if bullying is a problem it may be appropriate for the school to consider further dialogue regarding this issue.

Additional perspectives on school climate were provided in the variety of verbatim and interview comments of respondents. These provide interesting elaboration and viewpoints on the data described above:

- *The small size allows for a very intimate learning atmosphere. All teachers know the students. The students all play together no matter their age difference [and] I believe this greatly reduces the occurrence of bullying. (Parent).*
- *Small school. Big hearts! (Parent).*
- *I appreciate how comfortable my kids are at the school. (Parent).*
- *I am not sure what the protocol would be regarding an incident at school involving re-routing the students for safety. The school handled the situation properly and safely, however the parents were not notified. We have a right to be informed when they [children] are in danger, how the situation was handled and what will change should something happen in the future. (Parent).*
- *I like that the doors are locked during the day – ensures safety. (Parent).*
- *It's a small school, so the teachers know each student and most of the students know each other. It's like a big family! (Parent).*
- *My child's needs were looked after in the most caring, professional and genuine manner. I feel the kind of attention she received will benefit her for entire schooling life. (Parent).*
- *It is a very nice place to be. (Student).*
- *I love coming to school because of my teachers and friends. (Student).*
- *I sorta like coming to school. (Student).*
- *I rilly love my school it is fun. (Student – unedited).*
- *Lot's of great peopil. (Student – unedited).*
- *It has a "small community" school feel. The children look out for each other. We have an excellent staff that genuinely cares for the children and want them to succeed. (Educational Assistant)*
- *We all care about each and everyone around us each day. (Educational Assistant).*
- *Our school is welcoming, warm, friendly and caring. (Teacher).*
- *The closeness and feeling of community is unique. (Teacher).*
- *Students are familiar with all staff and enjoy a friendly, open atmosphere. (Teacher).*
- *We have nice families and parent volunteers. (Teacher).*

Caring and Respectful School Environment: Physical Environment

The physical environment is an important supporting condition by which the key qualities of school life can be enhanced. Basic standards of appearance, attractiveness, and cleanliness relate to the upkeep of the facility and speak eloquently to the priorities

and attitudes of those who work in the school as well as those who are responsible for its maintenance. The extent to which the physical environment contributes to safety, and the teaching and learning process is a critical consideration.. Parent, teacher and student responses to survey questions about the physical environment at Martin Browne School are summarized in **Table 8**.

Table 8
Indicators of Physical Environment

Item	% Indicating ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’/ % Indicating ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly Disagree’			% Indicating ‘Yes’/‘No’
	Parents/ Caregiver	Teachers	EA/SS	Students Gr. 3-6
I am satisfied with the school facility.	74/24	67/22	80/20	86/3
I am satisfied with the school grounds.	81/11	66/33	60/40	73/16
The school is clean.	87/6	56/44	60/40	65/5(30)
Vandalism (writing on the walls, etc.) is not a problem in this school.	66/9(25)	100/0	80/20	58/19
The school facility is designed to ensure student safety.	71/15	89/11	80/0	78/6

From the data contained in **Table 8**, it is quite clear that the quality of the physical environment is not one of the major strengths of Martin Browne School. In particular teachers and support staff indicated concerns about the school grounds and the school’s cleanliness while teachers and parents were not overly positive about their satisfaction with the building itself. As well the design of the building as it relates to insuring “student safety” was not overly endorsed by parents and students. Interestingly, parents and students were not as positive as teachers and EA’s that “vandalism is not a problem” in the school although there were a large number of “don’t know” responses on the part of both groups.

The following comments were among those received regarding the physical environment of the school:

- *These kids are getting a fabulous education from the educators but the facility is not up to the necessary standards. (Parent)*
- *We need a bigger gym. (5 Students)*
- *We need better playground equipment. (6 students).*
- *[I'd like] a cleaner school. (Student).*
- *Size is a problem. There are groups working in every available space. (Teacher).*
- *Space is a premium. (Teacher).*
- *Outdoor equipment is needed e.g. swings. (Teacher).*
- *Staff room is cramped. (Teacher).*
- *We could always use a gymnasium. (Educational Assistant).*
- *Even though we try to make good use of space, it's often lacking. (Educational Assistant).*
- *School's cleanliness could be improved. (Educational Assistant).*
- *The sidewalk could use shoveling. (Parent).*
- *The front entrance is crowded and not very welcoming. (Parent).*
- *I think the school could use some "greening". A little outdoor sprucing up as class projects would be great. (Parent).*

Responsive Curriculum and Instruction: Academic Emphasis

One of the crucial concerns for any school is its emphasis on academic work as a continuing priority. Effective schools are distinguished by a marked focus on high student achievement and it is reflected in the amount of school time and professional energy devoted to it. Time-on-task is maximized and homework is assigned regularly and used as a basis for remediation. Effective schools provide programs that meet the learning needs of their student clientele. Adequate attention is devoted to the basic skills of reading, writing, and computing. Students are taught to think critically, to communicate competently, to solve problems, and to use technology to enhance their learning. Of course, a school's student attendance rate is also an indicator of the concerted effort placed upon academic learning.

