Carolyn M. Shields
University of British Columbia

and

Linda J. LaRocque
Simon Fraser University

Year-Round Schooling:
A Catalyst for Pedagogical Change

In this article we argue that the implementation of a year-round school calendar served as a catalyst for innovations in teaching and learning and for school-level capacity-building by facilitating teachers' planning, formal and informal talk about teaching and learning, team-teaching, philosophically based programmatic changes, and a culture that supports innovation. We conclude that receptivity to change and ability to make conceptual links are keys to improving the learning environment for students and that whether the impetus is first- or second-order, structural or conceptual, is less important than is sometimes believed.

Dans cet article, nous soutenons que la mise en oeuvre d'un calendrier scolaire qui s'étend sur douze mois a servi de catalyseur pour des innovations dans l'enseignement et l'apprentissage, ainsi que pour la création d'habiletés à l'échelle scolaire. En effet, une telle démarche a facilité: la planification de la part des enseignants, les conversations (formelles et informelles) au sujet de l'enseignement et de l'apprentissage, l'enseignement en équipes, l'application au programme de changements basés sur des idées philosophiques, et le développement d'une culture qui appuie l'innovation. Nous concluons d'abord que la réceptivité aux changements et l'habileté à imaginer des liens conceptuels constituent des facteurs clés pour l'amélioration de l'environnement d'apprentissage des élèves et ensuite, que la nature de l'impulsion (qu'elle soit de premier ou de second ordre, structurelle ou conceptuelle) importe moins que l'on a parfois tendance à croire.

Over the past few decades, the literature on school change has attempted to differentiate between school reform and restructuring (Darling-Hammond, 1998), between first- and second-order change (Murphy, 1992; Taylor & Teddlie, 1992; Wehlage, Smith, & Lipman, 1992), and between structural and cultural change (Fullan, 1993). Each of these dichotomies suggests that modifications that affect how we conceptualize teaching and learning are central to effective educational reform, whereas those that focus primarily on organizational structures defined by Fullan (1991) as "roles, finance and governance, and formal policies" (p. 88) are less successful. Most recently, Darling-Hammond (1998) calls for a shift from designing structures and policies to

---

Carolyn Shields is an associate professor of education in the Department of Educational Studies where she coordinates the educational administration and leadership program.
Linda LaRocque is an associate professor of education in the Faculty of Education.
During the past few years both authors have been interested in examining how to create better learning environments for students. They have conducted research related to schools as communities, student engagement, and the relationship of structures like collaborative decision-making or year-round schooling to improved pedagogical practice.

effect control to capacity-building or "developing the capacity of schools and teachers to be responsible for student learning and responsive to student and community needs, interests, and concerns" (p. 39).

One initiative that seems to be receiving renewed attention and interest in today's climate of rapidly changing demographics, fiscal restraint, and concern for public education is a move from a traditional school-year calendar to one known primarily as year-round schooling (YRS). Year-round schooling is frequently presented as a complex and demanding solution for problems of overcrowding and fiscal constraint rather than as an opportunity for capacity-building. In this article we examine the relationship of year-round schooling to changes occurring in curriculum and instruction in three schools. YRS might normally be considered a first-order calendar change in that it does not usually extend the number of days a student spends in school but simply redistributes instructional and vacation days throughout the calendar year. However, we have found that in many instances this first-order change appears to have triggered, or at least facilitated, second-order, conceptual change related to teaching and learning.

In order to promote better understanding of the relationships between first- and second-order change, between a new school calendar and capacity-building at the school level, we describe the experiences of three schools that implemented a year-round school calendar. The discussion is situated in an overview of the literature related to two distinct but, in this case, interdependent topics: year-round schooling and educational change.

The Literature

Although the literature on year-round schooling increasingly suggests that a calendar change is associated with increased learning opportunities for students and with improved student outcomes, it is also emphatic in its recognition that these changes cannot be attributed solely to the new school calendar. We first provide an overview of the literature related to YRS and student outcomes and then attempt to situate it in some of the current thinking about educational change.

Teaching and Learning in Year-Round Schools

Overall, the body of research into the academic impact of year-round schooling has tended to focus on student achievement as assessed by standardized tests, with little attention to broader issues of teaching and learning. Even with a relatively narrow focus on standardized testing, some of the studies have been found to be deficient, either in terms of conceptualization or in design (Hazelton, Blakely, & Denton, 1992; Hough, Zykowski, & Dick, 1990; Zykowski, Mitchell, Hough, & Gavin, 1991). Of the more frequently cited studies, some have found no statistically significant difference in student learning (Goren & Carriedo, 1986; Hazelton et al., 1992; Merino, 1983; Zykowski et al., 1991). A few others have concluded that although there may be a positive impact for low SES or at-risk students, the overall impact on student achievement is neutral (Atwood, 1983; Capps & Cox, 1991; Gandara & Fish, 1994; Perry, 1991; Serifs, 1990). Finally, others find that YRS does improve the academic achievement for all groups of students (Baker, 1990; Bradford, 1993; Mutchler, 1993).

Most recently Kneese (1996), in a meta-analysis of YRS, was able to find only 15 studies published since 1982 that met her minimum criteria of having a control or comparison group and using student achievement as a dependent variable in a year-round school program that had been operating for at least one year. As a result, Kneese (1996) concluded that there is evidence of a slight positive impact on student achievement. She and others reporting the same result are unanimous in suggesting that the change is not due solely to the change in calendar, but to a concomitant change relating to the teaching and learning environment.

