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ABSTRACT

Assessment was studied in two accelerated schools, the Daniel Webster Elementary School in San Francisco (California) and the Fairbanks Elementary School in Springfield (Missouri) from October 1990 to March 1991. The accelerated schools movement for disadvantaged children began in the mid-1980s when researchers at Stanford University (California) argued that disadvantaged students would be as capable as any other students if their home circumstances had prepared them for schooling, and that schools could make up the gap. In accelerated schools, individual school communities set goals according to the schools' own visions. Various instructional approaches are used, including such vehicles for promoting literacy as Project READ. In these schools, assessment was one of four phases of overall accountability, with formative evaluations planned every year and a summative evaluation planned for every 3 to 5 years. The implications of school assessment for Chapter 1 programs are discussed. Preliminary results suggest that there is a primary need for external development of tools and strategies to enable school staff to monitor, measure, and report student progress. A questionnaire used in the evaluation study is included. (SLD)

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**ASSESSMENT IN PROGRAMS FOR DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS:
LESSONS FROM ACCELERATED SCHOOLS**

by

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for

Office of Technology Assessment
U.S. Congress

Michael Feuer, Project Director

March, 1991

This contractor document was prepared for the OTA assessment entitled *Testing in American Schools: Asking the Right Questions*. It is being made available because it contains much useful information beyond that used in the OTA report. However, it is not endorsed by OTA, nor has it been reviewed by the Technology Assessment Board. References to it should cite the contractor, not OTA, as the author.

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INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the subject of this report, a case study of assessment in two accelerated schools. It consists of six major sections. The first section recaps the development of the accelerated school movement from its inception by a group at Stanford University. The next several sections provide an overview of the concept, describing the premises and principles of acceleration, and the organizational, curricular, and instructional practices that acceleration ideally includes. The costs of acceleration are mentioned briefly. The next section lays out an overall accountability system for accelerated schools and their districts in which assessment is one part. The chapter then looks more closely at the features that the Stanford group recommends for consideration as accelerated schools design their assessment activities. The chapter ends with a brief introduction to the two schools and the chapters that describe them.

This report describes the assessment of student learning and other outcomes in two elementary schools. The schools are of interest because they have adopted a set of principles and practices to bring educationally disadvantaged students into the mainstream by the time they leave those schools. Despite a quarter century of national investment, most children who enter schools at an educational disadvantage leave the same way. They may leave with more skills, but these are generally fewer and less well developed than those of their more advantaged counterparts. As their more advantaged peers refine and add to their skills, the learning of less advantaged children usually continues to lag behind. Schools which take on the job of eliminating the gap deserve attention.

Educational assessment in these programs is also of interest. Federal guidelines and established professional practice both tend to promote the measurement of disadvantaged students' learning and program quality through standardized tests. In recent years, doubts have grown about the appropriateness of this technology for the many uses to which it has been put. Concerns have also arisen about the adverse side effects of such testing on teaching and learning. These effects are said to include stifling teachers' professionalism, narrowing the curriculum, and injuring students' self-esteem.

How do accelerated schools approach assessment? How do they look upon standardized testing? To what extent do they avoid the reputed negative effects of standardized tests? What additional or alternative technologies do accelerated schools actually use to

assess student learning and program quality? What might they use if they could? What are the implications for Chapter 1? These are the questions that this study was designed to explore.

THE ACCELERATED SCHOOLS MOVEMENT

Henry Levin and colleagues at Stanford shaped the concept of accelerated schools for disadvantaged youngsters in the mid-1980s. The concept brought together ideas from Levin's economics background, studies of worker participation, for example, and his career-long concern for the education of the disadvantaged. Although well argued and complete as a vision, the concept for accelerated schools at the outset offered less in terms of concrete implementation strategies. Levin approached several school districts to find elementary schools which, in partnership with Stanford, would try it out.

Two school districts in Stanford's vicinity agreed. District officials in each locale designated an elementary school, but the decision to proceed did not become final until the staff at each school also agreed. This occurred in early 1987, after some months of meetings and preliminary activities.

Stanford worked closely with the two pilot sites to bring the concept to life. Selected faculty members and graduate students provided training, facilitation, and on-going consultation to school personnel. University and school together learned about accelerating the education of disadvantaged children. As time went on, each site developed its own version of acceleration and responded to other forces for change in its environment. Although the intensity and nature of the relationship between Stanford and the schools have also been subject to change, Stanford has remained active at both pilot sites.

Interest in accelerated schools grew. Levin and his colleagues spoke and wrote about the concept tirelessly. In the fall of 1988, for example, Stanford organized a conference on acceleration that drew over 300 people. By the end of 1989, the national print and broadcast media had picked up the story. Various schools, school districts, and states explored the idea. A number of schools and states moved to adopt it.

Missouri was one of the states to show interest. At the invitation of the state superintendent of schools, Levin met with a group of local superintendents in December 1987. The meeting resulted in the formation of a state-sponsored network of six that began working toward acceleration the next summer. Several more schools joined the network the following year.

By late 1990, the Stanford group counted over 50 accelerated schools in five states. The schools included the pilot sites and other schools in California, with the rest in Illinois, Missouri,

Texas, and Utah. Accelerated schools in Illinois and Missouri were linked in state-sponsored networks or programs. The total also included four schools in partnership with universities operating as satellites to the Stanford group.

The accelerated schools that serve as the subject of this study are Daniel Webster Elementary School in the San Francisco Unified School District, the first pilot site, and Fairbanks Elementary School of the Springfield Public Schools, a member of the Missouri state network of accelerated schools. They are described in greater detail at the end of this chapter.

PREMISES AND PRINCIPLES OF ACCELERATION

What was the concept that Daniel Webster and Fairbanks agreed to implement? Although Fairbanks started almost two and a half years after Webster and a great deal of development had gone on in the interim, the accelerated vision had not changed. The vision rests on two premises and three basic principles.

Premises

The first premise of acceleration claims that educational disadvantage is a property of the situation in which children find themselves, not a characteristic of the children. Disadvantage refers to the mismatch between the resources and experiences these children receive in their homes and those assumed by most schools and necessary for school success. The circumstances that disadvantage these children include family poverty, lack of English proficiency, minority group membership, immigrant status, low educational attainment of parents, or a number of other well known causes. As a result of these factors, the children are set on a course of failure that starts with school failure and, sadly, often leads to failure in adult productivity, citizenship, and satisfaction. The first premise of acceleration asserts that the seeds of failure are in the situation and not in the children.

The second premise of acceleration states the community's obligation to provide for these children the education that the mainstream society wants for its children. This premise echoes the words of American philosopher John Dewey, who said almost 100 years ago, "What the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all of its children"². Accelerated schools own up to their obligation to provide to disadvantaged students the highest quality education that even the parents of gifted students would want.

Taken together, the two premises underpin the principles and inform the practices of acceleration. In sum, the premises claim that disadvantaged students would be as able as any other students if their home circumstances had prepared them for schooling. And second, the premises claim that schools can and must make up the

gap.

Principles

The three principles of acceleration lay the ground rules for acceleration. They are: unity of purpose, the fusion of responsibility to empowerment, and building on strengths.

Unity of purpose intends to focus students, parents, teachers, administrators, central office staff, the state education agency, and the community on the overarching goal of helping all children enter the educational mainstream. Drawing people together in this way is meant to concentrate and mobilize their power to accomplish the goal. Many schools lack clear goals for disadvantaged youngsters. Where such goals exist, they may be peripheral to the school's mission and may consist solely of continuing to provide service. In contrast, this principle declares that helping youngsters enter the educational mainstream is the school's central purpose and all energies should focus on it.

Responsibility and empowerment mean that stakeholders not only share in decisionmaking, but also share in accountability for results. This principle specifically includes in consequential, schoolwide decisionmaking those who are typically excluded from it: teachers, parents, and community members. By the same token, this principle also charges them with turning decisions into productive actions. No one can make excuses or blame anyone else for the circumstances within an accelerated school.

Building on strengths describes the prevailing positive spirit of accelerated schools. It refers to encouraging student success through high expectations and positive reinforcement. It also means regarding the resources and experiences that student do bring as foundations for other learning. Applied to accelerated schools' governance, this principle further suggests constructive problem-solving as a substitute for blame.

ACCELERATED PRACTICES

This section describes accelerated practices in the areas of school organization, curriculum, and instruction. However, this discussion of practices is not exhaustive -- partly because no definitive set of accelerated practices exists. The Stanford group has deliberately advanced the principles of acceleration and has avoided recommending a list of practices. This approach respects the fact that school personnel have the capability to determine what good practice is within their own settings. This approach also keeps acceleration from being misconstrued as a mechanistic set of practices that can be imported either whole or piecemeal.

Nonetheless, the Stanford group has always made clear its views on specific organizational, curricular, and instructional

practices. These were articulated most recently and fully in a report sponsored by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's Program for Disadvantaged Youth.³ The report suggests the types of practice that keep to the spirit of acceleration and hold promise for accomplishing its goals. The following discussion presents a partial list of practices recommended in this report.

Accelerated Organization

Accelerated schools define the goal-setting and decisionmaking process differently from conventional schools. In conventional schools, if a school has goals, they are usually imposed by central office. Principals are often the sole decisionmakers. If faculty and parents serve on governance committees, they are typically limited to fundraising, minor instructional assistance, and other non-instructional matters. Their role is purely advisory in most cases. Parents otherwise come to school only when summoned to be told about professionals' educational decisions regarding their children.

Committee Structure

In accelerated schools, individual school communities set the goals according to the schools' own vision, in consultation with the central office. A school-based steering committee coordinates the effort. Members are the chairs of the task forces or committees charged with carrying out specific pieces of the vision. Since school staff or parents will generally fill those roles, membership of the steering committee also includes the principal and selected others (such as parents, community members, or central office administrators). Principals are expected to facilitate rather than control decisionmaking. When a steering committee reaches a decision or wants broader input, it communicates with the school as a whole.

Inquiry Process

These committees use a method called the inquiry process for researching and selecting proposals to recommend for adoption by the whole school. Its steps emphasize spending time to determine exactly what problem is to be attacked, to discover exactly what its causes are, and to test possible solutions before acting. The inquiry process is meant to assure that the committees get all the information and time they need to make good decisions.

This method of systematic reflection contrasts with the truncated planning process that schools usually use. Not only do most schools have difficulty finding time for meetings of any kind, but they also have difficulty resisting the allure of prepackaged programs or materials which may not address the precise problem they are trying to solve. An accelerated school that spends time discussing the problem, the evidence, and possible solutions may

also conclude that a prepackaged program will do what is needed. The difference lies in the quality of the scrutiny to which the solution is subjected and the degree of knowledge and consensus that also result. For these reasons, recommendations emerging from the inquiry process are likely to lead to more appropriate and better implemented decisions.

Parent Participation

Accelerated schools value parents' participation in school life. Parents sign a pledge, for example, that they will make sure their children get enough rest and have a place to work on assignments. They also promise that they will respond to communications from school. However, the relationship between accelerated schools and parents is meant to be reciprocal. Staff are to confer with parents about their children's progress and seek their input in schoolwide policymaking. It is also their job to meet parents' needs in relation to their children's accelerated education. If parents need help learning English or accessing community services, accelerated schools are to provide that help.

Accelerated Curriculum

The accelerated curriculum refers to the type of content students should learn. It differs from a state framework or scope and sequence chart in that it does not list all the skills and concepts of each subject matter children are to master. Instead, the accelerated curriculum highlights those areas from which disadvantaged children tend to be excluded in conventional schools. This description of accelerated curriculum will also discuss issues relating to subject matter and programs for disadvantaged youngsters.

Enriched Approach

The curriculum in accelerated schools reflects the belief that all children can learn. In fact, accelerated schools treat disadvantaged children as if they were gifted. This harks back to the premise demanding for these children the very best education. This education should be rich and complex. It should tap children's creativity, stress thinking, foster social responsibility and independence, and encourage growth.

Critical Thinking

Teaching thinking permeates the accelerated curriculum. It includes helping children to think critically, to solve problems, and to employ a variety of thinking strategies. Often dropped from disadvantaged youngsters' curriculum in favor of rote learning, the accelerated curriculum explicitly teaches thinking and relates it to a variety of subject matters.

Literacy Through Project READ

An explicit aim of the accelerated curriculum is to develop children's language skills. As with critical thinking, the accelerated curriculum is unwilling to confine language development to reading or language arts activities. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening should also be taught in social studies, science, and mathematics in accelerated schools.

A primary vehicle for promoting this broadly-defined literacy is Project READ. Developed collaboratively by Stanford researchers and school practitioners in 1981, Project READ has theoretical roots both in contemporary cognitive psychology and the rhetoric from antiquity.⁴ Teachers using Project READ lesson formats and strategies help children analyze any spoken or written text. In this way, children can develop basic decoding and vocabulary skills while they also develop understanding of concepts.

For example, Project READ makes vocabulary study a dynamic part of concept development. Using graphic patterns such as a "web" (a central ellipse with spokes reaching out), a class can plot several categories of words (at the ends of the spokes) that relate to a single topic (in the center). On a "thermometer," they can graph high versus low intensity words within a single category. A "weave" (matrix) allows them to fill in the cells and compare the features of several words at the same time. A Venn diagram helps them see the multiple meanings of a single word.

Project READ vocabulary words are found and studied in context. That is, they relate to a text on which the children are working. A class uncovers their meaning through the text and through children's relevant experience. Given this fertile language environment, children can also study the derivation of these words, synonyms, antonyms, and parts of speech. Project READ expects children to master this kind of complexity because an experiential context is always provided and because the complexity is achieved through incremental steps. The incremental steps of Project READ are designed to lead to fluency in reading, writing, speaking, and listening -- in a word, to literacy.

Project READ's webs, weaves, and so on can teach other things as well. These include the structural components of narratives (setting, character, plot, and theme) and of exposition (description and sequence). Project READ is well suited to promoting literacy across the curriculum. As such, it is a critical component of an accelerated curriculum.

Concrete Applications

Relating school learning to concrete experience is another aim of the accelerated curriculum. Disadvantaged youngsters in particular need school to lay a foundation of real-life experience

on which abstract concepts can rest. The accelerated curriculum thus charges the school with enlarging the range of children's experiences. A corollary to this is constantly tying the concepts and ideas taught in accelerated schools to concrete experience.

Accelerated Instruction

Accelerated schools are encouraged to use a variety of instructional techniques. Most of the recommended strategies, such as an end to pull-out programs, and use of cooperative learning, peer and cross-age tutoring, and projects, clearly depart from conventional practice. However, accelerated schools are not called upon wholly to abandon teacher lectures, textbooks, worksheets, and standardized tests. These may still have a place within a fuller set of instructional strategies. The approaches described below are some of the less conventional ones that work with the curriculum to accelerate the education of disadvantaged students.

Alternatives to Remediation and Pull-Out Programs

Because of the belief that all children can learn, accelerated schools treat disadvantaged learners just like everyone else. Disadvantaged youngsters are integrated into regular classrooms. Their instructors are the instructors who serve all the children, not just those "identified" for special services because of their purported low ability. Their needs are met in the regular classroom.

Conventional schools tend to group children by ability. In schools which meet a poverty criterion, for example, students scoring low enough on standardized tests in reading or mathematics are pulled out of their regular classrooms for tutoring, drill, or other remediation by special Chapter 1 teachers. (Many schools also pull out students identified as gifted and talented for enrichment.) Critics of this approach, including the Stanford group, maintain that this segregation hurts rather than helps children. They claim that it mislabels children, sets up expectations for failure, reduces the curriculum, and thereby restricts these youngsters' potential achievement.⁵

Heterogeneous Grouping

Acceleration disparages another common form of ability grouping as well. This form of homogeneous grouping divides children within classrooms into sections of high and low ability for reading or mathematics instruction. Acceleration argues that whole group instruction, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, and multi-faceted student projects can be viable alternatives to various forms of ability grouping.

Active Learning

Active learning is a general instructional strategy for involving students in their own learning. An emphasis in the accelerated curriculum, it contrasts with the student passivity of conventional classrooms where teachers demonstrate, lecture, and formulate while students listen. Active learning engages students in using manipulatives, seeing and touching artifacts, meeting people, and experiencing first-hand what they are studying.

Another aspect of active learning is having students complete projects, undertakings that entail several stages and independent work. Projects can involve students in selecting their own topics, researching them, preparing a report or constructing a display, and presenting the finished product in some public forum. Relying on student effort to a much greater extent than conventional techniques, projects can also be the responsibility of teams rather than of individual students.

Team Learning

Accelerated instruction advocates engaging students in powerful learning activities by enlisting them as teachers. There are various ways of mobilizing students to teach each other. These include cooperative learning (teams of students rather than individuals complete assignments); peer tutoring (students in the same class check each other's work and/or provide one-on-one assistance to each other); cross-age tutoring (students of different ages pair for tutoring); and team projects. The academic and social learning that result are both desired outcomes of accelerated instruction.

Costs of Acceleration

A discussion of accelerated practices would not be complete without a word on their costs. Levin maintains that implementing acceleration does not require extraordinary extra resources. He estimates that about \$30 per student per year will support the establishment of accelerated organization and the implementation of many curricular and instructional practices. The experience of accelerated schools to date suggests that the extra resources will be used primarily for released time for teachers to work collaboratively.

Levin also maintains that the costs and resources for acceleration should be a major matter for accelerated schools and their districts to take up. The issue should be explicitly discussed both when they negotiate goals and when they review assessments.

A NEW ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL

Assessment of accelerated schools cannot be considered in isolation. According to Levin, it is but one phase of a process that starts with goal setting, moves through implementation and assessment, and ends with consequences. Levin has termed this whole process an accountability system.⁶

In several respects, it constitutes a new approach to accountability. Accountability in education conventionally means a state or a district meting out consequences to schools on the basis of their showing on selected assessments. By contrast, the accelerated accountability model places assessment and consequences within a more comprehensive system that incorporates planning and implementation as well. Moreover, the accelerated accountability system links school and district in a set of mutual obligations that occur at each phase of the process. Accountability thus becomes not a product, but a process for which the school and district bear mutual responsibility.

The accountability system's four phases are explained below.

Goal-setting

In the first phase, a district sets goals for all its schools. An accelerated school sets its own goals within the district framework, either tailoring district goals or adding goals to cover its program more completely. The goals will have a three- to five-year time horizon. The school then negotiates with the district about which goals should be retained and the resources needed to accomplish them.

A commitment to assess these and subsequently-developed goals is incorporated at this stage. This applies equally to formative evaluation (a type of assessment to provide constructive feedback for adjusting a program) and summative evaluation (assessment to judge definitively a program's effectiveness). Formative evaluations can be more spontaneous and less formal than a summative evaluation. Unlike formative evaluation designs, summative plans can usually be prespecified with a fair amount of certainty and detail.

An accelerated school treats both types of evaluation seriously. One mark of the seriousness is the commitment of resources. The Stanford group recommends designating from the outset an external evaluator and a school staff member to head up the school's assessment effort.

Implementation

Responsibility for implementing the goals rests equally on an accelerated school and its district. The district contributes by

delegating decisionmaking to the school, by helping the school understand problems as they are encountered, by facilitating the school's inquiry process, and by assisting school staff in implementing programs and carrying out evaluations.

The accelerated accountability system institutionalizes a shift from compliance to collaboration. This turns the conventional relationship between schools and districts on its head. Typically, a school receives directives about programs to implement from the district, and is left alone to implement them the best way it can. Implementation is considered complete to the extent that the school complies with district, state, and federal guidelines. Most federal entitlement programs, for example, have monitored local compliance as to such things as the propriety of student selection, staff allocation, and funding procedures.

