

**The Impact of Integrated Education on Students' Tolerance of Diversity:
An Ethnographic Case Study
September – December 2000
Report of Findings**

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Introduction

This study was conducted as part of a yearlong research sabbatical I undertook in 2000-2001 during which time I served as a faculty intern at UNU/INCORE (Institute on Conflict Resolution) in Derry/Londonderry and as Sheelagh Murnaghan Visiting Professor at Queens University in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Both of these institutions offered support to my project work and provided opportunities for dissemination of research findings and recommendations through presentations and written media. The focus of the overall research project centered on assessing systemic means of promoting tolerance through integrated education in Northern Ireland; the title of the project was "Beyond the Symmetry of Conflict: Exploring New Pathways of Tolerance through Integrated Education in Northern Ireland." This report describes the rationale, goals and methodology that defined this whole-school case study and summarizes the considerable data findings collected from surveys, interviews and observations of students, teachers, administrators, parents and staff. Recommendations derived from the findings are outlined at the report's conclusion and have been formally presented to both the school management and the governing board of the school under study as well as to the Northern Ireland Council of integrated Education (NICIE) for the broader implications across the integrated sector.

Rationale

After preliminary correspondence over the summer months of 2000, agreement was reached and arrangements made to meet with the school management of one post-primary integrated school in Derry/Londonderry in order to discuss plans to conduct an ethnographic study of the school during the autumn. This particular integrated school was chosen due to its proximity to where I would be residing during my sabbatical leave in Northern Ireland, thereby allowing for daily observations and assessments to take place as part of ethnographic research procedures. Over a few meetings held with staff in early September 2000, research objectives were defined and the design of a whole-school study to take place over the next four months determined. This effort was undertaken as an action research study, that is, the design of this study emerged from discussions with the school administration who asked if I would assist them

in gathering input that would help them answer the question, “Are we having a meaningful positive impact on students’ tolerance for diversity in this school and, specifically, what are we doing that is effective and ineffective toward that end. (Note: In order to maintain a degree of anonymity for this school, I have attempted to remove any identification data and refer to the specific school under study as “ABC College” throughout this paper. For those unfamiliar with NI school level designations, the term ‘college’ in this region is used to refer to a post-primary school, as opposed to its general use in USA to designate post-secondary institutions; typically, a College in NI educates the equivalent grade levels as the American middle and high school).

It is important to note that the idea behind action research is that applied study is undertaken in order to examine, answer or solve specific questions or problems that have been identified in the given setting. Given this, action research is typically collaborative, adaptable and emergent in nature. In this case, the research goals, design and methodology of the action research study that was to take place emerged from the staff input regarding identified areas of concern or query. Among a number of matters discussed, the notion of assessing the extent to which the integrated education ethos was actually at work at ABC College, specifically in terms of how the integrated school experience at ABC was impacting students’ tolerance of diversity emerged as the primary direction the study should take. Up to this point, only anecdotal information was available to speak to these critical questions.

The idea was that by having a participant-observer collect qualitative data over the course of a few months in the natural setting from students, teachers, parents, staff and administrators through observation, interviews and survey, an empirical assessment of the integrated ethos at ABC could better be achieved. By walking and talking with students and teachers in the classroom, hallways, morning and lunch breaks, sitting down in one-on-one discussion (and, in some cases, collecting input through surveys) with as many students, teachers, staff and parents as feasible, it would be possible to obtain a representative sense of what was working and what was not working at ABC in terms of carrying out the intended mission of integrated education (as defined in the NICIE Statement of Principles).