Change and Year-Round Schools

Fullan (1991) identified vision-building, initiative-taking and empowerment, evolutionary planning, monitoring, staff development, and restructuring as key components of effective school change. He cited Miles' (1987) work on vision and suggests that vision involves a sharable and shared understanding of what the school might look like and of how to get there. He concluded his discussion with the statement that "while virtually everyone agrees that vision is crucial, the practice of vision-building is not well understood" (Fullan, 1991, p. 83). Although we have found many examples of year-round school implementation we would describe as successful, few have started with the development of a "shared vision of what the *school* could look like" (p. 82, italics in the original) or of any of the other components identified above. Nevertheless, when YRS has been successfully implemented, renewed and shared vision appears to have been generated as a result of the calendar change.

In 1993, Fullan's emphasis seems to have changed somewhat, as he identifies the need for a more fluid and iterative process described as "ready, fire, aim" (p. 31). Here he suggests that although it is important to prepare for a change, and to have a rough idea of the direction in which one is heading, "crystallizing new beliefs, formulating mission and vision statements and focusing" (pp. 31-32) may well come later. In fact this approach more closely resembles the situation in most YRS change processes.

Sometimes, in a desire to improve the educational opportunities of students, a school community may choose to change to a single-track, year-round calendar in which students and teachers begin school earlier in the fall and the lost vacation time is redistributed more evenly throughout the school year. The change generally begins with a vague notion that more regular breaks, perhaps supplemented by additional enrichment or remedial activities, may be beneficial for students, but often lacks a strong vision for how this may actually occur. The multitrack calendar capitalizes on this altered timetable by organizing several discrete groups (or tracks) of students and teachers in a staggered and overlapping schedule. It is generally instituted with a broad goal of saving money or of accommodating more students in existing space. Again, vision related to a changed educational process rarely accompanies consideration of capital outlay. In each case, if implementation is successful, the "aim" of improved educational outcomes for students seems to come later, after the "ready, fire."

Another recent tenet of change theorists is Fullan's (1993) oft-quoted dictum to "reculture rather than restructure" (p. 68), which is sometimes used to

support the position that changes in structure will not effect desired capacity-building in a school. He hypothesizes that "reculturing leads to restructuring more effectively than the reverse" (p. 68). Hargreaves and Fullan (1998) reiterate the sequence of effective educational change that involves modifying relationships first and then permitting structural change to follow. They write, "when teachers really put students and their connections to students first, structural changes often follow very close behind" (p. 25). However, they note that without structural changes participants may be overwhelmed by the educational innovations.

We have noted that the opposite may also be the case, that is, that restructuring may lead to reculturing. In this article our purpose is not to assess the impact of YRS on student achievement, but to examine in more detail how the structural change to year-round schooling seems to encourage a new culture of teaching and learning. We hope this examination will support a better understanding of the relationships between structural and conceptual change.

Our Approach

The schools described in this article were research sites in three separate studies of year-round schooling conducted by one or both of the authors. Two of these occurred in elementary schools: one a single-track, the other a multi-track school; the third took place in a five-track junior high school. Data were collected through school visits; open-ended interviews and conversations with teachers, administrators, students, and district personnel; and examination of print materials. In each case, interviews with a minimum of four key informants were held, and at least two days were spent observing in the school. Insofar as possible, we permit the respondents to speak for themselves, although frequently in the interests of space we summarize their comments. We chose these specific schools because, although located in different geographic areas, all three shared what we perceived to be a supportive environment for innovation connected in some way to the year-round school calendar. Both the similarities and differences, we believed, would help us to understand the relationships of structural and conceptual change.

One of the elementary schools, Mount Sinai, is located in a district with an extensive, long-running, and well-established YRS program (all names of schools and people used in this article are pseudonyms). This school is a large multitrack school (1,300 students) serving a relatively homogeneous, predominantly white population. The other elementary school, Provost, is smaller (450 students) and serves a more urban and at-risk student body by means of a single-track schedule in a district where the norm is still the traditional school calendar. Stephen Lewis is a five-track junior high school, the 720-member student body of which is also quite diverse and perceived to be at risk. Like the second school, there are few other YRS in the district, and district-level support is not institutionalized.

For this article our analysis of the data focused on identifying the themes and patterns that helped us to understand the relationships between structural change and conceptual issues, as well as the links between first- and second-order change. To demonstrate some ways in which a change in school-year

calendar has been associated with pedagogical change, we first present a vignette of some of the change initiatives in each school.

Profile of Mount Sinai School

Mount Sinai Elementary School has a long history of being on a year-round school schedule, sometimes single-track, but most frequently multitrack. When the incumbent principal Dr. Valerie Shipley began her tenure 10 years ago, the school was on a multitrack schedule. After her first four years the school moved to a single-track "E" schedule owing to a temporary decline in student enrollment. Although the presence of everyone in the building at the same time provided a welcome opportunity for the staff to interact as a whole, all were prepared for a reversion to a multitrack schedule as enrollment increased. Indeed, after a two-year period, the school changed back to a four-track calendar (tracks A, B, C, and D), which has now been in effect since 1993.