Whether employed in special programs or not, district personnel in conventional settings are used to telling schools what they must do and then monitoring compliance. Assisting the school to implement its agenda for change is not only left out of most central office job descriptions but might even be construed as a breach of good practice. A requirement of the accelerated accountability system, central office support is especially critical during the implementation phase.

Assessment

In the accountability system, an accelerated school and its district assess progress annually, but assess achievement of goals after three to five years. Assessment of either kind is conducted collaboratively. At a minimum, school and central office staff are involved. Parents and students may also be able to participate.

Annual assessments are designed to identify problems the school must work on and strengths it can mobilize to overcome them. A summative examination of results would include assessment of the school's goals as well as of the quality of district support. If possible, an accelerated school's results would be compared to those obtained by a control, a similar school that had not adopted the accelerated approach. Considerations for accelerated school assessment are treated in greater detail below.

Consequences

The year after a summative evaluation is the time for an accelerated school and its district to reflect on the findings and to reformulate goals if needed. Both analyze the school's strengths, weaknesses, and the appropriateness of the goals themselves. They then renegotiate the goals for the next three-to-five-year period, again evaluating the school's resource needs and envisioning an assessment plan at the same time.

This should also be a time to celebrate. An accelerated school is rewarded for success in meeting its goals or in making progress toward them. The rewards may be symbolic, such as public recognition, or material, such as special equipment or a cash supplement to the school budget.

DESIGNING ASSESSMENTS FOR ACCELERATED SCHOOLS

As depicted above, assessment in accelerated schools is integral part of a comprehensive, ongoing process. To a great extent, the goals that a school and district negotiate drive the whole process. Those goals also drive assessment activities. Consequently, specific assessment activities will vary from school to school.

Nevertheless, the Stanford group has put forward some general considerations that all accelerated schools may use in designing their assessment activities. The suggestions come from the canon of ethnographic evaluation, but are molded to the particular needs and challenges of accelerated schools. One challenge is to make "the evaluation of this effort...as novel and refreshing as the program itself."⁷

Briefly, the Stanford group suggests that accelerated schools use both formative and summative evaluations. This means that assessment activities should have two aims. One is to help the school check its progress and isolate problems. The other is to make a judgment about the quality of the program and its effects.

Accelerated schools can and should assess all three areas of accelerated practice: organization, curriculum, and instruction. In terms of accelerated school organization, for example, assessment might address how clear the goals are, to what extent parents participate in formulating them, how efficiently meetings are run, and how completely individual committees follow the steps of the inquiry process. Assessment in this area will focus mainly on process goals rather than on the outcomes the process is supposed to effect.

Some aspects of the accelerated curriculum and instruction might be assessed by asking students themselves "to rate the degree of challenge and difficulty in their schoolwork, whether they know what they are supposed to be doing most of the time, whether their schoolwork is interesting, and so on"⁸ Other aspects might be assessed by examining how often teachers use particular strategies, how well they understand them, and the extent to which relevant training is available.

The Stanford group also points out that the unit of analysis should vary depending on the particular goal. Indicators of student learning that are best assessed at the individual classroom level might include teacher observation, portfolios of student

work, homework, and grades on classwork and report cards. In contrast, student learning as measured by standardized tests could be analyzed by classroom, grade, and school. Students' attendance, participation in school activities, self-esteem, and parental involvement might be measured at the school level.

An accelerated school's assessment design will ideally include both qualitative (narrative) and quantitative (numerically derived) data. The qualitative data should be selected which are relevant to the particular context of an accelerated school, which describe things nonjudgmentally, and which express "insiders'" perceptions as much as possible.

Longitudinal information should also be collected to enable the analysis of trends and change over time. The data that are collected should relate to a school's stage of accelerated development. For example, early concerns might center on gaining parental support and coming to consensus on goals. Later concerns might have more to do with measuring the quality of student experience.

Assessment in an accelerated school should also refer to some kind of standards. The setting of meaningful criteria means more, however, than merely specifying an arbitrary amount of expected performance. Schools need to define standards so that it is clear exactly to what they refer. For example, a school might clarify that a goal of 80 percent mastery on a particular standardized test means 80 percent of all the items on the test, of every part of the test, or of certain kinds of items only. In addition, an accelerated school with a number of language minority children might add indicators or set standards especially to detect these students' development.

Finally, the Stanford group counsels accelerated schools to plan for reporting assessment results to various audiences. Some assessments will only be of interest to individual teachers and the principal. Others will be important for the steering committee to consider. Others, such as the summative evaluation, should be made available to school staff, to the school district, and to parents. However, a school should consider tailoring the format and amount of detail it provides to each audience. The accountability model suggests that each audience will then put the assessment information to use, albeit in different ways.

CASE STUDIES ON ASSESSMENT IN ACCELERATED SCHOOLS

The remainder of this report describes assessment in two accelerated schools. They are Daniel Webster Elementary School in San Francisco, California, and Fairbanks Elementary School in Springfield, Missouri.

The information for this report was gathered in the fall of

1990. The author spent from two to three days at each location. During this time, the author visited classrooms, attended meetings, and interviewed the principal, a majority of classroom teachers, and selected others at the school and district's central office. The author also reviewed various documents such as school and district publications, correspondence, minutes of meetings, and other records. Additional interviews were held in Springfield with the director of Missouri's accelerated network and in St. Louis with network facilitators. Henry Levin was also interviewed, and he made project documents available.

The next four chapters describe Daniel Webster and Fairbanks in terms of their accelerated practices and their approaches to assessment. Each school is treated as a separate case. In the chapters describing the shape that each school has given to acceleration, readers will recognize some of the accelerated practices outlined above. However, the description embeds these practices in a narrative that attempts to render them in context. For both schools, that rendering requires recounting key events, the impetus for decisions, reactions and opinions, as well as changes that have occurred over time.

A subsequent chapter for each school then examines in detail each school's actual approach to assessment. These chapters organize the answers to the study questions posed earlier under four headings: classroom assessment, schoolwide assessment, standardized tests, and accountability system.

- * The section on classroom assessment portrays teachers' largely idiosyncratic and informal ways of monitoring student progress on accelerated learning.
- * The section on schoolwide assessment reviews each school's goals for acceleration and the ways the school as a whole measures their accomplishment. This section describes the school's rationale for using the indicators it has chosen and their relationship, if known, to other district initiatives. Available information about the school's performance on these indicators and the consequences attached to them also are reported.
- * The section on standardized testing describes how teachers in each school and the school as a whole responded to district (and state) mandates for uniform measurement of individual student achievement. The discussion is framed by description of each district's testing guidelines and use of test results. Available performance data are also presented.
- * The section on the accelerated accountability system describes the ways in which the school has implemented parts or the whole of this model. This section focuses on the use that the school and the district make of assessment data, but looks

also at the overall place of assessment in the life of the school and in its relationship with the district.

The chapters on assessment activities in each school conclude with staff's views on ideal ways to assess acceleration.

The two schools offer different perspectives from which to view assessment. Their differences in demographic makeup, district expectations and resources, relationship to Stanford, goals, specific accelerated features, and the time they had been engaged in accelerating all influenced the different ways they went about assessment.

The schools approached assessment alike, however, in two striking ways. One was the relatively little energy they had devoted to assessment thus far. The other, possibly a consequence of the first, was their own judgment that they were still at the beginning of thinking about assessment. This is particularly surprising given the difference in their time with acceleration: Webster's three calendar years (parts of five academic years) against Fairbanks' one and a half (parts of two academic years).

The explanation for these unexpected similarities may lie in the nature of acceleration itself rather than in the schools. Acceleration demands that a school (and district) make profound changes in almost everything. The Stanford group has anticipated that it would take a school five or six years to complete the transformation. A single cycle of the accountability process alone would require three to five years. By these tokens, both schools could still be counted beginners in acceleration and its assessment.

1. See, for example, Doug A. Archbald and Fred M. Newmann, Beyond Standardized Testing (Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1988); George F. Madaus, "Test Scores as Administrative Mechanisms in Educational Policy," Phi Delta Kappan, vol. 66, no. 9, May 1985, pp. 611-617; D. Monty Neill and Noe J. Medina, "Standardized Testing: Harmful to Educational Health," Phi Delta Kappan, vol. 70, no. 9, May 1989, pp. 688-697; Raymond Nickerson, "New Directions in Educational Assessment," Educational Researcher, vol. 18, no. 9, December 1989, pp. 3-7; and Grant Wiggins, "A True Test: Toward More Authentic and Equitable Assessment," Phi Delta Kappan, vol. 70, no. 9, May 1989, pp. 703-713.
2. John Dewey, The Child and the Curriculum and The School and Society (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 7.
3. Wendy S. Hopfenberg et al., Toward Accelerated Middle Schools, (Stanford, CA: Accelerated Schools Project, School of Education, Stanford University, August 1990).
4. Robert Calfee, Project READ (Stanford, CA: Calfee Projects, School of Education, Stanford University, January 1989).
5. Henry M. Levin, "Accelerating Elementary Education for Disadvantaged Students," in School Success for Students At Risk, Council of Chief State School Officers (Orlando, FL: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1988), pp. 209-226.
6. Henry M. Levin, An Accountability Model for the Accelerated School (Stanford, CA: Accelerated Schools Project, School of Education, Stanford University, December 1988).
7. David M. Fetterman and Edward H. Haertel, A School-based Evaluation Model for Accelerating the Education of Students At-Risk (Stanford, CA: Accelerated Schools Project, School of Education, Stanford University, June 1989), p. 26.
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GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH FAIRBANKS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

This chapter describes the accelerated features of Fairbanks Elementary School as background for the next chapter's discussion of the school's approach to assessment. This chapter includes traits of the school community, the school's vision for acceleration, and its accelerated practices. The chapter ends with reflections about acceleration by Fairbanks staff.

Fairbanks Accelerated Elementary School in Springfield, Missouri, serves 200 children in kindergarten through sixth grade. It is named for Jonathan Fairbanks, the city's first superintendent of schools. Were he on the job today, he would find himself in charge of 23,000 students attending 41 elementary schools, eight junior highs, five senior highs, and a handful of special schools and centers in Missouri's third largest city.

Located in barely rolling country in the southwest corner of the state, Springfield is as close to Tulsa, Oklahoma, as it is to Kansas City (a three-and-a-half hour drive) and almost as close to Little Rock, Arkansas, as it is to St. Louis (something between a four- and five-hour drive). A big interstate borders the town, a center for transport and agribusiness. Springfield is also the educational center for its region, with five colleges within the city limits.

THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Fairbanks Accelerated Elementary School is situated in the north central section of the city. The school draws its students from the immediate area, a largely residential neighborhood. The community appears to be of modest to moderate means. Simple wood-frame Victorians and Cape Cods with stone pillars supporting the front porches sit back from the broad, tree-lined streets.

Many of the larger houses have been subdivided into apartments which multiple generations of a family share, especially during the winter. Many of the smaller homes are in poor condition, with broken windows, leaking roofs, and little heat. A fair number of occupants rent rather than own these homes, too.

The parents of some students are employed in the local retail trade (e.g., in clothing stores or laundromats), while others work in factories. The neighborhood has a sizable population of older, retired people as well. Although they no longer have children in school, they and other community members occasionally have business that brings them to Fairbanks. On Election Day, for example, the principal had the voting booths set up in the school's all-purpose room where community members of all ages came and went while

students had gym class, practiced music lessons, or ate lunch.

Facilities

The school is a brick structure that joins an older building to a modern wing. The older part houses the kitchen, the all-purpose room, and most of the classrooms, whose generous dimensions, high ceilings, and oak trim are charming vintage features. A maze of rooms in the basement of the older part includes the music room, the teachers' lounge, and a parent room. The parent room is actually a narrow workspace and supply closet where volunteers prepare classroom aids according to teachers' specifications. The school office and media center -- complete with a sunken reading alcove, small offices for special service teachers, and a computer classroom -- are located in the newer wing. The exposed brick in the hallway linking old and new display posters, announcements, children's work, and the principal's "Good News Wall." Here photographs and a short description about their special accomplishment recognize individual students for good deeds or good behavior. An easy chair in the hall near the main entrance adds a further note of cheer and welcome to the building.

Staff

With only 200 students in kindergarten through sixth grade, Fairbanks typically has just one class at each grade level. The student-teacher ratio in 1989-90 was 22 to 1. Shifting enrollments and the addition of another extended day kindergarten class have meant that several teachers also have shifted assignments from year to year. These changes appear not to have ruffled these experienced classroom teachers, who averaged over eight years of teaching experience. In contrast, the principal was only beginning her second year at Fairbanks in the fall of 1990, although she brought substantial experience as a principal and central office administrator in another district. Other faculty members included half-time teachers in Special Education and Chapter 1 mathematics, and a fulltime Chapter 1 reading resource teacher. In addition, one aide spent time in various classrooms while another worked exclusively in the extended day kindergarten.

Students

Fairbanks' student count of 200 in the fall of 1990 represented a slight increase over the previous year's count, but the figure was expected to fluctuate throughout the year because of student transiency. Only 70 percent of Fairbanks students enrolled on the first day of school remained for the entire year in 1989-90, compared to an average of 85 percent for all Springfield elementary schools. Another measure of transiency is mobility, defined in Springfield as the number of students who transfer in or out as a proportion of the starting enrollment. In 1989-90, Fairbanks' mobility rate reached 81 percent, two and a

half times the district average.

Most (85 percent) of Fairbanks students were white; in 1990-91, the others were largely black (14 percent) with a very few Hispanic, American Indian, and Alaskan Natives (1 percent). The proportion of minorities at Fairbanks in 1989-90 (11 percent) was more than twice the district average (5 percent). Similarly, 62 percent of Fairbanks students applied and qualified for free or reduced price lunches, compared to only 32 percent districtwide. Fairbanks resembled the rest of the district in terms of family setting, however; almost one third of Fairbanks students and just over one third of all students in Springfield lived with both parents (one of whom could be a step-parent).

Ninety-three percent of students enrolled at Fairbanks attended daily. Although this was at the low end of the range for Springfield elementary schools, the range was small. The elementary school with the best attendance managed 96 percent, while the district average stood at 95 percent, only two points higher than Fairbanks.

Teachers commented that a significant number of Fairbanks students are at-risk. Despite the perception that some start school developmentally delayed, however, the learning disabilities of identified children were considered mild. Information from teachers providing special services suggested a population of about 5 percent learning disabled students and about 50 percent "Chapter students" in grades that are served by Chapter 1 services at Fairbanks.

Springfield students generally scored higher than the rest of the state on various standardized tests. However, Fairbanks students consistently scored below both the district and the state average in all grades and subjects tested in 1989-90. Yet more Chapter students than ever before scored high enough on the school's reading and math tests to qualify for exit from the program.

THE VISION OF ACCELERATED EDUCATION AT FAIRBANKS

Things happened fast for Fairbanks during the summer of 1989. The superintendent designated Fairbanks as the district's accelerated school, a new principal was appointed, and she, the Chapter 1 reading teacher, Special Education teacher, and three classroom teachers, on short notice, piled in a car to attend the state's second Accelerated Schools Academy.

Getting Started at Fairbanks

The Fairbanks team had to learn everything at once. The 1989 Academy invited the six original members of Missouri's Accelerated Schools Network, Fairbanks, and the other new member of the

network. It focused on Project Read, an accelerated approach to literacy. The academy held the summer before had introduced Professor Levin's overall concept and organization of accelerated education to network members. Lacking that introduction, the team from Fairbanks had to glean whatever information about accelerated governance and decisionmaking structures they could from other school teams. In retrospect, one of the Fairbanks teachers felt it an advantage to learn about certain aspects of acceleration from other practitioners instead of from theoreticians. Driving back, the Fairbanks team conceived and planned an after-school program that would embody some of the spirit of acceleration for their students.

By the end of that first year, Fairbanks Accelerated Elementary School had committed staff and parents to the concept of acceleration, began implementing Project Read schoolwide, established a parent room, instituted a weekly newsletter, held language enrichment assemblies, set up the principal's Good News Wall, and executed the after-school program. They also began operating several task forces and a steering committee composed of teachers, central office staff, and parents whose job was to carry forward the thinking and planning of acceleration.

Fairbanks' Mission Statements

Fairbanks prepared a mission statement for the 1989 opening of school that captured the essence of its vision for an accelerated future. The mission was "to have all non-handicapped students performing at grade level by the time they exit sixth grade regardless of family background, socio-economic standing, race, gender, or high risk status." The statement also proclaimed the staff's belief that all students could achieve the district's instructional goals and affirmed the importance of students' self-esteem and positive home-school relationships, along with academic achievement.

Endorsed in essence the following year, the mission statement became a critical text for acceleration at Fairbanks. Committees on curriculum, student self-esteem, parent involvement, and school climate took their charge from the mission statement. Parents, teachers, and the principal signed pledges describing their respective obligations that translated the mission into behaviors. Clearly, the mission succeeded in expressing the vital essence of acceleration at Fairbanks.

Several teachers had personalized the mission statement for themselves to the extent that, over time, they have ended up writing individual statements or class creeds. For example, the first grade vision statement states: The children in our class will read and write well, think mathematically, and know they are of great worth. And the fifth grade creed reads in part:

I am important. I am capable of being whatever I want to be. I am the only one to put limits on myself. If I choose to listen to instructions, follow directions, and do my assignments, there are no limits on what I can do.

In adapting the school's mission statement, these teachers felt they were following a maxim of Levin's that a vision for acceleration should be a living document, the soul of the school. As such, the words and the ideas should be subject to review and change. According to one of these teachers, the school was about to revisit its overall mission statement.

Fairbanks' Goals

The staff's motivation for accepting the school district's invitation to accelerate was that "what we were doing wasn't getting results," as one teacher put it. The impetus for change also came from the new principal, an energetic, action-oriented facilitator, and from new requirements related to the district's strategic plan.

Fairbanks translated the school's vision and mission into goals and later into actions. Teachers and parents had a role in formulating the goals. The principal then recorded the goals in the annual planning documents that all principals had to submit to the district. In 1990-91, the principal made a point of seeking teachers' comments on draft after draft of the planning document. She did so despite the fact that the document technically referred only to her own job accountabilities and the fact that the rounds of comment dragged out an already laborious effort. "Teachers have share in shaping the goals at an accelerated school," she said.

The principal explained that her job accountabilities statement incorporated all of Fairbanks' schoolwide goals, including its goals for acceleration. The overall goals for 1990-91 included improving achievement, attendance, and the attitude and self-concepts of students, and increasing parent involvement. As required, each goal area spelled out one or more indicators by which its accomplishment could be measured.

The indicators will be examined in detail in the next chapter. To illustrate briefly, however, student achievement was to be measured by standardized test scores. Parent involvement was to be evaluated by several parent behaviors such as attendance at school functions and signing the pledge of support for acceleration.

Various staff members put the goals of acceleration in their own words. As they expressed it, the goals of acceleration at Fairbanks were:

...to meet the needs of all the children in the school; to focus on children at-risk; to help children to be ready for productive adulthood (according to the principal)

...to have every child on grade level by sixth grade and to get primary children ready to be successful (according to a primary teacher)

...to have all Chapter children doing the same assignments and the same amount as in the regular classroom, and not to isolate children in any way (according to a Chapter 1 teacher).

Teachers viewed the school's goals for acceleration as basically compatible with the district's list of major instructional goals, an outline of the content to be mastered in each grade and subject matter. Several mentioned, however, that Project READ, the accelerated approach to literacy, had somewhat more global aims than their basal readers. Even so, they were able to use the basal series along with other materials for Project READ lessons.

