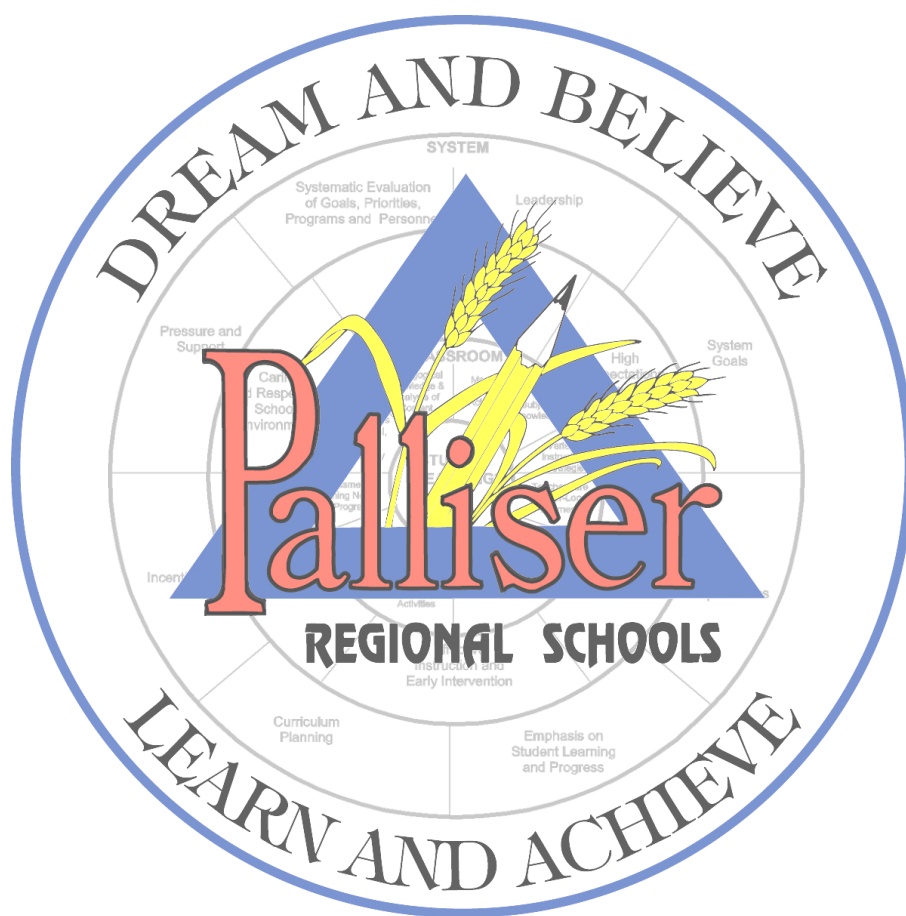


R.I. Baker Middle School

A School Effectiveness Review



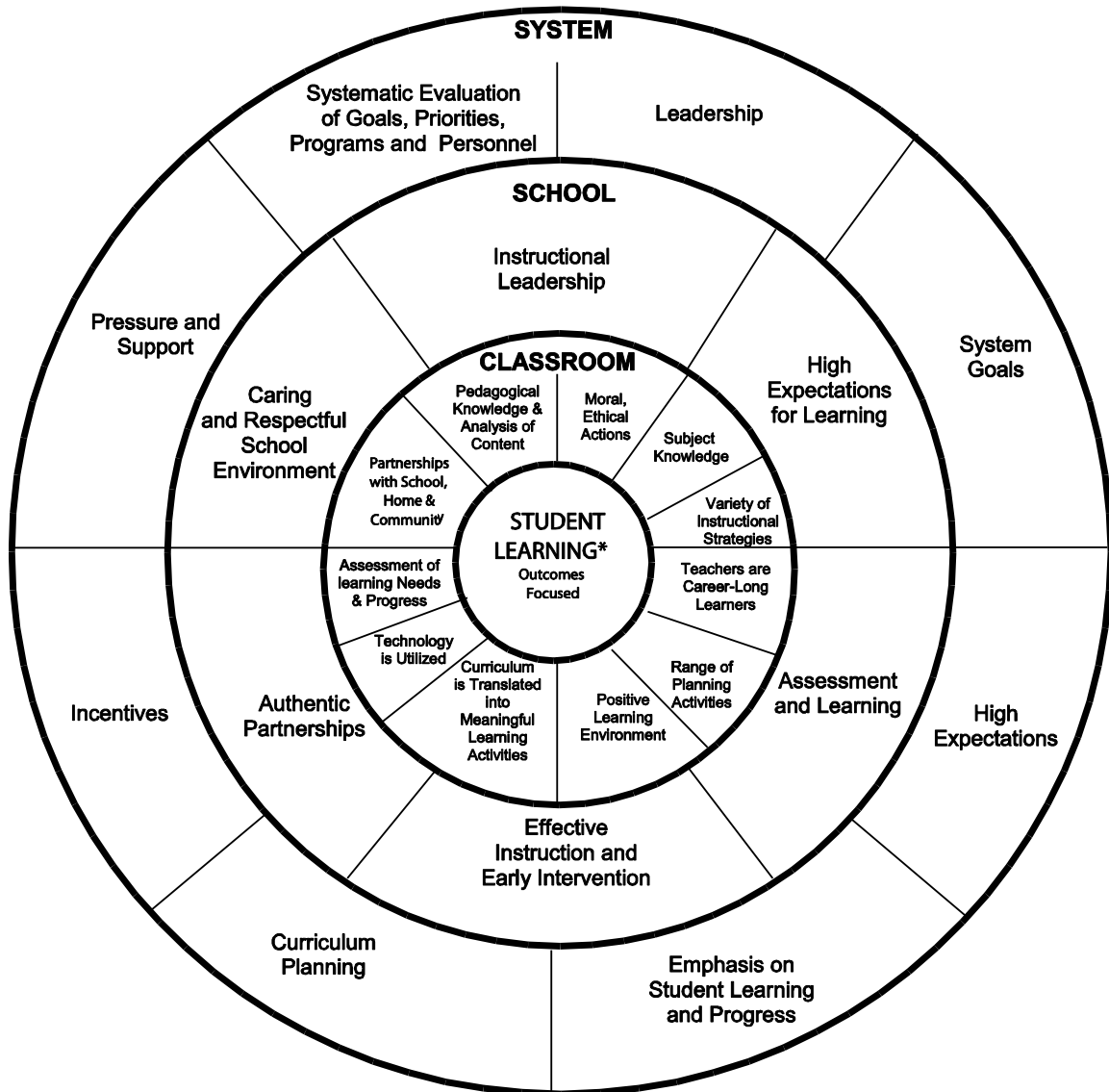
December, 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1.....	6
TERMS OF REFERENCE AND REVIEW ACTIVITIES.....	6
Purpose of the Review	6
Conceptualization	6
Procedures	7
Data Collection Methods	7
Data Analysis and Presentation	9
Organization of the Report	9
CHAPTER 2.....	10
Effective Practices Framework and the School Effectiveness Attributes	10
The School Effectiveness Attributes	10
Instructional Leadership: Vision and Purpose	11
Caring and Respectful School Environment: School Climate.....	14
Caring and Respectful School Environment: Physical Environment.....	16
High Expectations for learning: Academic Emphasis.....	17
Assessment and Learning:	19
Authentic Partnerships: Parent Involvement	21
Authentic Partnerships: Student Involvement	23
Authentic Partnerships: Supports to Learning.....	24
Effective Instruction and Early Intervention	27
Effective Instruction.....	27
Early Intervention	27
CHAPTER 3.....	29
Major Themes and Priorities for Action	29
Overall Rating of R. I. Baker Middle School	29
Summary of Verbatim Responses.....	30
Priorities for Action	32
Commendations.....	32
Considerations	33
R.I. Baker Middle School Goals 2010 - 2011:.....	33
Concluding Comments	33