For the last 10 years the administrative structure has remained the same, one principal and two assistant principals; but the conceptualization of their duties, particularly those of the assistant principals, has changed. Initially, the assistant principals were assigned to grade levels K-4 and 4-6 promoting what is termed *horizontal integration*, the sharing across grade levels regardless of track rotation. It became apparent that this approach facilitated students' affiliation with their grade level rather than their individual class or track. However, having one administrator responsible for students during their primary (K-3) years, and another during their next three years, seemed artificial and somewhat fragmented. Administrative assignments were subsequently changed to facilitate greater continuity for students and their parents through what was called *vertical integration.* Thus during the past four years, one assistant principal has been assigned to tracks A and C and the other to tracks B and D. Valerie informed us that this "helps with curriculum discussion, it helps with parents, it helps because you know the kids from K-6." The new vertical integration brought about a greater sense of the school as a whole and better understanding of individual students who could now be followed by the same administrator through their elementary school experience. At the same time, a creative approach to scheduling enabled the school to maintain its horizontal integration. The staff developed a six-day cycle and assigned the specialist teachers (music, art, PE) in such as way as to permit a common planning time for each grade level across all tracks regardless of the rotation. When asked whether other district schools were also on the six-day schedule, we were told this was the only one and that they had "just figured it out." Previously, the teachers had not been aware of the extent of their isolation, but the opportunity for interaction provided by two years on the single-track schedule when everyone was in the school at the same time had brought the need for extended communication to the forefront. We were informed that the increased horizontal integration had resulted in more sharing of materials, better utilization of common spaces allocated to specific grade levels, and increased talk among teachers about their teaching and learning

Soon after the school moved back to a multitrack schedule, the district instituted a middle school philosophy that involved the intended transfer of grade 6 students to designated middle schools. However, the policy preceded

the capacity of middle schools to include all grade 6 students. At Mount Sinai the fact that their grade 6 students would have to wait for two years to actually attend a different building was not a deterrent to implementation of the different philosophical approach. Recognizing that they could capitalize on the fact that middle school buses ran by the door, Valerie and her staff decided that grade 6 students should attend school not on a rotating track schedule, but on the traditional middle school calendar. To facilitate this Valerie requested that the district remove a wall from one wing of the building, which then became the traditional-calendar middle school within the existing multitrack school. Here two classes of grade 6 students were combined, with two teachers who team-taught to offer the middle school program "as much as is possible within an elementary school." This innovation ended in 1998 when a new middle school opened and the grade 6 students from Mount Sinai moved to a new building. However, teachers perceived that on an interim basis, the different grade 6 schedule had provided students with an excellent transition to middle school. The students with whom we spoke definitely supported this perception; one stated, "Now, you actually see that you have accomplished something and that you have made it through elementary school, you can say you have made it through a school, you can move on to another school. New people and stuff."

A boundary change, coinciding with the departure of grade 6 students to the new middle school in the fall of 1998, was expected to bring approximately 120 new students from grades K-5 to the school. Planning had begun the previous year to accommodate them, perhaps by adding a new alternative configuration to the school. Valerie had discussed with her staff the possibility of housing them in the old grade 6 wing and offering a multi-age, cross-grade approach. This would have a number of potential educational benefits, as well as the advantage of being the least disruptive, in terms of space allocation, to the rest of the school. She laughingly stated, "Well, I haven't really told the building people yet they're going to have to put that wall in. I told them, 'Take it out.' I haven't told them, 'Put it back in,' yet. But I will have to do that at some point."

When asked how she handled staff meetings and communication with some teachers on a multitrack schedule and others on the traditional middle school schedule, Valerie outlined an elaborate system of representative committees that, she said, conducted the business of the school. When she had previously attempted to make decisions with her 60 staff members present, it had been an unwieldy process she described as a mob. On the multitrack schedule, she has "a lot of small meetings, with different groups. They join one of our groups that really runs this building. It's site-based. So I have grade-level chairpeople, a person at each grade level and for special areas and special ed, who does a lot of the semi-administrative kinds of things." She informed us that she conducts monthly staff meetings primarily for information, communicates on a daily basis with the teachers via e-mail, and convenes the committees as necessary. For example, at the budget committee, grade-level chairpeople who were paid a stipend by the district made decisions concerning the allocation of school financial resources. It should be noted that this was not a true site-based management philosophy as Valerie bemoaned the fact that she did

not have the degree of flexibility to innovate that she might have if she had control over staffing.

When we commented on the number of changes occurring at Mount Sinai School, Valerie shared her belief that the year-round schedule forces teachers to be more flexible. "There is something about having to move every nine weeks which makes you more organized and more ready to innovate."

Profile of Provost School

Year-round schooling in Provost Elementary School was not a district mandate. In fact here teachers had fought for permission to implement the single-track schedule that had been in place for four years when our study was conducted. They described how they had held parent meetings, conducted surveys, and stormed the board with demands to change to the single-track schedule, one that they perceived would enable them better to meet the needs of their at-risk student body. One stated:

> We were really excited when we first went to the year-round schedule. We really fought to get it and we all went down to the board and fought for it. I was in resource and I thought 20 extra days for my students would be wonderful.