According to data from the 1999-00 academic year, the student enrolment of ABC Integrated College was listed as 765 students divided just about evenly across years 8 through year 11 (averaging between 146 and 139 students at each year level) with a drop in numbers at year 12 (121 students). As far as students staying at ABC for A-level study, these enrolment figures showed that 40 students were enrolled in year 13 and 30 students were in year 14. These figures indicate that only one-third of students who completed key stage 3 continued at ABC for their A-levels (key stage 4) with about three-quarters of these actually completing year 14. The question remains as to where these students go and for what reasons. This study did not permit careful analysis of

exit, transfer and attrition data to determine the paths these students take. While anecdotal reference was made to the majority of these students moving on to technical college, it was not clear as to what percentage of those leaving after year 12 might transfer to grammar schools for their A-level education. Such an inspection would provide indications useful to school enhancement efforts.

The term “integration” refers not only to the concept of integration of religious traditions but indeed includes all gender, socio-economic and ability levels. Looking at enrolments for the 1999/00 academic year, approximately 57% of students at ABC were male and 43% were female. During the period of this study at ABC, it was reported that approximately 20% of students were classified as having “special needs” and approximately 28.5% of students were listed as having entitlement to free school meals. Estimates of the student composition in terms of religious background indicate that approximately two thirds of the students at ABC come from the Catholic tradition and one third from the Protestant tradition. I would note however my own reticence in describing the school population in terms of these two classifications which in my estimate serves to disservice the school community and underestimate its diversity. For example, when students in this study were asked to optionally self-report their religious tradition, a wide range of responses were given beyond the two primary traditions of “Catholic” and “Protestant” including “Christian”, “Jehovah Witness,” “atheist,” “born again,” “agnostic,” “mixed,” and “Buddhist.”

ABC Integrated College, founded by local parents in 1992 with grant maintained status, is a child-centered, co-educational school whose “distinctive feature is its planned integrated character.” Its aims are “to provide a broad curriculum which will reflect not only the external demands of the N.I. curriculum but also the all-ability character and integrative purpose of the College itself.” We would expect then that, if successful in meeting its goals, the school ethos at ABC would be characterized by a consistently tolerant, cooperative and inclusive learning environment in which its students (indeed all members of the school community), over the course of time spent in the school, would demonstrate behaviors and attitudes of tolerance toward diversity. This study was intended then to pursue a systemic look at the overall school culture at ABC in the hopes of getting a better sense of its impact on students’ tolerance of diversity.

Methodology

Given the limitations of time and resources, a longitudinal or experimental design for this study was naturally ruled out. Rather, this research was designed as a short-term ethnographic case study that would aim to examine the school’s integrated ethos by way of assessing the attitudes, behaviors and experiences of the various constituencies within the school community, most especially its students. This would be accomplished through a series of personal as well as

phone interviews, observations, participant activities, surveys and material reviews conducted primarily on-site. Working within practical and logistical constraints, a concerted effort to achieve broad representation in identifying study samples from each constituent group was maintained.

As far as the student population, it was decided to appraise a sample of students at each year of the school curriculum and then attempt to compare their profiles across the progression of years, in an effort to consider the effect of the integrated school experience over time. As part of this, it was thought that looking at the students progressively over the year levels would give some comparative sense of the incremental impact that might occur through sustained experience in this environment. Student interview data were collected and collated at each year level (8-14) producing profiles that were subsequently compared across the years. In an effort to further garner an indication of the impact of the integrated school experience at ABC, surveys assessing student opinion about the "school climate" were given to all year 8 students (new entrants to the school) and all year 14 (graduating) students for subsequent comparison. The idea behind assessing students at entry point and exit point was to look for differences that might emerge over the course of time spent in the school. Obviously, absolute conclusions regarding direct effect cannot be drawn because the comparisons are being made across the years on the part of different students (where variability is less controlled) instead of looking at the same students across the years where differences in the end could be more readily ascribed to the variables of time, setting and experience. It is also important to recognize the limitation that this study did not venture out into the lives of students beyond the school day where other behaviours and influences could be assessed; this of course further limits the ability to measure students attitudes validly and/or to attribute effects singularly to the school experience. However, there is defense for this method of assessment under such circumstances and good reason to believe that the comparative profiles allow for a basic sense of how time spent in the integrated school experience at ABC impacts the student.