PALLISER EFFECTIVENESS MODEL

PALLISER EFFECTIVENESS MODEL SYSTEM, SCHOOLS AND CLASSROOMS



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many Palliser Regional Schools professional staff assisted in the R.I. Baker Middle School Review. The Board of Trustees and Superintendent Kevin Gietz were key in authorizing the collection of data from parents/guardians, students and staff in the school review process. The Review Team appreciated the commitment of the Board of Trustees and the Superintendent that the process was open and inclusive and that the review operated in an independent manner. The fact that Palliser Regional Schools initiates an in-house program for reviewing the effectiveness of schools as a support to school planning is exemplary.

The Principal worked with the team by coordinating the school review process and provided school documents. In all dealings with Principal Cynthia Fritzler, she consistently supported the review process and demonstrated professional regard and objectivity.

The staff of R. I. Baker Middle School contributed time and insight about school operations through individual interviews and survey completion. Their reflective thoughts and perceptions provided valuable information in understanding the school, its culture and operations.

Parents/guardians and students used the opportunity to provide their perceptions of the school. The approach was very open, direct and balanced.

Appreciation is extended to Anna Ell for her efforts in compiling this report and the information contained therein.

Dale Backlin, Associate Superintendent Alternative Programs and Technology

Dan Ryder, Coordinating Principal of School Development

R. I. Baker Middle School Review Team Members

Kevin Gietz	Superintendent of Schools
Dale Backlin	Associate Superintendent (Alternative Programs and Technology)
Barbara Gammon	Associate Superintendent (Learning Services)
Donna Dalby	Director of Curriculum
Dan Ryder	Coordinating Principal of School Development
Ron DeMaere	Principal Coalhurst High School
Janice Loitz	Principal John Davidson School
Dawn Ronnie	Principal Sunnyside School
Laurie Wilson	Principal Coalhurst Elementary School
Sherrie Shuttleworth	Vice Principal Jennie Emery Elementary School

R.I. Baker Middle School Council

Chair	Patricia Damjanoff
Vice Chair	Tanya Wurzer
Treasurer	Donica Clarke

R.I. Baker Middle School Teachers

Principal	Cynthia Fritzler
Vice Principal	Broc Higginson
Teacher	Connie Adserballe
Learning Support Teacher	Janice Beler
Teacher	Travis Conrad
Teacher	Mike Davis
Teacher	Michelle Gagne
Teacher	Sandra Holland
Teacher	Josh Martens
Teacher	Kyle McKenzie
Teacher	Pam Ross
Teacher	Deanna Smith
Teacher	Jeff Smith
Teacher	Alison Stewart
Teacher	Tarilie Thomas
Teacher	Derek Tonin
Teacher	Adrienne Van Hell
Teacher	Melanie Vegter
Teacher	Marie Wickham

SS/LA Kala Beers
SS/LA Nancy Budda
SS/LA Noel Bultsma
SS/LA Jan Delaine
SS/LA Brenda Jurgens
SS/LA Sandy Koberinski
SS/LA Bonnie Neufeld
SS/LA Paulla Deren Reck
SS/LA Sharon Roberts
SS/LA Karen Woods

R.I. Baker Middle School Support Staff

Family School Liaison Counselor Laura Thiessen
Caretaker Rhonda Goldie
Caretaker Rita Wall
Library Technician Sharon Bueckert
Secretary Glenda Kurtz
Secretary Paige McDonald

TERMS OF REFERENCE AND REVIEW ACTIVITIES

PURPOSE OF THE REVIEW

This review was designed to provide a picture of R. I. Baker Middle School (RIBMS) as perceived by various stakeholder groups. The review provided opportunity for students, teachers, administrators, support staff and parents/guardians to become involved in thinking about the school and its future.

Specifically, this school effectiveness review was undertaken to:

1. Provide a picture of the school as perceived by the various stakeholders;
2. Identify those areas in which the school is performing well;
3. Suggest areas in which school life can be improved;
4. Suggest ways in which the various stakeholders can work more effectively together;
5. Celebrate the successes of the school; and
6. Provide information to be used in planning for the future.

At the outset, R. I. Baker Middle School was informed that the observations on school effectiveness received from parents/guardians, students and staff was to provide a database of perceptions and suggestions to extend collaborative planning for the future of the school. Such planning is to begin during the second half of the 2010-11 school year. The findings that follow are presented with that objective in mind.

It is important to note that the only reason for conducting the review of R. I. Baker Middle School is to provide the school community with school improvement information. There was no intention to evaluate any individual(s) associated with the school. The review was designed to look at the total operation of the school with the purpose of highlighting areas of strength and those areas requiring further attention by the school and its community.

CONCEPTUALIZATION

The conceptualization for the School Effectiveness Review is premised on the indicators of school effectiveness and the research relating to professional learning communities. During the past 29 years, researchers have identified numerous characteristics that depict successful schools. According to this research, effective schools are characterized by a 'culture' or 'ethos' that permeates the school and results in positive learning outcomes for students.

Palliser Regional Schools has refined and improved its research-based school review process over the years. This model has been tested and used in numerous schools and school systems over the intervening years. The version of the model used in this study was updated in September 2010.

PROCEDURES

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

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Each of the data collection methods is briefly described.

Site Visits: In order to obtain a picture of how the school works, site visits were undertaken. These visits included an orientation for school staff on October 12, 2010. In addition, there were general observations of classrooms, the facility, and several ‘walkabouts’ of the entire school and grounds by members of the Review Team. The Review Team members made an on-site visit in order to conduct the review. Also, on the evening of October 18, 2010, members of the Review Team met with 12 parents to explain the rationale for the review and to conduct a focus group session. During the day, the Review Team members viewed the school facilities, interviewed staff and conducted focus groups. At these times, informal discussions were held with students, teachers, and other staff regarding school life. It should be noted that the research team was impressed by the warm reception provided by the students and all those who work at the school. It was apparent that the professionals were proud of their work and were willing to share ideas and issues with us.

Classroom Climate Observations: Part of the school review process includes classroom observations conducted by visiting principals and central office administrators. The School Effectiveness Correlate collects evidence of three types of positive interactions between classroom teachers and their students: Response Opportunities, Feedback and Personal Regard. Each classroom was visited at least two times by different Review Team members. After each visit, the classroom teacher was provided with a copy of all data that was recorded during the observation. There was opportunity to discuss the observation at the end of the class and at the end of the day. All teachers who teach at R. I. Baker Middle School were observed and made aware of the Teacher Expectation and Student Achievement (TESA) model.

On-line Surveys: The School Effectiveness Survey was administered to all students, teachers, support staff/learning assistants and parents/guardians. All surveys addressed the same school effectiveness variables, but the number of items and wording varied according to maturity level. The school staff emailed the parent/guardian surveys during the week of October 11, 2010. Because of low response rates to the survey, there were multiple attempts made to send electronic surveys home. The number of possible and actual respondents for each group of respondents is provided in **Table 1**.