These teachers were convinced that adding the possibility of at least four weeks of remediation or enrichment to the school year through regular inter-session offerings would provide a more consistent and more motivating learning environment for their students. Teachers believed that intersession would prevent children from being "street kids" during the long summer months, would provide a secure place for students to congregate, and would hook them into learning by providing more interactive, integrated learning opportunities in a relaxed environment where testing was not a threat. One of the teachers described the advantages this way:

> We've all got gifts, and one way or another some of our gifts just may not be opened yet. Different learning styles need to be addressed. If I were going to draw it for you I've got a little gingerbread man that really illustrates my philosophy.

She felt that the staff shared a belief that although the regular approach to schooling does not permit each gift to be identified and to flourish, the intersession structure might do so.

Intersession in Provost school was offered for a period of two weeks (of the three-week break) between the regular nine-week terms at a cost of $44 to parents, subsidized by funds from a number of grants and outside sources. The intention of intersession was to use creative approaches to instruction with the aim of increasing the motivation and enthusiasm of students for learning. Examples of creative approaches to teaching include the following. One teacher taught geometry through the vehicle of string art, where students learned to use protractors and other measuring devices in order to create the intricate patterns. Another used the creation of a school version of a "Little Rascals" video to teach communication skills. We were told that at the end of each intersession period, there was a public celebration of learning that included displays and student performances. Teachers told us of the students' delight in the quality of achievement and of their increased motivation for learning.

This was exactly what the teachers had hoped would happen when they moved to the single-track schedule. However, we were also told that unpredictable and decreasing funding available for the intersession program had shifted the teaching responsibilities from certificated teachers to noncertificated teacher aides. This has had the effect of tending to routinize the offerings and reduce teacher enthusiasm about the program. In turn this appears to have led to less teacher interaction about innovative approaches to teaching and learning, reducing the impact on their regular classroom practice. In fact we were curious about what appeared to be a negligible impact on regular classroom teaching and asked specifically about whether the creative approaches tended to carry over. Although there was a sense that there may have been some difference, the general feeling was, "Oh, we can't do that, we don't have time to do all that."

Teachers in Provost school also expressed the concern that not all the students who could benefit from the intersession programs actually attended them. They were discouraged by parents who did not seem to understand the educational benefits of intersession: some tended to accede to students' requests for a vacation; others, it was thought, sent their children because it offered a cheaper and better solution to child care than conventional babysitting services. Despite some waning of enthusiasm for the intersession program during the school's first four years on the single-track calendar, it still attracted over 50% of the student body.

In addition to the implementation of intersession, teachers in Provost School sought other ways to address the learning needs of their students. Two years after the school moved to a single-track schedule, two other innovations were implemented on a small pilot basis: two multi-age, cross-grade classes and the critical thinking program *Philosophy for Children* were introduced. At the same time, to forestall parental concerns, the principal, Ken Fairchild, promised to maintain at least one regular class for each grade level in addition to the multi-age groupings and to implement critical thinking in only some classes. By the next year the innovations had become so popular with both teachers and parents that it was difficult both to maintain the traditional classes and to fulfill parental requests for placement in multi-age, cross-grade groupings. Maintaining the dual emphasis necessitated separating some teachers who had historically worked in team situations, moving some to different grade levels in a traditional class, regrouping others to work in a team approach in the multi-age, cross-grade groupings, and restricting some from implementing *Philosophy for Children.*

Each of these innovations—intersession, new teaching strategies, critical thinking, and multi-age, cross-grade groupings—facilitated more thematic and holistic approaches to instruction and offered teachers increased opportunity to address the learning needs and styles of their students. In some instances this occurred through increased bonding during the smaller intersession classes; in others through the opportunity to have the same students in a multi-age grouping for more than one year.

Teachers in Provost School linked the need for innovation to their personal philosophies that each child could learn. They believed that for these at-risk students it might take more effort and innovation on the part of the teacher to

find appropriate learning strategies and to create supportive learning environments. They clearly thought that the move to a single-track calendar had facilitated both intersession and the other innovations that they had instituted. In fact it was their belief that the multi-age, cross-grade groupings could not have happened at their school without the prior change of calendar.

The teachers we interviewed at Provost Elementary School expressed some frustration that the scope and design of school committees tended to change frequently to the point where many had trouble remembering the name of committees on which they participated. Nevertheless, they were convinced that their site-based governance structure permitted, and even facilitated, the involvement of all teachers in the decisions we described, which they saw as having significant potential to improve student achievement.

Profile of Stephen Lewis Junior High School

Unlike the other two schools, Stephen Lewis Junior High School was a newly constructed facility opened by legislative mandate as the first multitrack school in its jurisdiction. Opened in 1993, the school was built in a community with rapidly changing demographics, generally low socioeconomic status, and associated social problems such as unemployment, crime, and youth violence. Because students had previously been bussed out of their neighborhood to attend junior high school, the school took on a considerable level of importance as a focal point for community activities.

The principal Naomi St. John was appointed a year and a half before the opening of the school and had been released from her educational duties in her previous school for a period of six months to prepare for the opening of the new school. Given that this was the first alternative-calendar school in the district, she argued successfully for a change in the traditional administrative allocation and was permitted to hire five learning leaders—one for each track—to replace the traditional assistant principals designated in the district contract. These learning leaders were teachers who were also appointed before the school opening. After a hard-fought battle by the new principal, they were also given some release time to engage in planning and the development of a shared school philosophy, to assist with teacher hiring, and to oversee specific aspects of the school construction and appointments. For example, one took responsibility for computer installation, another for furniture. The full complement of teachers was also accorded five days of release time from their previous duties to facilitate planning for instruction at the new school and to develop a Foundation Statement. We were told, "As a total staff we have developed a statement through which all of our teaching and learning issues could be filtered. The Foundation Statement is meant to be flexible in the sense that it is continually questioned and reexamined."