In deference to student 'time-in-class' concerns in the major subject areas, it was decided to utilize the PSE class period for student data collection purposes, specifically in order to conduct the interviewing and observation sessions. Approximately three students were identified from each PSE class period to be interviewed on a one-to-one basis. A total of 46 students, selected to be representative across gender, religion, ability/behaviour level and year of school (with the exception of year 12 students who were too busy in GCSE preparation), were interviewed on a one-to-one basis over the course of 3 months in the autumn of 2000.

In addition to the individual student interviews, approximately 135 students were given a "School Climate" survey which attempted to assess how students experienced ABC in relation to tolerance of diversity. There were 20 items contained in the survey each providing a 5-point rating scale for responses where

1='strongly agree,' 3='neutral' and 5='strongly disagree'. (Note: I developed this instrument as an adaptation of Hegarty and Dalton's (1995) Organizational Diversity Inventory which was developed primarily for use in work settings.) Student survey responses were input into the computer for statistical analysis using the SPSS v.10 statistical analysis package; both descriptive and inferential analyses (i.e., Analysis of Variance/ANOVA) were performed.

In the end, I was able to obtain direct input from approximately one-quarter (i.e., 23%) of the student population at ABC through interview and survey participation. Additionally, I observed or acted as participant observer in nine (9) individual class sessions with about 15 to 20 students in each class. Beyond these formal data collection occasions, numerous informal opportunities emerged occasions where I would inadvertently run into ABC students on the streets of Derry/Londonderry. Considering all these formal and informal means of assessing students' experience at ABC, I am confident that the whole of my investigative efforts incorporated the majority of the student body over the course of the three months of study.

In order to assess faculty and staff input, individual interviews were held with nine teaching faculty members some of whom were also observed in their classroom teaching; five auxiliary staff members including classroom assistants, canteen and caretaking departments who were identified because of their ability to see student behaviours in other perspectives; and, the three senior managers of the school. Additionally, 15 teachers responded to a written questionnaire I sent to the faculty. In total, about half of the professional staff were assessed through these methods.

Over this time period, in-person and phone interviews were held with nine parents, drawn from all student year levels, some with more than one child in the school as well as three who had removed their children from ABC within the last year. A member of the Board of Governors was among the parents interviewed. Of these parents, four specified their tradition as Catholic, four indicated various denominations of the Protestant tradition and one represented a mixed-marriage background. It should be noted that informal discussions also occurred with parents over the course of the semester as the opportunity arose (for example, after a Parent Council meeting, at a parent-teacher advisement night program, etc.).

The interview protocols that were used for each target group (all of which guaranteed anonymity) are included for reference at the end of this document, as is a copy of the "School Climate" Survey that was given to new and exiting students. Wherever possible, auxiliary data that could help to characterize the overall school ethos were included in the review process. As part of this, selected course curricula, operational policies, research reports previously completed, the annual report, school public relations literature, procedural handouts and reports

such as those outlining enrolment and budgetary figures were looked at as a means of increasing the contextual credibility of this study.

Due to time limitations, analysis of other formal documents that would provide empirical data relevant in a more comprehensive evaluation (for example, budget reports, enrolment/attrition statistics, staff hiring and professional development reviews, as well as Department of Education Inspection Reports which assess ABC performance across universal educational criteria) was not possible. Incorporation of such reviews would be indicated in follow-up to this study. Lastly, in an effort to add some comparative context to my review, I visited for interview and observation purposes both a local non-denominational, co-educational grammar school that enrolls a mixed student population (but is not an integrated school) as well as the local feeder integrated primary school.