The nature of the academic program at Martin Browne School has been the focus of serious enhancement efforts on the part of the school staff over the past several years. From the information represented in Table 9, it is apparent that these efforts are already beginning to bear significant fruit.



Table 9
Indicators of Academic Emphasis

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'/ % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'		% Indicating 'Yes'/'No'
	Parents/ Caregiver	Teachers	Students Gr. 3
On the whole, homework assignments are reasonable and fair.	90/2	100/0	95/0
Sufficient emphasis is given to the academic program in this school.	88/2	100/0	89/5
We are satisfied with how much students are learning in this school.	95/2	100/0	89/3
This school does a good job of teaching reading skills.	92/0	88/0	73/5
We are satisfied with how much students are learning in mathematics.	93/2	77/0	95/3
We are satisfied with how much students are learning in science.	87/2	77/0	84/3
We are satisfied with the students' learning in the area of writing skills.	87/7	77/0	73/16
This school does a good job of teaching students problem solving skills.	79/4		
We are satisfied with how much students are learning in social studies.	82/2	88/0	86/3
We are satisfied with how much students are learning in fine arts.	83/4	78/2	92/3
We are satisfied with how much students are learning in physical education.	89/6	77/0	95/5
We are satisfied with how much students are learning in health.	85/2	88/0	81/8
This school does a good job of teaching computer skills.	76/6	67/33	100/0
The resource room is important to my learning.	89/2	100/0	86/3

Parents, staff and Grade 3 students very much agreed that sufficient emphasis is given to the academic program at the school. Interestingly however, teachers were more

critical of themselves and their efforts to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to academic subjects (e.g. reading, math, science, writing etc.) than were the other respondent groups. It appears from the data that computer skills are not being attended to as ardently as some parents and teachers would like. This might be a reflection of the crowded nature of the facility and placement of limited numbers of computers in the library, a much used and valued feature of the school.

Many comments were made in the surveys and interviews concerning the academic work of the school. These provide valuable elaboration on the data described above:

- *Teachers in other schools say there are smart students coming out of this school. (Parent)*
- *This is an outstanding school and it doesn't get the respect it should because it doesn't have a gym. (Parent).*
- *My daughter had a rough time in her old school. When she came to Martin Browne School the teachers made learning fun and fair. Thanks to them she loves school and excels in her work. (Parent).*
- *There is a good emphasis on literacy here e.g. AISI project. (Parent).*
- *I would like to see the students have more computer time. (Parent).*
- *More use of technology for learning would be good. (Parent).*
- *It would be nice to see more homework. Maybe projects that can be done as a family. Maybe more of the assignments/quizzes sent home. (Parent).*
- *We need to improve on our technology, our gym equipment, playground and our resource room [equipment]. (Educational Assistant).*
- *The music and French programs are strong. (Educational Assistant).*
- *We could improve our use of technology/computers to directly support or enhance student learning. (Teacher).*
- *Small group reading and Early Reading Intervention are very successful. (Teacher).*
- *Parental support for our reading programs is a strength at our school. (Teacher).*
- *I like our library. (7 Grade 3 students).*
- *I like math. (11 Grade 3 students).*
- *I like computers. (8 Grade 3 students).*
- *I like gym class. (21 Grade 3 students).*

Responsive Curriculum and Instruction: Instructional Strategies

School effectiveness research suggests a positive relationship between student achievement and the expectations that teachers hold for them. The underlying theory is that all students have the capability to meet intellectual goals in various areas. In particular, *Multiple Intelligences' Theory* supports the notion that every child has some area of strength and that other areas can be developed utilizing appropriate instructional strategies. Generally, teachers who hold appropriately high expectations for learning, compared to teachers who hold lower expectations, tend to have students who achieve at higher levels. Teachers who regularly employ a variety of instructional strategies, who make expectations for student work clear, who are available to provide extra help when needed, and who keep students motivated to succeed, have students who achieve better. Survey data on Instructional Strategies are presented in **Table 10**.