Two organizational features reflecting a reconceptualization of teaching and learning grew from this planning and had an obvious impact on the students in Stephen Lewis School. Each track was organized as a learning community based on a number of educational principles. The group of students and teachers assigned to a specific learning community constituted a family cluster that encouraged building strong and sequential pedagogical experiences over the three years that students were in the junior high school. In

each learning community, four teachers, an aide, and the learning leader planned for the overall experiences of the 130-150 students. Although they did not have regularly assigned instructional duties, learning leaders assisted with instruction, worked with students individually, dealt with discipline, and provided key leadership and supportive roles in determining how educational experiences were organized and offered in each track. In order to meet the needs of the students, many of whom were designated as high risk, one teacher assigned to each community had a strong background in special education, whereas the others brought strengths in various subject areas.

The students' school day was organized in a series of flexible groupings: some were grade-level groupings and others multi-age or cross-grade; some were ability groups (primarily for skill acquisition), and others were cross-ability heterogeneous groups (for cooperative learning or project-related activities). Students were sometimes grouped in large, combined classes with one teacher, and at other times worked in small groups or one-on-one with a teacher. In the learning community, students were taught the core academic subjects, optional elective classes, and participated in a teacher advisory program.

Despite the school's name, Stephen Lewis Junior High School, the approach to instruction was both thematic and integrated, really more a middle school approach than the discretely organized curriculum of a traditional junior high school. In all the school activities the emphasis was on students taking increasing responsibility for their own learning, including peer- and self-assessment. This is reflected in part of the Students' Mission Statement, which reads "Everyone is equal and able to discover themselves through trust and respect and voicing their opinions. To improve their academic and social skills, students are also encouraged to cooperate with their peers more often." As each learning period ended, a celebration of learning was held during which students invited their parents to accompany them to school to talk with teachers about their achievements and to attend student performances and presentations.

The second organizational feature that had an impact on student learning experiences was the "rainbow track" unit that served all the rotating tracks with three-week units of such activities as art, music, computing, drama, physical education, home economics, and so forth. When students were engaged in these Career and Technological Science activities, the teachers of their learning community used this common planning time for meetings and discussion of curricular issues.

Curriculum planning in the learning community was only one area of teacher responsibility and leadership in the school. The overall philosophy of Stephen Lewis School was to empower teachers, parents, and students. This supported a sense of being part of the school as a whole, as well as of belonging to a smaller internal learning community. Weekly staff meetings were held; each month three focused directly on matters related to teaching and learning, whereas the fourth was for business and information purposes. There was an additional complex system of committees with representation from each track, all of which discussed and recommended policy relating to different aspects of school life: governance, assessment and reporting, professional development,

and curriculum. Each committee chose two leaders to ensure that no matter what group was off track, there would be a leader present at meetings. Although this committee structure ensured voice and representation, it was also time-consuming and somewhat cumbersome. Hence although it was perceived by teachers to be one of the strengths of the school, it was also a source of major frustration requiring a change of mindset of the part of the teachers.

Overall, the year-round schedule of Stephen Lewis School remained very much in the background of the daily life of students and teachers; nevertheless, there was a strong sense that this structure facilitated and enhanced the opportunity to offer a reconceptualized curriculum to students. In fact although many changes might have occurred in a traditional schedule, in this district the structure of learning leaders could not have existed before the multitrack schedule was instituted. With a traditional principal and assistant principal structure, many of the curricular changes, as well as the degree of teacher leadership, would have been constrained.

Analysis and Discussion

Although this brief glimpse of some of the innovative structures and thinking in these three schools cannot begin to convey a complete impression of the complexities of the change processes in which participants engaged, we have tried to capture some of the highlights. From our analysis of the themes and patterns across the three vignettes, we identified the following six issues for discussion: teacher planning for instruction, formal and informal talk about teaching and learning, team-teaching and organizing instruction, programmatic change based on philosophies of education, principal support for innovation, and a culture that supports innovation.

Teacher Planning for Instruction

In these schools, as in many other year-round schools we have studied (Shields & Oberg, in press), teachers were clear that the changed schedule had an impact on how they thought about and planned for instruction. In fact at Stephen Lewis School, when outsiders asked questions focusing on the YR structure, teachers were quick to say that the year-round calendar was a non-issue, and that the real innovations were in how they conceptualized the pedagogy. One of the school principals we interviewed was able to summarize succinctly what the teachers had repeatedly stated,

> They'll take a vacation the first week, and the second week maybe do what they have to, but the third week, they're planning. They have their kids in their minds. You don't know your kids over the summer in a traditional school. You've got your kids on your mind, you're planning for them. I think we get all kinds of planning done for classes on year-round that you will never see in a traditional. It just happens.

Teachers told us that they no longer used the textbook as their instructional organizer, but that they looked at the calendar and planned in three-, six-, nine-, or 12-week units in order to ensure that students acquired the main concepts and that they finished a unit before going off-track. One described an approach in some detail: "Everyone would get together, decide who was teaching what math class, and what kids would go together, what kids already had what

teacher. It was a ton of work. But it worked really well." Teachers recognized that although they might not have spent as long on a particular topic as they might have wished, the organization of their instructional time was more balanced. Further, because teachers did not have to engage in all their comprehensive planning, as traditional school teachers do, in the summer before actually meeting their classes, much more of their planning was done with the needs of specific students in mind.