ACCELERATED FEATURES AT FAIRBANKS

The principal said she thought of acceleration as the umbrella over everything else at Fairbanks. That umbrella was big enough to accommodate a number of innovative initiatives. Some, like Project Read, originated in the Stanford group and were imported through the state's network of accelerated schools. Others originated elsewhere, but were compatible with the accelerated concept. For example, the district had sponsored extended day kindergarten, in-class delivery of Special Education and Chapter 1 services, and an aggressive campaign to involve parents. None of these was unique to Fairbanks. Other practices, however, like the Good News Wall, were Fairbanks' own inventions.

Fairbanks' accelerated features thus amounted to an eclectic collection of organizational, curricular, and instructional practices that were unique to it. These practices conformed to some of the Stanford group's recommendations but did not mirror them exactly. This lack of perfect correspondence was largely due to the complexity inherent in the real life of school. Like most schools, Fairbanks accommodated various and sometimes shifting demands in its program. The program also reflected the opportunities and resources Fairbanks had been able to collect along the way.

Schoolwide Initiatives

The description below spotlights accelerated practices as Fairbanks has adapted them. Where a Stanford feature is clearly

visible, the headings use the Stanford terminology. Where the correspondence is less clear, the headings reflect local terminology.

Committee Structure

By the middle of its first accelerated year, Fairbanks put in place the task forces and steering committee of accelerated governance. The steering committee held its first meeting in January, but committees to oversee specific areas had been busy as early as the fall. Planning had actually begun as soon as the summer academy ended, before most staff members even knew about acceleration. Committees on self-esteem, school climate, parent involvement, and curriculum took over planning and successfully implemented a number of projects by year's end.

The steering committee met weekly in 1990-91, in contrast to the previous year's schedule of "whenever" -- actually about once a month -- members reported. Members especially liked how the committee structure made for the systematic flow of ideas, information, and feedback.

All teachers and some other staff each served on one topical committee. Parents were nominal members of these committees; the PTA president was on the steering committee. However, most parents attended meetings only rarely. Central office staff attended meetings regularly in 1989-90, but were considered advisory to the steering committee and attended meetings only occasionally in 1990-91. As needed, the faculty as a whole considered issues that the steering committee or topical committees brought to them.

Inquiry Process

Minutes of the steering and other committees consist almost entirely of action planning steps. There is little to suggest that the committees made equal use of the analytical or reflective steps of the inquiry process.

Project READ

Some teachers at Fairbanks adopted the philosophy and methods of Project READ immediately after an introduction to it at their first summer academy. When others expressed interest, teachers formed a self-help group which met for weekly half-hour sessions during an established planning period. The group worked throughout 1989-90 as the initiates increased their own knowledge and shared it with the novices. By early 1990-91, almost every classroom had posted one or more webs, matrices, or other tangible signs of Project READ lessons. Teachers used these devices to help children review the stories they had heard or read, to analyze similarities and differences among stories, and to generate vocabulary and ideas for their own original writing.

For example, the first grade class had heard two versions of the classic tale, "Stone Soup." Earlier, they had constructed a web or map of the main elements of each narrative. They had also placed adjectives describing characters' feelings on a thermometer chart, with "mad," "tired," and "hungry" near the bottom, and "curious," "happy," and "fantastic" near the top. Before hearing a third version of the tale, they reviewed a matrix they had filled in that compared the pictures, words, characters, plot, and setting of the two versions with which they were already familiar. Review also included students' oral reading of posters of the class' retelling of the sequence of events in the story. (It should be noted that many of these first graders in early November volunteered to read aloud, and all who were called on, did read, however haltingly.)

The following story of a Project READ unit also illustrates teaching language across the curriculum, incorporating students' interests in lessons, and using a variety of instructional techniques. When the Chapter 1 reading teacher and third grade teacher decided to present a unit on encyclopedia use, they knew they would have to start from scratch. The district's publication of major instructional goals did not give them the help it usually did, since encyclopedia use was not even listed for the third grade.

But the teachers wanted to go ahead and so designed the unit themselves. Over the course of several weeks, the teachers framed activities around the encyclopedia theme that allowed students to define and explore their own interests, gave them additional strategies for finding information, and had them analyze and compose scientific narratives, as well as do their own creative writing.

The teachers started by bringing to class enough volumes of an encyclopedia for each student to look up subjects of interest. After leading the children through a brief presentation and exercise on information retrieval, they let the children select and research their own topics. The teachers next had students read two articles, on pigeons and owls, and analyze their respective traits and habitats. In a subsequent lesson, students wrote their own articles about pigeons, owls, or a comparison of the two. In still other lessons, students read one of Donald Sobol's Encyclopedia Brown mystery stories [1964 and other years]. (The librarian reported a run on the series as students rushed to read more about the young detective.) Students were then to compose their own mystery stories. The product of an analogous combination of activities the year before was a collaborative novel, Anything for Survival, that was bound and placed in the school library.

Enriched Approach

To expand their students' base of experience, teachers and parents offered language enrichment assemblies and an extended day program. Language enrichment assemblies were held in 1989-90, as the teachers driving back from the summer academy had planned. Experts and special guests on selected topics addressed the children and teachers followed up with classroom activities in the Project Read format. More were planned for the current school year to coordinate with monthly themes such as health occupations, fine arts, sports, and the armed services.

Fairbanks also mounted an extended day program for students in grades one through six. Staffed by school and community volunteers, this program offered a menu of 15 to 20 activities for an hour a week over six weeks. Among the most popular activities were sign language, Spanish, computers, painting, pottery, friendship bracelets, piano, stenciling, tennis, drama, and hands-on science. The overall program was so popular that it was repeated four times in 1989-90.

Critical Thinking

The study of thinking -- in contrast to learning by rote -- became an integral part of Fairbanks' curriculum. For example, most children at Fairbanks practiced thinking through use of Project READ. Its graphic tools especially fostered the higher order skills of associating, comparing, and contrasting.

Some students also studied thinking as part of mathematical problem solving. The same third graders who learned about encyclopedia use, for example, had also been working on oral problem solving since the beginning of the year. These students tackled a daily problem, the solution steps to which they had to relate orally. All during September and October, the Chapter 1 mathematics teacher and the classroom teacher patiently coaxed and coached students. Some of their teaching consisted of talking aloud as they solved practice problems, modeling strategies such as guessing and estimating, as well as the metacognitive strategies of finding and correcting their own mistakes. By November, the students had overcome their discomfort with this method to state successfully the steps they took to solve problems such as the following: "Anna had 67 flower stickers. She gave 6 to Amy and 7 to Al. How many stickers does Anna have left?"

The principal also taught problem solving in real life situations to those students whose conduct ran counter to school rules. When students were referred for fighting or other major infractions, each party had the chance to tell his or her own version of the events (without interruption or protest from other parties). The principal then asked everyone involved to analyze where things had gone wrong, what could have been done to avert

it, how adults might have handled an analagous situation, and what each would do to ensure that the problem would not recur. As a final step, she asked students how they might demonstrate their good intentions for future conduct. Finally, she and the students negotiated the consequences for the incident that had occurred. The principal and some of the teachers liked this constructive approach and considered it highly effective.

Chapter 1 and Special Education Push-Ins

The district offered schools the option of delivering special services to students while they remained in their regular classroom. This meant that Chapter 1 and learning disabled students were not pulled out for small group drill or individual tutoring.² At Fairbanks, Chapter 1 reading and mathematics teachers planned with classroom teachers for daily lessons for all students in first through fourth or fifth grades. Their joint planning and delivery of instruction was to ensure that Chapter students could master the material along with their classmates. The learning disabilities teacher went into third through fifth grade classrooms where she routinely helped identified children (and sometimes others) as needed, and occasionally prepared lessons geared especially to identified students, but presented them to the whole class. Another instance of Fairbanks pushing special teachers in to the regular classroom was in the kindergarten and first grades, where the speech and language therapist taught listening skills to the whole class.

These double-staffing arrangements allowed the special teachers to concentrate or focus on their identified students while serving the rest of the class as well. The Chapter 1 mathematics teacher, for example, usually introduced the new concepts to the whole class. As students recited or worked problems at their desks, she then gave particular attention to identified students' responses. However, she distributed her attention over all students so as not to betray which students had been identified for service. The learning disabilities teacher did the same on a smaller scale because she had fewer identified students in each class and because she was more constrained by the specifications of her students' individual educational plans (IEPs).

Extended Day Kindergarten

The district sponsored extended day kindergartens for selected students who were judged to need special help in coping with an academic program. For half the day, these students attended the regular kindergarten where they participated in games and filled out worksheets along with the other students. They spent the other half day in their own class. There, they worked on the same skills as in the regular kindergarten, but had the chance to use more tactile and kinesthetic experiences. To this already accelerated approach, the Fairbanks extended day kindergarten teacher added

some Project Read lessons from time to time.

Students' Self-Esteem

To build students' self-esteem, Fairbanks put in place a number of schoolwide activities whose purpose was the recognition of student accomplishments. The principal maintained a Good News Wall outside her office to display the photographs of individual students and an account of their special accomplishments. Teachers devised the pat-on-the-back program, an announcement of good behavior or academic progress that was cut in the shape of a hand so the children could wear it on their backs. Teachers reported to parents on their children's milestones in achievement or behavior via Happy Grams. Teachers also reported individual and class doings in the school's weekly newsletter. These all served to keep the goal of building self-esteem constantly in view.

For a parent of two Fairbanks students, this pervasive attention to self-esteem was the essence of acceleration. "What I really like about the accelerated program is the positive attitudes in school," she said. "There are so many programs around that and they are really important for children's self-esteem. Acceleration stresses to the child: You are important, you are successful, you are smart." Acknowledging that Fairbanks students are not always told that at home, the parent continued, "Here, they're told: You can do what you want to do in life."

The principal's method for handling student behavior problems was designed to preserve and enhance students' self-esteem as much as it was to teach concrete problem solving. Several teachers felt it was such an important part of Fairbanks that they persuaded the principal to list it on her job accountabilities statement.

Other Schoolwide Initiatives

Other practices implemented during Fairbanks' first accelerated year included establishment of the parent room and an artist-in-residence program for children and their parents. Fairbanks also added to its complement of accelerated committees a teacher team to develop alternative interventions for children whose progress in academics or behavior were of concern.

Fairbanks also offered Saturday school for selected students. Staff were heartened by the positive ratings by parents and children who participated, but were disappointed by the low registration. Shaking her head in consternation, one teacher said, "The concept's right. We just can't get the parents to bring the kids." Staff continued suggesting new twists and inducements to raise enrollment well into the fall session.

FAIRBANKS REFLECTIONS ON ACCELERATION

"Acceleration is different," a teacher said. Others agreed. Essentially, they felt that acceleration had changed their perceptions of their students and their students' feelings about themselves. As a result, teachers had changed the way they approached teaching and learning in their classrooms.

Teachers' Perceptions About Students

Teachers at Fairbanks said they had always believed that all children could learn, but that acceleration had added a new depth to their belief. "I have a different feeling about the students," an upper-grade teacher remarked. "All students can learn. I need to present things in different ways because they learn in different ways." A primary teacher said it in her own way: "Every child can succeed, but not in the same way or at the same time." Another teacher said it another way: "We expect all students to do work on grade level."

This new way of looking at students has changed how teachers understand their jobs. At Fairbanks, when teachers review test results, "it's not OK just to say, 'Well, there's our curve!'" one of the primary teachers related. "We have to find out where the child is and find another way [to reach that child]." Acceleration has taught teachers that when they find the way for each child, all children will learn.

Students' Feelings About Themselves

"Probably one of the greatest benefits of acceleration is that kids don't know if they're remedial or not," a regular teacher said. A Chapter 1 teacher echoed, "This is so wonderful: kids are not identified as dummies. It keeps them from being stigmatized. They also don't have to leave [their regular classroom] and miss important things in class, and their [Chapter 1] work is completely correlated with regular classwork." Even a teacher who worried that push-in programs did not give needy students enough individual help agreed. She thought that refraining from labelling children was a special relief for older students. "No one knows who's supposed to get special help, and that's a real positive," she declared.

Accelerated Teaching and Learning

Acceleration has helped teachers rethink what and how they teach. One said, "I sometimes need to stop and think, 'Am I really doing acceleration or the same things as always?' I have more freedom to try things that these children need. I don't feel I have to start with the first chapter and go to the end [of the textbook]." In the same vein, a Chapter 1 teacher noted that the biggest change with acceleration has been that "teachers are OK

with the idea that math is not just writing down 25 problems." A regular teacher concurred, "I'm starting to realize that if students can do eight out of ten [math problems], they probably don't have to do 50."

Accelerated teaching meant creative teaching at Fairbanks. The traditional method -- giving students a worksheet of 50 math problems or reading a story in the basal reader and having students answer factual questions about it -- was boring, some teachers said. Instead of worksheets, children did hands-on arithmetic with number strips and cuisenaire rods. Instead of plowing through the basal reader, they read authentic literature and studied it through Project READ lessons.

Teaching creatively placed more burdens on teachers, but gave them greater rewards as well. Part of their reward was the increase in students' excitement about learning. For example, the children learned to love literature and reading. The Chapter 1 reading teacher recounted how last year's fourth graders had flooded the librarian with requests for Betsy Byers' books, and third graders had clamored for more of the Gertrude C. Warner's Boxcar Children series they had read in class. Even first graders with very rudimentary skills "light up to read a page in hard books" and asked for copies to take home, she said.

Most staff members at Fairbanks have accepted the challenges of acceleration. Not everyone is on board equally, the principal noted, but a positive and creative attitude prevails. "Everyone is trying to help kids," a staff member declared. Concurred another, "Teachers here so want children to do well, they're willing to try anything." Fairbanks has been in a hurry to do whatever has to be done to help kids ever since it started on acceleration. Someone said it well: "To help students succeed, Fairbanks is the school that tries everything."

1. The cutoff score for eligibility was the 45th percentile for first through third grades, and the 40th percentile for fourth and fifth grades. Chapter 1 services did not include fifth grade math and sixth grade reading and math.
2. Fairbanks was the only school in the district piloting the push-in concept for learning disabled students in 1990-91.

ASSESSMENT AT FAIRBANKS ACCELERATED SCHOOL

This chapter describes actual and ideal assessment in Fairbanks Elementary School. The chapter looks at actual assessment in four ways. The first section examines classroom techniques for monitoring progress on accelerated learning. The second section treats schoolwide measures of acceleration. The third section discusses standardized testing, which is part of both classroom and schoolwide assessment at Fairbanks. The fourth section considers the school's overall approach to actual assessment against the Stanford group's accountability model. The concluding section of the chapter presents the views of Fairbanks staff as to the ideal ways of assessing acceleration.

How did Fairbanks assess acceleration? And how would Fairbanks' staff prefer to assess acceleration? Like most schools, Fairbanks performed a variety of activities to assess student learning and program effectiveness. Various factors influenced what was actually assessed and how assessment activities were carried out. Most of this chapter explores actual assessment activities at Fairbanks. Only the last part records staff members' wishes or ideal scenarios regarding assessment. The whole chapter must be read in light of Fairbanks' relatively short experience with acceleration and its own judgment that it was just beginning to address the issue of accelerated assessment.

CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Teachers carried out some activities to assess acceleration in their own classrooms. The bulk of their assessment focused on individual student progress. However, a portion focused on the progress of the class as a whole.

Classroom assessment at Fairbanks was geared to Fairbanks' goals for student learning and to the instruction they received in class. In other words, Fairbanks' curriculum, instruction, and assessment were aligned. Teachers taught and checked students' performance on the areas dictated by the district's major instructional goals and by their understanding of what accelerated learning ought to be. Not unique to Fairbanks, the alignment of assessment with curriculum and instruction is a fundamental consideration in any solid educational program.

But acceleration did have a unique effect on classroom assessment at Fairbanks. Three ideas in particular had an impact. One was that teachers taught higher order and not just basic

skills. Another of these ideas was teachers' belief that all children could master basic and higher order skills. The other idea was teachers' acceptance of the responsibility to find ways for children to engage in learning those skills.

For example, Fairbanks' teachers embraced critical thinking as a curricular goal. The third grade teachers taught it through problem solving in mathematics. They instructed, demonstrated, and coached so children could understand, practice, and feel comfortable with oral problem solving. As they presented and as children recited, they assessed. They listened for the logic and efficacy of the thinking strategies. When children mastered simple problems, they introduced slightly more complicated ones, listening for correspondingly greater fluency and sophistication.

This example illustrates the fact that Fairbanks' teachers, embedded assessment in instruction. Like many elementary teachers, they attended to how students were doing while they were learning. Teachers assessed as they went along to inform themselves about children's progress and about how they might have to adjust their teaching. Teachers assessed in other ways as well, but relied heavily on directly assessing children's performance of classroom learning tasks.

This example also illustrates that the teaching and direct assessment of higher order skills gave teachers better information about student progress than conventional teaching and assessment techniques. The conventional curriculum for disadvantaged youngsters concentrated on basic skills. Conventional instruction stereotypically relied on worksheets or tests that required students only to fill in the blank or to circle a correct answer.

In teaching the kind of problem solving described in the example, Fairbanks' teachers used instructional strategies that required students to make explicit the steps in their thinking. In this way, teachers could ascertain both the students' answer and how they arrived at it. Project READ techniques had this same property of making overt otherwise covert cognition. Learning tasks of this sort opened a window into students' minds. Teachers could look through this window to assess not only the product but the process of students' learning.

On a daily basis, teachers used several sources for information about student progress. Students' performance on learning tasks, as described above, was a primary source. Teachers tapped it for assessment by observing, listening, spot checking, and asking questions about the material and about children's comprehension. Other examples include a primary teacher and the Chapter 1 reading teacher listening critically to children say which of two other versions of a story a third resembled and why.

The Chapter 1 mathematics teacher and an upper grade teacher watched children solve two-digit regrouping problems using number boards, strips, and blocks. Both circulated, noting how readily students manipulated the materials to work the problems and questioning some individuals directly on what they were doing.

Another source of day-to-day assessment information was students' performance on paper-and-pencil tasks, such as quizzes, tests, retests, and reflective writing exercises. Some teachers made a point of testing only when they estimated or ascertained that students had already mastered the material. Some collected samples of student work, selecting pieces for public display or for individual portfolios. For example, a primary teacher compared how well children wrote their names the first week to subsequent weeks. An upper grade teacher chose student work for display on one of two bulletin boards. One board was reserved for "A" papers; the other featured work on which students were showing substantial improvement.

Still another source of day-to-day information about student progress was students' feelings. Teachers at Fairbanks assessed feelings to determine students' degree of engagement and enjoyment. They scanned children's faces, read their body language, and monitored their comments. While teachers in many schools might notice their students' feelings in passing, teachers at Fairbanks used them as a gauge for instruction. When Fairbanks' teachers picked up apathy, passivity, blank looks, stress, frustration, or resistance, they knew they had to find another way to present the material. When they saw children relaxed, happy, enthusiastic, and eager -- wanting to be there and wanting to do the work -- they knew that their instruction was appropriate. Individual reactions counted as much as an overall class' reactions because teachers were committed to enabling all students to learn.

In the main, teachers' everyday ways of assessing learning tended to be informal, idiosyncratic, and largely tacit. Fairbanks' teachers had a hard time articulating the methods they used almost automatically in their classrooms. They had not yet formalized the assessments which so infused their daily instruction. Although all teachers were developing portfolios of students' work, they currently had no systematic, objective way to capture and record these assessments. These assessments therefore remained outside of the formal assessment and reporting systems of grading, report cards, and standardized test scores.

This discontinuity between informal and formal assessment bothered some teachers. One described her personal quandary at the close of each marking period. How should she grade the child who learns the spelling words only after intensive one-on-one help? Does that child receive a grade for mastery or effort? Does

another child who gets the words right the first time receive the same grade?