Table 10

Indicators of Instructional Strategies

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'/ % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'		% Indicating 'Yes'/'No'
	Parents/ Caregiver	Teachers	Students Gr. 3
Teachers create an atmosphere which promotes student learning.	95/2	100/0	81/11
Teachers make expectations for class work clear to students.	89/2	100/0	76/11
Teachers are available to give extra help when needed.	82/2	100/0	89/3
Teachers expect work to be done to the best of students' abilities.	97/2	100/0	89/5
Teachers are prepared for class.	76/2	100/0	
Teachers use a variety of teaching strategies.	70/2(27)	100/0	84/0
Teachers provide students the opportunity to work with one another.	87/2		92/0
Teachers expect students to use the resource room/library regularly.			
Teachers adapt their instruction to meet the needs of their students.	69/6(25)	100/0	84/5

Consistently high ratings across all groups of respondents suggested that teachers in this school are providing students with a high caliber of instruction. Not only are a variety of motivating teaching strategies being employed but additional help is being provided to assist students to meet learning objectives. The data would therefore suggest that the school's emphasis upon "multiple intelligences" is having a positive impact upon students. It is noteworthy however, that a relatively large percentage of parents replied "don't know" to the statements concerning teachers use of a "variety of teaching strategies" as well as "adapting instruction to meet the needs of their students". Perhaps as more communication from the school to the home as to the nature of M.I. (multiple intelligences) occurs it will become more evident that one of the underlying principles of M.I. is the adapting of instruction to take advantage of individual students' learning styles.

The following comments were made regarding aspects of instructional strategies:

- *A school of this size lends itself to change because of its great atmosphere and willingness to try new things. (Parent)*
- *Teachers are creative and they make learning fun for students. (Parent).*
- *We are impressed with the different teaching methods in use. (Parent).*
- *We like the fun activities. (5 Grade 3 students).*
- *Subjects are integrated a lot here e.g. music and art with Peter Puffin. Teachers don't see this type of thing as an "add-on". It is a natural way of doing things at this school. (Teacher).*
- *Our librarian is very good at getting us resources to use in our classrooms. (Teacher).*
- *Staff is expected to develop professional growth plans and Deb[principal] monitors our progress. (Teacher).*
- *We share teaching ideas a lot here. People are very co-operative and helpful. (Teacher).*

Responsive Curriculum and Instruction: Resources

Resources available in the school are important contributors to the quality of instruction and consequently enhanced student learning. The availability and appropriateness of materials, books, computers and equipment are all essential supports for the instructional program. The Learning Resource Centre in the school should be

accessible and provide a range of materials that assist staff in support of student learning. Perceptions of respondents regarding these qualities are summarized in **Table 11**.

Table 11
Indicators of Resources

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'/ % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'			% Indicating 'Yes'/'No'
	Parents/ Caregiver	Teachers	EA/SS	Students Gr. 3
The school is well equipped.	53/27	89/11	60/40	
The school has adequate instructional materials (e.g., books, visuals, computers, etc.) to help students learn.	82/8	100/0	60/40	95/0
Students have adequate access to computer technology in the school.	72/19	89/11	80/20	43/35
The Learning Resource Centre materials adequately support all school programs.	57/10(33)	89/11	100/0	

There is clearly a mixed opinion as to the adequacy of the resources available at Martin Browne School. Teachers are more positive about all four statements regarding this effectiveness correlate than are the other respondent groups. For example, parents and EA's do not believe the school is very well equipped. As well, parents and especially students are less than positive about having "adequate access to computer technology in the school".

- * *We need a computer for each student. (Parent).*
- *The playground needs updating. (Parent).*
- *We need more computers and updated playground equipment (more swings). (Educational Assistant).*
- *I'd like more computers so we don't have to share. (Student).*
- *We have it good here e.g. good books for supporting reading. (Teacher).*
- *There are good resources here. We have a good library. (Teacher).*

- *The division and principal are doing a good job of providing resources here. We have lots of books, TV's, Smart boards. We have an excellent librarian. (Teacher).*

Assessment for Learning: Feedback

Professionals in effective schools consider feedback on student work to be a core activity deserving of substantial time and effort. Reliable and timely feedback on academic performance means that teachers are constructive, consistent, continuous, and fair when assessing student work. Increasingly, teachers in effective schools are providing a tighter focus on student assessment through linkages with curriculum and attention to clarity and validity of assessment procedures. Effective teachers recognize good work, reward students for their efforts, evaluate fairly, regularly talk to students about their work, and provide feedback on assignments in a reasonable amount of time. Moreover, effective teachers use evaluation for the purposes of remediation and encouragement of student effort. Teachers in effective schools are conscious of the linkage between instruction and assessment and use strategies that are appropriate in assessing learning. As well, teachers in these schools are familiar with a variety of assessment strategies and use them regularly. Furthermore, effective schools keep parents/guardians informed of student progress and work with them to ensure learning success. Data on Feedback are presented in **Table 12**.

There was solid affirmation in the responses that students in this school are recognized for good work, that teachers evaluate student progress in a variety of ways, and that the feedback students receive help them to learn. Additionally, all groups felt that assignments are corrected and returned in a reasonable amount of time. On the item, 'teachers regularly talk to students about their work, parents and Grade 3 students were slightly less positive than were teachers. Of interest and possible cause for future action when pursuing "assessment for learning" PD activities, is the data indicating that 27% of the students "don't know" if their "work is evaluated fairly".