Although the three-week breaks between track time were definitely perceived as needed vacation time that helped in many instances to prevent or reduce teacher burnout, teachers also informed us that some of this time was used in specific thinking and planning for the next instructional block. New teachers reported that this was of particular assistance to them, "Each track it seems to get better and better and my discipline gets better and my lessons get better because I try something new." For all teachers the calendar facilitated the teacher talk identified above, as teachers returning from a three-week break were likely to share new materials and ideas with those who were still on track.

Teacher Talk about Teaching and Learning

The opportunity for teachers to plan at regular intervals during the academic year and to take more frequent breaks seemed to foster a culture in which the level of enthusiasm and discussion for educational innovation was high. Thus teachers in all three schools emphasized the importance of their frequent interactions around teaching and learning. As one put it, "We go off together, we think things through, and we talk to each other about our new ideas. There's a lot more rejuvenation happening." Some of the conversations involved sharing materials; others were to ensure smooth transitions as teachers rotated in and out of spaces in the school; still others permitted more regular discussion about educational philosophy and concepts of curriculum and instruction.

In Mount Sinai School one of the first things we were told was how grateful teachers were that the principal had found innovative ways to ensure common planning time across grade levels in order to facilitate the conversation and sharing about teaching and learning. In Stephen Lewis this was facilitated by teachers' daily common planning times and by the provision of a workroom in each track's space. In Provost School the regrouping of teachers into differently configured instructional teams offered similar opportunities for informal interaction.

In addition to informal teacher talk, we also found evidence of a high degree of formalized discussion about pedagogy in all three schools. In fact common planning time and frequent informal discussions were not adequate in and of themselves, and all three schools found ways to provide additional formal structures through which teachers could interact about curricular issues. In all cases formal committee structures were established that ensured the interaction of teachers across groups and tracks and that provided a more holistic and school-wide approach rather than just a focus on the team or grade level.

Organization of Instruction

When many people are first introduced to the concept of year-round schooling, they imagine that the logistics involved in changing the schedule will require so much time and energy that no other changes can be considered simul-

taneously. It may seem surprising that the teachers in these three schools did not permit the rotation of the schedule to prevent or inhibit their opportunities not only to plan together, but to engage in team-teaching and interdisciplinary and thematic instruction. In fact the new structures appeared to liberate rather than to constrain reconceptualization of the curriculum and instruction even when this required additional structural change.

In these schools the reconceptualization often involved flexible and changing ways of grouping students and of assigning teachers and students to meet student needs better. Hence at Provost school teachers who chose to teach at intersession did not teach at the same grade level as their regular assignment in order to ensure that they developed new, interactive materials, which in turn might have an impact on their regular classroom instruction. The institution of such innovations as multi-age, cross-grade grouping, a grade 6 middle school concept, and learning communities demonstrates that in these schools there was constant reexamination of both the organization for instruction and the conceptualization of teaching and learning.

Programmatic Change Based on Philosophies of Education

A fairly typical response by schools wishing to implement change to address student needs is the tendency to institute a number of discrete programs without prior examination of how they fit with programs currently in place or how they relate to a shared vision or overall philosophical base for school initiatives (Coleman & LaRocque, 1990; Wildavski, 1979). In these three schools programs were more likely to be developed as a result of schoolwide discussion and consensus and to emerge from and extend the shared philosophy of teaching and learning. For example, in Mount Sinai the removal of a wall and the implementation of a team-taught grade 6 program were carried out in order to permit the grade 6 students to enjoy the benefits of the middle school philosophy and schedule that was being instituted throughout the district. In Provost School the teachers fought for the single-track schedule in order to provide the intersession program because, as they each informed us, their particular student body needed the continuity and the flexibility of instructional strategies afforded by such a program. In Stephen Lewis we have seen that before the school opened, everything—from the organization of the students to the daily schedule and the assignment of teachers to learning communities—was planned to support the philosophy of caring, relevance, and student choice.

Principal Support for Innovation

Although many of the initiatives we describe related directly to teacher planning, discussion, and organization, in these schools they were supported and facilitated by the attitudes and actions of the principals. Repeatedly our respondents told us that there was something special about their principal, and that although they had worked in other schools for other principals they had rarely found one who was as open, supportive, and empowering. "I'm amazed at the support here ... you're listened to and I feel I have more support."

The need to empower participants to make decisions regarding change was evidenced by Dr. Shipley of Mount Sinai School who talked about a current proposal. She indicated that she had raised the issue, had not received a *No*

from the teachers, and was waiting to see how their responses would develop. At the same time, she was not just waiting for the teachers to make the decision, but was encouraging them by giving them additional information to be examined at the next staff meeting. She believed that the information would help them to understand the options and would constitute the basis for informed discussion. This approach to change—planting ideas, sharing information, being open to alternatives—is indicative of the approach of the three principals in this study. Teachers did not see that the ideas for change were top-down, but that the principals' suggestions formed part of the pool for discussion and consideration.