Although the grading issue remained unresolved, this teacher and her colleagues at Fairbanks used diverse informal ways to report children's day-to-day successes. This was what pats-on-the-back, happy-grams, and the good news wall were all about. Teachers also wrote notes or phoned parents to record children's accomplishments. If parents might not recognize what constituted an accomplishment, one teacher at least made sure to tell them. "Your kid is doing this or that," she would say. "You should be excited!"

As to year-end assessment, Fairbanks and all other Springfield schools used standardized achievement tests. These will be discussed at length in a separate section, but their use by classroom teachers will be noted here. Teachers at Fairbanks generally felt that the tests were well aligned with the district's major instructional goals and with much of what teachers actually taught. Most teachers indicated that the results gave them useful feedback. If they received the results before the end of the school year, some teachers said they retaught the skills that students had apparently missed. If not, they still could see which areas to hit harder with the following year's class or where their instructional methods evidently needed adjustment.

SCHOOLWIDE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

Fairbanks had developed and implemented formal plans for assessing acceleration schoolwide. The school's first plan was prepared scant months after the staff was introduced to acceleration. The assessment design (and later interpolations of results) was included in Fairbanks' school improvement plan for 1989-90, a document each school submitted to the district. The stated "focus" of Fairbanks' document was low test scores in reading, language, science, social studies, and math, and lack of overt parental support for the school's educational mission and goals. The improvement objectives were to increase reading and other standardized test scores 10 percent over the previous year and to obtain participation in two school activities by at least 80 percent of parents. Acceleration was to be the main vehicle for accomplishing these objectives. Compatible district initiatives were also included.

Fairbanks' second formal plan was its accelerated school assessment plan for 1990-91. This plan took the form a one-page outline of goals and indicators for 1990-91 in four broad areas. These areas were academic success, attitude and self-esteem, parent involvement, and attendance. Although this plan was quite spare, it was clearly derived from a much more elaborate document, the

principal's job accountabilities statement of 1990-91.

Because the job accountabilities statement was an important source for Fairbanks' assessment activities, it is helpful to know more about it. This document superseded the school improvement plan as a district requirement. In it, principals had to describe their goals, the functions they would perform, and the results for which they agreed to be accountable at the end of the year. The statement also had to show how principals proposed to assess their performance. At the principal's request, Fairbanks' teachers had helped write her job accountabilities statement to reflect the whole of the school's program. The statement therefore incorporated goals and indicators relating to the school's accelerated features and provided more detail on them than was contained in the accelerated assessment plan for 1990-91 alone.

In general, Fairbanks' assessment plans were relatively simple. Some indicators were predicated on available data; others relied on the district's provision of instruments and data analysis. Various parts of the plans lacked technical detail. For example, most of the goals did not specify exactly how the named instruments would show improvement (e.g., "improve attendance" by "computer printout for attendance for each child"). In a number of cases, moreover, the plans neglected to quantify or describe the improvement expected. There was also no discussion of how the multiple indicators for a single goal might be reconciled.

The following discussion of Fairbanks' schoolwide assessment activities is framed around the four major goals listed in the accelerated schools assessment plan for 1990-91. However, it draws from two other documents as well: the school improvement plan of 1989-90 and the principal's job accountabilities statement of 1990-91. Results are included where available.

Measuring Students' Academic Success

Improving students' academic success had been a major goal for Fairbanks since the inception of acceleration. In 1989-90, the staff looked for a mean improvement of ten percentile points on students' standardized test scores in reading especially, but also in language, science, social studies, and math. Results indicated that, of the three grades for which information was available, only one came close to meeting the criterion. Although most scores in the other two grades did rise, they fell short of the stated goal.

In 1990-91, Fairbanks planned to measure academic success in three different ways, two of which relied on standardized test scores.

One of these established the criterion for success as

decreasing the percentage of students who scored in the two lowest quintiles. A note on the plan indicated that these would be the students considered most at risk.

The second criterion for academic success was for Chapter 1 students to post three or more NCE gains in reading and mathematics. In the previous year, Fairbanks' Chapter 1 students had made significantly more than three NCE gains.²

Predicting that the criterion would be as easily surpassed in 1990-91, the principal had proposed a more challenging one, yet one she was confident the students would also meet. Her proposal was to gauge academic success by the proportion of Chapter 1 students who scored high enough to exit from the program. She pointed out that 36 percent of children in Chapter 1 reading and 39 percent in Chapter 1 math had done so the previous year. Teachers balked, however, fearing that the prior result had been a fluke. The principal herself was torn, but for other reasons. On the one hand, she was eager to show what she considered "measurable" success and was convinced Fairbanks could do it again. On the other hand, she believed in shared decisionmaking and the teachers, through the committee process, had made their decision. In the end, she accepted the more modest goal.

The third criterion for assessing academic success at Fairbanks was through portfolios that would "document progress on work across the content fields." The Missouri network had designated Fairbanks to develop portfolio assessment as a possible model for other network schools. In an independent effort, the district was also beginning to look to portfolios as a promising new assessment technology. A district committee had come up with a short description and little more. According to the district committee, a portfolio was composed of representative samples of each child's work. Its purpose was to document progress, demonstrate integration and use of knowledge and skills, and demonstrate creativity.

Fairbanks' principal said she hoped portfolios might show students' accelerated learning that standardized tests might not document. Fairbanks' teachers had begun to collect samples of student work but had not yet discussed exactly what portfolios would contain or how they would be evaluated. At the time of the study visit, few teachers even mentioned that they were currently collecting material for student portfolios.

Measuring Attitude and Self-Esteem

Improvements in the attitude of parents and students and in the self-concept of students were to be assessed in 1990-91. The assessment plan indicated that instruments would consist of a parent and student opinion survey and culture-free self-esteem inventory.³ While the district required all schools to show how parent input was to be obtained, there was no standard instrument in use. Few other schools used parent surveys. In 1990-91, Fairbanks was the only school to use the self-esteem inventory which had been suggested by a central office administrator.

Fairbanks also proposed to assess parents' attitudes. Annual parent surveys appeared to be required of all Springfield schools. The previous year, Fairbanks had distributed its own instrument which asked parents to agree or disagree with 20 items describing their knowledge of or participation in school activities and their level of satisfaction with Project READ, the extended day program, and other accelerated features at the school. The results showed that 95 percent of the respondents agreed that their children seemed to learn a lot in school. Ninety-four percent agreed that their children's teachers were aware of their needs and acted accordingly. Ninety-two percent agreed that Project READ had helped their children in reading. Eighty-nine percent agreed that the accelerated program had helped their children.

Measuring Parent Involvement

Fairbanks repeated in 1990-91 its intention of the previous year to measure parent involvement. In the first year, assessment of this goal had entailed documentation of attendance at school functions, volunteer hours at home and at school, teaching or assisting in activities related to the extended day program, and returning signed pledges or school surveys. The goal was 80 percent participation in two or more of these activities.

According to the principal, this goal was met the first year. The evidence included that 142 family members attended at least one PTA meeting and 68 parents ate lunch with their children or otherwise participated in parent involvement month. Twelve parents took part in a math workshop for parents, and parents taught 11 classes in the extended day program. Eighty-two percent of parents completed a pledge and 89 individuals returned parent opinion surveys.

Only slight changes were planned for the 1990-91 assessment. Some indicators were added and the criteria for success differentiated. For example, participation in parent/teacher conferences was added, with 90 percent participation targeted, while the proportion of parents expected to return pledges of

support remained at 80 percent. Parent representation on schoolwide committees was also added.

Measuring Attendance

Student attendance was an altogether new goal to be assessed in 1990-91. The assessment plan stated only that attendance was to be monitored via each child's computer printout and the district's annual computation. The available documents do not explain why attendance was a major area to be assessed at Fairbanks. A possible explanation is the school's last-place showing among elementary schools as published in the district's annual report for 1989-90.

STANDARDIZED TESTING

As the previous sections show, standardized tests exercised some influence over schoolwide and classroom assessment at Fairbanks. This section first discusses standardized testing in detail and then describes its changing role in Springfield. The section ends with the comments of Fairbanks' staff on current use of standardized tests.

Instruments and Uses

Children at Fairbanks and in all Springfield elementary schools grew up with standardized tests. Entering kindergartners took the Missouri Kindergarten Inventory of Developmental Skills (KIDS) to determine their level of school readiness. Once in kindergarten, children at Fairbanks took the Kindergarten Iowa Test of Basic Skills. (Other schools administered the CTB/McGraw Hill Early School Assessment to kindergartners.) First graders took the California Achievement Tests (CAT) in reading, mathematics, and language. Second through sixth graders took the Missouri Mastery and Achievement Test (MMAT) battery in reading, mathematics, science, and social studies for their grade.

Schools administered other tests as needed. A district publication described the full range of assessment instruments and procedures to which a Springfield resident between infancy and age 21 might be subjected. These included developmental screenings, health screenings, parent questionnaires, intelligence tests, and miscellaneous checklists, as well as the subject-specific achievement tests listed above. The district used most of these tests to identify students for various special services. For example, testing of children in kindergarten and younger helped identify students for early entrance to kindergarten, extended day kindergarten, and/or additional testing for possible referral to special education programs.

Students took achievement tests at their schools each spring. After the tests were scored and analyzed, the results were returned to the central office and to the school. Teachers usually, but not always, received printouts of the results before school let out for the summer.

Within the school system, the results had multiple meanings, uses, and consequences. Foremost among the meanings was that standardized test results represented the academic achievement of all individuals and grades. Scores on these tests were used to identify individual students for Chapter 1 services: those enrolled in a qualifying school and who scored below the 40th or 45th percentile in reading or mathematics, depending on their grade, became eligible.

The school district interpreted these standardized test scores as a judgment on the effectiveness of the curriculum districtwide. District committees were charged with considering these results in their periodic reviews of Springfield's curriculum. As a consequence of their deliberations, the district's curriculum, instructional emphasis, or materials could be changed.

Standardized achievement test scores were also understood to reflect the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction in individual schools and classrooms. According to a district publication, these same scores were also used to rate the effectiveness of Chapter 1 services.

The scores reflected on principals as well. Fairbanks' principal asserted that central office supervisors called principals to account for whatever they wrote in their plans. If principals had listed standardized tests scores among the indicators of their job performance -- as Fairbanks' principal had -- then they could expect to be judged by them.

The district expected teachers to use test scores in planning instruction for their incoming classes and in tailoring instruction to accommodate students' needs. Their students' scores on standardized tests were also taken in consideration on the district's Performance-Based Teacher Evaluations.

The Changing Role of Tests

Central office administrators said that, for some time, the official view had been that standardized testing alone constituted assessment. The district had put a great deal of energy and thought into its standardized testing program. Each year, for example, the district published test scores in overwhelming detail. Some reports for the public broke scores down by school or by grade, subject, subtest, gender, and Chapter 1, and compared them

to previous years. The district also revamped the program from time to time, dropping some standardized tests and substituting others. For example, the district changed the second and fifth grade tests as recently as 1990.

But central office administrators also said that the district now appeared to be moving away from defining assessment solely by its standardized testing program. It was moving toward the view that assessment was an ongoing and continuous process in which standardized tests were events along with other events. This view was "evolving" within the current "ferment" over assessment in the district and the whole state.

This ferment at the district level included interest in emerging assessment technologies. For example, the district was developing its own eighth grade writing assessment, even though the state was also preparing one. Further, the district was exploring portfolios as a means of assessing individual student performance. Still further, the district was expanding the depth and scope of its program assessment activities. A new administrative unit was being set up to "ensure that programs and practices are developed and assessed." Acceleration at Fairbanks was just one of several experimental approaches that the district had agreed to pilot and intended to assess in due time.⁵

Fairbanks' Views on Testing

Standardized achievement testing of all students was still the reality at Fairbanks and in the rest of the schools, no matter what evolution in thinking was occurring at the district level. Fairbanks' teachers took a measured view of standardized tests. Most agreed that the tests assessed the contents of the district's major instructional goals. They felt the tests influenced teachers strongly to gear their instruction to those goals. Most welcomed the curricular consistency and continuity that this alignment produced.

At the same time, a majority of Fairbanks' teachers had concerns about standardized testing practices. They worried about the stress for them and their students around testing. They also worried about the validity of the scores, especially for students who took the tests when they were emotionally or physically upset. Finally, they worried about the negative impact of low scores on their students.

Fairbanks' staff disagreed mildly about other aspects of standardized testing. The principal saw standardized tests as a realistic way of getting hard data on students' year-end achievement. At least one teacher concurred, stating that the tests were both necessary and inevitable for purposes of

aggregation and comparison. Others on staff, however, questioned a number of things about the standardized tests currently in use. They voiced doubt that the tests could measure critical thinking, could present items in terms relevant for their children's experience, or could adequately serve other valued goals of the accelerated approach, such as students' positive self-esteem.

ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

It is useful at this point to assemble the components of assessment at Fairbanks in terms of the Stanford group's accountability model. This model set assessment activities in an overall accountability context that consisted of goal-setting, implementation, assessment, and consequences. Each represented a phase of the on-going change process. The model assumed collaboration between school and district in every phase. This system, as the Stanford group styled it, is described more fully in the first chapter.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that Fairbanks was not expressly trying to follow the model. Fairbanks was not even aware of the model as it was laid out in the Stanford group's papers. However, Fairbanks' staff had absorbed the general principles of acceleration that the model embodies. It is therefore appropriate to ask how accelerated assessment fit into the overall school improvement process that Fairbanks and its district actually used.

Fairbanks appears to have followed parts of the model. The school set goals within a district framework. It indicated what was to be evaluated. It implemented programs. It collected performance information in accordance with its plan.

At some points, however, Fairbanks deviated from the model. Some of the deviations were in degree rather than in kind. Implementation went forth, for example, but more often by truncating or even bypassing the deliberations of a full-blown inquiry process. As to assessment, Fairbanks' approach to the activities it had undertaken or had planned was somewhat simplistic. Some assessment activities were clearly relevant to goals -- monitoring attendance and parent participation, for example -- but there was little indication of exactly what or how much would represent the desired improvement. Other assessment activities were specified precisely, but may not have been very meaningful. For example, why would a ten percentile increase in standardized test scores the first year or a three-NCE gain for the second year be significant?

Other deviations from the model were omissions of various pieces. A big missing piece was the thoroughgoing collaboration

between school and district that the model had described. The district surely permitted Fairbanks to accelerate and had negotiated the goals in the job accountabilities statement, but otherwise held back from active participation in implementation. Although a district representative sometimes attended steering committee meetings, the district's support was generally muted or passive. The district's only role in assessment was to provide the services it routinely and uniformly provided to all schools.

It seems that the parts of the model which tied assessment to planning were underdeveloped. Fairbanks collected data each year, but their impact on the setting of new targets was not clear. Moreover, assessment went forward without obvious reference to prior assessment plans. Each year, planning started afresh. The lack of a staff person assigned to evaluation further reinforced that impression. Just how the consequences phase of the model would play out was unknown at the time of the study.

IDEAL ASSESSMENT AT FAIRBANKS

Staff were asked to describe their ideal for the assessment of students' accelerated learning and of the school's overall accelerated program.

Ideal Classroom Assessment

Generally speaking, staff had clear ideas about what they wanted to assess in the classroom. Several came up with notions about how to measure those things. But staff had few clear ideas for recording or capturing that information on classroom learning so it could be collected, inspected over time, and formally reported.

In the ideal, Fairbanks staff would focus on a variety of accelerated goals. The principal said she would want to see children's thinking, decisionmaking, and judgmental skills assessed. In contrast, one primary teacher would keep to the district's major instructional goals and nothing more. Another primary teacher wanted to know if her students were becoming lifelong, independent learners. She would also want to measure their understanding of how they learned. To do this, students would have to know how their minds worked and how to find out what they needed to be productive. The Chapter 1 reading teacher wanted to assess children's love of literature and reading. "The true assessment of a reading program is that children read," she said. "You see them reading, writing, able to understand and enjoy what they read."

Individual staff members also had some thoughts on how ideally to assess these things. Each person had a different image of the

ideal. For example, the principal looked to portfolios for showing the analytical skills that children apply to their writing. She had been especially impressed by the sophistication of children's writing in the collective novel, Anything for Survival, that they wrote at the end of 1989-90. An upper grade teacher also included portfolios in her description of the ideal. For her, portfolios would contain samples of the full range of children's expression, even drawings. She would regularly review the students' portfolios with them, talking one-on-one so they could see their improvement. To make this ideal scenario real, she said she would need more time or fewer students, but that neither was likely soon.

One of the primary teachers agreed that samples of student work would be desirable. She suggested that students' portfolios would be studied in conjunction with teacher journals. According to her ideal,

Teacher journals would have observations of the kids, an account of the growth of each child and a comparison with what they could do earlier. A journal would have a statement of goals, how the class was moving toward them, and timelines because it's important to set deadlines. But a journal should also include commentary on how teachers feel: 'I liked this or I didn't because...It didn't work,' and so on. Teachers' journals should communicate the sense that it's OK to goof.

Others agreed with the underlying conviction that teacher judgment would be central in an ideal assessment system. A special education teacher favored basing assessment on teacher observation and other informal means (including a journal), especially because she gets to know her students well over the three or more years they typically stay with her. The Chapter 1 math teacher concurred that, whatever the form, "teacher opinion, evaluation, and judgment are the best methods" of assessment. This could include holistic grading of language arts, as another teacher proposed. But this teacher noted that her ideal could be realized only if teachers received help, more inservice perhaps, to learn to do it well. "Grading creative writing is difficult. I'd like to be able to do it better," she said.

Two teachers commented specifically on their ideal for reporting student progress. A primary teacher's ideal was to simplify measurement. In her ideal, the district's major instructional goals would be adapted for classroom use as a checklist. When teachers reported student progress, they would reproduce the checklist and mark each only "mastered" or "not mastered." An upper grade teacher endorsed a binary marking system but would replace "not mastered" with "incomplete."

Others were stymied as to how teachers could ideally record and report student progress. One teacher said, "It's desirable, but really difficult to keep track of each child's progress." "We'll need to know if kids are mastering the objectives," another teacher stated. "We'll need to know how far we've come. Day to day, we can't always see. When we stop and look, we really will be able to see."

The difficulty of finding a workable technology to capture day-to-day and end-of-year progress blocked the way toward the ideal. The Chapter 1 reading teacher, for example, believed that Fairbanks' reading program had succeeded in getting children to read, write, understand, and enjoy what they read. "We have it," she declared, "but we don't know how to document it. We've got to show the world," she went on. "I don't know how to do that."

Ideal Schoolwide Assessment

The principal predicted that Fairbanks would get better every year at finding appropriate measures for its schoolwide accelerated program. She said, "The bottom line is the change in teachers' attitude toward parents, children, learning, and themselves --- believing that they can make a difference." To assess that change, a principal would have to have a finger on the teachers' pulse as to their attitudes and self-concept. "Don't be scared off by expressions of diverse opinions by teachers," she cautioned. Divergence and disagreement are a good sign. "When things aren't going well, teachers clam up," she concluded.

A parent who is active in the school would also pay a great deal of attention to attitudes. Teachers' attitudes and the atmosphere of the school would be among the first things she would want to assess. She would want to know how teachers talk to children and how they respond to their questions, interests, and concerns. After that, she would want to know how children feel about themselves, the teachers, and the school as a whole. At some point, this parent would also want to look at standardized test scores to assess acceleration schoolwide.

While the reduction of children scoring in the lowest quintile on standardized tests was at least one teacher's ideal for assessing acceleration, others had different images. Another teacher would assess parent involvement and parental interest, along with children's pride in their school. "Children want to come to school here," she asserted, and for her, that would be important to know in assessing acceleration.

