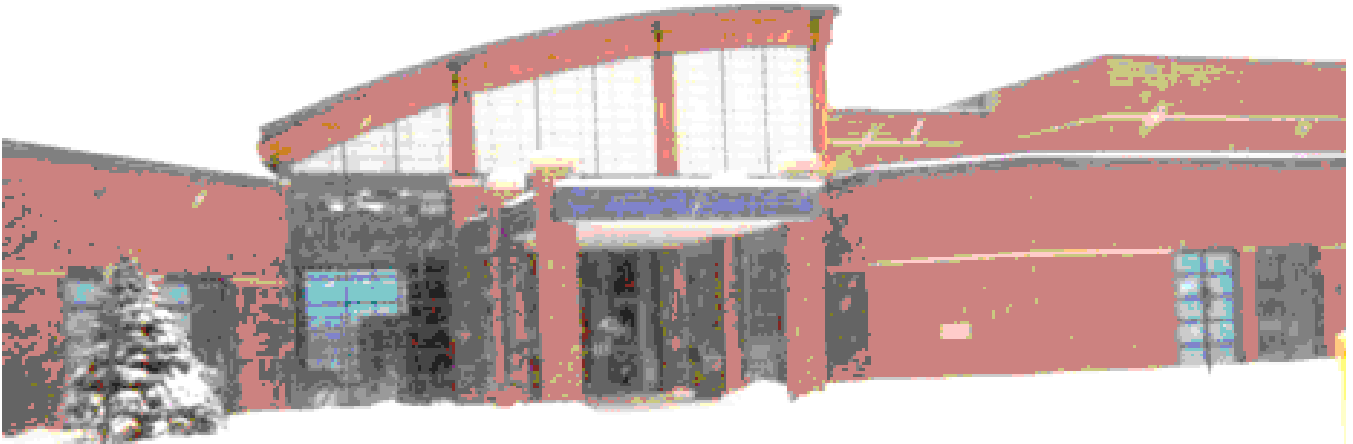


SCHOOL PROFILE
Washington Elementary School
400 Michigan Avenue
Oconto, Wisconsin 54153



- Type of School:** *Elementary (K-4)
*Brand new school building opened in Fall, 2000
- Location:** *Oconto: located approximately 30 miles north of Green Bay, Wisconsin
*Rural: Also serves students from neighboring rural communities
- Size:** *Typically 5 classes at every grade level
*Student-teacher ratios are 15-1
*450 total students
- Student Population:** *Majority of students are Caucasian
*Changed from a K-8 to a K-4 school in Fall, 2000
* All students are fully included with the exception of several students having severe disabilities who are mainstreamed for a minimum of 50% of their day.
- Principal:** *Nancy Burns, for six years
*Strong supporter of inclusive education
- Teachers:** *A mix of new and experienced teachers in the building

Summary of Classrooms, Teachers, and Students in the Research Study Washington Elementary School – Oconto, Wisconsin

Spring Semester, 1999:

Grade: Grade 1
Teachers: Ms. Evelyn Stewart
Target Students: Whole class observation
Class Make-up: 15 students total; 5 girls and 10 boys

Grade: Grade 1
Teachers: Ms. Mary Lou Gazdik
Target Students: Whole class observation
Class Make-up: 15 students total

Grade: Grade 1
Teachers: Ms. Heroux
Ms. Bushmaker
Target Students: Whole class observation; 1 CD student receiving 1 on 1
Class Make-up: 24 students total;

Grade: Grade 3
Teacher: Ms. Jill Maus
Ms. Kathy Pinkart
Target Students: Whole class observation
Class Make-up: 30 students total

Grade: Grade 4
Teachers: Mrs. Rhonda Ross
Target Students: Whole class observation
Class Make-up: 21 students total; 5 boys, 16 girls

1999-2000 Academic Year:

Grade: Grade 1
Teachers: Ms. Evelyn Stewart
Target Students: Whole class observation
Class Make-up: 15 students total; 7 girls and 8 boys

Grade: Grade 1
Teachers: Ms. Bushmaker
Target Students: Whole class observation
Class Make-up: 17 students total; 8 girls and 9 boys

Grade: Grade 3
Teachers: Ms. Jill Maus
Ms. Kathy Pinkart
Target Students: Whole class observation
Class Make-up: 30 students total; 14 girls and 16 boys

Grade: Grade 4
Teachers: Ms. Rhonda Ross
Target Students: Whole class observation; Joey, student referred for ED
Class Make-up: 16 students total; 10 girls and 6 boys

Grade: Grade 4
Teachers: Ms. Norton (Rhonda Ross on maternity leave)
Target Students: Whole class observation;
Class Make-up: 16 students total; 10 girls and 6 boys

Researchers who observed and recorded data

Paula DeHart	Spring, 1999 – Spring, 2000
Kim Beloin	Spring 1999
JoAnne Suomi	Spring, 1999
Nancy Proctor	Fall, 1999 – Fall 2000

People Interviewed

2-11-00	Jill Maus	Third Grade Teacher	Interview by: DeHart
2-11-00	Kathy Pinkart	Third Grade Teacher	Interview by: DeHart
2-11-00	Mrs. Bushmaker	First Grade Teacher	Interview by: DeHart
2-11-00	Evelyn Stewart	First Grade Teacher	Interview by: DeHart

Curriculum:

Reader's and Writer's Workshop

EMPOWER CITIZENS IN A DEMOCRACY:

- Teachers choose to team teach or teach individually knowing that all teachers will be teaching all students (with and without disabilities).
- Students are involved in a leadership/service learning program in the school and community, such as an intergenerational program between the students and community members.
- Principal's advisory council, which includes staff and parents, makes decisions ranging from staffing, scheduling, budgeting, and general problem solving.
- Students resolve their conflicts through the peer mediation program for peaceful resolution.

INCLUDE ALL:

- 98% of the students with disabilities are included in general education classes fulltime.
- 2% of the students (those experiencing severe mental retardation or severe emotional disturbance) spend no more than 50% of their day in a separate classroom/program with a special education teacher.
- There is at least one dually certified (i.e., special and general education) classroom teacher at each grade level who not only teaches a heterogeneous class of students at that grade level, but also serves as a consultant to the other grade level teachers.
- Students with disabilities are proportionately assigned to each of the general education classrooms. (i.e., there is no clustering of students with disabilities in general education classrooms). All classrooms serve a heterogeneous population of 15 students.
- All Title I services are delivered within the general education curriculum through the use of paraprofessionals, reducing the size of reading groups and extending the time in after school and summer programs.
- Many students receive speech and language services within the general education classroom.

TEACH & ADAPT FOR DIVERSITY:

- Extensive training has been provided to all instructional staff in how to make effective modifications and adaptations. Appropriate accommodations for students with and without disabilities as made by classroom teachers.
- No specialized or different curricula are used for students with disabilities who are included. All students participate in the general education curriculum with adaptations and modifications.
- The integration of Multiple Intelligences at all grade levels increases the participation and success of all learners.
- Cooperative learning groups are used at all grade levels, especially at the primary grades.
- Drama is a focal point of the elementary curriculum. Art and technology are also well integrated into the curriculum.
- 100% participation rate on state and district testing at the 3rd and 4th grade levels for the past 3 years.

BUILD COMMUNITY & SUPPORT LEARNING:

- Students with disabilities and others who are academically at-risk are supported by their classroom teacher given the low student-teacher ratios of 15 to 1. A grade-level classroom teacher, dually certified in general and special education, also serves as a grade-level consultant and support.
- Peer supports are developed through cooperative learning, buddy programs, peer tutoring and peer mediation programs.
- Daily common team planning time is provided in addition to contracted prep time.