Culture That Supports Innovation

It became apparent that although these principals were leaders with strong personal visions of education and numerous ideas for innovation, they had created a culture where teachers too were willing to put forward their ideas without fear of ridicule or repercussion. In Provost School teachers had difficulty identifying the source of the experiment to implement multi-age and cross-grade groupings. There had been so much discussion about different strategies to meet student needs that the decision to implement this approach seemed to emerge from this more diffuse environment of experimentation. This example is characteristic of what we found at the other two schools as well.

Although it is difficult to describe in concrete terms what we call a culture supportive of change, the following appear to be important aspects: regular interaction and discussion of conceptual issues, frequent revisitation of school philosophy and vision, willingness to experiment, opportunity for change initiatives to emerge from any source or direction, and supportive leadership. In addition, we have found that the teachers demonstrated a remarkable personal willingness not only to suggest change, but also to participate in or to lead it. Moreover, the innovations these teachers were willing to attempt went well beyond structural tinkering with programs and affected the conceptual core of their practice.

Implications and Conclusion

Much of the year-round school literature concludes that where YRS appears to have had a positive impact on student achievement it has been accompanied by other changes (Goren & Carriedo, 1986; Hough et al., 1990; White, 1992). In this article we describe some related innovations in three schools and show how a reconceptualization of practice has in turn modified the learning environment of these schools. In addition, some literature focuses on the effects of the calendar change to YRS in terms of its impact on teachers, administrators, and families with schoolchildren (Alkin, 1993; Baker, 1990; Brekke, 1983; Christie, 1989; Hazelton et al., 1992; Perry, 1991; Zykowski et al., 1991). Despite this relatively large body of literature that emphasizes preimplementation concerns, most authors stress that these quickly tend to dissipate following the implementation of the YRS calendar. In the three schools described in this article we found that the calendar change has been very much a nonissue except insofar as respondents perceived it to have facilitated other changes. This is in startling contrast to most of the literature in which a change to YRS

has been found to constitute a major and almost overwhelming shift of focus (Kirman, 1991; Koki, 1992; Rasberry, 1994; Shields & LaRocque, 1997).

We posit that this attitude may be due to a failure to distinguish between changes that are structural in nature and those that are conceptual. The starting point for this article was a discussion of three schools that had implemented a change from a traditional to a year-round calendar. Typically, a structural change of this magnitude, requiring new teaching assignments, redistribution of resources, community consultation, and alterations in school governance, is considered a second-order change. We have challenged this notion by demonstrating that in these three schools the structural change alone may be better represented as a first-order change and that the pedagogical reconceptualization triggered by the new calendar is the true second-order change.

The educators in these three schools recognized that the year-round schedule was a structural modification they could exploit to further their educational philosophy and to support the additional innovations they wished to implement. In fact all three schools are good examples of organizations in which the structure is relatively fluid and in which numerous alterations are made on an ongoing basis. In every instance our teacher respondents emphasized the work and challenges associated with instructional innovations and advantages and rarely, unless asked directly, spoke of their school calendar.

We found no evidence in any of these three schools of an intentional emphasis on capacity-building, that is, a focus on "the motivation, skill and resources that are needed to perform at a high level" (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 72). In the two elementary schools, teachers did, however, take advantage of the YRS calendar, with its more regular breaks, to begin to discuss issues of practice, as well as some of their underlying beliefs and assumptions. In Stephen Lewis Junior High School considerable discussion about teaching and learning occurred before the school opening. However, recall that in this instance, as in Mount Sinai Elementary School, the calendar change had been mandated by the district. Neither clear vision nor a culture for change and innovation had been present before the decision to implement YRS. In Provost School teachers believed that offering intersession might help some of their at-risk students; they did not plan at the outset to add critical thinking or multi-age, cross-grade groupings.

Some might assert that if the culture and vision for transformation were not present at the outset, the changes demonstrated by these three schools were merely serendipitous and cannot be attributed to the revised calendar. The issue is definitely complex and the changes interrelated. However, we find support for the notion that a new pattern or structure may act as a catalyst or trigger for additional change. Perhaps in the case of year-round schooling increased communication between school and community (required to coordinate new schedules and calendars) inspires additional support for the school. Perhaps the increased interaction, necessitated as teachers share physical space or coordinate team-teaching or intersession activities, reduces teacher isolation and increases their sense of motivation and empowerment. Perhaps it is simply that having to cope with the deceptively simple, but politically volatile, calendar change promotes an increased sense of power and professionalism on the

part of teachers. We are currently beginning to explore these and other possible explanations.

Regardless of the explanation, educators in these three schools would agree that the new school-year organization provided the impetus for reconceptualizing teaching and learning, as well as for increased capacity-building in each school. Thus it is our hope that this article will be helpful to practitioners and policy-makers—both those considering or working within a YRS calendar and those dealing with other types of innovations. Nathan and Myatt (1998), in their discussion of capacity-building, emphasize the need for "disseminating promising practices that emerge from diverse schools" (p. 130). Here we suggest that expanding the list of promising practices to include some unlikely and apparently simple structural changes may be a worthwhile endeavor.

The complexity of educational change indicates that it may not be necessary to prioritize reculturing and restructuring, but rather to begin wherever a change is occurring and to use it as a trigger for additional changes. Wheatley (1993) suggests that one of the new leadership tasks is to understand the underlying patterns in our organizations, "to seek out surprises, relishing the unpredictable when it finally decides to reveal itself to us" (p. 142). "The dance of this universe," Wheatley says, "extends to all relationships we have. Knowing the steps ahead of time is not important, being willing to engage with the music and move freely onto the dance floor is what's key" (pp. 142-143).