Still another teacher wondered if a self-made tool might work best. Somewhat skeptical about acceleration, this teacher wanted whatever instruments were devised to be administered frequently so

that Fairbanks could see if it were making enough progress to warrant continuing. This teacher said she wished most of all that she could see four years ahead. In that way, she could assure herself that acceleration really made a difference.

SUMMARY

In summary, some people at Fairbanks had ideas about how ideally to assess acceleration. On the whole, however, their ideas were tentative and not fully formed. As one teacher mused, "Acceleration should change the way we assess, but I don't know how." She paused a moment, downcast, until the Fairbanks spirit revived her. "I'm willing to try anything," she said.

1. At the start of the 1990-91 school year, the state was in the process of planning an evaluation of all schools in the Missouri network of accelerated schools. Members had been asked to review and comment on a general evaluation model by the end of October. Baseline data were to be collected during the remainder of the 1990-91 school year. About the same time, the Stanford group asked accelerated schools to contribute stories about their positive experiences as well as suggestions for handling problems for publication in a resource guide and newsletter. Stanford provided a page of open-ended questions that schools might choose to respond to in their reports.
2. By grade, Fairbanks' students averaged nine NCE gains in reading (ranging from one to 18 for five grades) and over eleven NCE gains in math (ranging from 4 to 24 for four grades).
3. Publishers Test Service, CTB/McGraw Hill, "Culture-Free Self-Esteem Inventory," 2500 Garden Road, Monterey, CA 93940-5380.
4. Springfield also used teacher nominations to select children for Chapter 1 services. In 1990, kindergarten teachers used a rating scale to do this. They rated all their children from 1 to 10, where 10 indicated the greatest need for extra help. As of 1991, teachers in all elementary grades could use the same method to recommend students whose scores did not qualify them for services. Historically, about 5 percent of students served were identified through teacher recommendation.
5. Other experimental approaches in the pilot stage included push-in programs for Chapter 1 and learning disabilities. The ungraded primary unit was still in the developmental stage, but was expected to be piloted eventually.

GETTING ACQUAINTED WITH DANIEL WEBSTER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

This chapter describes the accelerated features of Daniel Webster Elementary School as background for the next chapter's discussion of the school's approach to assessment. This chapter portrays the characteristics of the school community, the school's vision for acceleration, and its accelerated practices. The chapter ends with the staff's reflections on acceleration.

Daniel Webster Accelerated Elementary School in San Francisco, California, serves 324 children in kindergarten through fifth grade. It is one of 72 elementary, 16 middle, and 22 high schools and programs in the San Francisco Unified School District. In all, the district enrolls over 62,000 students in kindergarten through twelfth grade, but serves more through such programs as prekindergartens and community day classes.

Everybody's favorite city (according to the local media), San Francisco has drawn immigrants as well as tourists over the years. With its largely Hispanic Mission district, increasingly Filipino Outer Mission district, Chinatown, and Japantown, the city contains many diverse ethnic and language communities. The public school enrollment reflects this diversity: about one quarter is of Chinese extraction, one fifth each is Spanish-surnamed and black, one sixth is "other white" (Caucasian but not Spanish-surnamed), one eighth "other non-white" (including Arabic, Samoan, and Indo-Chinese), and one twelfth is Filipino. Students from Korean, Japanese, and American Indian backgrounds make up the rest. More than one quarter of the students are classified as limited or non-English proficient.¹

THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Daniel Webster Accelerated Elementary School perches on Potrero Hill, located in the southeastern part of the city. The school's immediate neighborhood accommodates a mixture of Victorian and contemporary homes and small shops. Down the hill to the north is an industrial area; just down the hill to the south is a large public housing complex. The fringes of the Mission district begin just over the freeway to the west; and the San Francisco Bay lies to the east. From Daniel Webster, the view of downtown and the bay are spectacular and even the weather is good.²

Only some of Daniel Webster's students live in the immediate neighborhood and can walk to school. Two thirds arrive by bus from other areas, principally the Mission, south of Market, Chinatown, and the Western Addition. These communities are all relatively poor. Few parents own cars, so coming to school for conferences or other activities is difficult. The families of many students

have only recently immigrated. A number do not speak or understand English. The principal commented that, as a group, these families make fewer demands on the school than those in other district-designated alternative schools.

Facilities

The school is made up of three structures that are connected by a covered walkway. The office, nurse's station, and teachers' lunchroom are in a large portable on one corner of the lot. Behind it is the oldest portion of the school, an auditorium that serves also as gym and student lunchroom. Opposite these structures, a two-story building houses the classrooms and various resource rooms.

Although classrooms are uniform in size, the furniture, arrangement, and decor vary greatly from room to room. One room looked fairly traditional with students' desks, teacher desk, and neat displays of student work. Another room had made space for a table display of Native American masks near one wall and a well-used loveseat along another. Still another room had given over one area to comfortable pillows and an old steamer trunk with costumes spilling out.

Two constants stood out amid all the variety. One was a sense of crowding. Most classrooms were bursting with children, desks, file cabinets, bookcases, storage containers of different kinds, bulletin boards, displays of student work, posters, pictures, artifacts, and other teaching materials. Another constant was chartpaper. Charts leaned on ledges, were tacked to walls, or attached to easels. Someone pointed out that it was a shortage of blackboards in classrooms that had forced teachers to switch to flipcharts as their primary instructional technology.

In addition to regular classrooms, Daniel Webster had a computer room with enough terminals for each individual in a class, a school library, a parent room, and a resource room. The resource room simultaneously served as an office for staff paid by Chapter 1 and other special funds, as a curriculum library for materials purchased with special funds, as a meeting place for committees, and as the photocopying room.

Staff

The size of Daniel Webster's staff has fluctuated somewhat from year to year because of declining enrollment overall and the changing enrollment in programs paid for by other than the district's general funds. In the fall of 1990, there were 13 classroom and two resource teachers at the school. Of the classroom teachers, six taught in bilingual Spanish or Chinese classrooms and one worked in a self-contained special education class. Class size averaged about 28. The resource teachers were

assigned to Chapter 1 and other state and federal projects.

The professional staff was ethnically diverse and included white, Chinese, Spanish-surnamed, black, Filipino, as well as other backgrounds. In 1989-90, Daniel Webster's permanent certificated staff had averaged 20 years in the district. Individuals' length of service, however, ranged from one to 35 years.

The staff also included several paraprofessionals, assigned to regular or bilingual classrooms, and an elementary advisor who acted as liaison to the community. Though not technically staff members, a number of volunteers were active at the school. One, a parent, came almost daily to help out with one or another task.

Students

Daniel Webster's enrollment had been dropping for several years. In 1988-89, it stood at 380; in 1989-90, at 348; and in 1990-91, at 324. As overall enrollment fell, so did the proportion of educationally disadvantaged youth whose presence meant additional funding for the school. At one time, over three quarters of the student body had been eligible to receive Chapter 1 services. In 1990-91, the number had declined to just under half. The proportion of students who were identified as limited English proficient had remained at between 40 and 50 percent, however.

In 1989-90, close to 70 percent of Daniel Webster's students qualified for free or reduced price lunch. This was almost 40 percent higher than the average for elementary schools across the city.⁴

The array of students' ethnic backgrounds was almost as diverse as the district as a whole. At Daniel Webster, Spanish-surnamed students were the most numerous, accounting for a third of the students. Black students accounted for one quarter, Chinese and "other non-whites" each accounted for about one eighth, and Filipino and "other white" students accounted for under one thirteenth each. When the children gathered on the playground for the daily opening ceremony, their faces were a rainbow of color and ethnicity.

The students' attendance rate was high: almost 99 percent attended daily.⁵ The principal reported, however, that transiency was quite visible at Daniel Webster. In the course of one year, 80 new students came and 56 left, for an overall transiency rate of about 40 percent.

San Francisco participated in the California Assessment Program, which ranked schools and districts on the basis of third graders' performance on a statewide reading, writing, and mathematics test of basic skills. Scores were computed in two

ways: an unadjusted score compared the third graders' performance with that of all third graders in the state; an adjusted score compared their performance with those in the 20 percent of California districts whose populations were deemed comparable.

The district's unadjusted score generally placed it at or just under the midpoint of other districts statewide. The district's adjusted score raised it to between the half and three quarter mark.

Daniel Webster consistently ranked below the district's unadjusted and adjusted scores. Nevertheless, the school had shown some improvement, albeit uneven, in all tested subjects. The school's third graders had improved dramatically and continuously in mathematics, reaching the 46th percentile on the adjusted scale in 1990. That same year, however, Daniel Webster's third graders scored at the 36th percentile in reading and at the 18th percentile in written language on the adjusted scale -- higher in 1988, but lower than in 1989.

The district also tested students' achievement in reading, language, and mathematics across all grades using nationally-normed tests. On these tests, too, Daniel Webster showed an uneven pattern.⁶ Over three years, the school again scored higher in mathematics than in reading and language. In 1990, for example, the school's composite mathematics score was about the 50th percentile, while reading and language scores lay between the 20th and 25th percentile. While the mathematics and language scores represented some recovery from slippage in 1989,⁷ the reading score appeared to continue a slightly downward trend.

THE VISION OF ACCELERATED EDUCATION AT DANIEL WEBSTER

Daniel Webster had been the very first school to accept the challenge of acceleration from the Stanford group. Responding to the school's nomination by the district, Henry Levin of the Stanford group wrote: "From what [the district representative] told me about the small size, the ethnic mix, and an excellent principal and staff, it sounds like a wonderful choice."⁸ It had taken just three months of visiting back and forth, hearing about the Stanford group's vision, and airing concerns and questions for the Daniel Webster faculty to vote unanimously to start the project.

Getting Started at Daniel Webster

The staff had begun preliminary work on its vision and a mission statement at an initial retreat held at Stanford in mid-October, 1986. In early January, the superintendent wrote encouraging words about the school's progress in planning. He also shared his vision for Daniel Webster to receive the level of attention and support that would make it one of the city's most

attractive schools.

Planning continued after the faculty vote endorsing acceleration in late January, 1987, until August, 1987. Much of the planning was conducted through individual task forces, which Daniel Webster organized in February. Planning sessions varied from hour-long meetings to day-long retreats to week-long workshops involving the principal, teachers, and sometimes the school's paraprofessionals as well.

Members of the Stanford group worked directly with Daniel Webster staff throughout this period. Assisting as needed, they helped prepare for all-faculty planning sessions, conducted training on meeting behaviors and Project READ, and facilitated and wrote up minutes of task force and steering committee meetings. They also planned and hosted two "seasonal retreats" for Daniel Webster and the other pilot school relatively early in the planning period.

Looking back, the principal credited the Stanford group with catalyzing Daniel Webster's energy and enthusiasm. The school and the district had been impressed from the outset that the university was interested in working with at-risk students at the elementary level and was really committed to help.

The collaboration was not without its difficulties, however, as the principal and a teacher recalled its early stages. The principal remembered the conflict as being between the university's "philosophical" approach and practitioners' desire for clear structure and action steps. "Initially, it was hard to know what the accelerated concept was," the teacher said. "There was no real definition." The principal agreed that first year's roughness was due to the "experimental" nature of acceleration at that point. Both the university and school had to learn as they went along.

Problems also came that first year from school staff's knowing full well the type of changes that acceleration would require. The teacher explained, "A lot of people here had to welcome change." Not everyone was prepared to do so.

By all accounts, the first year was strenuous. "There were fists flying and a lot of abuse [between Stanford and Daniel Webster]," the principal joked. The teacher remembered confusion more than strife. "The first year was not exactly chaos," she described, "but a year of not understanding. Nobody, not even Hank Levin, really knew [all about acceleration]."

But teachers felt both that the concept of acceleration made sense and that there was clearly a need to do something at Daniel Webster. "Teachers worked together and talked for many weeks," the teacher continued. They made decisions. As they worked over time, Daniel Webster's version of acceleration also became clear.

Daniel Webster's Vision Statements

The school's vision has remained essentially unchanged since acceleration began. As the 1990 statement expressed it,

Daniel Webster is a school where children, parents, and staff are respected and recognized; where children learn and achieve at their own pace in a safe and caring environment; where teachers are supported and competent in what they are teaching; where parents are welcome and are involved in activities supporting and assisting the school.

While Daniel Webster's own, this vision reflected elements of official district policy, as found in the district mission, philosophy, and expectations for teachers.⁹

The principal recently translated the school's vision statement and the district's policy pronouncements into her own words for a visitor. She wanted Daniel Webster to have money which would equip the school with more resources and tools for learning. She wanted a richer curriculum and she also wanted richer staff development so teachers could learn to work better with children caught in at-risk situations.

Daniel Webster's Goals

Daniel Webster managed to condense its vision into just two major goals. In 1990, these goals were to develop a positive sense of self and school community, and to improve learning and student achievement.¹⁰

Various staff members commented on the school's goals. One teacher said that the essence of acceleration was "having a vision of what's possible for kids and a commitment to move the school as close to the vision as possible." The important fact about acceleration for a number of staff members was that they themselves had created the vision, set the goals, and could work toward realizing them.

Several staff members stressed the achievement side of the goals, declaring that acceleration was about bringing students up to grade level by graduation. Other teachers expressed it as teaching what kids needed to know for their grade level. The principal said that the school's job in acceleration was to make students into productive citizens and, more colloquially, to "develop dendrites" in them.

Some staff discussed the self and community side of the goals. Acceleration also meant dealing with children individually, the principal stated. One teacher said that, for her, acceleration

meant enabling each child to accelerate at his or her own pace and not feel bad. Another said the goal was to take the "disadvantaged" label away and put more positive images in its place.

ACCELERATED FEATURES AT DANIEL WEBSTER

Staff used diverse metaphors to make the point that acceleration somehow organized the change effort at Daniel Webster. Acceleration was "a focus," "an umbrella," and "a way of pulling the threads together," various individuals suggested. These "threads" consisted of a "variety of educational programs geared toward a culturally diverse student population," as Daniel Webster's 1990-91 school accountability report card described acceleration. On the achievement side, the report card mentioned special academic programs in creative arts, math/science, perceptual motor, and language arts. On the self and community side, the report card noted weekly awards for academics and citizenship, the exchange of ideas, and mutual respect among students, staff, and parents.

However, the adoption of common goals and schoolwide programs did not necessarily mean that everyone at Daniel Webster did the same things. Teachers generally worked out acceleration as they wished in their own classrooms. A few collaborated. For example, three teachers jointly developed a specially-funded Native American unit that was offered to students for the first time in 1990-91.

Schoolwide Initiatives

Acceleration at Daniel Webster was not confined to the practices recommended by the Stanford group. Where a Stanford feature is clearly visible, the headings use Stanford terminology. Where the correspondence is less clear, local descriptors will be used.

Committee Structure

Daniel Webster formed its committees for accelerated governance shortly after voting to proceed with the concept. The school started with four topical committees (behavior, language, parent involvement, and time and organization) and a steering committee. By 1990-91, these had evolved into three topical committees -- curriculum, parent involvement and student behavior, and special needs and management -- in addition to the steering committee. Daniel Webster staff, and a few parents, comprised the membership of these groups. The principal regularly attended steering committee meetings and, on occasion, other committee meetings. Each topical committee designated one member to represent it at steering committee meetings.

Committees met weekly for 90 minutes.¹¹ Two process goals to guide committee work were neatly calligraphed and posted inside each committee's spiral notebook. These were to build leadership within the group and to identify, prioritize, implement, and monitor activities that related to the committees' topical areas.

A resource teacher in charge of specially-funded projects helped the committees keep up with their paperwork. It was she who had provided the spiral notebooks and lettered the goals. She also maintained committee files, furnished pertinent information in the three areas for teachers' looseleaf handbooks, and sometimes took the duty of writing steering committee responses in individual committees' notebooks. Keeping the committees going, this resource teacher pointed out, required someone to do the follow-up. At the outset, classroom teachers dismissed this idea, claiming that committees could take care of it themselves. "But it does take a 'me' [to do it]," she insisted, "because they're in the classroom and not everyone takes leadership as to follow-up."

The principal said that participation in accelerated governance changed her role completely. "I used to come to school a grouch," she confessed. "The whole school was a grouch." She characterized herself now as a team player and support person who took care of teachers so they could take care of the children. Overhearing, a parent confirmed this self-report. "Before we came to this school, we heard in the neighborhood that the principal was a bad person. But when they opened the door and we started here, [we learned otherwise and] we stand [up] for her," this parent declared.

Inquiry Process

The key word in acceleration is process, a teacher said. It means "setting a vision, identifying goals, and figuring out how to get there. It includes assessing barriers and problems, figuring out how to move them, and not accepting excuses." She continued, "It also has to do with research, becoming aware of various programs that are available and match your needs, and selecting them." This is the inquiry process in a nutshell.

At Daniel Webster, the inquiry process was carried on through the accelerated committee structure and grade level groups. The inquiry process has provided a forum in which staff could talk to each other. Perhaps even more important, it assured them that they were heard. One teacher explained, "Teachers gave opinions that finally were respected and listened to. [The meetings] bring teachers closer so they can begin to make decisions that are good for kids." Other teachers talked about the teamwork, sharing, and closeness among staff.

The issue of test-taking skills provides an example of how the inquiry process worked in part. In a review of standardized

test scores, the steering committee suggested that students needed to improve their test-taking skills. The issue was referred to the curriculum committee. After checking one commercially-available package, that committee reported that the level appeared too hard for Daniel Webster's students. At a subsequent meeting, the committee decided that the staff needed more information about test-taking strategies before it could make an intelligent decision. The committee finally recommended to the steering committee that a central office resource person brief them on the topic and show them some concrete examples of other available materials. As of this writing, the steering committee was attempting to schedule such a session.

The interaction in committee meetings and the professional exchange and learning that took place as a result of the inquiry process brought with them a sense of intimacy among the staff.¹² This closeness has not barred confusion, disagreement, or hurt feelings from time to time. Committee minutes and observation both confirmed, however, that staff kept talking. Ultimately, the talk resulted in action.

Parent Participation

Daniel Webster's 1990-91 report card stated that 28 dedicated parent volunteers played a number of important roles at the school. These included participation in decisionmaking as well as helping with student supervision, field trips, communicating with non-English speaking parents, and preparing classroom aids. At the behest of individual teachers, some parents also assisted in the classroom. A parent's quilting skills, for example, provided the foundation for a mathematics unit in one classroom.

While some staff stressed how much parent involvement had grown at Daniel Webster, others disagreed. Overall, parent participation was problematic for Daniel Webster. Ways that schools commonly involve parents -- having them come to school for conferences or meetings -- did not readily fit, given the geographic dispersion of its student body, the lack of easy transportation, the limited English proficiency, and the long working hours of many parents. A parent-teacher group had only been established at the school since 1987-88. As recently as fall of 1990, the staff (through the committee on parent involvement and student behavior) were still trying to define parent involvement and to determine the school's vision in this particular area.

Enriched Approach

Staff had designed the curriculum at Daniel Webster to be stimulating and challenging. The curriculum was based on the district's core curriculum guides, but Daniel Webster's staff took it further. What partly distinguished their efforts to enrich the curriculum for all students was their outlook. According to one

teacher, the curriculum conveyed to students, "'We know you can do this work' instead of 'There's not a lot I can do with you.' The curriculum shows respect for their abilities."

Daniel Webster also made use of specially-funded projects to enrich students' school experience with the arts. Two years in a row, the school had arranged for several cycles of a seven-week creative arts program that engaged students in dance, poetry, and painting with local artists. In addition, the school had secured funding to support an arts and movement program for the entire school year.