PARTNERING:

- A Family Involvement Coordinator is employed by the school and has developed a strong program of parent volunteers.
- A Parent Resource Center in the school offers many parenting resources.
- Positive Parenting classes are offered at the school throughout the year. Tapes of the positive parenting approaches are also broadcast on the public access channel.
- The school facility is used from 6:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. for before school and evening programs offered to the community.

Introduction

Washington Elementary School is located in the rural community of Oconto in northeastern Wisconsin. It has a homogeneous population of students with and without disabilities. Washington Elementary School was chosen as a research site because the school community exemplifies the five principles of Whole Schooling in its own unique, yet effective way. This school profile will provide specific examples illustrating how the Whole Schooling Principles are implemented across age, grade and ability levels.

Principle 1: Empower Citizens in a Democracy

The first principle of Whole Schooling is to help students to function as effective citizens in a democracy. Because of the important role schools play in teaching essential participatory skills and in perpetuating democratic ideals, Washington Elementary School was examined for its nurturance of democratic decision-making. The examples below are taken mainly from interviews and observations over a two-year period of time. When looking at the many examples, several main themes or findings emerged.

Finding 1: Committed respected school leaders support the school community in democratic decision-making.

Nancy Burns has been the principal of Washington Elementary School for seven years. At the beginning of the Whole Schooling Research Project, the school included grades K-8. In the last year of the study, a brand new elementary school building was completed and Mrs. Burns became the principal of the new K-4 building. The first example of how Nancy Burns supported democratic decision-making related to participating in the Whole Schooling research project. Rather than requiring teachers to participate, she asked teachers to consider being involved and she said five teachers enthusiastically agreed. About this approach, Nancy Burns said, "I do everything this way. I don't force people to do things or they make sure it doesn't work."

Washington Elementary School teachers said they felt supported by Mrs. Burns. Comments from teachers included the following: "If you come up with an idea, Nancy will help you do it," and "I like Nancy. She has supported everything I have ever come to her with. It seems she respects my opinion and lets me go out on a limb." Teachers expressed an ability to make decisions about curriculum and scheduling and were observed implementing creative and engaging lessons of their own design in their classrooms.

Another form of democratic decision-making in the school supported by Nancy Burns is the Principal's Advisory Council. Teachers and parents serve on the Principal's Advisory Council, which makes decisions on a variety of school policies including "how many recesses to have and who gets to run the laminator." In addition to the Principal's Advisory Council, teachers discussed a variety of committees they serve on that have decision-making power in the school including the Science Fair Committee, the Read Across America Committee, the Field Day Committee, and a Report Card Committee that was formed to design new report cards.

While Washington School teachers felt they had control over some decisions in the school, they felt there was a limit to their decision-making power. One teacher said, “[Decision making] is about 50/50. 50% we decide and 50% we don’t have a say. You follow the chain of command. Teachers, then Nancy, then the superintendent, then the school board. The school board has a lot of power.” The perception of the administration’s power in the district was expressed by another teacher who said, “I know there is a Principal’s Council, but I have never sat on it. I hear that even though people get to have their say, decisions are made administratively. This includes the principal, but also includes the superintendent.”

As the last statement above reveals, Washington teachers sometimes felt their ideas and recommendations were requested and then disregarded, leading to a feeling of disempowerment. One specific example given was related to the Report Card Committee in Washington School. A teacher explained, “The Report Card Committee drew up a rough draft of a report card and then it still ended up being what Nancy wanted at the beginning.” The mixed messages Washington teachers felt they were getting from administrators about decision-making led to a feeling of frustration as expressed by a teacher who said, “We do know what works and what doesn’t. We are asked, but what we say doesn’t matter.”

Democratic decision-making is an area that Washington School administrators and teachers may want to examine and discuss since this is a critical component of Whole Schooling. When teachers feel that they don’t have a voice in important school decisions, there is a risk that they will not support administrative initiatives even when those initiatives may benefit students.

Finding 2: Students are involved in leadership roles and decision-making and teaching.

Since the teaching of democratic skills and principles is such an important function of schools, Washington Elementary School was examined for the ways in which students are encouraged to take on leadership roles and make decisions in the school and classroom. The primary area where Washington students were observed making decisions was related to classroom instruction. During Readers and Writers Workshops, students were routinely seen making decisions about which books to read, what topics to focus on in writing, what revisions they wanted to make in their writing and what format they wished to use to publish their writing. For example in one classroom observation, fourth graders were writing personal narratives to apply their knowledge of sentence structure, story structure and grammar. The students were able to choose what they wanted to write and then put their work into one of the book formats they had learned including pop-ups and wallpaper books. As this classroom scenario illustrates, Writers Workshop puts students in the role of real authors who made important decisions about what to write and in what form that writing would be published.

Also in Writers Workshop, Washington students conferred with peers and provided them with positive feedback and suggestions for how to improve their writing. This allowed students to serve in a teacher role for writing instruction, critically evaluating another

person's writing, giving them encouragement for their efforts and suggesting possible ways to continue to improve and grow as writers. Clearly, Washington teachers put a high priority on students serving in this teaching capacity because they devoted class time to teaching students the skills of peer conferencing and regularly built peer conferences into daily writing instruction.

While there were some examples of students serving as teachers and making decisions found in Washington Elementary School as observed during Readers and Writers Workshops, learning how to participate in democratic settings is a crucial aspect of Whole Schooling and one that school community members are encouraged to explore further.

Finding 3: Schools grow and change quickly, but schools reform slowly.

Although finding 3 emerged out of the data from the eight research schools, observation and interview data did not provide evidence that finding 3 is present at Washington Elementary School. However, it should be noted that this doesn't mean that there are not times in which change and growth occurs quickly. For example, at the end of the time when classroom observations were being conducted, Washington Elementary School staff were getting ready to move into a new school building, which was going to change the school surroundings, but there was no evidence noted in interviews and observations that this was going to impede or change school reform efforts.

Finding 4: School leaders promote and believe that continual staff development, research, and collaboration improves the quality of education for all.

There was evidence from observations and interviews that staff development, research and collaboration were supported by school leaders in Washington School. Professional growth opportunities that were discussed by teachers included in-service training in new teaching techniques. A specific example mentioned was an Earth Day in-service where teachers learned to make a globe from a paper bag, which the first grade teachers decided to try in their classrooms. While teachers didn't talk specifically about receiving training in Readers and Writers Workshops during interviews, it was clear from classroom observations that teachers had been educated in the philosophy behind and the techniques for carrying out effective Readers and Writers Workshops. Washington Elementary teachers were seen consistently teaching students effective reading and writing strategies, demonstrating the steps in peer conferencing and helping students become self-directed readers and writers.

Teachers said they felt Nancy Burns, the principal was "up on new trends" and involved in quite a bit of grant writing from which they had benefited. Some specific grants and programs that teachers mentioned Nancy spearheading included guided reading, the SAGE program (which provides funding to help keep class sizes to 15 students), reading grants to purchase books and materials, and the citizenship program. While teachers were appreciative of the benefits of Mrs. Burns' efforts, they also felt there were times when she took on too much. One teacher interviewed said, "As far as being a leader, she came with a lot of ideas for changes. We don't do a good job of getting used to things. We

would have been more supportive if we had more time to deal with each change. A lot of her ideas, like inclusion, will start without the proper training.” Inclusion was mentioned by other teachers as well, as an area where more training was needed. One teacher said her own background was not in special education so she felt she didn’t really know how to work with students with special needs. She said, “I would like to see more information and more workshops. I don’t want the theory, I want the meat.” Because support and training are crucial to the successful inclusion of students with special needs this is an area for further discussion and examination. School reform efforts that are important and worthwhile take time and require a long-term commitment on the part of administration and staff.