Table 12**Indicators of Feedback**

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'/ % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'		% Indicating 'Yes'/'No'
	Parents/ Caregiver	Teachers	Students Gr. 3
On the whole, students are recognized for good work in this school.	87/8	100/0	76/11
Teachers regularly report student progress to parents/guardians.	87/11	100/0	84/0
Generally, assignments are corrected and returned in a reasonable amount of time.	88/4	89/11	100/0
Students' work is evaluated fairly.	87/4	100/0	68/5(27)
Teachers regularly talk to students about their work.	72/23	100/0	76/14
The feedback our child receives helps him/her to learn.	87/4		84/5
Teachers evaluate our child's progress in a variety of ways (tests, essays, etc).	87/2		

Authentic Partnerships: Parental/Guardian Involvement

There is a significant body of research that advances the view that meaningful parental/guardian involvement is closely related to higher student achievement. Recent studies have also found that parental/guardian involvement is related to decreased absenteeism and to improved perceptions of school and classroom climate. As well, a few studies have noted that student behaviour tends to improve as parents/guardians become more involved in their child(ren)'s schooling. Consequently, parents/guardians have an important role to play in encouraging, monitoring and supporting their child(ren)'s educational efforts. Numerous studies have documented how children from dysfunctional homes have a difficult time being successful in school. School staff and parents/guardians need to work together to ensure the child(ren)'s success with academic and social

learning. Details of perceptions regarding Parental involvement at Martin Browne School are summarized in **Table 13**.

Table 13

Indicators of Parental Involvement

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'/ % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'			% Indicating 'Yes'/'No'
	Parents/ Caregiver	Teachers	EA/SS	Students Gr. 3
The school communicates effectively with parents/guardians.	77/15	100/0	100/0	73/11
Parents/guardians encourage students to study.	87/6	89/11	100/0	89/8
Parents/guardians feel welcome at this school.	83/13	100/0	100/0	72/3(25)
Parents/guardians are kept informed about school matters.	81/11	100/0	100/0	
Parents/guardians are asked for their opinions about the school.	46/47	77/11	100/0	
Parents/guardians frequently participate in parent-teacher interviews.	95/2	100/0		86/3
Parents/guardians are aware of what their child is studying in school.	91/4	100/0		

Analysis of these Parent/Guardian Involvement data should take into consideration the age of the students, the changing nature of families, and of work. The parents/guardians of secondary age pupils tend to be less involved with their child's school than is the case for elementary pupils. As well, many students now find themselves a part of a changing family structure that can result, especially in the case of secondary students, in less immediate parental/guardian supervision. Finally, the current economic situation often dictates that parents/guardians hold more than one job and work extended and perhaps irregular hours, often outside their immediate community. The net result for the school is parents/guardians are not as available as they once were for direct involvement at the school. Parents/Guardians who are short of time have to pick their

occasions for involvement and, typically, select parent/guardian-teacher interviews and extra curricular activities.

It is often said that Parent/Guardian Involvement ebbs and flows dependent upon the school situation. When problems become evident, involvement increases, when problems don't exist or are not evident, involvement is decreased.

From the variety of activities and communication mechanisms utilized in this school, there is no question that the school utilizes numerous avenues to enhance the quality of the communication between the school and the home. These include the school newsletter, class communications, phone calls, report cards, and the use of the school's web site. One initiative that has had a positive impact on the connections made among parents, teachers and students has been the implementation of student "agendas".

There was a generally strong agreement that the parents are made to feel welcome at this school, that parents are kept informed about school matters (with the possible exception of a recent school "lockdown" which occurred) and that they frequently participate in parent-teacher interviews

The following verbatim comments illustrate more fully how respondents felt about parental involvement at Martin Browne School.

- *The teachers are attentive with my kids. They make us aware right away if something is work. They genuinely care. (Parent).*
- *The staff is very friendly and helpful. (Parent).*
- *The staff are friendly and approachable and will make time to talk through any queries or difficulties. (Parent).*
- *Parents weren't informed when there was an intruder at the school. We should have heard from the school and not from the "grapevine". (Parent).*
- *I do not like the fact that all the doors are locked all the time. We want to be welcomed into the school, not kept out with locked doors. (Parent).*
- *Now that the school locks their doors, there is no one on one time with teachers. (Parent).*

Authentic Partnerships: Student Involvement

Effective schools recognize the importance of high levels of student involvement in various aspects of school life. Student participation in school life is measured by the extent to which: (a) students are encouraged to make the school an attractive place to be; (b) students have a say in the decisions affecting them; (c) students are actively

encouraged to become involved; and, (d) students want to become involved. Recent school effectiveness research indicates that as student leadership increases, student behaviour and learning outcomes improve. Student involvement develops student leadership skills and this leads them to positively identify with their school, which, in turn, results in a more democratic school environment. Further, student engagement (cognitive, emotional and behavioural) is a requisite element for student growth. Fullan (1993) posed the question, “What would happen if we treated the student as someone whose opinion mattered?” It is striking how enthusiastically students can engage, and flourish in their school lives when assumed to be partners in their own learning. Democratic schools do this well.