Whole Language

According to the principal, almost all teachers at Daniel Webster were using a whole language approach. Officially sanctioned by the district, this approach entailed using literature rather than basal reading series as the source of reading material, writing in conjunction with or even before reading for young children, and using other media to develop language and reinforce reading. Teachers in bilingual or language development classrooms especially used whole language techniques in which objects, written and spoken words, context, and movement all served to reinforce vocabulary and concepts.

A primary teacher described the approach through her treatment of the "Three Billy Goats Gruff" story. She read the story to the children and put up sentence strips. Children made goat medallions and wore them around their necks when they dramatized the story. During free reading time, children could put their goat medallions on again and "read" the story to themselves or to each other.

The principal related how hard it had been in the beginning to pull some teachers away from basal texts. She recounted the hours she had spent trying to help one very traditional teacher develop whole language alternatives. Taking off from a story on weather, for example, she demonstrated that weather words like "umbrella" could teach short vowels and "raincoat," "sunshine," and "rainbow" could teach children about compound words.

The district's whole language approach appeared compatible with Project READ, the Stanford group's approach to literacy. Most teachers at Daniel Webster were familiar with Project READ and had used it at one time. Vestiges were apparent in their instructional routines. For example, the principal spoke of using webs to show the traditional teacher how to relate the themes of friendship and plants (and somehow ended up with salad). Another teacher indicated that she liked Project READ techniques for reteaching stories and for helping students analyze the daily thought problems she assigned. She had used Project READ notions of narrative sequence to teach the problem, response, action, and outcome sequence in environmental issues. And she used a weave to

display students' treatment of a set of problems (e.g., hunger, pollution, drugs) and possible solutions (e.g., for drugs, to jail pushers and destroy the supply).

Critical Thinking

Critical thinking figured in Daniel Webster's accelerated program primarily as a part of other program features like the whole language approach. However, some staff made it more of a focus. An example is the upper grade teacher who emphasized writing specifically to promote children's ability to think for themselves. After her students read the classic tale, "Beauty and the Beast," for instance, she had them write a familiar folktale from other than the main character's viewpoint. This teacher posted a daily thought question, often related to current events, on which students wrote a personal response. She also regularly asked students to write a paragraph describing what they really learned from a particular lesson. In addition, she worked on helping students understand how learning occurred and how to recognize in which mode they learned best.

The principal also made critical thinking a focus by putting students through a mental drill each morning during opening exercises. For example, one morning she asked students to compute $7 + 2 + 1 - 5 - 3$. As she received their answers, she talked about the importance of thinking in getting good jobs or in other life situations, and exhorted the students to concentrate on their studies.

Integrated Curriculum

Integrating the curriculum at Daniel Webster consisted either of blending subjects or thematic teaching. Blending subjects meant designing lessons with objectives in more than one subject at once. Language skills could be taught in relation to social studies material, for example, or mathematics in conjunction with literature. Thematic teaching had to do with developing a set of lessons that related to a specific theme, like the weather.

Teachers were free to integrate the curriculum only after the principal removed from them the requirement of adhering to specific time blocks for individual subjects. Eliminating designated time periods for reading, math, and other subject matters was intended to increase the time spent on reading and math overall. No longer were they relegated to a single period each, but were meant to be treated as skills applicable to various contents and to be caught at every opportunity.

The blending of subjects and thematic teaching can both be seen in the Native American unit. Adapted from an eastern middle school, the idea of the Native American unit was eventually to establish a museum of student-produced artifacts related to the

life cycle of Sioux Indians. In one teacher's lesson, students read an article describing turtles and other sacred objects (basically a social studies assignment). In another lesson, they made and decorated their own turtles (basically art). They next studied the concept of symmetry in relation to their turtles (basically math), and then returned to the article to learn about pronouns (basically language arts).

In addition to themes developed in individual classrooms, Daniel Webster had adopted a schoolwide theme, "we are family," in 1990-91. The schoolwide theme was selected to emphasize the unity of the school's diverse populations and to foster a stable, family-like feeling for the students who came from dysfunctional homes. The schoolwide theme was then reinterpreted and adapted in various ways. During the first semester, the whole school concentrated on knowing yourself and your body. Month by month, teachers on the same grade level jointly planned instruction around the given themes. Primary and upper grades identified still other, related themes. For example, the upper grades elected to focus the schoolwide theme on the world and the environment.

An upper grade teacher used the nexus of "we are family" themes to teach about birds. Taking off from the adage, 'birds of a feather flock together,' she had students study and construct nests. They went on to cook eggs (and to learn measurement and number as they cooked). They read O'Shaughnessy, a children's book about a bird trying to learn to fly. Courtesy of the protagonist, O'Shaughnessy, they learned about synonyms and gerunds: flying, soaring, floating, etc. And when O'Shaughnessy did not know where to land, the children studied geography and talked about their own experiences as refugees and immigrants. Finally, they expressed their own experiences in poetry.

The school had proceeded with the integrated curriculum despite some potential drawbacks. Some of these were that it required ample time, resources, and teacher creativity to do well. These are not always equally available. Another drawback was that integrating the curriculum made it difficult to reconcile with some of the regulations for Chapter 1. One problem was scheduling paraprofessionals who were to work only on reading and mathematics. Another problem was making it clear exactly how they were to help when reading and mathematics were intertwined with other subjects. Daniel Webster had not fully explored the implications of this situation.

Concrete Applications and Active Learning

"We found out that Chapter 1 kids learn by being part of what they're learning," the principal asserted. Curriculum and instruction for these children in particular had to be filled with discovery and energy. "So we changed our curriculum." The examples of enriching and integrating the curriculum at Daniel

Webster also contain examples of concrete applications and active learning. The creative arts program, LEAP, for example, enlarged the experience base of the children by exposing them to new modes of expression. Cooking and studying quilts to learn math concepts exemplified making the abstract concrete, engaging children in activities that yielded learning, and linking learning to their own cultures and backgrounds.

Paraprofessionals in Classrooms

Early on, Daniel Webster stopped pulling children out of regular classrooms for Chapter 1 tutoring. Instead, paraprofessionals were assigned to regular classrooms where they provided extra help for Chapter 1 children under the supervision of the classroom teacher. A highly-experienced paraprofessional described her job as helping children having difficulty with whatever the regular teacher did. This paraprofessional sometimes used manipulatives or other materials, usually something the teacher had suggested. In some cases, this paraprofessional felt comfortable suggesting something different and the teacher would often agree.

Students' Self-Esteem

Daniel Webster had developed a number of ways to help students develop a positive sense of self and community. One regular event was the weekly awards ceremony. Excitement ran especially high at opening exercises on Fridays. Children lined up on the playground (or in the cafeteria if it rained), teachers took their places with their classes, and the public address system was plugged in as usual. But on Fridays, with the air of a professional emcee, the principal announced the winners of awards. Each recognized student received a computer-generated certificate and a small prize, usually of school supplies, being named citizen of the week, for example, for having read like a champion, or having accomplished something else noteworthy. (Teachers, too, could receive awards on the nomination of their students.) Some parents, alerted by teachers, also attended. Although the ceremonies ran long and the criteria for nominations had not been fully set, most teachers regarded the awards assemblies as one effective means of enhancing students' self-esteem.

Teachers had internalized the goal of enhancing students' self-esteem and found various ways to foster it. The principal reported that acceleration had helped teachers generally begin to look at "child talent." For example, fostering students' self-esteem was an explicit goal of the Native American unit that three teachers had planned for their classes. The unit would result in a museum of artifacts that the children created. As one of the teachers said, "It will show that these kids are capable of producing fantastic work that people will see."

Not only teachers had internalized the goal of increasing students' self-esteem. A staff member whose job was to act as community liaison mused, "You know how, in everyone's life, there is one person who really turned him or her around? I try to be that person." A paraprofessional who also served as crossing guard echoed the thought. She said she saw almost every child every day. "I try to say something," she reported, "a little thing, to lift this child. It makes a difference. It does."

DANIEL WEBSTER'S REFLECTIONS ON ACCELERATION

One teacher estimated that Daniel Webster was 98 percent there in terms of agreement on the fundamental goals of acceleration. Yet, "even here," another teacher stated, "not everyone believes or agrees with the same philosophy and strategies." What most could agree with was that acceleration had given staff at Daniel Webster a collaborative process for addressing problems, a different way of dealing with students, and a good start on learning how to accelerate the education of their students.

Collaborating

Staff's power and responsibility to make decisions stood out as a major difference that acceleration has made at Daniel Webster. One teacher explained, "Acceleration doesn't solve all the problems. We're like other schools in that we still have the same problems arise. But we have a process to address them." Another declared, "We have common goals and a solid direction. We decided ourselves."

Daniel Webster's collaborative process has changed the way staff work together. A number of teachers recalled their isolation prior to acceleration. "Teachers used to shut their classroom doors and just do their own thing," said one. They credited the accelerated process with bringing the staff closer and increasing professional sharing among them. Several described it as having opened up the school: opening staff to each other, to the community, and to non-traditional methods.

The process has allowed staff to probe problems fully and thus to make better decisions. A teacher noted, "Building on strengths has made people not afraid to say where weaknesses are." Pointing her finger at an imaginary colleague, another staff member said, "We're moving from 'why doesn't she?' to 'why don't we?'" As she spoke, she turned her gesture into an invitingly open palm.

Dealing with students

Raising expectations and changing from remediation to acceleration have impacted how staff treat students and how students feel about themselves. Staff have accepted the notion that labeling and segregating disadvantaged learners undermine

their self-esteem. "Before acceleration," a staff member said, "if children weren't scoring at grade level on standardized tests, they would be put in a remedial group. 'I'm doomed,' they would think." She continued, "But acceleration tells them, 'You can do. We know you can do it.'" Another agreed: "I never let a child feel, 'You can't achieve.'"

Even so, some staff were still surprised and delighted when students performed as staff had professed to believe they could. One teacher described her amazement that students with the least developed reading skills that very day had read chorally, found the beginnings of sentences, located information in the text, and grasped its meaning along with their classmates. This teacher had prepared students for this culminating exercise by telling them that for some, the words in the text would be scary; some would look at all that print and say, 'Never, never, never'; and some would be able to read it right away. But they all handled the material very well, she concluded, still surprised at how well they did.

Dealing with students as individuals represented another way that acceleration has changed things at Daniel Webster. "We're looking more closely at the child as opposed to the children," someone carefully explained. "And then we really try to deal with the whole child."

Some teachers described the effect on the school's overall atmosphere. "We adults have made progress in the way we work together. The kids are more positive and more accepting, too," one asserted. Another put it in terms of the friendships that teachers have developed with each other and with their students. Some students have begun returning from middle school to keep in touch with their friends on staff.

Learning to Accelerate

In addition to their collective work, teachers continued to work out their individual ideas and techniques for accelerating their students' education. "I'm learning to integrate more and I'm trying to learn new tricks," said one teacher. Another volunteered that she was personally taking more risks in the classroom. "Moving away from textbooks is a big step for me," she confided. "But there's lots of sharing between teachers, like at lunch, about what works and what doesn't. It really helps." Others agreed that knowing each other well through the accelerated process has enabled them to be innovative. "If something doesn't work," yet another teacher said, "we know we can try something else."

Despite their focused effort and relatively long experience with acceleration, the Daniel Webster staff stressed the unfinished nature of the enterprise. "I don't think any school has done it yet," a teacher remarked. "We and Hank Levin [of the Stanford

group] know more about the project now," the principal said. Others concurred. "It's difficult, but we're doing it," a teacher observed, and another commented, "We're not claiming we have every piece together, but it's moving." Other teachers emphasized how close to the beginning Daniel Webster still was on acceleration. "We're still babies," someone said. "It took us a long while to know what acceleration meant," someone else said. "We're still learning."

1. Planning, Research and Information Systems, San Francisco Unified School District, District and School Profiles 1989-1990, (San Francisco, CA: San Francisco Unified School District, June 1990), p.1.
2. The climate in San Francisco varies by neighborhood. Potrero Hill is generally sunnier, warmer, and less foggy than other areas.
3. Every classroom opens to the outside. Odd-numbered rooms open toward the office and auditorium on the north; even-numbered rooms overlook the large blacktopped and fenced playground to the south. A series of metal stairways on the outside of the building provides access to the rooms: each stairway leads only to two first floor rooms and two second floor rooms. Inside, the rooms on each floor open directly onto one another. There is not much in the way of interior corridors and there are no interior stairs. Visitors take a while to find their way, but the children and staff have no trouble.
4. The figure for 1990-91 was not available.
5. The district included excused absences in this figure.
6. The Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) was used. Reading testing started in kindergarten, but language testing started in grade 2 and mathematics testing in grade 1.
7. These comments relate to the mean national percentile rank across grades 1 to 5 in reading and mathematics, and grades 2 to 5 in language. For 1989 only, these figures exclude the fourth grade scores which were under review. Year to year gains or losses varied by grade.
8. Henry M. Levin, letter to Assistant Superintendent for Elementary Services, October 2, 1986.
9. San Francisco Unified School District, "District Mission," Daniel Webster Elementary School 1990-91 School Accountability Report Card (San Francisco, CA: Author, fall 1990); "San Francisco Unified School District Philosophy and Expectations," Student Handbook 1990-91 (San Francisco, CA: Pupil Services Department, Division of Instruction), p. 2; "San Francisco Unified School District Expectations for Teachers," EXCEL '90, Curriculum Planning Workshop Packet (San Francisco, CA: Daniel Webster School, September 1990).
10. From the beginning, the staff also adopted "the big three," three rules for students that were meant to reinforce the goal of a positive sense of self and community. The rules were recorded in school documents as early as 1988 and could still be seen in the school office. The big three were: no fighting; call people by

their correct names; and obey and respect school adults and follow their directions.

11. Meetings were held over the lunch hour and an additional period. During the additional period, the principal or another staff member covered committee members' classes by doing fitness activities with the students.

12. The principal personally made sure that teachers were intimate with each other's teaching as well. "It's important that teachers talk," the principal said, "but they also need to see each other teach and see each other's children." Teachers at Daniel Webster had the chance to do that when they became principal for a day, an opportunity the principal gave the faculty once a month. During that time, the principal took over the class of the selected teacher. The teacher would follow the principal's directions, for example, to look in every classroom for certain student or teacher behaviors.

ASSESSMENT AT DANIEL WEBSTER ACCELERATED SCHOOL

This chapter describes actual and ideal assessment at Daniel Webster Elementary School. The chapter examines actual assessment in four sections. The first of these sections discusses classroom techniques for monitoring progress on accelerated learning. The second section treats schoolwide measures of acceleration. The third section covers standardized testing at Daniel Webster. The fourth section considers the school's approach to actual assessment against the Stanford group's accountability model. The chapter ends with the views of Daniel Webster's staff as to the ideal ways of assessing acceleration.

The question of how Daniel Webster assessed acceleration is answered in part by school practices and in part by district and state policy. These can be seen in a variety of assessment activities. Staff pointed out, however, that assessment ranked high among the priority issues to which they planned to attend in the current school year. That examination had begun but had yielded few firm decisions to date.

CLASSROOM ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

At Daniel Webster, classroom assessment of reading, language, and mathematics had for some time been tied to profiles. These profiles listed the proficiencies that students must master grade by grade and indicated the measures for determining mastery. As will be explained more fully in the next section, the curriculum committee determined that Daniel Webster's profiles needed updating.

Teachers meeting in grade level groups started updating the profiles in the fall of 1990-91. Drafts of the reading profiles for two grades suggest the curricular content that would be taught and ultimately would be assessed. These particular drafts contained only the content.

In kindergarten, for example, the left side of the profile listed five skill areas: readiness, word attack, vocabulary, comprehension, and appreciation. Under each were from three to eight specific skills with a place to check off mastery. The specific skills included recognizing colors and upper and lower case letters, identifying word meanings appropriate to grade level by using word recognition strategies, retelling a story in own words, and selecting a book independently. The right side of the profile was left blank for comments.

The third grade reading profile consisted of six skill areas. Three areas were the same as for kindergarten (all areas except for

readiness). The third grade profile contained three additional areas: language mechanics, language expression, and reference skills. The specific skills listed under each area were commensurately more advanced than those for kindergarten. For example, the specific skills included recognizing multiple meanings of words, locating and identifying supporting details, using capitalization, punctuation, and parts of speech correctly, interpreting maps, table of contents, and dictionaries, and communicating feelings about a book.

Once teachers finalized the skill areas and specific skills for each grade level, they would decide on the means of assessing each. This information was to be printed on the profiles. In the meantime, however, teachers apparently made their own decisions about content and day-to-day assessment in the classroom.

Lacking a uniform set of assessment techniques, individual teachers did what they were comfortable with. One teacher used oral and written tests almost exclusively, relying mainly on published tests at the end of a story in reading, for example, as well as dittoes and spelling tests the children wrote out themselves on lined paper. Other teachers used some of these well-established methods, too. They checked homework and boardwork and sometimes gave tests.

Several teachers paid particular attention to students' writing. This usually included monitoring children's finished work, such as book reports and original stories. For one teacher in particular, it included monitoring students' less formal writing assignments. This teacher gave students frequent opportunities and a wide range of subjects on which to write. For example, this teacher monitored students' responses to daily thought questions and their periodic reflections on what they had learned.

Some teachers kept their students' writing in portfolios. One collected samples of students' writing on a topic such as "What makes you a special person?" three times a year. Over time, she reviewed these, looking for increases in volume (some children wrote only one line early in the year) and sophistication. Another teacher kept first drafts and final drafts of student writing at four points during the year.

It was not unusual for teachers at Daniel Webster to keep students' work in various subjects in individual folders. One teacher mentioned that she rarely reviewed class sets of an assignment anymore. Instead, she spent time reviewing an individual child's folder where she could more readily see that child's progress in relation to him or herself. Another teacher remarked that she routinely kept all of her students' work, but was not sure how best to organize it.

Most teachers at Daniel Webster made a point of supplementing

these techniques with others tied more closely to the ongoing, careful observation of students. Some teachers described listening to children's oral explanations and discussion, watching how children interacted in the classroom, and seeing how they performed hands-on learning tasks. These tasks might be oriented toward purely academic ends or social ends, such as a cooperative student project of putting up bulletin boards.

A geoboard exercise illustrates how one teacher assessed student learning during a hands-on activity. Students received tiles (small pegboards) with two lines drawn on each. The length of the lines varied from tile to tile. On some, the lines were parallel; on others, they intersected at different angles. The students' task was to sort the tiles by the length of the lines. As students placed their tiles with others they thought had lines of the same length, they explained their reasoning. Other students were asked if they agreed or differed. In the course of this activity, the class derived definitions from the discussion of the attributes of each set of tiles. The teacher watched, listened, and probed. For her, the exercise yielded information about individuals' and the class' understanding of the concepts and their ability to express them.

Another teacher described looking at the cumulative projects of individuals or groups of students to assess student progress. The Native American unit on which three teachers were collaborating especially lent itself to this means of classroom assessment.

One teacher asked parents to provide information in a collaborative attempt to assess children's progress. Prior to conferences, this teacher asked parents to fill out a short survey on their perceptions of their children's strengths and weaknesses and the manifestations of learning they saw at home. Parents and teacher then compared notes. This teacher also conferred with students from time to time, often during a review of their folders.

To the extent that teachers kept folders of student work and had devised other recordkeeping systems, they were theoretically able to transfer classroom assessment information to report cards, parent conferences, and other public reports of assessment. Yet even teachers with relatively well-developed recordkeeping systems reported that the transfer was imperfect. One teacher said that she carried a lot in her head. Another indicated that she did not see a strong connection between informal classroom assessment and more formal reporting at present and that she, for one, still had to think it through.