TABLE 1: SURVEY RETURNS FOR EACH RESPONDENT GROUP

Survey	Possible Respondents	Number of Returns	Percent Returns
Grades 5 & 6 Students	139	123	89%
Grades 7 & 8 Students	172	145	84%
Total Students	311	268	86%
Parents/ Guardians (families)	222	72	32%
Teachers	17	16	94%
Learning Assistants/ Support Staff	14	14	100%
Total	875	638	73%

From the information in **Table 1**, it is evident that students, teachers and staff were all strongly represented. However, only 32% of the R. I. Baker Middle School parents responded to this survey. School personnel need to be commended for sending survey information home on multiple occasions. The use of web-based surveys was conducted at R. I. Baker Middle School. In addition, reminders in student agendas were used to further encourage parent survey completion. As a result, the information in this section must be interpreted with a degree of caution and measured with other responding groups. The parent response was supported by the focus group interview (involving 12 parents) that took place on the evening of October 18, 2010.

Interviews: Individual curriculum and instruction interviews were held with teachers. Focus group interviews were also held with learning assistants, parents and students. In total, more than 60 individuals participated in interviews and focus groups. The interviews were structured in such a way that the interview questions were common to all members of the sub-groups. Opportunity was afforded for individuals to elaborate as they wished concerning their own experiences and views about the school.

Document Review: Data pertaining to classroom and school populations, parents and staff, school programs, procedures and policies were derived from documents and information supplied by the administration and staff. These materials were valuable in supplementing and clarifying the picture of school life captured in the interviews, focus groups and surveys. Documents obtained for the review included: the 2010/2011 R. I. Baker Middle School Agenda, the school's up-to-date website and extensive document section, the school's newsletter (The Paw Print), staff weekly email updates (Middle Matters), five-year provincial achievement test data, and the Annual Education Results Report for the 2009 - 2010 school year. Minutes for staff meetings were not available for analysis, however staff meeting agendas were examined in preparation for this review.

DATA ANALYSIS AND PRESENTATION

On-line survey data was collated and analyzed electronically, and the results were presented in the form of frequencies and percentages for each statement and category. Students in Grades 5 - 8 were asked for responses to the survey questions using a four-point scale ranging from '1' for 'strongly disagree' to '4' for 'strongly agree'. This scale was also used for parents/guardians, teachers and learning assistants/support staff. The 'agree' and 'strongly agree' rankings were aggregated for each statement, as were the 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' categories. The learning assistants/support staff category included the front office staff, librarian, caretaking staff and learning assistants.

As a general guide to interpreting responses to each of the statements in the survey, when more than 70% of respondents indicated 'agree/strongly agree,' it was assumed that there was strong agreement with that statement. A percentage of less than 50% indicated a lack of agreement with that statement. When more than 20% of the respondents used the 'don't know' option, the percentages are shown in parentheses next to the aggregated agreement/disagreement percentages.

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

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

ORGANIZATION OF THE REPORT

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

CHAPTER 2

EFFECTIVE PRACTICES FRAMEWORK AND THE SCHOOL EFFECTIVENESS ATTRIBUTES

Chapter 2 describes the School Effectiveness Attributes within the Effective Practices Framework. For nearly three decades, research on school effectiveness has emphasized that in effective schools, a number of specific characteristics are evidenced consistently and purposefully. More recently, Palliser Regional Schools has developed a framework for school effectiveness (shown on page 2 of this report) that uses similar research on the correlates of school effectiveness and expands it to include new dimensions pertinent to the ever-broadening expectation of schools. The framework and its relationship to the school effectiveness characteristics are described below

- Instructional Leadership
 - Role of the principal
 - Agent of change
 - Capacity building
 - Collaborative
 - Inspires others
 - Holder and communicator of school purpose (mission)
- High Expectations for Learning
 - High standards for student success
 - High levels of student engagement
 - Positive staff/student relationships
 - Positive staff/parent relationships
 - Collaborative Learning
 - Curriculum competency
 - Creating challenging learning environments
- Assessment and Learning
 - High quality feedback
 - On-going reporting/communication of student learning to parents
 - Effective assessment tools used in classrooms
 - Frequent monitoring of student learning
 - Parental awareness of student learning
 - Common assessment language is used in the school
- Effective Instruction and Early Intervention
 - Variety of instructional interventions and supports available
 - Capacity of school to meet student's learning needs
 - Awareness of preventive programs available for students
 - Wide variety of instructional materials available
 - A variety of teaching techniques that encourage success
 - Incorporate problem solving and divergent thinking activities

- Meaningful homework expectations, excellent quality of homework assignments given to students
- Authentic Partnerships
 - Effective school council
 - Student involvement in school programs
 - Student accomplishments celebrated with parents
 - Parent volunteers in the school
 - Community involvement and support
 - Actively seeks out parental input
 - Actively seeks out community involvement in programming
 - Parental input on school policies
 - Recognition of staff and students
 - Parents are welcome at the school.
- Caring and Respectful School Environment
 - Safe place that encourages student learning
 - Principal and teachers show that they care about students
 - Teachers available outside of class to help students
 - Maintaining a safe, attractive physical environment
 - Students and teachers take pride in the appearance of their school
 - Clearly stated, consistently reinforced, student behavioral expectations
 - Staff and students treat each other with mutual respect
 - Students respect each other: bullying is not a problem in this school
 - Infrequent disruption of learning
 - The school climate promotes learning
 - Student behavior contributes to a safe and respectful environment
 - Classroom discipline is applied fairly to all students.

In this chapter, the information from various sources of data as they relate to the work of R. I. Baker Middle School is presented for each of the above dimensions.

INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: VISION AND PURPOSE

Research has demonstrated that effective school projects incorporate a shared philosophy and a sense of vision of what those involved want to achieve. A school's mission and primary goals are widely shared by teachers, administrators, learning assistants and support staff, parents/guardians and students. Michael Full states in his work, *The Six Secrets of Change*, (2008), "... you should stand for a high purpose, hire talented individuals (and) ... create mechanisms for purposeful peer interaction." Those engaged in the day-to-day life of the school seek to build communities of parent/guardian and student support while keeping their common purpose paramount at all times. In essence, an effective school always keeps student learning as the focus of its work.

While parents/guardians and other key stakeholders have a role to play in the development and clarification of the school's mission, the certificated staff play a pivotal role in assessing the school's performance, discussing priorities and developing collaborative ways of doing things

that matter most in the school. Such a focus on mission is reflected in the following characteristics: shared norms and consistency throughout the school; agreed-upon ways of doing things; clearly stated goals known to all; a high degree of acceptance of the importance of goals; joint planning initiatives and data-based decision making. Inherent in achieving the mission of the school is the belief that the professional staff has the potential to change the culture of the school.

Parent, staff and student perceptions of the extent to which these characteristics are represented at R. I. Baker Middle School are summarized in **Table 2**.