One last indicator of the willingness of Nancy Burns to support professional development, research and collaboration at Washington Elementary School was their participation in the Whole Schooling Research study. Mrs. Burns and the staff at the school opened all aspects of the school’s operation to close scrutiny. The attitude of the school community was that they were proud of the good things happening at Washington School and they wanted to share this with others who could benefit from their example.

Finding 5: Diversity across ethnicity, SES, culture, ability, etc. is accepted and valued.

Diversity in the traditional sense of the word, which usually means race, was not very evident at Washington Elementary School in Oconto. Oconto is a small, rural Wisconsin community and the majority of the residents are Caucasian. The homogeneous nature of the Oconto community is reflected in the student population. While there is little racial diversity in Washington School, there was evidence that diversity in the form of ability and special needs was accepted and valued. The majority of students with special needs were fully included in general education classrooms. Within these classrooms, students with disabilities were observed working successfully individually and in cross-ability groupings. Washington Elementary teachers said they worked hard to ensure that students with special needs were involved in the same activities as students without disabilities, at times with modifications. Readers and Writers Workshops were both mentioned as instructional approaches that helped facilitate successful inclusion because within the workshops all students work at different and developmentally appropriate levels.

While there was widespread support for the inclusion of students with diverse abilities and needs, one teacher raised concerns about whether all students are best served by inclusion. She said, “All the time we work with students who are having special problems, we rip off the kids at the upper end.” She suggested that the special education students could be “pulled out just for hardcore classes,” but then said she realized that that was not really inclusion. A possibility she suggested for change was to have a special education teacher come into the general education class to provide support. The low pupil to teacher ratios were partially achieved at Washington School by hiring dual certified teachers who could teach their own classroom of students and provide help for teachers at the same grade level in working with students with special needs. This approach made it more difficult for the special education teacher to work or team with

other teachers in general education classrooms. Since a concern about the value of fully including students with special needs in the general education classroom was raised in the school, Washington School community members are encouraged to engage in ongoing dialogue about the value of inclusion, the best ways to support teachers in their efforts to include all students, and effective strategies for meeting the needs of all students.

There is one additional area of diversity that Washington School community members are encouraged to examine related to gender. While in some classrooms boys and girls were observed sitting and working together in mixed gender groupings, in other observations students moved through the halls in “boy lines” and “girl lines” and girls were directed to do one activity while the boys were directed to do another. It is understandable why teachers might feel that separating boys and girls in this way could deter disagreements between young boys and girls and avoid discipline problems, but there is a larger issue of what happens when students grow up seeing divisions along gender lines as natural and even desirable.

Finding 6: Students, teachers, and parents are encouraged and empowered to develop their true selves.

Several of the ways that Washington Elementary students and teachers were encouraged and empowered to develop their true selves have already been covered in previous findings of Principle 1. The teachers had control over the ways in which they presented curriculum in their classrooms and were observed implementing Readers and Writers Workshops and a variety of other engaging instructional strategies. Students were encouraged to make decisions and serve as peer teachers within Readers and Writers Workshops.

There are some additional examples of Washington students being encouraged to develop their true selves that merit sharing. One of these is the ways in which Writers Workshop encouraged students to express their individuality through the books and stories they wrote. During one classroom observation of a Writers workshop a group of boys and girls, who were sitting at a table together illustrating books, were asked if they all wrote their own stories or did the same story. One of the little girls responded, “We all wrote our own books. We wrote them about things that we have done. My book is about my family’s trip to Florida. Some of the books are almost the same because we have ideas that are the same.” A little boy at the table added, “No one else thought about monkeys in their stories, just me.” The children continued to illustrate their books until the teacher dismissed them for recess. Washington students were seen writing books and stories about a wide variety of topics including personal experiences, animals, hobbies and even the Green Bay Packers. In this way, students were able to share thoughts and feelings on topics that were important to them.

In another interesting example, not only were students encouraged to develop their true selves, they were encouraged to reflect on their own growth and development. In an observation conducted close to the end of the school year, third grade students were given personal narratives they had completed on the first day of school. As one of the teachers passed the writing samples back to the students, she said, “We have saved your original

writings. These are fun to look back at. They show how much you have improved this year. Now you have one whole year of growth.” The teacher encouraged students to share the narratives with one another and then instructed them to write new narratives about themselves. One difference in the assignment she pointed out to them was that their end of the year stories would be in cursive, which is something they learned during the school year. As students were working on their new narratives, the teacher commented that several students noticed they had even spelled their own names incorrectly on the first day of school. This activity encouraged students to develop and reflect on their true selves in two ways. First, because the writing assignment was a narrative telling about themselves, each student was able to see how they had changed as a person over the course of the school year. And second, because students were able to look at writing samples from the beginning of the school year, they were able to see how they had grown as writers during that time period.

Principle 2: Include All

The second principle of Whole Schooling supports instructional practices where all children learn together across culture, ethnicity, language, ability, gender, and age. This principle is exemplified in many ways at Washington Elementary School. The following findings and corresponding examples will demonstrate this.

Finding 1: Students with disabilities have access to the general education curriculum.

Washington Elementary School has a fairly small population of students identified with special needs and the numbers vary from grade level to grade level. For example, the first grade teachers shared that in the first year of the study, they had eight students identified with special needs and in the second year they only had one child identified as having special needs. The third grade teachers also had only one child identified for special education during the second year of the study when most of the observations were conducted. Finally, in the fourth grade classroom included in the research study, one student was referred and identified as ED during the second year of the study. While the numbers of students identified as having special needs was small, the teachers mentioned they also had students in their classrooms who were quite low academically or had behavioral challenges, but did not qualify for special education. Regardless of their disabilities, all students with special needs were fully included in the general education curriculum.

Washington teachers said they addressed the needs of students with disabilities in a variety of ways. The use of Readers and Writers Workshop for reading and writing instruction worked well for including all students because the workshops were set up to allow for a wide range of abilities and needs. One teacher explained that students with special needs are fully included in Writers Workshop, but she does grade a little differently. She said that she might focus more on the child remembering to put a capital letter at the beginning of a sentence and a period at the end. She also said she would expect shorter sentences.

Another teacher said she had a student who was identified in the area of speech and language and that the student was fully included with some modifications. The modifications included requiring fewer sentences in language arts and fewer problems for math. The teacher also explained that she cued the student before calling on her, she said she would say to the child, "I am going to be calling on you next." Another support the teacher gave to the student was to start with her when there was independent work time and check back with her frequently. Finally, since the teacher used Readers Workshop for reading instruction, she said the student was able to "work independently and read at her level." She went on to say, "She is doing what everyone else is doing, but she is reading at her level, which all of the kids do."

The student who was referred and identified for ED in the fourth grade classroom was fully included in the general education curriculum. The fourth grade teacher used a variety of strategies to help keep him focused on class activities. She used physical proximity to stop problems early and redirect the student's attention. She also talked to him frequently about his behavior and what he needed to do to work more successfully. These conversations took place quietly and privately so this student was not singled out in front of the rest of the class. This student also had access to a resource room and occasionally had a one-on-one aide if his behavior warranted extra support. These strategies were utilized more during the time the regular teacher was out on maternity leave and a substitute teacher took her place. By the end of the year, the regular fourth grade teacher said she was quite pleased with the student's progress and felt he would do well when he moved on to fifth grade in the middle school.

One last support utilized in Washington Elementary School was an amplification system installed in some of the classrooms for students who had speech, language and/or hearing needs. Teachers were observed using the amplification systems even in classrooms where there were no students with speech, language or hearing needs because they felt it worked well for all students.

Finding 2: Inclusion is valuable for kids with disabilities.