The implementation of year-round schooling seems to be surprisingly like the dance in which the steps, sometimes even the tune and rhythm, are unknown at the outset. We are increasingly convinced that the starting point is less important than the ability and willingness of participants to make new conceptual links to their educational practice. In turn, these links hold the potential for a change initiative to have a positive impact on the learning environment of students.

References

Alkin, M. (1983). *Evaluation of the year-round schools program.* Los Angeles, CA: LAUSD. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 248291)

Atwood, N. (1983). *Integration evaluation reports: Appendix A. Year-round schools sub-studies, 1982-1983.* Los Angeles, CA: Research and Evaluation Branch, LAUSD. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 246143)

Baker, G. (1990). *Parent satisfaction with year-round and traditional school calendars in Conroe Independent School District.* Unpublished Masters thesis, Sam Houston State University. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 331137)

Bradford, J.C., Jr. (1993). *Making year-round education work in your district: A nationally recognized single track high school model.* Paper presented to the National School Boards Association national convention. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 358559)

Brekke, N. (1983). *Cost analysis of year round education in the Oxnard School District.* Paper presented to the 14th Annual meting of the National Council on Year-Round Education, Los Angeles, CA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 227597)

Capps, L.R., & Cox, L.S. (1991). Improving the learning of mathematics in our schools. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 23*(9), 1-8.

Christie, S. (1989). *A report on opinion surveys of parents. students, and staff of four track year-round schools in Cajon Valley, 1987-1988.* Cajon Valley, CA: Cajon Valley Union School District. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 303888

Coleman, P., & LaRocque, L. (1990). *Struggling to be "good enough": Administrative practices and school district ethos.* New York: Falmer.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1998). Reframing the school reform agenda: Developing capacity for school transformation. In E. Clinchy (Ed.), *Transforming public education* (pp. 38-55). New York: Teachers College Press.

Fullan, M. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change.* Toronto, ON: OISE Press.

Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces.* New York: Falmer.

Gandara, P., & Fish, J. (1994). Year-round schooling as an avenue to major structural reform. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 16*(1), 67-85.

Goren, P., & Carriedo, R. (1986). *Policy analysis on the implementation of an expanded multi-track year-round school program.* San Diego, CA: Planning, Research and Evaluation Division, San Diego City Schools. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 282328)

Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (1998). *What's worth fighting for out there?* New York: Teachers College Press.

Hazelton, J.E., Blakely, C., & Denton, J. (1992). *Cost effectiveness of alternative year schooling.* Austin, TX: Educational Policy Center, University of Texas at Austin. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 354629)

Hough, D., Zykowski, J., & Dick, J. (1990). *Cost-effects analysis of year-round education programs.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of AERA, Boston, MA. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 319771)

Kirman, J.M. (1991). Year-round schooling: Caution is needed. *ATA Magazine, 72*(Nov/Dec), pp. 6-8.

Kneese, C.C. (1996). Review of research on student learning in year-round education. *Journal of Research and Development in Education, 29*(2), 61-72.

Koki, S. (1992). *Modified school schedules: A look at the research and the Pacific.* Honolulu, HI: Pacific Region Educational Lab. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 354630)

Merino, B.J. (1983). The impact of year-round schooling—A review. *Urban Education, 18,* 298-316.

Murphy, J. (1992). School effectiveness and school restructuring: Contributions to educational improvement. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement, 3*(2), 90-109.

Mutchler, S. E. (1993). *Year-round education.* Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Lab. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 025451)

Nathan, L., & Myatt, L. (1998). The travails and triumphs of charters and pilots: Fenway Middle College High School—A work in progress. In E. Clinchy (Ed.), *Transforming public education* (pp. 111-131). New York: Teachers College Press.

Perry, L. (1991). Should we have a new school clock and a new school calendar? *Education Canada, 31*(2), 8-15.

Rasberry, Q. (1994). *Year-round schools may not be the answer.* Paper presented to the conference for Private Childcare Centers and Preschools, Orlando. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 369548)

Serifs, D. (1990). *Year-round education: A closer look.* (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 329008)

Shields, C.M., & LaRocque, L.J. (1997). Reflections on consultative decision-making: Challenging concepts of best practice in a provincial change initiative. *Canadian Administrator, 36*(7), 1-8.

Shields, C.M., & Oberg, S.L. (in press). What can we learn from the data? Towards a better understanding of year-round schooling. *Urban Education.*

Taylor, D., & Teddlie, C. (1992). *Restructuring and the classroom: A view from a reform district.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco.

Wehlage, G., Smith, G., & Lipman, P. (1992). Restructuring urban high schools: The New Futures experience. *American Educational Research Journal, 29*(1), 51-93.

Wheatley, M.J. (1993). *Leadership and the new science.* San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.

White, W.D. (1992). Year-round no more. *American School Board Journal,* July, 27-30.

Wildavski, A.B., (1979). *Speaking truth to power: The art and craft of policy analysis.* Boston, MA: Little/Brown.

Zykowski, J.L., Mitchell D.E., Hough, D., & Gavin, S.E. (1991). *A review of year-round education research.* Riverside, CA: California Education Research Cooperative. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED 330040)