TABLE 2: INDICATORS OF INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP: SCHOOL VISION AND PURPOSE

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' (*) % Indicating "Don't Know"				
	Parents/ Guardians	Teachers	LA/SS	Students Grade 5, 6	Students Grade 7, 8
Continuous improvement is expected of all school personnel.		100	93		
Leadership is distributed among many staff members.	99	93	100		
Principal collaborates with teachers, staff and the school council before setting the instructional goals of the school.	47/6 (47)	87/6	50/21 (29)		
The principal encourages the staff to take risks in promoting student learning.		88/6	43/7 (50)	78/6	71/11
The staff is committed to the school's goals.		93	93	89/5	90/5

The data indicates a high level of agreement among teachers, learning assistants and support staff regarding items related to continuous improvement. Of note is the high agreement among parents, teachers, learning assistants and support staff on the item regarding distributed leadership. The high degree of unknown parent responses for the item regarding "principal collaborates with teachers, staff and school council" could be examined further. There was very high agreement for the shared commitment to the goals of the school among students and staff at R. I. Baker Middle School.

Mission and vision statements are practical tools intended to define criteria for decision-making. Each staff member must internalize and personalize these professional beliefs and resulting directions if consistency is to be maximized. People were asked in what ways this school exhibits a sense of vision and purpose. Staff and parents were very positive in their responses to this question.

Mission Statement – ‘Shaping Tomorrow Today’

The values of R.I. Baker Middle School are:

R - Respect

I - Interdependence

B - Balance

M - Middle

S - Success

The above mission and values were evident throughout the interactions with individuals and groups and through the observations made by the Review Team on its visits to the school. They were also reflected in many ways in the comments of students, parents and staff, and in the school newsletters and other communications. All of the above stakeholders’ responses strongly suggest that the mission and values of this school are dynamic, drive school life, and are an inherent part of the culture at R. I. Baker Middle School. This, of course, provides an important standard against which the points of distinction and continuing priorities of this school need to be gauged.

The following comments reflect the sense of vision and purpose at R.I. Baker Middle School:

*I feel that the administration team works together to make this the best school possible.
(LA/SS)*

The teachers have the most respect of their students. (student)

This school is a very great place to work. Working with the students in my classroom every day always reminds me why I wanted to be a teacher. I feel very blessed that I get to work at R I Baker. (teacher)

Great options for the kids when it comes to “exploratories” and curriculum learning. The staff all works as a team. The atmosphere and attitude around the school is calm and supportive. It is a big and spacious school that gives the children room to move around and work in. (LA/SS)

*The best qualities of the school would be everything. Every-thing is the best at school.
(student)*

This school has a solid administration. I have taught in many schools and these two leaders are the best. (teacher)

Great school with an excellent staff. Staff know what is happening with the students and it feels like a very positive environment. (parent)

In the past, as support staff, we have not consistently been made aware of the school goals and objectives. I was happy to learn that this year we were included in an on-site PD day. School goals, assessment for learning and differentiation in learning were the key topics. (LA/SS)

CARING AND RESPECTFUL SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT: SCHOOL CLIMATE.

In effective schools, concerted attention is devoted to the creation and maintenance of a safe and caring environment that is conducive to learning. This includes the establishment of a climate in which students can enjoy school and the various relationships they experience within it. It relates, in turn, to the nature of school rules, school discipline, how people get along with each other, and the overall school spirit which prevails. In these contexts, very specific regulations and guidelines are laid down and are clearly understood by everyone. **Table 3** contains a summary of the survey responses of parents, teachers, learning assistants/support staff and students regarding various aspects of school climate at this school.

TABLE 3: INDICATORS OF SCHOOL CLIMATE

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' / % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' (*) % Indicating "Don't Know"				
	Parents/ Guardians	Teachers	LA/SS	Students Grade 5, 6	Students Grade 7, 8
The principal shows that she or he cares about students.	82/7			86/4	65/29
The teachers show that they care about students.	93/3	100	100	87/4	89/7
Teachers are available to help students outside of class.	68/10 (22)	100	86/7	75/7	76/16
Staff treat each other with mutual respect.	90/7	100	100	89/5	78/15
Students treat staff with respect.	84/6	100	85/14	84/5	72/16
In this school there are clearly stated behavioral expectations.	95	100	86/7	93/4	93/5
School discipline is carried out in a consistent manner for all students.	50/14 (36)	100	64/7 (29)	70/20	53/39
My current employment gives me a high level of job satisfaction.		100	86/14		

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' / % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' (*) % Indicating "Don't Know"				
	Parents/ Guardians	Teachers	LA/SS	Students Grade 5, 6	Students Grade 7, 8
In this school there are few disruptions to instructional time.	80/4	87/12	57/22 (21)	62/32	56/37
Most students respect each other: bullying is not a problem	57/22 (21)	100	71/14	50/38	51/41

Data in **Table 3**, provides many highly positive indicators by parents, staff and students of school climate at RIBMS. The data indicates that both staff and students show respect for each other. Of particular note is the high response by students and parents on the item, "The teachers show that they care about students." Further, the survey response shows a high agreement for 'clearly stated behavioral expectations'. Disruption to instructional time is something that might be examined further because of the high percentage of student disagreement.

Because of the lower support from students and parents on the item regarding students respecting each other, it is an item that could be further examined. Additional perspectives on school climate were provided in the variety of verbatim and interview comments of respondents. These provide interesting confirmation and elaboration and viewpoints on the data described above:

Dedicated leadership, student centered learning, doing what is best for the students, high expectations and celebrating student and staff success (teacher)

Staff are friendly and helpful with my child and myself. (parent)

Good conversation with students! (observing principal)

The pep rally rocked. (student)

Teacher used proximity to redirect any students and keep students on task. (observing principal)

Great staff. They are all very nice and polite to the students. (student)

Teacher circulates among the students as he waits for them to complete one of the questions. (observing principal)

Supervision and student behaviour are good. (parent)

I like the teachers. (student)

"I'm going to keep you a bit to finish this." Teacher lowered chair to height of student. (observing principal)

I think that the teachers are amazing and are really good at interacting and giving the right punishments. (student)

Teacher bends down to students' levels, places hand on shoulder to talk to him (observing principal)

Staff members seem to genuinely care about the student, not just their achievements. (parent)

Teacher has established a caring, fun atmosphere in her class. A fun bunch of students! (observing principal)

I am very glad that I am able to address the principal or any teacher my children have had with any comments or concerns that I may have without prejudice. (parent)

School sports; teachers respecting students and challenging students in learning opportunities; after school opportunities for non-athletic kids (student)

The teachers are very involved in the school activities. I'm sure it isn't easy to give up time after hours to make these programs work. That involvement is appreciated. (parent)

Teacher smiles frequently (observing principal)

CARING AND RESPECTFUL SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

The physical environment is an important supporting condition by which the key qualities of school life can be enhanced. Basic standards of appearance, attractiveness and cleanliness relate to the upkeep of the facility and speak eloquently to the priorities and attitudes of those who work in the school, as well as those who are responsible for its maintenance. The extent to which the physical environment contributes to safety and the teaching and learning process is a critical consideration. Parent, teacher and student responses to survey questions about the physical environment at R. I. Baker Middle School are summarized in **Table 4**.

TABLE 4: INDICATORS OF PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' / % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' (*) % Indicating "Don't Know"				
	Parents/ Guardians	Teachers	LA/SS	Students Grade 5-6	Students Grade 7-8
Students take pride in the appearance of their school.	84/3	94/6	79/21	81/10	73/17
The school building is clean.	98/1	100	64/36	83/12	94/4
I feel safe at school.	100	100	100	88/7	84/12

From the data contained in Table 4, it is apparent that there is satisfaction with the school facilities and cleanliness. From the data, it is clear that students have a strong sense of pride in the school. Further, there is much support for the school being a safe place for students and staff.