One of the teachers certified in both special and general education teaching at the first grade level had an interesting comment on the value of inclusion for students with disabilities. She shared that when she was still working solely as a special educator she went to observe in a fourth grade classroom. Of the observation she said, "I realized that I had kids sitting in my special education classroom and then I saw what was going on in a 4th grade classroom and I thought, 'With a few modifications these kids could be working in their own classroom.' I do see a positive side of inclusion." This special educator offers a unique perspective because she has been trained to work with special needs students and sees the potential for their success in the general education classroom with some modifications and supports. In observations of this teacher, she was seen to work very effectively with students with and without disabilities.

Classroom observations in Washington School classrooms also revealed teachers fully including students with special needs in their classrooms and making modifications where needed. Most of the teachers felt that inclusion was working well and that students

with disabilities were learning and making progress in their classrooms. As mentioned previously, a student who was referred and identified for ED in the fourth grade participated successfully in the general education classroom and the teacher felt he would do fine when he moved on to fifth grade the following year.

While most comments about inclusion were positive, there were some reservations expressed about whether the needs of all students were being met. One teacher said, “I don’t feel qualified teaching special education kids. I think about the teacher that used to do special education and think about how she could really focus on their needs. What might help is if we had someone in our room who could give them special help. I keep expecting things to click but when we get test results I see no, the kids didn’t get it.” Another teacher made a similar comment. She said that when the school moved to having a dual certified teacher at her grade level rather than a special educator who just worked with students with special needs, she felt it became more difficult to receive the support she needed. She said that because the dual certified teacher had her own group of students she had less time to work with other teachers.

Washington Elementary School staff are encouraged to continue to dialogue about the value of inclusion for students with disabilities. While the majority of teachers felt that inclusion was beneficial for students and were observed working successfully with students with special needs, there were other teachers who said they were struggling to meet the needs of all students. These teachers may need further training, time to talk to other teachers in the school who are successfully including all students, and/or opportunities to observe in classrooms where effective teaching strategies are being implemented.

Finding 3: Inclusion improves the educational experience for all kids.

There were several ways that inclusion improved the educational experience for all students in Washington Elementary School. The first way is related to the 15 to 1 pupil to teacher ratios that were found in all classrooms. This was partially achieved by putting dual certified teachers at each grade level to teach a classroom of students rather than having pull-out programs. The lower class sizes helped teachers to meet the needs of all students including those with and without disabilities. In addition to the benefits of low pupil to teacher ratios, placing a dual certified teacher at each grade level had positive effects in other ways. First, students with and without disabilities in the dual certified teacher’s classroom had the benefit of being taught by someone with special expertise in addressing individual learning needs. Second, the other teachers on the grade level team also had access to this same expertise. With this kind of team set-up, all teachers learned modifications and other effective strategies for teaching students who were struggling to learn whether or not they have been identified with disabilities.

Washington teachers also said that utilizing small groups in inclusive classrooms helped all students learn. One teacher said, ““I think using some small group activities works well. I’m not always pulling the kids who are needing help, I also work with the kids who don’t need extra help. I can work with them on things and the other kids can work on something else. That is good for all of them.” Small groups were observed being

used especially effectively in Readers and Writers Workshop where students with and without disabilities read together, reviewed written work and made plans for publishing their writing.

Students with and without disabilities benefited from the team teaching arrangements found in some Washington School classrooms. In a classroom with 30 students and 2 teachers, the teachers were able to work with students in creative ways. At times, one of the teachers was observed teaching most of the students in a large group setting while the other teacher worked with an individual or a small group. At other times, most of the class was working independently while each teacher worked with an individual or small group of students. In this way, students with and without disabilities had access to a great deal of teacher interaction and individual help.

A final way that all students benefit from inclusive practices is related to Reading Recovery. One teacher shared that for a graduate project, she studied the students in her class using the Reading Recovery approach. She found that Reading Recovery had a positive effect on all students, some who were identified as having special needs and some who were not. She noticed with one student who was not identified with special needs, but was quiet and lacked confidence, Reading Recovery gave her more confidence in her reading. The teacher said she believed Reading Recovery worked well for her students with special needs because they were reading the same book repeatedly. This story seems to support the premise that if an instructional strategy is effective for students with special needs, it is effective for all students. Reading Recovery, a program developed for students struggling with reading, offered this teacher effective strategies to use for all of her students.

Finding 4: Inclusion provides positive, proactive supports for students.

Washington School students with disabilities were observed working successfully with their classmates within cross ability groupings. This was especially true during Readers and Writers Workshops where students engaged in partner reading and peer conferencing to critique written work. Washington teachers were observed pairing students with disabilities with their non-disabled peers. For example, in one classroom, a student with CD who had been receiving one-on-one help from the classroom teacher finished her work and went to the bookshelves to look at the books. The teacher then directed her to sit by another student in the class who proceeded to read to her. While the two students read together, the teacher met with a different small group to talk about their writing. As this example demonstrates, Washington School students with special needs received support from the classroom teacher and from peers. For the most part, students with special needs were so seamlessly included that it was difficult to tell who had disabilities and who did not.

Finding 5: Inclusion promotes the natural distribution of students.

As stated under a previous finding, the population of students with special needs in Washington Elementary School is fairly low and varies from grade to grade. These students are have been naturally distributed among the grade level classrooms. There was no indication that the practice of clustering students with needs into one grade level

classroom was being implemented. Students with special needs were observed being included in all classrooms at all grade levels. Therefore, based on the data, it is evident that Washington Elementary School believes in and implements the natural distribution of students with disabilities within general education classrooms.

Principle 3: Teach and Adapt for Diversity

The third principle of Whole Schooling promotes the philosophy and practice of designing instruction for diverse learners that engage them in active learning in meaningful, real-world activities. The following findings and examples illustrate how Washington Elementary School implements this principle.

Finding 1: Instructional practices are responsive to learner's needs, interests and abilities.

Washington Elementary School teachers utilized a variety of instructional practices that were responsive to learner's needs, interests and abilities. Two instructional programs they implemented that were particularly effective for addressing individual needs and abilities were Readers and Writers Workshops. Classroom observations showed Washington teachers using Readers and Writers Workshops consistently and effectively. In a typical Readers Workshop lesson, children chose books they wanted to read from bins filled with books. Students then spread out around the room where they read their books to themselves or to classmates. As they finished books, they went to the book bins to get new ones. While the children were reading, the teacher in the classroom moved systematically around the room meeting with individual students listening to them read and asking questions about their books. The questions the teacher asked probed for comprehension and addressed the student's likes and dislikes regarding the books they were reading. Students with disabilities were included in Readers Workshop and were able to read books that were appropriate for their developmental level and receive individual help from the teacher through frequent conferencing.

Like Readers Workshop, Writers Workshop also provided an effective way for Washington teachers to address individual interests and abilities in writing. During Writers Workshop, Washington teachers were observed presenting mini-lessons on specific writing strategies, grammar and punctuation, and different formats for publishing written work. While some time was devoted to teaching writing strategies and skills, the majority of Writers Workshop time was devoted to students actually writing. The extensive writing time allowed students to apply and practice the new writing strategies they were learning.

Individual needs, interests and abilities were further addressed through the peer conferences that were an important part of Writers Workshop. Students were taught to sit down with peers, listen to them read their written work, and then give feedback in the form of compliments and suggestions for improvement. While students were engaged in writing and peer conferencing, the teacher was able to circulate around the room and work with individual students to re-teach needed skills and push students to grow in their writing. Teachers were observed pointing out grammatical and punctuation errors, encouraging students to add more detail to their stories, and showing students how to

decorate and bind books. Because of the personal knowledge Washington teachers demonstrated having of their students, they were able to suggest writing ideas that were appropriate to each child's abilities and interests. One teacher's comments highlight the effectiveness of both Readers and Writers Workshops for addressing the needs and abilities of individual students:

My readers and writers workshop are very effective for giving me time to meet with kids and work with them individually with their needs. I might do an activity with capitalization for a small group and maybe one student is way beyond that and another one is struggling, so I can work with them individually.