Details of responses to items related to student involvement are contained below.

Table 14
Indicators of Student Involvement



Item	% Indicating ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’/ % Indicating ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly Disagree’			% Indicating ‘Yes’/‘No’
	Parents/ Caregiver	Teachers	EA/SS	Students Gr. 3
There are ample opportunities for students to be involved in athletic activities.	78/16	67/11	80/0	95/5
Students have an adequate say in school decisions affecting them.	56/10(35)	89/0	80/0	78/3
Students are encouraged to become involved in school life.	78/4	100/0	100/0	
Students are encouraged to take leadership roles in this school.	65/2(33)	100/0	100/0	78/14
Students actively participate in school activities.	91/2	100/0	100/0	92/5
There are ample opportunities for non-athletic activities	83/6	100/0	100/0	89/3
I enjoy the activities out of class.				97/3

With the exception of a significant percentage of parents who indicated they “don’t know” whether students have “an adequate say in decisions which affect them”

and whether students “are encouraged to take a leadership role in the school”, there was substantial positive uniformity within all respondent groups to the other statements in this section.

The following comments were made regarding student involvement at Martin Browne School:

- *I like the extracurricular activities for students. (Parent).*
- *There is a good combination of athletic and academic activities. (Parent).*
- *I like the games we have. (Student).*
- *We have choir. (Student).*
- *We go skating and swimming. (Student).*

Authentic Partnerships: Supports to Learning

Effective schools have a collaborative culture that extends the learning community beyond the school. These schools are active in pursuing partnerships and agreements with agencies, community organizations, and individuals who have skills that support the school's learning program. These relationships provide opportunities for students and staff to reach outside their facility for support and provide enhanced learning opportunities.

The School^{Plus} concept assumes that supports to learning that have been traditionally available to students and staff will be integrated into the educational fabric of schools in Saskatchewan in a more formal way resulting in better support for students. For this to occur, staff in schools and in community agencies will need to engage in joint planning and gain comfort with a culture of interdependence that had not hitherto been evident in Saskatchewan schools. One gauge of a school's effectiveness in this respect is the success with which the school links with the community and its agencies to address the needs of students.

Table 15 provides data on perceptions as to how effectively Martin Browne School is linking with the community and its agencies.

Table 15

Indicators of Supports to Learning

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree'/ % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'		
	Parents/ Caregiver	Teachers	EA/SS
Staff, parents and community work well together to address student needs.	73/11	100/0	80/0
The school and families work well with human service providers to support student needs.	45/2(53)	100/0	60/0(40)
The school is effective in using a broad range of community resources to expand student educational experiences.	67/6(27)	89/11	80/20
Parents are involved in planning with teachers on a regular basis.	43/19(38)	55/22	80/20

As can be seen in this Table, although there was a significant number of “don’t know” responses, there appears to be a generally positive view that the staff, parents and community work well together to address student needs, and that the school effectively utilizes its community’s resources to expand student educational services. However, Parents and teachers had low levels of agreement that their respective groups are involved in planning with each other on a regular basis.

- *_Martin Browne avails itself of outside services. They are very good about referring kids without delay. (Human Services Provider).*
- *The staff even look after families who have personal needs for things like beds and clothing. The staff personally donate time and money. (Human Services Provider)*
- *Our principal is really good at accessing community supports right away if they are needed. The school is small so kids don’t fall through the cracks. (Teacher)*

When asked what external partnerships enhance support for the school, respondents identified the following most frequently:

Police

City of Lloydminster Parks and Recreation

Social services

SHIP counselors
Auxiliary Kindergarten Program
Second Step program
Native liaison counselors
ERIK (for hearing impaired students)
Health

While these relationships were seen as invaluable support to the work of the school, respondents identified several ways in which they could be strengthened. These included the development of initiatives for improving relationships with parents, continued recognition of the educational work of community groups, increasing the focus on using community resources to aid learning, and developing the relationship with the business community.



Comprehensive Prevention and Early Intervention

Comprehensive Prevention

When the needs of children are anticipated, supports can be activated before the effects of risk factors escalate. Effective schools are proactive in implementing programs that strengthen the resiliency of children and youth. Schools, families, and communities collectively create and promote learning environments that contribute to the well-being of all children and youth.

Early Intervention

Effective schools are proactive in assessing learning and social problem and take effective action through their interventions. These schools work collaboratively within their environment and in the community to enhance their array of interventions strategies as a support to learning. They demonstrate the following qualities:

- The collaboration evident between administration and staff members, particularly special education personnel, when making educational decisions on students.
- The special focus and competence provided when working with ‘at risk’ pupils.