The following comments are merely a small sample of the many received regarding the physical environment, particularly relating to ‘safety’ and ‘facility’ features of the school:

The school grounds are clean and well kept. (student)

Beautiful facility (teacher)

The school is clean. (student)

I think that the school is well taken care of. (student)

The school looks very nice. It has a lot of resources and extra help to students is always available. (student)

In order to maintain the cleanliness of the school, more hours need to be dedicated to the custodians. (teacher)

The school is very clean, cool, and full of things to learn. (student)

The school is clean and staff are friendly. (student)

Students leave garbage outside on the ground. There should be more garbage cans. (student)

The school always feels very welcoming and all of the teachers are nice. The school entrance is always very clean. (student)

HIGH EXPECTATIONS FOR LEARNING: ACADEMIC EMPHASIS

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

R. I. Baker Middle School focuses much attention on continued high student achievement. From the information represented in **Table 5**, and the October 2010 Accountability Pillar for the school, it is apparent that school efforts have yielded much success.

TABLE 5: INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC EMPHASIS

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' / % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' (*) % Indicating "Don't Know"				
	Parents/ Guardians	Teachers	LA/SS	Students Grade 5-6	Students Grade 7-8
This school promotes an academic learning climate by establishing high expectations for ALL students.	92	100	79/14	96/3	94/4
Teachers communicate the belief that all students can learn.	93	100	93	89/3	89/6
The positive relationships between staff and students enhance learning in this school.	88/5	100	93	74/6	73/13
Student learning outcomes are communicated to parents by teachers in this school.	94	100	72/7 (21)		
Students are given the opportunity to work on collaborative learning projects.	89	93	72 (28)	85/12	81/14
Expectations for student achievement are communicated clearly to students.	94	100	72/7 (21)	94	88/4
Teachers expect students to learn at their own highest level.				80/10	78/13
Teachers create challenging learning environments for their students.	88/2	100	79 (21)	80/10	78/13
This school has sufficient instructional materials to help students learn. (books, hands-on materials, gym equipment, etc.)	89/4	81/19	79/21	87/4	93/5
Students use technology to enhance their learning in this school.	96/1	100	93	89/5	82/11

Parents, staff and students very much agree on the high emphasis given to academics in this school. Communication of student learning outcomes to parents and students is an area of strength in RIBMS. The difference in responses among parents, students and staff on the item about sufficient instructional materials is one that could be explored further.

Many comments were made in surveys and interviews concerning the variety of programming offered at this school. These provide valuable elaboration on the data described above:

The staff cares about the students and works to try to develop each one to their potential. (LA/SS)

Routines were established – bell time work was up on the board. (observing principal)

I like how in band, if you need some help with smart music or our instruments, there is always someone to help you (student)

The students get to work; the teacher moves closer to a student that needs extra support to get started. (observing principal)

Caring, helping teachers. (student)

The school has almost all the teachers ask if you are okay and act as if concerned for you. (student)

All students I saw who asked for help received it quickly. (observing principal)

I think the computer room is one of the strengths. (student)

There are many talented teachers providing an educational atmosphere for students. (LA/SS)

Classroom rules are displayed. Student work is featured along with interesting information. (observing principal)

High standards are set for staff and students; (teacher)

The number of working computers should equal the number of students in a class (teacher)

The school provides excellent educational opportunities and a good learning environment for the average student. (parent)

Many opportunities for learning – broad range of experiences. Teachers are friendly and interested in the students as people. (parent)

Likes to chat with the students. Great conversation! Keeps students on track, checks in often! Very caring and interested in the students. (observing principal)

Overall, this is a fabulous school with a dedicated and committed staff. The teachers like what they do and administration is committed to making this the best school it can be. (LA/SS)

ASSESSMENT AND LEARNING:

Professionals in effective schools consider feedback on student work to be a core activity deserving of substantial time and effort (Jackson 2009). Davies (2007) emphasizes the importance of specific, quality feedback and its role in motivating student learning. Reliable and timely feedback on academic performance means that teachers are constructive, consistent, continuous and fair when assessing student work. Increasingly, teachers in effective

schools are providing a tighter focus on student assessment through linkages with curriculum and attention to clarity and validity of assessment procedures. Effective teachers recognize good work, reward students for their efforts, evaluate fairly, regularly talk to students about their work, and provide feedback on assignments in a reasonable amount of time. Moreover, effective teachers use evaluation for the purposes of remediation and encouragement of student effort. Teachers in effective schools are conscious of the linkage between instruction and assessment and use strategies that are appropriate in assessing learning. As well, teachers in these schools are familiar with a variety of assessment strategies and use them regularly. Furthermore, effective schools keep parents/guardians informed of student progress and work with them to ensure learning success. Data on feedback is presented in **Table 6**.

TABLE 6: INDICATORS OF FEEDBACK

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' / % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' (*) % Indicating "Don't Know"			
	Parents/ Guardians	Teachers	Students Grade 5-6	Students Grade 7-8
Communication about student learning between the teacher and parents occurs between reporting periods.	83/11	100	79/9	61/18 (21)
Learner outcomes are communicated to students prior to instruction.	84/9	100	73/13	69/26
Students receive frequent feedback on their learning from teachers.	56/7	100	73/10	56/32
Parent/teacher conferences focus on student achievement and performance on learning outcomes.	92/1	100	72/14	65/22
Common assessment language is used by teachers when communicating with students and parents.	82/4	81 (19)	84/8	81/13
Teachers frequently monitor student learning and progress.	89/2	100	81/7	64/28

The level of school/home communication between reporting periods is commendable. As well, there is strong agreement among teachers, parents and students regarding the use of common assessment language. Older students are not as supportive regarding frequent feedback received from teachers. The following comments about the indicators of feedback further illustrate the above data:

Teacher moves around the room helping students as needed. All students are on task. (observing principal)

The staff help you learn lots. (student)

Great feedback to whole group – informed them of their performance and gave suggestions and tips. (observing principal)

I think the most effective qualities of this school are the way the teachers are. (student)

*"Good try, not quite." Teacher keeps asking until the correct response is given.
(observing principal)*

I learn a lot and teachers think I am a good student. (student)

Brilliant class – how lucky these students are!

*Teacher relates the questions to the student's interest. e.g. "I know you play soccer..."
(observing principal)*

The staff showed a lot of care for my child and wanted the best for her. (parent)

Teacher provided praise and reason why! (observing principal)

AUTHENTIC PARTNERSHIPS: PARENT INVOLVEMENT

There is a significant body of research that advances the view that meaningful parent/guardian involvement is closely related to higher student achievement. Recent studies have also found that parent/guardian involvement is related to decreased absenteeism and to improved perceptions of school and classroom climate. As well, a few studies (Glasgow and Whitney, 2009) have noted that student behaviour tends to improve as parents/guardians become more involved in their child(ren)'s schooling. Consequently, parents/guardians have an important role to play in encouraging, monitoring and supporting their child(ren)'s educational efforts. Numerous studies have documented how children from dysfunctional homes have a difficult time being successful in school. School staff and parents/guardians need to work together to ensure the child(ren)'s success with academic and social learning. Details of perceptions regarding parental involvement at R. I. Baker Middle School are summarized in **Table 7**.