Teachers generally indicated that they varied assessment techniques according to subject and learning task. "I don't use discovery methods so much for spelling," one teacher said. She noted that even spelling assessment need not be traditional,

however, commenting that she sometimes taught and checked spelling in literature lessons.

Teachers calculated report card grades several times a year, but only a few teachers commented on grading. One indicated that she made some allowance for students' effort in marking, yet found some areas very hard to grade. She and another teacher both said they would prefer to eliminate report card grades altogether because they tended to overshadow learning for many children.

Students' grades formed part of the cumulative record that was forwarded to the next teachers. Some teachers added little notes for the receiving teacher. However, some teachers made a practice of forming their own initial judgments about each child before consulting cumulative records.

Year-end assessment at Daniel Webster was linked to standardized testing. Standardized testing information was available by individual and class, and was publicly reported by grade in each school. Teachers generally received this information either at the end of one school year or the start of the next. Broken down into subtests (e.g., in word attack skills, reading vocabulary, and comprehension) and showing scores by quartiles, this information enabled sending teachers to adjust their programs and receiving teachers to accommodate for students' areas of relative strength and weakness. One teacher had particularly stressed writing for that reason. Standardized testing will be discussed more fully in a subsequent section.

SCHOOLWIDE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITIES

"How to assess ourselves as an accelerated school was the big question this year," one teacher said. "The curriculum committee decided we needed evidence, something on paper, to show progress." One type of evidence on paper they had come up with was a banner chronicling each class' work -- on very big paper -- that hung in the cafeteria. Another type of evidence was to be the profiles, described in the last section, that teachers were to update. When completed, the profiles will be duplicated for each student and teachers will be able to check off the skills each had mastered over the course of a school year.

Updating the grade-by-grade profiles in reading, language, and mathematics was an ongoing schoolwide assessment activity in 1990-91. The curriculum committee and the steering committee had several reasons for deciding to propose this effort. One was the need to square the profiles with changes in curriculum that had occurred at the district level and at the school as a result of acceleration.

Another reason was the need to align the curriculum with the standardized tests that all students took annually. Still another

reason for revising the profiles was Daniel Webster's scheduled Program Quality Review (PQR). PQR denotes a thorough examination, similar to an accreditation review, to which California schools receiving special funds are subject every few years.¹ The review covered a broad range of school practices connected with curriculum, instruction, and assessment.

Yet one more reason was the sense that, after three full school years as an accelerated school, it was time for Daniel Webster to fix on its assessment tools. The principal said she had been asking about a schoolwide assessment instrument for three years. Some teachers hoped that the profiles would serve to standardize curriculum, instruction, and assessment throughout the school. One teacher, for example, hoped the updated profiles would create a uniform system of recordkeeping that would be especially important for those teachers who had heretofore refused to keep written records of classroom progress.

Teachers were constructing the reading profile from the scope and standards of the district's new core curriculum, the profiles published in the district's literature-based reading series, and the skills assessed in the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS). For math, teachers decided to continue using the profiles published in the school's textbook series that presumably linked skills to tests contained within the series.

Teachers generally regarded their work on the profiles to date as productive, either in terms of additional opportunities for professional sharing or in terms of the expected increase in articulation. However, the degree to which the profiles would incorporate emerging assessment technologies was not yet clear. As one teacher remarked, "We're just in the early stages of saying that traditional assessment doesn't work. We haven't gone really far with a concrete idea of what we do want."

STANDARDIZED TESTING

As described above, standardized testing played a role in both classroom and schoolwide assessment at Daniel Webster. This section places standardized testing at the school in a district context. It goes on to describe shifts in standardized testing and concludes with the comments of Daniel Webster's staff on the current use of standardized tests.

Instruments and Uses

Daniel Webster participated in two standardized testing programs, the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) and the California Assessment Program (CAP). Both represented requirements for the school district and hence for Daniel Webster as well.

Most staff at Daniel Webster meant the CTBS when they talked

about standardized testing. As described in a district publication,²

The Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills (CTBS) is a norm-referenced test measuring basic skills in reading, language, spelling, and math. Tests are given at grades K-11....

National percentile scores are presented for all grades in reading, math, and total test...A separate percentile scale is established for each grade level of students and for each subject area tested....

Grade equivalent scores are presented for all grades in reading, math, and total test...A grade equivalent represents the grade and month in school of students in the norm group whose test performance is theoretically equivalent to the test performance of a given student....

The CTBS was given in the spring. According to a parent, the principal sent notices home announcing the dates and orienting parents to the upcoming testing. She also encouraged them to prepare their children by ensuring that they got enough sleep and ate properly prior to testing. Just before testing began, parent volunteers brought nuts and other nutritious food to class, so that children could keep up their energy.

District and school scores were made available late in the spring, but more detailed information usually became available only during the summer. The district typically made the district's scores the subject of a press release that newspapers picked up. This intense public interest prompted at least one teacher to dub the CTBS the newspaper test.

The district used the scores as a primary means of identifying students for specially-funded state and federal programs. For example, individuals at Daniel Webster who scored below the 45th percentile on reading or math and/or who were recommended by their teachers were eligible to receive Chapter 1 services. At Daniel Webster, these consisted mainly of working with the half-time paraprofessionals in their classrooms.

The district also circulated to the schools lists that ranked all schools by their relative gains in each subject. If the gains were insufficient, the district might ask for revisions in the plans the school had to file to receive its special funds.

Schools, in their turn, sent the scores home to parents. In addition, Daniel Webster planned an annual parent workshop to explain to parents (in Chinese, Spanish, and English) just what the CTBS scores meant. As described in the last chapter, the school's level of performance on the test had led to the suggestion

of teaching test-taking skills to students. Rather than rush into a decision, however, the curriculum committee had decided to explore the issue more broadly and to spend more time evaluating possible test-taking aids.

In contrast to the CTBS, staff at Daniel Webster generally spoke little about the CAP. The explanation may lie in the fact that it involved the third grade alone. According to the same district publication cited above,

the California Assessment Program (CAP) is administered each year to all students in grades 3, 6, 8, and 12. No individual student scores are calculated, only school scores and district-wide scores. Students are tested in reading, written expression, and mathematics, and at some grade levels, also in history, social science, science, and writing assessment....

Each school is...given a ranking on the CAP of from 1 to 99 in each subject area. The ranking indicates how well the school scored in a given subject area when compared to every other school in the state. The state average score is set at the 50th rank.

Because a school's state rank does not take into consideration the characteristics of that school's student body, CAP also gives schools a relative rank. A school's relative rank is a percentile rank which shows how the school compares to the 20 percent of schools statewide most like it in terms of socio-economic level, the percent of students with limited English-speaking ability, student mobility, and the percent of students receiving assistance under AFDC [Aid to Families with Dependent Children].

From the CAP, Daniel Webster could learn about third graders' achievement on various skill areas as well as their attitudes toward reading, writing, and mathematics.³ While the staff as a whole did not pay close attention to the CAP, the scores were nonetheless minutely analyzed in the state's publication of the school's results. The analysis disaggregated scores by sex, ethnicity, grade students first enrolled at the school, and their participation in specially-funded programs, and then compared the school's scores to the district and state.

Shifts in Testing Policy

Although the school district was more or less locked into the state's mandated testing program, change, or the need for change, was very much in the air. According to a central office administrator, the state, for example, was working on interjecting more thinking skills into the math portion of the CAP and test publishers of the CTBS were supposedly working on revisions. But

these changes and others that would reflect more current assessment technologies had yet to alter the tests that students actually took.

This administrator pointed out several factors that made assessment in the San Francisco Unified School District ripe for change. One was that curriculum and assessment were "out of whack" at present. For example, the district had recently adopted a new core curriculum in reading, based on an open-ended approach to literature rather than on the traditional basal reading series. The administrator was convinced that the new curriculum would produce better readers and more sophisticated appreciators of literature. However, the tests were still geared to the more limited goals of the old basals.

Another way in which the misalignment of curriculum and instruction with assessment expressed itself was in the conflict between program diversity and testing uniformity. On the one hand, the district encouraged schools to develop programs that would respond adequately to the diversity of their students. District policy directed staff to plan alternative strategies in order to reach every child. The district had embraced acceleration at Daniel Webster and other programs at other schools for this reason. On the other hand, the district still insisted on uniform tests. High stakes testing forced school people to gear their teaching toward obtaining students' success on the tests, the administrator asserted. This impulse diverted them from focusing on individual children and the approaches that work best for them. "It makes no sense," the administrator said.

Concerns about equity were still another factor to be considered in regard to assessment. San Francisco's black community in particular questioned the validity of the comparisons and conclusions of the current testing program. The administrator explained that the ethnic and racial integration of the district's schools (in which no ethnic group could exceed 40 percent of the population at any school) appeared to justify proponents' claims that school results would not be biased. Schools were not integrated socioeconomically, however, the administrator noted, strengthening opponents' arguments about inequities in the testing program. This and the other issues remained unresolved.

Daniel Webster's Views on Testing

Staff at Daniel Webster could see both the need for and the shortcomings of standardized testing. Sentiment on the need for testing was partly endorsement and partly resignation. Some staff appeared to accept standardized testing without reservation. "The test is a part of life," the principal stated. One teacher appeared totally satisfied with standardized tests. She said all of her materials were geared to the CTBS and implied that it did test what she taught. Another teacher noted that because Daniel Webster's profiles took the CTBS in account, curriculum,

instruction, and assessment were aligned. Another teacher ventured further, stating, "There's a good match between testing and the assessment of acceleration." "It is one of many ways for assessment," someone else said.

But a note of resignation could be heard. "Test results are not 100 percent [of what we need to know in assessment], but we can't eliminate tests completely," another teacher stated. "We have to have some tests," still another teacher said, "but we also have to have thinking [tested]. We'll have to struggle through, just like the state, to get at this."

Some staff also expressed sharper dissatisfaction with current standardized tests. Several asserted that standardized tests did not adequately register some aspects of accelerated learning. Several other staff members mentioned the problem of timed tests which penalize children who know the material but lack speed. Another teacher enumerated the failings of the CTBS in terms of the form of the tests and the potential for children to make mechanical errors unrelated to their knowledge. "I have lots of objections to the CTBS. I write them in [the space for] teachers' comments each year, but I don't know who looks at it," she said.

ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

At this point, it is possible to compare Daniel Webster's approach to assessment with the Stanford group's accountability model. This comparison allows for a critical overview of assessment as part of an ongoing change model at Daniel Webster.

The Stanford group's accountability model was described in the first chapter. Briefly, it set assessment activities in an overall accountability context that consisted of goal-setting, implementation, assessment, and consequences. Each represented a phase of the on-going change process. The model assumed collaboration between school and district in every phase.

Daniel Webster had conformed to the model in some respects. It had set its own goals which appeared consistent with district policy. It had implemented the committee structure of acceleration, made use of the inquiry process, and implemented a number of accelerated practices in individual classrooms or throughout the school. And, after three to five years of acceleration, Daniel Webster was slated to consider summative evaluation. Staff were actively updating the profiles as part of that effort.

On some points, Daniel Webster and its district clearly deviated from the model. Planning for evaluation was not part of the goal-setting process by the school or the district. Further, accelerated goals were never translated into specific targets or objectives. Daniel Webster received, but appeared not to use

available information (such as the results from annual standardized testing) for this purpose. Still further, the school was only now turning to summative evaluation. Yet, even after the profiles were updated, the school would still have develop some way to apply these annual records to a summative judgment about the effectiveness of its accelerated approach. There was no evidence that such thinking had begun. Moreover, the profiles related only to student achievement and not to the self-esteem and community-building side of the school's goals.

The record is less clear on other points. For example, it is unclear whether or not the district negotiated with the school about its goals and whether or not the district arranged with Daniel Webster for the resources it would need for acceleration. The district certainly provided a modest amount of direct support and symbolic encouragement.⁴ The lack of confirming evidence suggests that the district did not definitively shift from a compliance to a collaborative role.

How Daniel Webster and the district would deal with the issue of consequences, which the model called for the year after a summative evaluation, was not yet known.

IDEAL ASSESSMENT AT DANIEL WEBSTER

Staff were asked to describe their ideal for assessing students' accelerated learning and the overall effectiveness of the school's accelerated program. In the main, their comments pertained to techniques of assessment rather than on the content to be assessed.

Ideal Classroom Assessment

Four staff members shared their views on the ideal classroom assessment of accelerated learning. Three indicated that they would retain some well-established assessment techniques and add others. One teacher would specifically liked short question-and-answer techniques (filling in blanks, true or false, and other close-ended questioning methods) for ascertaining student learning. Two staff members specifically, but resignedly, would retain standardized tests. The principal thought standardized tests would be acceptable, but wanted to use criterion-referenced tests (scored in relation to content mastery) rather than norm-referenced tests (scored in relation to other students' performance). A teacher also found standardized testing acceptable. She said, "We have to have some basis for making judgments and standardized tests provide it." Almost as an aside, she added, "We'll never get rid of them entirely."

Two teachers would emphasize expository and narrative writing as a means of assessing student learning. Through writing, students would show their comprehension and would demonstrate

knowledge of content and mastery of a variety of discrete skills (including spelling, for example). One teacher would rely on student writing to the extent that she would replace short question-and-answer assessment; the other teacher would not.

The teacher who would stress writing and retain question-and-answer tests would also like to do much more assessment through students' active learning and concrete applications. For example, this teacher would have students use math manipulatives as a learning tool and would observe them as they did so. Similarly, this teacher would engage students in learning through such activities as cooking or making a teepee. Instruction and assessment in mathematics, for instance, would be closely linked. As students measured the cloth and the poles for the teepee, the teacher would watch, listen, and speak with them to check their understanding.

Ideal classroom assessment for this teacher also included student performances or exhibits. Last year, she had dreamed of having her students build a model village in round and square houses as part of an integrated curricular project. But it proved too big a dream, given limitations of time, energy, and resources. This teacher intended to try something similar with the Native American unit in this and succeeding years.

She was especially excited about the possibilities for integrating subject matters and embedding assessment in students' creative activities and finished products. These projects would demonstrate students' abilities in planning, art, critical thinking, to name just a few. When students strung colored macaroni to simulate Sioux necklaces, for example, the teacher would be able to teach and check their ability to count by two's. This teacher envisioned students writing and mounting plays, composing poetry, and producing videotapes as culminating activities for various projects. When students work in this way, "certain wonderful things happen," she said.

Despite her commitment to this ideal of combined instruction and assessment, she still had a fundamental question about it. After those certain wonderful things happened for students in one teacher's classroom, what would happen the next year in another teacher's classroom? This question pointed to two related concerns. One was the difficulty of summarizing and communicating accurately the skills students had learned. "It's not the clay pot alone," she said, "but the story behind it." How would the next teacher know? Her second concern was about students' ability to transfer their skills from an experience-rich environment to a learning environment that was less rich. A moment's thought reassured her that students would not have trouble. "Once you've learned it, you've learned it," she concluded.

Staff at Daniel Webster commented that neither envisioning

nor realizing the ideal in classroom assessment of acceleration was easy. "It's a hard question," one teacher said. "And there are no grand answers." Another teacher remarked, "I don't know a perfect way. I wish there was an easier way to assess integrated subjects." This teacher added in an earnest yet wistful tone, "If someone would please teach me." According to the first teacher, it will take a long time to figure out. Meanwhile, she predicted, she would continue to do what worked for her and other teachers would do what worked for them.

Ideal Schoolwide Assessment

Those staff members at Daniel Webster who shared their perceptions of what would ideally constitute the schoolwide assessment of acceleration suggested both what should be assessed and how it might be assessed. Several staff members prefaced their comments with the overall proviso that it would be difficult, if not impossible, to lay down general principles for assessing accelerated schools. "It's hard to measure because every school is different," said a paraprofessional. A teacher said, "It depends on the staff and how they react to acceleration." Besides, she added, "you can't necessarily 'see' it in a short visit." Nonetheless, they tended to discuss four areas on which the effectiveness of an accelerated school would ideally be assessed.

Most would assess student achievement. The ideal ways of measuring achievement for some would include standardized test scores. Good accelerated schools would have good scores. For others, a good accelerated school would promote most children, and they would have mastered the expected content. For one teacher, a good accelerated school would demonstrate the high esteem in which children's work was held. For example, their original writings would be bound and preserved in the library, their papers and artwork would be prominently displayed, and their performances would be taken seriously. Others suggested that student work would be kept and assessed holistically.

The degree of a school's unity of purpose and collaboration among teachers would ideally count as additional indicators of the effectiveness of an accelerated school, according to several staff members at Daniel Webster. As one teacher envisioned it, staff at a good accelerated school would agree that children were at the center, as the school's priority; there would be a schoolwide focus (because staff would think about what they do); there would be follow-through (so "ideas don't just plop"); and teachers would talk a lot, share practices that work, and inservice one another. Another teacher added that teachers would have learned to pat themselves on the back, focus on what went right, and respect each other's opinions even when they diverged from one's own.

Parent involvement was still another area in which several

Daniel Webster staff ideally would evaluate the effectiveness of an accelerated school. Parents would show interest in their children's learning, one teacher said. They and the community would get involved. Parents especially would be in classrooms, both presenting parts of lessons and assisting the professional staff.

Yet another area for assessing acceleration in the ideal had to do with the overall environment and how students felt. The attitudes of students and teachers would reflect a positive environment. As one teacher explained, everyone at Daniel Webster is quicker to make positive comments as a consequence of acceleration.

There would be a general feeling of happiness. Children would feel secure, several teachers said. They would know we value them. They would feel more self-esteem, someone said. They would enjoy what they are doing in their classes and feel pride in their school, said someone else. Someone else again said children would be cooperative and considerate with one another. They would come excited, wanting to learn, and happy to be there every day.

SUMMARY

When staff members described how they would like to assess acceleration, the line between the ideal and the actual blurred somewhat. Several reported what they saw at Daniel Webster as examples of what one would ideally see at an accelerated school. One illustration shows both an unconventional assessment tool and makes a closing statement about where acceleration had taken Daniel Webster. Children felt so much better now, a paraprofessional said. "Sometimes we hugged kids and they didn't know how to hug back. Now they know how, a real tight hug. They can touch without hurting."

1. the criteria for elementary schools' pqr were based on 16 factors believed to correlate with effective schools. The 16 factors were: academic focus, rigorous content, a safe and orderly environment, coordinated curriculum, maximum use of time, regular homework, opportunities for student responsibility, structured staff development, teacher-directed instruction, variety of teaching strategies, high expectations, regular assessment, instructional leadership, recognition, home-school cooperation, and a sense of community. Source: California State Department of Education, School Improvement Program, Program Quality Review Training Manual for Elementary Schools 1989-90 (Sacramento, CA: Author, 1989).

2. San Francisco Unified School District, Planning, Research, and Information Systems, District and School Profiles 1989-1990 (San Francisco, CA: Author, June 1990), p. 243.

3. Scores broke down achievement into relatively discrete skills areas. In language, for example, the third grade test reported on eight skill areas such as word forms, sentence recognition, and punctuation. Each of these was further broken down into two or more specific skills, such as prefixes, suffixes, irregular plurals, and contractions under word forms. Attitude items simply asked how much students liked each subject and reported results as to "very much," "a little," "not at all." Responses were correlated with students' mean total score for each subject test.

4. The state-sponsored program quality review (PQR) for specially-funded projects seemed to have rejected the pure compliance stance of other review systems. Yet, while the PQR recognized site autonomy in some matters, that did still not constitute collaboration. That is, everything that was not compliance was not necessarily collaboration.

CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes assessment in the two schools in light of their understandings and practice of acceleration. The discussion is framed in terms of the accountability model that the Stanford group has proposed. The chapter then considers the implications for Chapter 1. The chapter ends with a brief summary of the import of the study for schools serving educationally disadvantaged students.