While the implementation of Readers and Writers Workshops reduced the need for making modifications for students with special needs, because students were able to work at the appropriate reading and writing levels, Washington teachers did adjust activities and assignments in their classrooms when necessary. Some of the kinds of modifications and accommodations teachers made included assigning fewer problems, pairing students who were struggling with students who were not, assessing work with different expectations for proficiency and providing challenges for students who were ready to move ahead.

Washington School teachers were also observed utilizing multiple methods of presentation to address the varying needs and abilities of students. This was particularly true in math instruction. Teachers used math manipulatives like fraction stacks, tens and ones strips and counting pieces to help students understand challenging math concepts. For example in one lesson, first graders were being introduced to subtraction. Students were given little counting pieces that looked like ducks and rabbits. The students played a game where they started with a certain number of ducks or rabbits on a bed and then used a spinner to determine how many animal pieces to move to a tent. In this way, students were learning to solve subtraction problems with concrete models. In a similar way, a teacher in another classroom helped students understand borrowing by using tens and ones strips on an overhead projector. The teacher helped students see through modeling with manipulatives that numbers from the tens column could be converted to ones in order to subtract from the ones column. As students worked on solving math problems, Washington teachers encouraged them to find multiple ways of finding answers, which further served to meet individual needs and styles of learning.

In addition to math manipulatives, Washington teachers also helped students with various needs, interests and abilities learn through activating prior knowledge, bringing student interests into class discussions, and getting students actively involved in classroom instruction. An example of this active involvement was observed in a first grade classroom where students were adding action words to a class poem they were writing. As students suggested words, the teacher put them into the poem to see if they fit and then had students act out the action word. In another classroom, students were observed playing charades to help them learn action verbs. The use of multiple strategies for presenting information, especially those that encouraged students to be actively involved

in the learning, helped Washington teachers to effectively address the needs, interests and abilities of all students.

Finding 2: Motivating instruction reduces the need for individual accommodations.

Washington School teachers used a variety of methods for motivating students. One strategy that was observed frequently was the use of games. As one teacher stated, “I am the queen of games. I can think of a game for anything we do. Some examples she gave were turning the \$25,000 Pyramid into a vocabulary game, using Candyland as an adjective game and developing vocabulary through playing freeze tag, Go Fish, and Bingo. The teacher explained that after the students played a game she had them engage in a serious activity to demonstrate what they had learned. While games were used effectively to motivate students to learn, Washington teachers are encouraged to examine the content for which the games are being used. At times, the games seemed to be used to make rote instruction more interesting. Rather than transforming rote instruction into a more palatable form, Washington teachers may want to evaluate the learning goals for the rote instruction and determine if the best approach is to turn it into a game or to find a more meaningful way to present the curriculum.

Another way instruction was made motivating in Washington School was by bringing in the personal experiences of the teachers and students. For example, one teacher was observed effectively sharing her personal experiences and connecting to the background knowledge of the students when she introduced a book on Mount St. Helen to the class. The teacher started by saying, “I want to show you my volcano ash,” and held up a small bottle of volcanic ash that she possessed. She then said, “Look at the lava ash, how would you describe it?” A student replied, “Like smoke or sand.” The teacher built on the student’s response by saying, “Okay, we are describing a kind of sand. Can you imagine what happens as this spreads over a house?” To which a student replied, “Kind of like pepper.” The teacher then proceeded to read from the book on Mount St. Helen and show pictures from the book, all the while referring back to the bottle of volcanic ash and making connections to what students already knew about volcanoes and what they had observed about the ash in the bottle.

In a similar example, a teacher in another classroom was introducing a big book of rhymes to her students. Before reading the book, the teacher asked the children what kinds of games they like to play and elicited responses. The teacher then shared some of the games she liked to play at Easter time. By tapping into children’s interests and sharing her own personal stories, the teacher motivated students to participate in the remainder of the lesson which focused on sounds, letter identification, punctuation and rhyming. This example illustrates how a teacher can appeal to general and age-specific interests of the students she teaches, which frequently occurred in Washington Elementary School and helped to motivate students to learn.

Finding 3: “Authentic” curriculum and instructional practices are implemented (Authentic: Involving the construction of knowledge; disciplined inquiry; value beyond school).

The third principle of Whole Schooling promotes the philosophy and practice of designing instruction for diverse learners that engage them in active learning in meaningful, real-world activities. The following findings and examples illustrate how Washington Elementary School implements this principle.

One approach Washington teachers used to making reading instruction authentic, which was discussed in depth in a previous section, was Readers Workshop. The belief behind Readers Workshop is that students should have choices about the books they read, need to learn to monitor their own progress, need to learn strategies that will allow them to be self-directed, independent readers and should spend as much time as possible engaged in reading. The ultimate goal of Readers Workshop is to inspire students to be lifelong readers.

Like Readers Workshop, Writers Workshop was also used extensively in Washington Elementary School and is an authentic approach to teaching writing. Students were encouraged to view themselves as real authors who were using effective writing strategies to appeal to real audiences. Within Writers Workshop, students could write about topics that interested them, write at their developmental level and continue to grow as authors as they tried out new techniques to improve their writing. As was also mentioned previously, students engaged in peer conferencing to provide feedback to one another about their writing. This is an additional way for students to see themselves as serious authors who have important things to say about the writing of another person.

Writers Workshop also helped students to engage in the entire writing process including publishing work. In traditional writing classrooms, students often write something that gets read and assessed by the teacher and then the work is never shared with a real audience. By contrast, Washington School students learned that publishing their work in a way that was appealing to them and to an audience was an important part of the writing process. For example, in a fourth grade classroom, the teacher was observed introducing a new format for publishing their writing. She said to the students, “When you are done, please come to the center of the room, and I am going to show you a different way to publish today. There is an example back there, but I am going to show you from the beginning so you’ll understand this way. This is an excellent way to publish for a STEP book. You don’t have to publish this way, but it is a very good way.” The STEP book the teacher then proceeded to show students was a book with varied length pages, each progressively longer than the previous page. In subsequent observations in this classroom, students were seen using the STEP book format as a way to publish their written work.

An authentic approach to teaching science that was observed in Washington School was the science fair held at the school. To participate in the science fair, students chose an area of science about which they wanted to learn (i.e., Killer Whales, characteristics of salt, dinosaurs, magnets, etc.), conducted research and/or an experiment, analyzed data

and presented their work to an audience of peers, teachers, parents and community members during an evening event. The research in which students were engaged involved the construction of knowledge about scientific concepts, required students to practice disciplined inquiry as they moved through the investigative process and allowed students to see the value of their work beyond the classroom walls as they presented their science fair projects to the public. In addition to the science fair, Washington students were also seen conducting experiments in their day-to-day science instruction. An example of this was a series of fingerprinting experiments that students carried out in a fourth grade classroom. When the teacher introduced the topic of fingerprinting she said, "We are going to be doing a couple of experiments, including getting fingerprinted. You will learn how to use fingerprinting not only to find criminals, but also to find missing people." As this quote illustrates, the teacher helped students to understand the connection between the experiments they were conducting and how the knowledge and skills attained through the experiments is applied in the real world.