- The availability of special education teachers to support other teachers with program modification.
- Division leadership through provision of in-service on the use of the Adaptive Dimension in curriculum development and instruction of students experiencing difficulty with regular programs.
- The availability of very talented and committed EAs.
- The provision of creative and focused programs to address student success.

Table 16 presents perceptions concerning aspects of Comprehensive Prevention and Early Intervention at this school.

Table 16
Indicators of Comprehensive Prevention and Early Intervention

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' / % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree'		
	Parents/ Caregiver	Teachers	EA/SS
The school has a variety of interventions available when students' needs are not being met or when personal problems arise.	61/8(31)	100/0	80/0
The school does a good job of identifying student needs that effect learning.	70/6	100/0	100/0
The school is effective in its interventions when student needs are not being met.	53/6(41)	100/0	80/0
Preventive programs in the school are well known to staff, students and parents.	70/8	89/0	100/0
The school does a good job of dealing with student problems before they become big problems.	70/6		
The school has the capacity to respond to most students needs.	66/15	100/0	100/0

While parents are not quite as positive, the data suggests that teachers and support staff firmly believe this school has the capacity to respond effectively to most student needs and is being successful at so doing. Understandably, there is a large percentage of parents who indicated they “don’t know” what interventions are available and whether the school is effective when student needs are not being met”. Unless as a parent, your child is experiencing difficulties there is little occasion to enter into discussions with the

school as to what “interventions” might be available either in or out of school. To complicate the situation, privacy considerations must be taken into account whenever school personnel discuss certain aspects of individual student needs/programs and consequently the general public is usually not aware of the wide range of special programs and interventions being utilized at schools.

Verbatim comments which are related to this correlate are:

- *Martin Browne avails itself of outside services. They are very good about referring kids without delay. (Human Services Provider).*
- *We have very good early academic support. Every Grade 1 who is in need is able to receive intensive small group reading instruction. (Teacher).*
- *Behavioural support is available to help with students who require it. (Teacher).*
- *Training is provided by the division for Grade 1 teachers to learn how to proceed with Early Reading Intervention. (Teacher).*
- *Grade 1 teachers have one period per day to work with kids in need re: ERI. (Teacher).*
- *Our students have access to the Auxiliary Kindergarten and Second Step Programs. They are offered at the Avery Building. (Teacher).*

This concludes the discussion of the findings for the school effectiveness attributes as they pertain to Martin Browne School. In the next chapter, the major themes and priorities for action emerging from this review will be identified.



Chapter 3

Major Themes and Priorities for Action

The purpose of this Review was to provide all those interested in the quality of schooling at Martin Browne School with a picture of the school as perceived by its various partners. An important part of this purpose was the provision of clear information that can be used in planning for the future.

In this chapter, a summary of major themes derived from the data is presented in terms of an overall rating of the school, and a summary of the major strengths and areas for enhancement identified in the comments and the survey data. As well, considerations for action, resulting from the data, interviews and survey comments are presented.

Overall Rating of Martin Browne School

Students and parents were asked to rate Martin Browne School by giving it an overall grade (A: excellent to F: very poor). The ratings are summarized in **Table 17**.

Table 17

Overall Ratings of Martin Browne School

Rating	% of Each Group	
	Parents/Caregiver	Grade 3
A (Excellent)	40	73
B (Good)	43	18
C (Average)	13	3
D (Poor)	2	
F (Very Poor)		
Don't Know	4	6

As illustrated in **Table 17**, 83% of the parents, and 91% of the Grade 3-6 students perceived the school to be 'good' or 'excellent.' Only 2% of the parents gave the school a 'poor' rating. In short, there was a very strong affirmation that this is a very good, if not

excellent, school. A summary of the comments from the surveys, offering a more specific view and some explanation of these ratings, is provided in the following section.

Summary of Verbatim Responses

Each respondent was given the opportunity to provide written elaboration on a number of issues. Two questions related to the perceived overall strengths of the school, and aspects that individuals believed could be improved. **Table 18** represents the categories that emerged from the responses in order of frequency of mention per group.