TABLE 7: INDICATORS OF PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' / % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' (*) % Indicating "Don't Know"				
	Parents/ Guardians	Teachers	LA/SS	Students Grade 5-6	Students Grade 7-8
The school council has meaningful involvement.	65/25	56/6 (38)			
Parents are actively involved in this school through volunteerism.	77/6	81/19	71/7 (21)	67/19	54/36
Parents are kept informed about school activities and programs.	93/7	100		81/11	75/17
Parents' opinions are valued in this school.	80/6	100		64/12 (24)	60/21 (19)
Parents have opportunity to provide input into school policies.	60/7 (33)	63/6 (31)			
Teachers celebrate student accomplishments with parents.	70/12	87/13		45/34 (21)	40/42 (18)

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' / % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' (*) % Indicating "Don't Know"				
	Parents/ Guardians	Teachers	LA/SS	Students Grade 5-6	Students Grade 7-8
Parents feel welcome in this school.	95/2	100	86 (14)	73/6 (21)	67/8 (25)

Analysis of the parent/guardian involvement data shows high agreement between parents and teachers on value that is placed on parent volunteerism and keeping parents informed. Survey results also reveal that parents feel welcome at RIBMS. Parental input into school policies is an area that could be further investigated. It is often said that parent/guardian involvement ebbs and flows dependent upon the school situation. When problems become evident, involvement increases; when problems don't exist or are not evident, involvement is decreased. Data collected in this review shows that there is much communication between the school and parents. Parents feel that school staff members are approachable and that their input is valued.

Efforts to address the level of school council involvement is an area to be explored further.

The following comments illustrate more fully how respondents felt about parental involvement at R. I. Baker Middle School:

I would like to see more parental involvement. (teacher)

Most teachers are willing to adapt exams/materials to accommodate different styles of learning. (parent)

I love how the staff made me and my daughter feel very welcome. We are new to Coaldale and my daughter absolutely loves it here. (parent)

Teacher explains why she would agree/not agree with their responses. (observing principal)

Because we have only been involved with RIBMS since the start of this school year I feel we are just getting to know the school and staff. So far, the environment here is one of support, encouragement and caring. (parent)

All the children have a connection with at least one staff member. CGA is a great way to help kids get to know everybody and feel like a school family. (parent)

More notice should be given to parents about upcoming events/deadlines, etc. (parent)

I wish more parents would get involved with what their children are doing and maybe volunteer more. (parent)

Still somewhat short on parental involvement between reporting periods. I would like more input from the teachers regarding my child's learning and habits during the school year. (parent)

Overall, RIBMS is a very welcoming school to walk into and I could not imagine moving my children to any other school. (parent)

Teachers and support staff work well together in support of student education. The website has become a valuable tool for communication with parents and students about activities and homework. (LA/SS)

AUTHENTIC PARTNERSHIPS: STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Effective schools recognize the importance of high levels of student involvement in various aspects of school life. Student participation in school life is measured by the extent to which: (1) students are encouraged to make the school an attractive place to be; (2) students have a say in the decisions affecting them; (3) students are actively encouraged to become involved; and (4) students want to become involved. Recent school effectiveness research indicates that as student leadership increases, student behaviour and learning outcomes improve. Student involvement develops student leadership skills and this leads them to positively identify with their school, which, in turn, results in a more democratic school environment. Further, student engagement (cognitive, emotional and behavioural) is a requisite element for student growth. Fullan (1993) posed the question, “What would happen if we treated the student as someone whose opinion mattered?” It is striking how enthusiastically students can engage and flourish in their school lives when assumed to be partners in their own learning. Democratic schools do this well.

Details of responses to items related to student involvement are contained below. The results indicate that student involvement is strong at R. I. Baker Middle School.

TABLE 8: INDICATORS OF STUDENT INVOLVEMENT

Item	% Indicating ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ / % Indicating ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly Disagree’ (*) % Indicating “Don’t Know”				
	Parents/ Guardians	Teachers	LA/SS	Students Grade 5-6	Students Grade 7-8
There are sufficient opportunities for students to be involved in athletic activities.	87/10	100	93	87/7	75/10
There are sufficient opportunities for students to be involved in non-athletic activities.	79/10	100	93	80/9	77/13
Students are encouraged to become involved in school life.	84/4	100	77 (23)	83/8	68/23
This school is committed to developing student leadership.	72/7 (21)	81/12	79 (21)	78/6	65/22
Students have adequate input into school decisions affecting them.	37/10 (53)	87/6	64 (33)	51/20 (29)	49/32 (19)

There was strong agreement regarding sufficient opportunities for students to be involved in athletic and non-athletic activities. Additionally, parents, staff and younger students expressed support for students being involved in school life and the commitment in developing student

leadership. Grade 7 and 8 students don't share this support and showed dissatisfaction on the input that they have regarding decisions that affect them.

The following comments were made regarding student involvement at R. I. Baker Middle School:

I think that the school is an awesome way to get involved in sports, band, exploratories, etc. (teacher)

They have a great canteen and are very organized. Everything is safe and the teachers make sure you know what you are doing. (teacher)

Teacher laughs with students, jokes, but brings students back to focus very quickly. (observing principal)

We get to do exploratories and we are all a team. Baker is so much fun I can't imagine a better school. (teacher)

The best and most effective qualities of the school include having CGA (where all the kids feel comfortable with students in all grades in the school), and having their fun days when all the staff (including the caretakers) get involved. (LA/SS)

AUTHENTIC PARTNERSHIPS: SUPPORTS TO LEARNING

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

Table 9 provides data on perceptions as to how effectively R. I. Baker Middle School is linking with the community and its agencies.

TABLE 9: INDICATORS OF SUPPORTS TO LEARNING

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' / % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' (*) % Indicating "Don't Know"				
	Parents/ Guardians	Teachers	LA/SS	Students Grade 5-6	Students Grade 7-8
The school uses community resources such as; sports facilities, libraries, health and wellness resources, police and others.	80/7	94/6	64/7 (29)	74/5 (20)	75/14
This school provides effective programs.	69/8 (22)	87/12	86		

Item	% Indicating 'Agree' and 'Strongly Agree' / % Indicating 'Disagree' and 'Strongly Disagree' (*) % Indicating "Don't Know"				
	Parents/ Guardians	Teachers	LA/SS	Students Grade 5-6	Students Grade 7-8
There are sufficient resources available to meet the needs of "at-risk" students.	43/20 (37)	81/18	58/21 (21)		
The school encourages students to take more responsibility for their learning.	99	100	86/7	93/3	85/7

There is significant support for, and focus on student responsibility at RIBMS. The overwhelming support for encouraging students to take responsibility for their learning demonstrates that this is a continuing priority of the school. As well, the use of community resources has garnered a broad base of support from survey groups. Because of the need for privacy surrounding at-risk student needs, it is understandable that there might be a high percentage of unknown responses from parents regarding this survey item.