A "Wisconsin Cities" project was one example of an authentic social studies activity observed in Washington School. Each student in a fourth grade classroom chose a Wisconsin city and wrote to the Chamber of Commerce of that city to receive informational materials. The students also used a computer program called Map Quest to get door-to-door directions from their school to their Wisconsin city. Students worked on classroom computers to word process descriptions about their cities and to find information about their cities from the Internet. During an observation of students working on the Wisconsin Cities project, the teacher explained that the students would be preparing booklets to convince other students to visit their cities. In this specific social studies example, students were involved in disciplined inquiry as they gathered information on their cities and were seeing how the information had value beyond the school as they tried to persuade peers to visit their cities, much as a tourism bureau director might do.

Math is probably the subject area most likely to be taught in a drill and skill manner, yet there were instances of authentic math practices observed in Washington School. For example, in one first grade classroom, the teacher created real world story problems to help students understand subtraction. This teacher started the lesson by asking five students to come to the front of the classroom to stand and then asked one of them to sit down. She asked the class, "How many left?" She continued with several examples, using various group sizes and asking different numbers of students to sit down. Each time, she asked students how many were left and wrote a math sentence on the board to match with the problem. After students were comfortable with this approach, the teacher then wrote a math sentence on the board and made up a story to go along with it. The story she said was, "Five birds are sitting on the branch, then three flew away. How many are left?" The last step in the process was a series of problems students solved using pictures on a math worksheet. The teacher encouraged students to create stories about the pictures before solving the subtraction involved. Through teaching subtraction in this way, the teacher helped students to see the real world applications of mathematics through observation and investigation, before moving to the symbolic representations of mathematics, which is usually the focus of math instruction in traditional classrooms.

While numerous examples of authentic curriculum practices were observed in Washington School, there were also examples of instruction that did not involve the students in construction of knowledge and disciplined inquiry. There were many classes observed where students spent the class period involved in drill and skill activities. For example in one classroom, the teacher was observed giving a corrected subject and predicate worksheet back to students. She said to students, “I corrected some of your worksheets and PU! You need some work, or you need to open up your listening ears. What’s a predicate?” She then proceeded to quiz students on the definitions for a predicate and a subject of a sentence. She also asked, “Does the subject always have to come at the front of the sentence?” Students had apparently noticed that subjects often come at the beginning of the sentence and used this “rule of thumb” throughout the worksheet, even on sentences where the subject did not appear at the beginning of the sentence. Although students may need to know the grammatical rule that sentences need a subject and a predicate, this particular worksheet lesson gave students no meaningful way to understand subjects and predicates and gave the teacher no assurance that students would be able to apply knowledge of subjects and predicates in their writing, particularly because the students had applied a rote “rule of thumb” that did not apply in all situations.

One last example of instruction that was not authentic was related to standardized testing. A classroom observation showed students practicing for a standardized reading test. Each child had their own individual reading test, with questions modeled after the standardized reading test students would be taking. Each child also had a yellow marker to assist them in locating important information in the sentences they were reading. The teacher guided students through a series of questions on sentence structure, vowel sounds and contractions. As students worked through the test questions, the teacher directed them to fill in the circle next to the correct answer. Washington Elementary School teachers are not to be faulted for preparing students to take standardized tests. It is unfortunate that teachers feel so much pressure over required standardized tests that they have to devote valuable instructional time teaching students how to fill in computerized scan sheets. Schools throughout Wisconsin and the rest of the nation are struggling with the same dilemma.

Finding 4: Instructional practices integrate curriculum.

Washington Elementary teachers were observed integrating curriculum in a few different ways. One effective integration technique observed was the integration of children’s literature with other subject areas. In one first grade classroom, students were observed learning about the math concept of subtraction. The teacher read a book to students called, “Ten in Bed.” The premise of the story is that ten children are trying to sleep in the same bed and they are all lined up in a row. As the story progresses, one by one the children fall or get out of the bed. As the teacher read the story out loud, she called on students to complete the subtraction involved as each child left the bed. In this way, students grasped that each time a child left the bed, there was one child less than before. By using an engaging children’s story, the teacher helped students to grasp the concept of

subtraction in a very concrete manner before introducing children to the mathematical notation that represents subtraction.

Washington Elementary teachers were also observed integrating literature with social studies. Teachers read children's stories to their classes that correlated with social studies themes. An example was a teacher reading the book "Living as Pioneer Women" to her class as a kick-off to a pioneer unit. The teacher explained to students that they would be starting a contract the next week with a variety of activities and assignments that would help them to understand the meaning of the word "hardship" and the kinds of hardships that pioneers experienced. The pioneer women book the teacher read worked effectively to give students a taste of what the new unit would entail.

A second form of integration observed in Washington classrooms was the novel ways in which the teachers integrated math skills. In one first grade classroom, students created a bar graphing showing how many students in the classroom knew their addresses. The bar graph was made up of magnet pictures of each child lined up on the board beside yes or no. Once the bar graph was completed, the teacher asked questions like, "Are there more people who know or who don't know their addresses?" As the teacher asked questions about the bar graph, she encouraged students to find different ways to solve the problems. In this same classroom, students also constructed a pie chart representing their popcorn preferences. By linking math skills like graphing with other activities in which elementary level students commonly engage, like learning how to write their address (or doing the daily calendar as practiced by another teacher), Washington teachers helped to reinforce math concepts and connect math knowledge with everyday activities.

A final form of integration observed in Washington School was the integration of technology into the classroom curriculum. This was especially true in a fourth grade classroom where students were frequently seen using computers to locate, organize and present information. One example of this was the "Wisconsin Cities" project described under a previous finding. With this project, students used the Internet to gather information on their chosen city, used a Map Quest program to get door-to-door directions from Washington School to their city, and used word processing software to create a final promotional booklet on their city. In this same classroom, students were also frequently seen using computers during Writers Workshop to write, revise and publish their written work. While there was some use of technology observed in Washington classrooms, this is an area of integration that warrants further exploration. The use of technology can be especially helpful for students with special needs who benefit from computer programs that offer many levels of difficulty and programs that assist with the reading, writing, and math skills with which the students struggle.

Finding 5: School staff implement a number of major determiners of learning including: small class size, high expectations, time on task, accountability, effective management strategies, predictability, structure and routine, high attendance and participation rates and relevant curriculum.

There were many factors that influenced the degree to which students were encouraged and able to learn at Washington School. Many of these factors have been covered in the previous four findings, particularly those that focus on the importance of high-interest, motivating and authentic curriculum practices. While an engaging curriculum is essential to student learning, there are other instructional factors that play a role in student learning that don't fall within the realm of curriculum.

One major determiner for learning observed in Washington School classrooms was the statement of clear expectations for students. The following are samples of statements that were heard across classrooms:

“Let's see if you can follow directions. Put your name on the top, and put them in the middle of the table. Number ones please bring them up. It's amazing how quickly we can move on when we follow directions.”

“Would you please be sure you are putting everything back in your portfolios. Some people are losing things, and that should not be happening. Make sure you put your portfolios in the center of your group and Group 4 will be picking them up. I am looking for you to be sitting quietly.”

“Boys and girls, you need to be sure the books are cleaned up and if you are done with your illustrations, put them in a safe spot, because we will work with them tomorrow. I'm going to listen to Jacob read, while some of you are using the bathroom to get ready for lunch. We only have about two minutes left before lunch.”

As these statements indicate, Washington teachers gave very specific directions for what students were to do and the order in which they were to do it. While there are times when children need freedom of movement and opportunities to make decisions and choose activities, as was observed during Readers and Writers Workshops, there are other times when having clear guidelines and expectations is important for students. This seems especially true for students with and without disabilities who struggle with self-discipline and organization.