Table 18 : Most Frequent Comments: Strengths and Needed Improvements

<u>What are the strengths of the school?</u>			
<u>Parents</u>	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>EA's/Staff</u>	<u>Students</u>
1. Caring climate	Caring climate	Caring climate	Friends/nice kids
2. Small size	Staff team work	Staff team work	Gym
3. Good staff	Admin./leadership	Programs	Teachers/staff
4. Programs	Family support	Admin/leadership	Fun activities
5. Communication w/parents	Resources	Students	Computers
<u>What can be improved?</u>			
<u>Parents</u>	<u>Teachers</u>	<u>EA's/Staff</u>	<u>Students</u>
1. Gym	Space	Space	Gym
2. More computers	Computers/use	Computers/use	P'ground eqp
3. Portables	Playground eqp.	Playground eqp	Computer
4. Communication w/parents	Divisional expectations	School cleanliness	Space

The theme that represented the most commonly identified strength across groups was the existence of a welcoming, warm atmosphere, with strong, caring teaching, and support staff. Terms such as “family-like”, “small town feeling”, “welcoming” and “intimate” were used by parents to describe the environment.. As well, teachers and support staff commented often on the positive supportive nature of staff relationships and teamwork prevailing in the school. It is clear that the staff not only genuinely care about the students but they also care deeply about each other.

In regard to areas for improvement, the following points emerged:

- The most common message from staff spoke to the need to continue to find ways to manage the space “crunch”. With limited areas in which to work, the staff frequently find themselves working with students in less than ideal locations. Further, storage of materials, equipment and supplies in certain “non-storage” sites is seen as problematic. An additional area of need identified by the staff is technology. Not only is there thought to be a benefit to be had by increasing the number of computers for students but also in promoting more extensive use of technology for staff members. For instance, it was suggested that internal communication among staff members would be enhanced by the use of e-mail thus relying less on “word of mouth” and/or hard copy announcements. As well, reporting attendance on-line was seen as having potential to enhance recordkeeping and internal communication.
- Parents also identified facility concerns at the school. A significant number of parents specifically noted their feelings that the gymnasium is an inadequate size. Several other parents indicated the computer lab is underequipped while others said the portables, although functional, do not contribute to the students and adults sense of belonging to the school. An additional area identified by several parents was the need to communicate more fully with parents when a significant incident such as the “school intruder” takes place. A related issue for some parents is the “locked door” policy the school adopted in the fall. While no one appeared to question the need for student safety, there was concern expressed that locked doors do not contribute to an overly welcoming environment and further, lessen the opportunities for informal parent/teacher discussions.
- Students, teachers and support staff identified an additional area for improvement – playground. Specifically, the need to add more swings was mentioned by the three groups.

Priorities for Action

There is little doubt that Martin Browne School is doing very well in its efforts to provide the students with a high quality education. In reviewing the correlates of “effective schools”, it is clear that the school has strengths in each of the areas of “Adaptive Leadership”, “Caring and Respectful School Environment”, Responsive Curriculum and Instruction”, Assessment for Learning”, Authentic Partnerships and Comprehensive Prevention and Early Intervention”. What follows therefore, are “commendations” which the review team feels captures some of the practices and procedures which should be celebrated and therefore continued. As well, several “considerations” are provided to generate discussion by the school’s stakeholders regarding planning for 2008-09.

Commendations

Continue:

1. To put student needs as your school’s top priority when it comes to planning and decision making. (adaptive leadership)
2. To revisit your mission statement by regularly evaluating the extent to which you are being successful at “develop[ing] lifelong learners in a collaborative, respectful environment”. (adaptive leadership)
3. To treat students with respect and concern. (caring and respectful school environment)
4. To be “energized” by interactions with your students and colleagues. (caring and respectful school environment)
5. To welcome visitors to your school in a warm and caring manner. (caring and respectful school environment)
6. To encourage parental involvement through volunteer activities and other ways. (authentic partnerships)
7. To utilize “parent-friendly” report cards, newsletters, student agendas, telephone calls and your website to communicate with the parents. (assessment for Learning)

8. To access the services of outside agencies in a timely manner to support your students' needs. (authentic partnerships)
9. To engage in collaborative planning activities. (adaptive leadership)
10. To emphasize literacy as your primary instructional goal (e.g. ERI). (comprehensive prevention and early intervention)
11. To provide variety in your instructional approaches. (responsive curriculum and instruction)
12. To emphasize multiple intelligences as a focus of your instructional approach. (responsive curriculum and instruction)
13. To display student work in prominent areas of the school. (assessment for learning)
14. To view the lack of a large gymnasium as a positive opportunity to provide "off site" learning opportunities such as skating and swimming. (responsive curriculum and instruction)
15. To work towards offering well rounded Arts Ed and French Programs. (responsive curriculum and instruction)
16. To utilize "assessment for learning" principles to assist in determining the extent to which students are learning as well as to decide upon what changes might be necessary to ensure student success. (assessment for learning)
17. To engage in appropriate professional development activities and then to share new knowledge with colleagues. (adaptive leadership)
18. To be flexible with regard to limited space as to where and when you work with students. (caring and respectful school environment)
19. To be open in communicating with students, parents and each other. (caring and respectful school environment)
20. To deal with areas of need/concern without delay. (adaptive leadership)

Considerations:

Consider:

1. Sharing this report with staff and parents at the earliest convenient time.
2. Placing the main points of the report on the school's website and inviting responses.

