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Developing Healthy School Communities through the School Review Process.
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Introduction

According to the Sundsvall document, the "creation of educational environments supportive of health" means "transforming the culture of education so that it is healthy in both its means and its ends". The concept of schools as settings where health is created is a shift from the strategic entry points of health issues or of population groups.. Through schools as settings we begin to look at the total population of the school and the impact that notions such as organisational health, quality of school relationships and attention to empowerment and equity can have on school communities. This approach is based on the principles and strategies of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion (WHO 1986). The settings approach has been developed further under headings such as the Health Promoting School, Healthy Schools, and Healthy School Communities 2. At the same time a whole school approach to school performance has emerged. Rapid social and educational change has emphasised the need for strong support from all levels of the community. Students, parents, employers, and other interest groups all desire input into school educational, social and organisational developments. In response to this school communities are involved in a variety of review and development exercises which reflect the principles of the Australian Education Council's Hobart Declaration (Agreed National Goals of Schooling in Australia 1989) and findings on School Effectiveness (Austin and Reynolds 1990).

This paper describes work in progress which seeks to identify indicators of a healthy school community within the process of school review. The three elements of the research process are the picture which emerges of each school as a healthy community, the appropriateness of the researchers concept of a healthy school community and the degree to which the SPRAD indicators show a healthy school community.

The concept of a healthy school community has been developed by the Network for Healthy School Communities drawing on the Agreed National Goals and the Ottawa Charter. Through a series of workshops and forums the Network has developed a set of principles and policies as well as guidelines for networking. Fourteen characteristics or indicators of a healthy school community were developed from the two 'charters'. According to this framework a Healthy School Community is one which

- values learning
- empowers community members with ownership and control of their own endeavours and destinies
- works collaboratively with agreed goals
- works with the broader community and is supported by it
- functions as a model and a training ground for active community participation
- accommodates diversity
- enables all people to achieve their fullest potential for healthy learning and healthy living

- develops skills and confidence for full participation in the community
- teaches people to think critically and analytically about social and health issues
- encourages people to think globally and act locally
- accords health an important place in the school curriculum
- provides a school climate which supports personal and social development
- fosters good communication and social relationships
- delivers efficient and humane educational services to meet needs.

The Research Project

Using a collaborative approach consistent with the Network principles the authors worked with two schools in the ACT which were undergoing the formal process of school review. The aims of the project are

- i. within the framework of the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion explore the indicators which emerge for Healthy School Communities during

the School Performance and Review Development process;

- ii. in collaboration with the school community, to extend and develop these indicators as a framework for the school as a healthy school community to be considered as an adjunct for possible future planning and development.

SPRAD

School Performance Review and Development (SPRAD) was developed in order that the ACT Public Schools system regularly and systematically examine key aspects of a school (ACT Department of Education and the Arts 1991).

While previous programs of review have been primarily curriculum oriented, SPRAD is different in that other key aspects, in addition to curriculum are seen as important determinants of school effectiveness. The broadening of the review process has enabled a whole review which establishes the school as a community with strong interrelationships within the school itself and the broader community within which it acts.

SPRAD is the initial process in a five year program of review and development. The process is essentially based on an action research model (Kemmis and McTaggart 1988). Basically it involves information gathering, reflection, report writing and planning, review panel and celebration .

The emphasis is to develop and implement a School Development Plan based on the outcomes and processes of SPRAD. The purposes of the review are threefold:

- i. to promote improvement and future planning;
- ii. to satisfy requirements for schools to be accountable;
- iii. to enhance the public confidence in individual schools and the system as a whole.

Research regarding key aspects of effective schools was used to identify determinants on which to base a whole school approach to the review

process. The key aspects selected for the review are

Management; planning, policy, resources, leadership;

Programs; curriculum, special programs, processes;

School Climate; morale, attitudes, enjoyment, environment;

Student Welfare and Management; welfare and discipline;

Educational Outcomes; achievements.