There were other strategies that Washington School teachers taught and modeled that helped students to be self-directed learners. Several of these were observed during Writers Workshop. It was common, during writing time, for students to approach the teacher to determine the correct spellings for words they were using in their stories. Rarely did Washington teachers just spell the word for the students. Rather, students were encouraged to look at the “Word Wall” that had been created in the classroom, use a

dictionary and keep a personal log of correct spellings for words they commonly use in their writing. In other situations, students were encouraged to look in their handwriting books for the correct formation of letters rather than asking the teacher to write them. All of these examples illustrate Washington teachers promoting self-reliance in their students. Washington students quickly learned that there were many ways to find the information they needed over which they had control. Asking the teacher was only promoted when all other avenues had been explored.

Principle 4: Build Community & Support Learning

Principle four focuses on the school's practices for building an effective and supportive learning community. This often requires the use of specialized school and community resources (e.g., special education, Title 1, gifted education) to build support for students, parents and teachers. This principle also focuses on building community and mutual support within the classroom. Finally, providing proactive supports for students with behavioral challenges is a necessary ingredient. The following findings and examples illustrate Washington Elementary School's commitment to Principle 4.

Finding 1: The creative use of available time, staff, parents, and peers benefits and supports ALL students.

One example of the creative use of staff at Washington School was the practice of having two teachers team together in a classroom of 30 students. In this way, the 15 to 1 pupil to teacher ratio found in the other classrooms was preserved and teachers were able to plan and teach together. The primary benefit of this to students was with two teachers in the classroom, one teacher could take responsibility for presenting a lesson while the other teacher worked with individuals or small groups of students who needed extra help. This practice was used to assist students with and without disabilities.

A second creative use of staff at Washington School was including a teacher certified in both special and general education in each grade level team to provide support for the other teachers on the team. In this way, pupil to teacher ratios were lowered to 15 to 1 and teachers had a person knowledgeable in special education on their grade level team. In an interview, one teacher shared that the first year the school had lowered class sizes to fifteen students, she had a student with pretty severe emotional problems in her class. She said it was assumed with only fifteen students, teachers would be able to handle any learning or emotional problems that arose, but she said this was a real struggle for her because of the extent of her student's problems. The teacher shared that with the addition of the dual certified teacher to her team she was now able to receive the support she needed and talk with a trained special educator about ways to help students with special needs.

The only drawback mentioned to having a dual certified teacher with their own classroom of students was that at times they were too busy with their own students to provide much support to other members of the team. This is a situation that Washington School administration and staff may want to continue to monitor and discuss. Having a dual certified teacher on each grade level team is a creative way to promote inclusion and

provide support to general education teachers, and every effort should be made to see that this approach continues to work successfully.

A creative use of space was observed in a classroom that had previously been a home economics classroom, but was currently being used to house a class of 30 third graders and their two teachers. Because the room had been a home economics classroom, it was quite large and was equipped with kitchen appliances and equipment. Because of the accessibility of kitchen facilities, the teachers were able to incorporate cooking into their teaching units. One of the teachers who taught in this classroom said, “We teach them social skills. Some of them don’t know how to crack an egg. We teach them hygiene. You don’t make cookies with dirty hands.” The teacher went on to say that later in the school year, the class was going to prepare a dinner for parents, for which the students would cook and serve the meal. In addition to the creative use of the kitchen equipment, teachers in this classroom also turned a small storage closet into a classroom library. Due to their ingenuity, the two teachers in this example turned what might have been considered an inconvenience (having a home economics room rather than a regular classroom) and turned it into a unique learning environment.

Parent volunteers were used to some extent in Washington School. One teacher said she sent a note home to all parents at the beginning of the year requesting classroom helpers. She said she was able to recruit two parents to come in on a regular basis. The parents who volunteered in this classroom were observed helping students with a variety of activities including Readers and Writers Workshops, working with computers and completing research projects. While there was some utilization of parent volunteers, this is an area that Washington School staff may want to explore further. Parents, grandparents and other community volunteers can provide much needed help in school classrooms. Having extra hands in the classroom can be especially beneficial in classrooms where students with special needs are included and may need extra support to participate and succeed in classroom activities.

Finding 2: Peers serve as natural supports for their classmates.

The Readers and Writers Workshops used extensively in Washington Elementary School classrooms provided many opportunities for students to serve as natural supports for their classmates. During Readers Workshop, students often paired together to read books to one another. Washington teachers taught students the necessary skills for working successfully with peers. In one classroom, a teacher was observed reviewing how reading partners should work together during Readers Workshop. She told students that a “good partner” helps with sounding out words and helps their partner to read. By reviewing necessary peer coaching skills rather than just turning students loose, this teacher helped the students to work more productively with their reading partners.

Peer supports were also observed being used in Writers Workshop sessions. And like the previous Readers Workshop example, Washington teachers taught and reviewed the skills necessary for providing feedback during peer writing conferences. It was common to hear teachers start Writers Workshop with a reminder of the steps to follow in

conducting a peer conference. One teacher was observed leading the following discussion with her students:

Mrs. T.: What does your friend do after you read your story?

Student response.

Mrs. T.: That's right, a compliment. Can you do more than one compliment?

Student response.

Mrs. T.: Of course, but you must say at least one. After you have said the compliment, what's next? Then you give ideas on improving the story. And then you go back to your desk and work on it."

Students with and without disabilities were observed giving and receiving peer feedback on written work. In addition to the benefits of students learning to work with one another and to critically evaluate the written work of others, the peer conferences also helped the teachers. Because students worked together in peer conferences, all students had access to one-on-one writing assistance without the teacher having to provide it. Teachers encouraged students to engage in a peer conference before sharing their writing with a teacher, thus helping to ensure that the work shown to teachers had already been reviewed and revised.

Some Washington teachers organized their classrooms in ways that facilitated peer teaching and interaction. In one classroom, the desks were organized in groups of four and the teacher often built groupwork into her lessons. For example, during an observation of a math lesson, the teacher gave each group a set of "fraction stacks" and had them work together to solve math problems with fractions. It was noted in this particular class that all of the student groups of four included a mix of male and female students.

While some teachers encouraged students to collaborate, teachers in other classrooms felt their students couldn't handle working together. In one classroom, the two teachers explained that their students did too much socializing in groups rather than concentrating on the academic purpose of the activities. This same class of students also struggled with making transitions from one subject to another. Although groups may vary in their social maturity and ability to work together, Washington teachers are encouraged to continue to experiment with peer teaching and cooperative learning to help students learn important collaborative and interpersonal skills.

Finding 3: Whole Schools provide positive, proactive supports for behavior management.

There were a variety of positive, proactive supports Washington Elementary School teachers were observed providing for behavior management. The first of these, which has been mentioned in previous findings is the predictable and well-defined structure of classroom activities. This was particularly true during Readers and Writers Workshops where students had been taught all of the steps for participating in the workshops and practiced the steps on a daily basis. While teachers had to occasionally redirect students

to keep them on task, for the most part students were very focused and self-directed during reading and writing time.

Washington School teachers were also observed modeling and reinforcing positive behaviors. Teachers clearly stated what they wanted students to do and frequently complimented students who followed their guidelines. For example, one teacher said, “Raise your hand if you have been stung by a bee or a wasp.” During the same lesson she said, “Annie, thank you for raising your hand.” As this example illustrates, Washington teachers generally focused on positive behavior and complimented students who were doing what had been asked of them. Teachers also encouraged students to move themselves away from situations where they might get into trouble. For example, in a first grade classroom where children were talking to classmates while the teacher was talking, the teacher said, “If you are sitting next to someone you are talking to, you need to move. I will give you three counts to move. Danny, you need to move. Cissy, you need to move.” Then the teacher continued with the lesson.