When asked what external partnerships have access to and support from both the school campus and the educational programs of the school, respondents identified the following most frequently:

- Town of Coaldale
- County of Lethbridge Junior High Athletic Association (COLJHAA)
- Lethbridge Schools Athletic Association (LSAA)
- Lethbridge Regional Police Service
- Coaldale Indoor Soccer Association
- Junior Achievement
- Gideons International
- Rotary Club of Coaldale
- Coaldale Musical Arts Society
- Chinook Country Student Health Partnership
- CARE
- REACH
- Children's Mental Health
- Alberta Children's Hospital
- Rethink Autism
- Behavior Solutions
- FSCD – Family Supports for Children with Disabilities
- FCSS – Family Community Support Services
- Child and Family Services (CFS)
- Royal Canadian Legion
- Alberta Mental Health

These relationships were seen as invaluable support to the work of the school and respondents identified many of them in surveys, focus groups and interviews. It is clear that the school is deeply rooted in the community and uses the relationships that it has developed with support organizations to benefit students.

Comments related to this correlate are:

Staff are very helpful and will help you if/when you need it (student)

Teachers and learning assistants work together as an amazing team to provide a learning environment that meets the varied needs of all students, regardless of their ability. (LA/SS)

I think we have a lot of great activities in this school such as sports and choir, plus other activities that make people happy at this school. (student)

Teacher's inclusive manner keeps all students on task and interested. (observing principal)

I think the school needs to let the students who are smarter and more eager to learn move ahead of the rest of the grade so that they are working on harder curriculum. (student)

I really like the variety of exploratories offered. The teachers show that they genuinely care for my children and are very encouraging. They accept my children for who they are. (parent)

I like that we have so many field trips. (student)

Room is well organized with a mixture of student work and information and decoration. (observing principal)

I like working in my classroom with my friends and teachers. (student)

Teacher has very strong interaction with class humour, tying new "vocabulary (e.g. juvenile)" into lesson and into students' personal lives. (observing principal)

I love my school and am proud to go to school here. (student)

Teacher movement helps to keep the students' attention through proximity and low key cues supporting positive behaviour. (observing principal)

Teacher leaves and the Learning Assistant moves to work with the special needs student. The class continues to work quietly, aware of the routine and expectations. (observing principal)

The staff at RIBMS all have a wide range of strengths, teaching styles, personalities and interests. I think that diversity equates to a "high octane" environment that allows ANY child to find someone/something to relate to and enjoy. (teacher)

Teacher is attentive to student response; provides guidance and direction as they work on the board. (observing principal)

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION

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

EARLY INTERVENTION

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

- The collaboration evident between administration and staff members, particularly special education personnel, when making educational decisions on students;
- The special focus and competence provided when working with “at-risk” pupils;
- The availability of learning support teachers to assist other teachers with program modification;
- Division leadership through provision of in-service in curriculum development and instruction for students experiencing difficulty with regular programs;
- The availability of very talented and committed learning assistants; and
- The provision of creative and focused programs to address student success.

Table 10 presents perceptions concerning aspects of Effective Instruction and Early Intervention at this school.

TABLE 10: INDICATORS OF EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Item	% Indicating ‘Agree’ and ‘Strongly Agree’ / % Indicating ‘Disagree’ and ‘Strongly Disagree’ (*) % Indicating “Don’t Know”				
	Parents/ Guardians	Teachers	LA/SS	Students Grade 5-6	Students Grade 7-8
POD meetings effectively meet student needs.		94/6	62 (38)		
Homework expectations are reasonable.	93/6	87	78 (22)	83/10	65/32
The school is proactive in addressing student learning needs.	70/12	100	72 (28)		

This data shows that homework expectations are reasonable for all groups except the older students. Also, the survey question about the school being proactive in addressing student learning needs shows good support from parents, teachers and learning assistants/support staff. From the survey data, it is clear that RIBMS has the capacity to respond to most student needs.

Comments related to this correlate are:

RIBMS is a school where the teaching and support staff engage students in all aspects of their lives bridging a caring relationship with a mentoring attitude regarding both home and school life. I am very proud to work in this environment. (LA/SS)

I think we have a lot of great activities in this school such as sports and choir, plus other activities that make people happy at this school. (student)

The exploratories are a great way to let the students try new things. (parent)

I love cross-country club and there are lots of fun exploratories that are unique and challenging. (student)

Children are given a lot of opportunities to explore their learning abilities and styles. (parent)

The CGA is so much fun!! You get to make new friends in different grades! CGA ROX! (student)

Having such a wide variety of optional classes and clubs to join is fantastic. The librarian goes out of her way to keep book readers interested and challenged. (parent)

This is a good place to learn; one of the nicest schools I have been to. (student)

I love my school and am proud to go to school here. (student)

Dedication to keeping the homework portion of the web site up to date could be improved. (LA/SS)

This concludes the discussion of the findings for the school effectiveness attributes as they pertain to R. I. Baker Middle School.

In the next chapter, the major themes and priorities for action emerging from this review will be identified.

CHAPTER 3

MAJOR THEMES AND PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

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

Chapter 3 includes a summary of major themes derived from the data presented in terms of an overall rating of the school and a summary of the major strengths and areas for enhancement identified in the comments and the survey data. As well, considerations for action resulting from the data, interviews and survey comments are presented.

OVERALL RATING OF R. I. BAKER MIDDLE SCHOOL

Students and parents were asked to rate R. I. Baker Middle School by giving it an overall rating (Very Effective to Not Effective). The ratings are summarized in **Table 11**.

TABLE 11: OVERALL RATINGS OF R. I. BAKER MIDDLE SCHOOL

With respect to student learning, this school is:

Rating	% of Each Group				
	Parents/ Guardians	Teachers	LA/SS	Students (Grades 5-6)	Students (Grades 7-8)
Very Effective	28	69	57	40	28
Effective	58	31	29	42	41
Somewhat Effective	14	0	14	15	22
Not Effective	0	0	0	3	10

As illustrated in **Table 11**, 86% of the parents, 82% of the Grades 5-6 and 69% of Grades 7-8 students perceived the school to be 'effective' or 'very effective.' No parents gave the school a 'Not Effective' rating. In short, there was affirmation that this is a very effective school. A summary of the comments from the surveys, offering a more specific view and some explanation of these ratings, is provided in the following section.

SUMMARY OF VERBATIM RESPONSES

Each respondent was given the opportunity to provide written elaboration on a number of issues. Two questions were related to the perceived overall strengths of the school and aspects

that individuals believed could be improved. **Table 12** represents the categories that emerged from the responses in order of frequency of mention per group.