3. Having had the opportunity to share the report in relatively general terms, (as per #1 and 2 above) consider holding an “Appreciative Inquiry Forum” with staff, teachers and parents to discuss the school review report and to begin the development of a plan related to the data contained therein. The correlate “authentic involvement” suggests that parents should be more meaningfully involved in major school decisions than is currently the practice in most North American schools. By involving them in an API Forum, and receiving their suggestions for the subsequent development of the school’s 2008-09 plan, the school would demonstrate its commitment to enhancing this aspect of its operation.

The specific purposes of the forum could be:

- a. To examine the findings of the effectiveness review for each of the correlates of school effectiveness.
 - b. To discuss what people appreciate about the school and would like to see more of.
 - c. To provide an opportunity for staff dialogue on the implications of the findings for the future of the school.
 - d. To identify short term and longer term priorities for action deriving from the data.
4. Involving staff and where appropriate, parents, in the development of the 2008-09 school plan.
 5. Posting the 2008-09 plan on the school’s website and inviting responses.

Concluding Comments

This review of the effectiveness of Martin Browne School was initiated to support the planning process at the school. In addition, the various activities of the review were conducted under the assumptions that:

- **Every school can improve;**
- **Individuals on staff have the desire to grow professionally;**
- **All groups associated with the school support improvement and growth;**
- **The staff should be the key leaders of the school planning and enhancement process; and**
- **It is always better to proceed from an appreciative, ‘possibilities-based’ orientation than from a ‘deficit’ one.**

The various interactions the review team had with the leadership and staff of this school has conveyed a powerful sense of the extraordinarily high level of commitment that this group of professionals has to the students of Martin Browne. Throughout this Review process, the staff and administration have demonstrated a sincere and enthusiastic interest in the emerging pictures of school life as described in the data. In fact, their commitment to the school was affirmed when on April 10, 2008, the staff acted on the writer's recommendation to have an Appreciative Inquiry workshop and thereby agreed upon the following set of priorities and goals:

Priority 1: Higher Oral Language Achievement (AISI)

Maintain High Mathematics Achievement

Goal 1: Students in Grades 1-3 will demonstrate increasing skill and confidence in oral language development.

Goal 2: Kindergarten students will demonstrate phonemic awareness skills at or above the 25th percentile.

Goal 3: By the end of Grade 3, the percentage of students achieving the acceptable standard as measured by the Alberta Provincial Achievement Tests will be maintained or increased.

Goal 4: By the end of Grade 3, the percentage of students achieving the standard of excellence as measured by the Alberta Provincial Achievement Tests will be maintained or increased.

Priority 2: Equitable Opportunities

Goal 1: The percentage of students attending more than 177 days of school (88.5 for Kindergarten) will increase.

Goal 2: All students will have access to, and instruction in the use of current technology to meet the goals of the LPSD Technology Plan, and to support curriculum learning.

Goal 3: By the end of June, 2009, the percentage of teachers indicating proficiency in integrating the use of technology in their daily instruction will increase, as measured by a Teacher Satisfaction Survey.

Priority 3: Smooth Transitions

Goal 1: Parents express satisfaction that their children experience successful transition into Grade 4, as measured by a Parent Satisfaction Survey.

Goal 2: Parents express satisfaction that their children are successfully transitioned into Kindergarten, as measured by a Parent Satisfaction Survey.

Goal 3: Students are successfully transitioned between grades at Martin Browne, as measured by a Parent Satisfaction Survey.

Priority 4: System Accountability and Governance

Goal 1: The School Community Council will work to improve SCC communication between home and school and to recruit new members.

Priority 5: Communication Plan

Goal 1: The percentage of parents indicating satisfaction with the amount, quality of information, and timeliness of school communications will be at or above 95% as measured by the parent satisfaction survey which will be administered in June of each school year.

The School Review also identified the facility and use of space as priority issues for parents, staff, and students. While these have not been included in the School Improvement Plan, staff acknowledges the need to address these issues immediately. Requests have been made for additional staff room space, as well as the construction of storage cupboards or shelving. As well, staff have volunteered to work in teams, each team undertaking to organize a specific location for supplies to alleviate some of the storage and clutter concerns.

It should be noted that the strategies which will accompany these goals were also discussed at the API workshop and they will be outlined in an action plan which will be presented to LPSD by June, 2008.

Susan Rosenholtz, in her classic research on Teachers' Workplace, made the distinction between *moving* schools and *stuck* schools. This school is in a *moving* school. Motivated and energized by a commitment to improving the quality of the learning environment for students, the leadership and staff of Martin Browne School have shown great openness and a willingness to look at their school through the "lens" of effective school research. It is the review team's belief that although Martin Browne is clearly doing well as a "moving" school, there is a willingness to make it even better. In short, the future continues to look bright for the education of Martin Browne students.