Additional ways that Washington School teachers provided positive supports for behavior management were to play soft instrumental music while students worked, squeeze a squeaky toy to get students’ attention before giving directions, turn lights off to signal a transition to a new activity, distribute stickers to groups that were staying on task, have students fill out assignment slips to remember homework, and hold a pizza party for students who had no missing assignments.

While Washington Elementary School teachers were observed using many positive, proactive supports for behavior management, this is an area for further examination. In classrooms where teachers find the same students engaging in the same behaviors regardless of their efforts to change the behavior, the teachers may want to take a closer look at the reasons behind the students’ actions. Sometimes what is judged misbehavior is really a natural reaction to curriculum that is inappropriate for the students in some way. The curriculum may be at a level that is too difficult or too easy, or instructional strategies may not be varied enough nor address multiple styles for learning, thus leaving some students bored or disengaged.

Principle 5: Partnering

The last principle of Whole Schooling is Partnering. This principle requires that school staff build genuine collaborative relationships within the school and with families and the community. It further promotes that schools take an active role in strengthening the community as well as providing guidance to engage students, parents, teachers and others in decision-making and the direction of learning and school activities. Washington Elementary School exemplifies this principle in several ways that will be described below.

Finding 1: Joining together with families, community members and university faculty mutually benefits all.

There are several ways that Washington School staff joined with families and community members. The first of these is the Family Involvement Coordinator employed by the

school to recruit and organize parent volunteers who work in classrooms to support the teachers and assist students. A second connection to families and the community is the Parent Resource Center located in the school that provides parent resources and offers “Positive Parenting” classes. Videotapes of the Positive Parenting classes are also broadcast on the local public access channel. A third way the school reaches out to the community is by opening the school facility before and after regular school hours for early morning and evening community events and programs. While not observed by researchers during the Whole Schooling research project, Nancy Burns also indicated that students in the school participate in community service learning, like an intergenerational program between students and community members.

In addition to some of the schoolwide programs available to families and community members, individual and teams of teachers also sponsored activities that parents were invited to attend. The third grade teachers held an Author’s Tea every spring where parents could go into the classroom and read the students’ writing. This provided a nice showcase for the writing students had completed over the course of the school year. In addition to the Author’s Tea, these same teachers also hosted a Readers Theater where parents were invited in to watch students engage in dramatic reading. The teachers explained that the purpose for holding special events like the Author’s Tea and Readers Theater was to get parents coming into the school for things other than parent conferences.

There are many additional ways that Washington teachers reached out specifically to parents like newsletters, conferences and phone calls that will be discussed in more detail under Finding 3.

Finding 2: Collaboration and Co-Teaching strengthens the overall school community and learning experiences.

As has been described under previous findings, there were many examples of Washington Elementary School teachers collaborating and team-teaching. These collaborative relationships included two teachers in the same classroom co-teaching a group of 30 students, and grade level teams made up of general and special education teachers who worked together to plan curriculum and decide how to meet the needs of students with and without disabilities. Teachers who worked in teaming situations often said they couldn’t imagine not having the support of their colleagues. In one situation, two general education teachers who had no training in special education said they were able to successfully work with a child with special needs by working together. When asked how the year went with the student, one of the teachers replied, “It went VERY well!”

In addition to the collaborations described above, there were other ways Washington teachers communicated and worked together. One teacher described the importance of collegial relationships when she said, “We have an excellent 3rd grade team. We have a new reading series so we are really working together a lot and talking about that.” Another teacher said the first grade team of teachers to which she belonged was also working together to learn how to use the new reading series adopted by the school. In

addition, she said her team planned different holiday activities that all of the first graders did together, shared manipulatives and other supplies and worked with the rest of the K-2 teachers to plan a Christmas sing-along. In general, Washington teachers expressed having very positive relationships with peers, which facilitated collaboration within and across grade level teams and made teaching a more enjoyable experience.

Washington School teachers expressed great appreciation for the team planning time that helped to facilitate communication within grade level teams. One teacher emphasized the importance of the team planning time when she said, “Well, I think most important (for collaborating with others) is our common team planning time. We have fifty minutes when we can meet together. We can talk about students and materials.” This same teacher went on to say that in the previous year they also had time to meet with the teachers from one grade level below and one grade level above to discuss the specific problems and needs of the students moving from one grade to the next. She found meeting with various grade levels beneficial, but said the practice had been discontinued when time and substitute teachers were not designated for that purpose.

Looking to the future, one Washington teacher said she was looking forward to the set-up in the new school building where all of the first and second grade teachers would be in the same hallway. Along with being in the same hallway, the teacher also said there would be an easily accessible resource room where the teachers could get together. One final desire this teacher expressed when looking to the future was working more closely with the teachers who taught in the special areas like art, music and physical education. The main deterrent to this collaboration, she said, was lack of time to meet and plan together.

Finding 3: Parents and students feel supported by school staff.

There were many ways that Washington School teachers reached out to the parents of their students. One teacher said that she and the teacher with whom she teamed sent home a parent letter every Friday that explained what stories the students were reading, gave information about field trips, and discussed any other topics the students were studying. In this same classroom, the teacher said that she and her colleague call every parent once a month. She said that the parent calls focus on the positive things that are happening with each child. This teacher concluded by saying, “Having a phone in your room is great, it is easy to call.”

Another way Washington teachers communicated with parents was through a “dialog notebook” or “communication log.” These are two terms for basically the same strategy where teachers have a notebook that goes back and forth between them and parents. In the notebooks, teachers write down assignments the student needs to complete, suggestions for how parents can work with their child, and progress the child is making academically and/or behaviorally. Teachers said they liked the dialog notebooks because parents knew they could depend on them for getting information and it gave the parents a place to dialogue back. As one teacher said of the dialogue notebooks, “This keeps the communication going with home.”

Washington teachers also had creative ways for reaching out to parents. One teacher said she has each student work for a week to create a poster at home that really shows who they are. During their week, each student can also bring in a special guest, which is usually one or both of the child's parents. Of this visit the teacher said, "I think the parents really like to come in. They like to come in for reading workshop, where they like to hear the students read. The parents really see the growth of their child." This same teacher said she uses a digital camera and takes pictures of events and activities that take place in the classroom during the year and then creates a book of the pictures. She said the students write captions for the pictures and then take the book home for parents to see. She said parents have reacted positively to the book.

One final way Washington teachers said they communicate with parents is through informal means. Teachers said one context in which this takes place is in the morning when parents drop their children off at school. These were not planned meetings, like the parent teacher conferences that were routinely held, but it offered an opportunity for teachers to touch base with parents. One teacher made this comment about her informal contacts with parents, "Living in a small town, you just run into people in the grocery store and in church." As this quote illustrates, Oconto is a small rural community and many Washington teachers have been an integral part of the community for many years, which helped to facilitate open communication and positive relationships with parents.

Conclusions:

When reviewing the research data for Washington Elementary School, there were a few areas that warrant further mention. The first was a request on the part of teachers to have scheduled time to work with colleagues across grade levels. Teachers said this was something they had been able to do in the past and had found extremely valuable.

A second area teachers wished to pursue further was inclusion. Teachers said they hoped one result of their participation in the Whole Schooling Research project would be to learn new strategies from other schools where teachers are successfully including students with special needs. One teacher said, "Sometimes with the hecticness of what is going on, you don't have the time to keep up on new practices." Washington Elementary School staff members are encouraged to communicate with other schools involved in the Whole Schooling Research Project and to talk with one another about inclusive strategies they are implementing in their classrooms.

Finally, it has been a pleasure to have Washington Elementary School as a research site in the Whole Schooling Research Project. Thank you to Nancy Burns and all of the teachers, parents and students at Washington School for their cooperation and support for this project.