TABLE 12: MOST FREQUENT COMMENTS: STRENGTHS AND NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS

What are the strengths of the school?				
	Parents	Teachers	LA's / SS	Students
1	Encouraging, Caring Staff	Variety of Programming	Variety of Activities for Students	Wide Variety of Programming
2	Wide Variety of Quality School Programs	Caring Dedicated Staff	Strong Sense of Team	Challenging Learning Opportunities
3	High Quality Instruction	High Expectations for Students and Staff	Caring Staff	Variety and Quality of Sports Offered
4	Safe and Caring Environment	Beautiful Facility		Caring Staff
What are the Areas needing improvement?				
1	School Discipline	Hectic Pace at School	Communication	Nothing Needs Improving
2	Communication to Parents	More Time for Instruction in Core Areas	More Equitable Distribution of Extra Curricular Responsibilities	Discipline
3	Cleanliness			School Cleanliness (washrooms)
4	More Challenging Learning Opportunities (Gifted)			

The following themes summed up some of the many strengths of the school:

1. The existence of a “wide variety of programming” was identified in all survey and focus groups. The range of exploratories is clearly a strength of this school. Comments included, “The exploratories are a great way to let the students try new things.” (parent), and student comments like, “The CGA is so much fun!! You get to make new friends in different grades! CGA ROX!” and “I love the fact that we can learn about things through exploratories. They are a great addition to my school.” One parent said, “The school is friendly and always welcoming.” It can be summed up with the parent comment, “I like that the school has CGAs” (cross-graded activities multi-graded groups of students that participate in school activities together).
2. All respondent groups indicated the presence of a caring and professional staff which is a strength in R. I. Baker Middle School. Comments like, “... the teachers at the school really care about my children’s welfare and try to do their best to make sure that they succeed in their education” and “there is an acceptance and tolerance of each other by students and staff despite different backgrounds. It creates a safe environment for children to learn and grow.”
3. Students, parents and staff acknowledged that a challenging instructional program was also one of this school’s assets. Comments like: “As a family, we feel that our children are given encouragement to exceed and are acknowledged for their accomplishments,” and “(RIBM) is a great place for academic learning.” Also student comments like, “teachers are really friendly and always think about the students’ needs,” and “the teachers are very committed to improving students’ learning and helping (them) every chance they get,” support this theme.

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

1. The largest theme for students of RIBMS was the absence of “concern”. Several students expressed a deep level of satisfaction with the school as expressed by comments like, “I personally don’t think that this school needs improvement,” and “I think that this school is very perfect just the way it is. All I can say is that the school is awesome and so unique.” As well, many students said “nothing,” when asked to identify areas that could be improved in the school.
2. Parents and students identified two distinct themes. School discipline was one area. Student comments like, “(punishment) should not be as harsh and unfair and unreasonable about finishing homework and getting a D.T.” and, “I also think that DT is harsh and unreasonable.” Parent comments like, “I feel that discipline in the school is overdone,” inform these concerns. The second area focused on school cleanliness.
3. Communication was a third area of improvement identified by multiple groups in this school review. Parents identified school/home communication as an area for further study. Comments like, “more notice given to parents about upcoming events/deadlines etc.” and, “communication (with parents) about homework not getting completed,” were submitted. Learning assistants identified internal communication as an area for

improvement with comments like, “communication with the cleaning staff (evening) and making them more feel more like a part of the staff.”

PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

There is little doubt that R. I. Baker Middle School is doing well in its efforts to provide the students with a high quality education. In reviewing the correlates of Effective Schools, it is clear that the school has strengths in each of the areas of “Instructional Leadership,” “Caring and Respectful School Environment,” “High Expectations for Learning,” “Assessment and Learning,” “Authentic Partnerships” and “Effective Instruction and Early Intervention.”

COMMENDATIONS

CONTINUE TO:

1. Put RIBMS student needs as the school’s top priority when it comes to focusing on continuous improvement initiatives. (Instructional Leadership)
2. Imbed the school’s mission, ‘Shaping Tomorrow Today’ with staff, students and parents. (Instructional Leadership)
3. Foster an environment where students receive the assistance that they need. (Caring and Respectful School Environment)
4. Clearly communicate behavioral expectations to students and parents. (Caring and Respectful School Environment)
5. Encourage an environment where employees display a high degree of job satisfaction. (Caring and Respectful School Environment)
6. Create a learning environment where students feel safe. (Caring and Respectful School Environment)
7. Use collaborative structures when creating and communicating school goals. (Instructional Leadership)
8. Focus on continuous improvement at R. I. Baker Middle School. (Instructional Leadership)
9. Create a learning environment that promotes high expectations for students. (High Expectations for Learning)
10. Maintain high quality collaborative learning experiences in classrooms. (High Expectations for Learning)
11. Communicate the belief that all students can learn. (High Expectations for Learning)
12. Maintain frequent quality communications with teachers and parents between report cards. (Assessment and Learning)
13. Give students the opportunity to learn collaboratively. (High Expectations for Learning)

14. Use common assessment language in communications with students and parents. (Assessment and Learning)
15. Provide sufficient amounts of learning materials that assists in student learning. (High Expectations for Learning)
16. Create abundant opportunities for students in both athletic and non-athletic activities. (Assessment and Learning)
17. Provide proactive responses when addressing student learning needs. (Effective Instruction and Early Intervention)
18. Encourage parent volunteers to be included in school functions and supports. (Authentic Partnerships)
19. Keep parents informed about school activities and programs. (Authentic Partnerships)
20. Provide a wide variety of programming options for RIBMS students. (Effective Instruction and Early Intervention)
21. Encourage students to take more responsibility for their learning. (Authentic Partnerships)

CONSIDERATIONS

CONSIDER:

1. Sharing this report with staff, parents, and central office personnel at the earliest convenient time in order to solicit feedback as to how the data can be used to inform future planning.
2. Implementing review information when planning facility, technology and resource improvements.
3. Placing the main points of the report on the school's website and inviting responses from the public at large.

R.I. BAKER MIDDLE SCHOOL GOALS 2010 - 2011:

Goal 1: School Culture

Goal 2: Student Achievement: Differentiation

Goal 3: Student Achievement: Assessment for Learning

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

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

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

R. I. Baker Middle School deserves recognition for maintaining an educational program that aligns its goals with its mission. Parents, teachers and support staff all focus on its core beliefs in all that is done for students. It is summed up with the comment:

This school has a wonderful group of teachers and staff. They work well together for the children. Never forget that students are all different and have different opinions and ideas. ...Keep up the great work. You get an “A”. (parent)

The review team, through various interactions with the leadership and staff of this school, felt these professionals demonstrated an extraordinarily high level of commitment to the students of R. I. Baker Middle School and their families. Throughout this review process, the staff and administration have demonstrated a sincere and enthusiastic interest in the emerging pictures of school life as described in the data. After reviewing the data and trends contained within the report, the school may wish to hold an analysis workshop. This will help school staff work collaboratively through the school review data to develop a response to this report that will be presented to the Palliser Board of Trustees.

In his work on school change, Douglas Reeves (2009) addressed three necessary conditions for successful change to take hold in schools. The first ingredient for successful growth is “administrative clarity” and the role it plays in creating and supporting the culture of a school. Knowing what’s important for student learning and success to occur is paramount in the organization of school resources. This includes supporting collaborative best practices and securing divisional supports to enrich instruction. Second, a “reorientation of priorities and values” that aligns vision with school leadership and purpose must occur. The priorities of the leader must be seen in the school’s priorities, plans and programs. Lastly, a “vision of change that is so compelling” is required to sustain the continued growth needed in a school.

R. I. Baker Middle School is a very successful school that provides excellent programming for its students. The goals and priorities clearly outline areas where school resources and efforts are being directed. The diversity of programming and deep care for student learning, while maintaining a safe environment, are core to the staff’s beliefs about student success. Lawrence Lezotte and Kathleen Snyder in their book, *What Effective School Do*, define an effective school as:

The effective school is characterized by high overall student achievement ... [it] is built on a foundation of high expectations, strong leadership, unwavering commitment to learning for all, collaboration, differentiated instruction, and frequent monitoring of student progress.

All of these characteristics are present in abundance in R. I. Baker Middle School. Inherent in the school's inclusive mission statement, **'Shaping Tomorrow Today'** is the empowering purpose that focuses efforts for all who are fortunate enough to serve the students of R. I. Baker Middle School.