This report has described the assessment of student learning and other outcomes in two accelerated schools, Fairbanks Elementary School in Springfield, Missouri, and Daniel Webster Elementary School in San Francisco, California. The two schools differed in many ways -- e.g., type of location, student population, amount of time in acceleration, major accelerated features, district size and influence, and the specifics of assessment activities.

However, there were many similarities in how these two schools approached assessment. This chapter stresses the similarities in order to draw out the implications for Chapter 1 programs.

ASSESSMENT IN THE ACCELERATED ACCOUNTABILITY MODEL

The schools' approach to assessment can be summarized under the broad categories which the Stanford group's accountability model provides. In this model, assessment was one of four phases in an overall system of accountability. Although assessment could be described as a discrete phase -- preceded by goal-setting and implementation, and followed by consequences -- some activities related to assessment were to occur in each phase.

Briefly, the Stanford group's model called for comprehensive front-end planning during the goal-setting phase. A school was to structure its goals within a framework provided by its district, develop an evaluation plan, negotiate its plans and obtain commitments from the district for the requisite resources, and assign staff to the assessment effort.

During the implementation phase, school committees were to use the inquiry process as a vehicle for identifying and solving problems. They were to locate possible solutions, evaluate them, and then adopt those that responded to their needs.

Assessment was to consist of formative evaluations every year and a summative evaluation every three to five years. Suggestions for the design of evaluations included the use of longitudinal data, a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods, measurement of process goals, and application of the findings in adjusting plans from year to year.

The summative evaluation would determine the consequences that would follow the next year. This evaluation would give both the school and the district information for analyses of the school's strengths and weaknesses, and would permit them to reformulate the goals if necessary.

The district was to collaborate actively with the school in each phase. During implementation, for example, central office personnel were to assist the school-based committees. The district was to replace a compliance-monitoring stance with a more facilitative, collaborative one.

Both schools adhered to the model only in part. The schools conformed to some of the model's major elements but overlooked others. Although the specifics differed at each school, the following picture of the two schools emerged.

- o Both schools set accelerated goals within a district framework. Their goals addressed student achievement and self-esteem. These goals built on acceleration's premises that all children can learn and that schools must enable them to learn. Teachers accepting the goals understood that they had a new job to do. Teachers now saw their task as offering instruction that engaged students and, when necessary, altering their instructional strategies until all students did learn. Acceleration made them stop and think about how to help their students reach the high expectations of the schools' goals.

However, neither school made assessment a priority during the goal-setting phase. Neither assigned a staff member to be in charge of evaluation or sought an external evaluator to work with the staff. Neither made plans for the summative evaluation during the goal-setting phase.

- o Both schools used accelerated organization to determine some of the accelerated curricular and instructional practices they would adopt. This consisted of an inclusive committee structure and the inquiry process as a method of deliberation. The committee structure in both schools allowed teachers especially to make important decisions about instruction. To the extent that the schools made use of the inquiry process, teachers were able to examine their schools' needs and their strengths, reflect on schooling and instruction, explore new alternatives, and learn from each other.
- o Both schools implemented some accelerated practices that corresponded to their goals. These practices included Project READ at Fairbanks and whole language and the integrated curriculum at Daniel Webster, the enriched approach and critical thinking at both schools, Chapter 1 push-ins at

Fairbanks and paraprofessionals in the classroom at Daniel Webster, and various activities to promote self-esteem like the good news wall and pats-on-the-back at Fairbanks and weekly awards and fostering "child talent" at Daniel Webster.

However, the implementation of accelerated practices in the classroom remained largely a matter of individual experimentation. Staff at both schools claimed still to be learning about acceleration. Many teachers were still discovering the nuances of acceleration and trying to determine what these might mean to them.

- o Teachers in both schools used formative assessment in their classrooms. Much assessment of accelerated learning was embedded in instruction. As students participated in discussion, handled manipulatives, performed hands-on learning tasks, interacted, or worked problems aloud, teachers could catch glimpses of what and how they were learning. Teachers also watched for signs of how students were feeling. Teachers at both schools used these types of informal assessment to tell them which students needed more help or another way of approaching the learning task. Some teachers had students write frequently for similar reasons. This writing varied from short responses prompted by daily thought questions to elaborate narrative or expository compositions.

Most teachers used end-of-chapter tests and other pencil-and-paper techniques to inform them about student progress. In addition, all teachers at Fairbanks and some at Daniel Webster collected student work in portfolios or folders in order to track students' progress over the year. Many teachers also found standardized test results helpful in assessing students' progress on some but not all of their learning goals. These provided information that helped teachers adjust their instructional programs.

Staff members' notions about ideal classroom assessment addressed both what to assess and how to assess it. In both schools, assessment ideally would be integral to instruction. Examples of what would be assessed included students' writing, thinking, problemsolving, and mastery of integrated content over time. Examples of how to assess included portfolios, performances, and other types of exhibitions. Staff also discussed ideal notation systems that would reflect teachers' perceptions of students' performance on learning tasks. Ideally, staff would use these systems to record their judgments on student writing and portfolios, for example, and to communicate with students, parents, and school authorities.

However, teachers remarked on the practical difficulties of assessing accelerated learning in their classrooms. They said it was hard to record each child's accomplishments in the

midst of instruction. It was also hard to know exactly how to extricate the discrete skills that were bound up in students' activities, especially in the integrated curriculum. It was equally hard to know how to grade such learning.

- o Both schools had made a start on evaluating acceleration schoolwide. Fairbanks had assessed certain of its goals during its first accelerated year and had developed plans for assessing those and others during its second year. And staff at Daniel Webster planned during the current school year to address the question of how to assess the skills on its revised profiles.

Both schools used standardized tests as a measure of student achievement. While they used standardized tests chiefly because district and state policy required it, staff at both schools found the data they produced moderately helpful. Students' performance on standardized tests generally gave teachers a way of checking on their performance in teaching specific topics. Most staff accepted standardized tests as a legitimate assessment tool with particular, well delineated uses. Although they generally were resigned to the inevitability of standardized tests, staff members had reservations about the stress surrounding standardized testing and overinterpretation of the results.

Staff members ideally wanted the assessment of acceleration schoolwide to reflect an array of student achievement and self-esteem outcomes. This would include not only standardized test results, but also measures of parent involvement, the school's capacity for decisionmaking and taking action, students' and staff's attitudes and feelings, and the atmosphere of the school. Good accelerated schools would be happy places where teachers respected children and their work, and where children felt good about school, learning, and themselves.

However, actuality fell far short of this assessment ideal. Despite its relatively long experience with acceleration, Daniel Webster had so far avoided tackling the assessment of schoolwide outcomes other than achievement. And although Fairbanks had attempted to measure a wider range of outcomes, the efforts consisted of piecemeal indicators that met few of the Stanford group's design criteria and lacked technical sophistication overall.

Staff in both schools said that operationalizing the ideal would be difficult for them. They had not fully formed their ideas; they needed to think assessment through; they couldn't generalize because indicators could be so varied; they did not know how to proceed. In short, staff felt that the issue was important and complex, but that they were not equipped to

deal with it adequately.

- o Neither school had yet made any plans for a summative evaluation. The accountability model called for an overall judgment on the effectiveness of a school's and district's implementation after three to five years, with preparations starting as early as the goal-setting phase. The time for reckoning was still far off for Fairbanks yet was arguably close at hand for Daniel Webster. There was no evidence that either school had undertaken even preliminary work on a summative evaluation.
- o Neither school had joined the issue of consequences with its district. In the absence of a summative evaluation or a definite plan for conducting one, neither school had yet undertaken the activities of the model's consequences phase.
- o To some extent, both districts had collaborated with the schools in support of acceleration. The districts had been especially active in the early stages, first by agreeing to the concept and then by designating Fairbanks and Daniel Webster to become accelerated schools. During planning and implementation, district representatives participated in some committee meetings and provided other support and guidance.

Neither district had collaborated with the schools to the extent outlined in the model. District participation in planning and implementation fell off over time until the districts dropped out of substantive involvement at the school level altogether. Neither district appeared to have helped identify and commit the requisite resources at the outset, for example, nor to have worked with school committees through the various steps of implementation. Neither district appeared to have totally abandoned compliance monitoring vis-a-vis the schools nor to have replaced it with anything else. School districts may simply be too overloaded themselves to do otherwise. As one central office administrator commented, "We have several things like acceleration going. The problem is tight budgets. It doesn't take Houdini to get staff together and develop a vision. These are not new ideas. We could do this sort of thing if only we had a little more time and a little extra staff. With [supervising a number of] schools, it's hard to focus on any one thing." One of the principals described her district's behavior as akin to benign neglect. But she quickly added that she was not sure she wanted it any other way.

Fairbanks and Daniel Webster offer a picture of assessment in acceleration at two elementary schools. In sum, the picture shows staff who had accepted accelerated premises and principles, and who used them to forge accelerated goals for their own schools and classrooms. The picture also shows some promising changes in

practice that reflected accelerated organization, curriculum, and instruction. To a credible degree, acceleration had replaced remediation at the two schools.

But the picture is incomplete. The two schools had not yet finished transforming themselves into accelerated schools. Staff were still exploring the full meaning and ramifications of acceleration. They were still working on putting accelerated practices in place. They had barely begun to focus on assessment as the accelerated accountability model presented it.

Nonetheless, the picture suggests the strengths and challenges of acceleration in two schools serving educationally disadvantaged youngsters. How these relate to Chapter 1 schools and programs in general is the subject of the next section.

IMPLICATIONS FOR CHAPTER 1

There are several aspects of Chapter 1 programs that will be useful to highlight in connection with acceleration and assessment.

Critical Features of Chapter 1

One feature of Chapter 1 to underscore has to do with its goals. Recent changes in Chapter 1 law and regulations direct funded schools to strive for three new outcomes. These outcomes are students' progress on basic and advanced skills in reading and math, grade-level proficiency, and success in the regular instructional program. In contrast to former goals, these new goals for Chapter 1 dramatically raise the expectations for students.

Another feature is that Chapter 1 provides for schools either to target individual eligible students in their delivery of services or to serve students schoolwide. The criterion is a school's proportion of economically disadvantaged students. Schools with fewer than 75 percent poor students must target individual students. They typically do so by providing supplementary instruction. In an effort to comply fully with federal rules for fiscal accounting, most schools design Chapter 1 programs that can be clearly distinguished from the regular school program. In contrast, schools with 75 percent or more poor students may serve students schoolwide. They thus have greater flexibility in using Chapter 1 resources and may therefore more comfortably draw together Chapter 1 and the regular program.

Still another feature to highlight is the federal requirements for assessing Chapter 1 programs. At a minimum, schools and districts must use a standardized norm-referenced test to measure annual gains in students' progress on basic and advanced skills in reading and math. Additional measures to assess this outcome may be used and may be determined at local or state option.

Regulations require the other outcomes to be assessed as well, but do not specify the means of assessing them.

Last, federal guidelines dictate the specific consequences of assessment for Chapter 1 schools. If schools not designated as schoolwide projects fail to make sufficient progress on the desired outcomes, they must engage in a program improvement process. If local efforts in program improvement still do not produce the expected gains, then schools face the prospect of state intervention in their improvement activities. Schoolwide projects are subject to somewhat different consequences. Their challenge is to make targeted gains within three years or lose their status as schoolwide projects.

Acceleration and Chapter 1

The relation of acceleration to Chapter 1 can now be seen more clearly.

- o Acceleration and Chapter 1 are working toward the same ends. As the desired outcomes of Chapter 1 now read, they are compatible with the goals of acceleration. The basic goal of acceleration is to move educationally disadvantaged youngsters into the educational mainstream in a finite period. As Fairbanks and Daniel Webster have embraced and operationalized this goal, they have addressed achievement in basic and higher order skills, grade-level proficiency, and the overall school success of their students.
- o In order to achieve this goal, acceleration concentrates schoolwide attention and energy on practices that affect individual classrooms and the school as a whole. Acceleration's structures and processes provide the means for schools to achieve the goal. Fairbanks and Daniel Webster demonstrated how schools may take a schoolwide perspective while staying within the guidelines for non-schoolwide project Chapter 1 programs. The two schools managed to make use of the powerful outlook and flexibility more typical of Chapter 1 schoolwide projects even though they themselves were not.
- o Acceleration's accountability model provides a useful understanding of assessment that might also benefit Chapter 1 schools. The model insists that assessment is a fundamental and integral part of a school change process. Rather than being a last or next to last step, assessment has practical utility for school staff during goal-setting and implementation as well. Like accelerated schools, Chapter 1 schools are in the business of school improvement and change. It may be functionally important for Chapter 1 schools, too, to see assessment in this larger context.

Support and Assistance

Although Fairbanks and Daniel Webster made significant progress toward acceleration, they were unable to adhere completely to the accelerated accountability model. For example, even staff members who had tried or who could imagine new ways of assessing student progress admitted their inability to take those ideas further without help. Part of the problem was that staff have limited time to spend on research and reflection. Another part was that school staff also tend to have limited expertise in specialized matters and limited access to sources of new information or developments.

Fairbanks' and Daniel Webster's experience suggests the kind of support and assistance that Chapter 1 schools will need in order to make acceleration's accountability model and organization serve their Chapter 1 goals. It should be noted that Fairbanks and Daniel Webster did get some help from their districts, from the Missouri network of accelerated schools, or from the Stanford group. But they needed more than that help on assessment.

Specifically, they needed help in conceptualizing, planning, and carrying out formative and summative evaluations within classrooms and schoolwide. They and Chapter 1 schools working toward similar goals would need assistance to ascertain the right questions for their situations, to identify and obtain relevant data, and to analyze and interpret data so they can answer their questions. These schools would also need assistance to learn about new assessment technologies and to ensure that they are practicable for classroom or schoolwide use.

In theory, school districts provide much of the support that schools need. As acceleration points out, when schools substantially alter the goals they pursue, their districts are called upon to change how they relate to those schools. Yet districts like Fairbank's and Daniel Webster's had only a limited capacity for offering the requisite support.

Districts, in fact, have their own needs for support and assistance. The exact nature of the help that districts might need is difficult to pinpoint. However, assistance could be targeted toward increasing districts' technical expertise, capacity, and resources, and introducing new organizational structures and norms that would enable districts to be more responsive to schools.

SUMMARY

In a manner of speaking, this report should be seen as an interim and not as a final report. This is because the two schools on which this report was based are still in the process of accelerating education for their students. They have begun but not yet finished the job. As these schools continue their work, they

will shed more light on how to bring educationally disadvantaged youngsters into the mainstream and how such approaches may be assessed.

Some implications of their work are already clear. These have mainly to do with the need for support and assistance. Primary among the needs is for the external development of tools and strategies that will enable school staffs to monitor, measure, and report student progress. New technologies and systems are needed, as are the means of making them accessible and useful to school staffs. In the end, the new tools and strategies will enhance not only the precision of measuring desired outcomes, but the capacity of school staffs to attain those outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

The case study of assessment at two accelerated schools was carried out from October, 1990, to March, 1991. Visits to the two sites, Fairbanks Elementary School in Springfield, Missouri, and Daniel Webster Elementary School in San Francisco, California, took place during November, 1990. Supplementary visits to Missouri Accelerated Schools Network facilitators, to the Accelerated Schools Program at Stanford University, Stanford, California, and to another accelerated school in California also took place during that time.

Data for the study consisted of interviews, observations, documents, and survey results. These are described below.

The primary source of data was interviews with staff and other knowledgeable persons associated with the two schools. Interviews were semi-structured. Informants included the principal, a majority of the teachers, other school staff, at least one parent, and at least one central office administrator in each locale. Open-ended questions addressed to site personnel generally covered the informant's job responsibilities, definition of acceleration, description of acceleration in the classroom and schoolwide, and description of actual and ideal assessment practices. Interviews with central office personnel focused on district assessment policy, involvement in acceleration, and other relevant contextual information.

Interviews with Accelerated Schools Program personnel treated the program's approach to assessment and included some discussion of the chronology and development of acceleration at the two schools. Interviews with the coordinator and facilitators of the Missouri network of accelerated schools included the chronology and development of acceleration in the state, the role of facilitators, and the current status and outlook for assessment of acceleration.

Almost all interviews were conducted face-to-face. However, one central office administrator was interviewed by telephone. In addition, short preliminary interviews were held by telephone with the two principals and Accelerated Schools Personnel at Stanford.

Interviews with each principal lasted 60 minutes or more in total, while interviews with other school-based informants lasted 20 to 30 minutes on average. Interviews with others (i.e., from the central office, the Accelerated Schools Program, and the Missouri network) averaged 60 minutes or longer.

Observations consisted of tours through each school building and grounds while children were present, visits in selected

classrooms, and attendance at selected meetings and other events. Classroom visits lasted from five to 30 minutes approximately. (A supplementary visit to Daniel Webster in February provided an additional ten-minute visit in a classroom.) Meetings included a steering committee meeting at each school, two topical committee meetings at Daniel Webster, and a faculty meeting at Fairbanks. Other observed events included student lunch at both schools, opening exercises, a student performance, and picture-taking at Daniel Webster, and recess and two disciplinary sessions between students and the principal at Fairbanks.

Relevant documents supplied additional data. The documents mostly consisted of school and district publications, minutes of committee meetings, correspondence, and announcements. The files of the Accelerated Schools Program at Stanford were also consulted.

A survey conducted prior to site visits provided another source of data. The survey consisted of 11 items on the subject of standardized testing, and actual and ideal assessment practices in light of acceleration. All classroom teachers and a Chapter 1 teacher at Fairbanks responded. At Daniel Webster, two classroom teachers, one resource teacher, one paraprofessional, and one parent responded. A copy of the instrument is attached.

School staff were invited to review a draft of the chapters describing accelerated features and assessment at their respective schools. The director of the Accelerated Schools Program at Stanford was also invited to review a draft of the chapter describing the Stanford group's approach to acceleration and assessment. The purpose of these reviews was to correct inaccuracies and to identify possible misinterpretations.

11/90

YOUR VIEWS ON ASSESSMENT AND ACCELERATION
Accelerated Elementary School

Your school has been asked to participate in a study for the Office of Technology Assessment of the United States Congress. The purpose of the study is to explore assessment in the context of an accelerated school. To help us understand the important issues in student and program assessment as you see them, please respond to the following questions. Use an extra sheet if you wish. Seal your response in the envelope provided and mail it to Dr. Gail Meister by .

Note: Your answers will be confidential. This means that only study personnel will see your comments and that the authors of specific comments will not be identified in the study report.

1. At your school, as in most schools, teachers are required to administer standardized tests such as the CAP or CTBS.

In what ways do standardized tests influence what you currently do in the classroom...

a) ...by preparing for them?

b) ...by using their results?

In what ways do these tests influence what the school as a whole currently does?

What do you see as the positive effects of these tests?

What are the negative effects that you see?

PLEASE TURN THE PAGE OVER.

2. Your school was one of the first accelerated schools.

How would you say that your school's mission has changed since becoming an accelerated school?

Are standardized tests helpful in what you are trying to accomplish as an accelerated school? If so, how? If not, why not?

Is assessment an important part of being an accelerated school? If so, how? If not, why not?

How has being an accelerated school changed things in your classroom?

Has your way of assessing students changed as a result of acceleration? How?

3. It may take several years to realize fully all the aspects of acceleration.

Are there some new or different ways of assessing students that you might want to try in the future? What are you thinking of and why?

What specifically would you need to try out these new ideas or to use them on a regular basis?

Grade/Assignment _____ Number of years at your school _____
(counting this one)

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP.

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