Review committees are established for each of these key aspects with an additional working groups focussing on specific areas of need identified by the school. A School Review Committee takes responsibility for the co-ordination of the review process in collaboration with a systems School Review Panel. Members of the committees include parents, teachers, other staff and include students where appropriate, and as far as possible include 'critical friends'.

The first phase is information intensive, schools are encouraged to gather together school policies and philosophies, system policies, previous school evaluations and reports, curriculum documentation, student records, enrolment and demographic data. Information is gathered on the key aspects of the review through intensive questionnaires completed by parents, students and teachers. Information and feedback also comes from group process, interviews, observation, schedules, meetings and classroom discussions.

The following phase involves the school as a community reflecting upon the findings to identify genuine strengths, successes and concerns, then to discern reasons for these and decide on priorities for action. This reflective process is steered by committees set up for each of the key aspects.

A final Review and Development Plan is produced from the committee reports and a process of further review and negotiation with the School Review Panel and School Review Committee.

Methodology

The collaborative process of SPRAD is consistent with the principles of the Healthy School Community, thus incorporating the process for this research was straightforward. As members of the community outside the school community the researchers needed to develop an understanding of the roles of parent student and teacher within the individual school context. Membership by one researcher on a committee at each school enabled participation in the review process.

Participant observation as the key method was extended into consultation with parents, teachers and students, exploring data to establish the

concerns and strengths highlighted in SPRAD. It was important in this participatory role to be aware of the level of researcher influence in terms of concerns and strengths at the recommendation stage. An observational role was found to be more appropriate at this time.

Indicators for a healthy school community were drawn from data about the whole school through the different SPRAD committees. Within committee discussions continually referred to areas of overlap between the key aspects and contributed to initial analysis of data from the other committees.

Using the characteristics developed by the Network as a guide the indicators identifiable in the review process are to be established. These

will emerge from and together with a picture of the individual school as a healthy school community. This information will be shared in a workshop format with representatives from each committee, including students, parents and teachers.

The workshop will encourage discussion and reinterpretation of the researchers findings and the identification of gaps in indicators which already exist in the review process. Any gaps identified are to be looked at in terms of what is already in place which could be extended or modified rather than attempting to establish new terms of reference in the rapidly changing environment of education. This is consistent with the Network principle of working with current developments and building on what is already in place.

As active participants in the school community and with various roles within that community the workshop members will bring their own perceptions to the task of naming indicators of a health school community.

The workshop process will enable participants to build a full picture of their school as a healthy community according to their own vision. They will own the document produced and determine its use, however it is anticipated that the document will become a plan for further development alongside their SPRAD Development Plan.

The indicators which emerge from this research will demonstrate the appropriateness of the healthy school communities concept as described by the Network for Healthy School Communities for these two schools. This result will contribute to the further development in reviewing and describing the concept of Healthy Schools and the Health Promoting School. Finally the indicators from this research will be useful to other schools in the ACT particularly when they are undertaking the formal review process. Other educational systems may find value in establishing a similar process of determining indicators of healthy school communities as part of the schools role in building better futures.

Bibliography

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- World Health Organisation. Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion 1986

1 The Sundsvall Conference on Supportive Environments 1991, the Third International Conference on Health Promotion was organised jointly by the Nordic countries (Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden), the World Health Organisation and the United Nations Environment Program. The Briefing Book Creating Supportive Educational Environments was developed by a team from Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

2 The Health Promoting School developed in the 80's through work in the UK

and other European countries and is now a key project for WHO Europe. The title and ideas are incorporated in the NSW Teachers Guide for the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education Syllabus..

The Healthy Schools title was adopted for a European report following the WHO Symposium in 1989. Healthy Schools is used for the major project in BC Canada.

Healthy School Communities title was used for a project funded by the National Health Promotion Fund in 1991.

A South Australian document Health in Schools is also based on the Ottawa Charter and the educational policies of that state.