Findings

Parents

For the most part, the parents who were interviewed indicated that they sent their children to ABC Integrated College (ABC) because of their belief in the integrated education ideology and ethos and the desire to have their children educated in a non-sectarian environment. These parents believe that by enrolling their children in a school that educates students across gender, religious, sociopolitical and ability groupings, they are further enabling them to learn how to accept and interact effectively with all people and therefore be better prepared to live in an increasingly diverse world (distinct from the one they themselves had grown up in). It became clear in these discussions however that for a number of these parents the benefit of not having to abide by the contentious 11+ selective system was also a key reason integrated education (ABC) was viewed as a preferred choice. The fact that ABC was an all-ability school meant that their children would qualify for admission regardless of academic performance in the primary school years and, more importantly for some of them, not have to deal with the trauma they feel the 11+ test invokes on the part of students so young.

It is significant to note that when these parents were asked for their general thoughts on the selective system in Northern Ireland, every one of them, regardless of the academic ability level of their child or how their child might have performed on the 11+, eschewed this selection procedure as 'the worst system ever', 'the most appalling thing done to children in NI', 'a dreadful injustice to our children', 'a terrible practice', 'supporting the ethos of division in NI' 'reinforcing the two-tier system in NI'. Indeed, they all spoke strongly about the inequities, injustices and emotional damage this system wrought on the part of children in Northern Ireland and unanimously believed it should be done away with.

When parents were given the opportunity to discuss their positive impressions of ABC, almost all emphasized the inclusive and accepting environment that they believe characterizes their children's experience at ABC. As part of this, parents mentioned the school's efforts to endorse positive attitudes toward people of all backgrounds and applauded the school's emphasis on promoting mutual respect and building self-esteem on the part of students. Small class size (on average about 20 students in each class) was identified commonly as a very positive aspect of the school as was the sense that "special needs" were well accommodated at ABC. Reference was also made to the newly established Enrichment Program as offering bright students additional challenge and opportunity within the ABC school experience.

Parents' negative impressions centered on three general areas: 1) the inadequate physical facilities (concerns were raised about the safety, health and overall learning environment posed by the school's physical plant wherein the vast majority of classes need to be scheduled in outdoor mobile units and insufficient recreational/common space exists for non-classroom activity); 2) teachers' expectations of and treatment toward students related to academic performance (comments included "some children are not adequately challenged by teachers"; "not enough homework given"; "some teachers are not specialists in their subject area"; "with the emphasis on high self-esteem, some children are allowed to get away with too much"; "some students are not properly sanctioned for misbehaviour or academic negligence"); and, 3) parent-school communications/relations (comments included "the supposed close relations between parent and school are not actually the case"; "there is limited parental involvement in this school"; "if you are not one of the 'insider' group of parents at the parents council, concerns you raise are not taken seriously").

Despite these voiced concerns, it is significant to note that most parents indicated that, even if they had some concerns as parents, their children were almost uniformly happy in the school. There appeared to be no difference in feedback based on the religious tradition of the parent.

When parents were asked to comment about how issues related to sectarianism were being handled at ABC, the majority indicated a general sense of satisfaction with the way the school is succeeding in treating every child equally and consistently implementing policy and practice that proscribes any form of sectarianism. There were a few parents however who anecdotally mentioned incidents where their children had experienced or witnessed sectarian prejudice between students in the school. When asked how the school addressed these incidents, the parents said the school had addressed each case straightforwardly and effectively. Most of the parents who were interviewed felt that their children maintained their tolerant attitudes and behaviors beyond the school at the end of the day (often having other ABC students from different traditions among their closest friends now). At the same time, they admitted to the fact that their children on occasion still experience sectarian prejudice from

other youth (from both the same and different religious traditions) and therefore maintain a degree of healthy caution when out and about with others, especially if they are wearing their school blazers in public areas.

When asked if they thought issues of sectarianism should be openly addressed in classes as part of achieving an integrated ethos at ABC, parents were split in their opinions. Some thought that these issues indeed should be addressed openly in an educational and objective manner rather than avoided or only addressed when some prejudicial comment was made by a student. Others felt that due to the unequal representation of the traditions in many classes, it would be difficult for students to feel comfortable when these issues came up for discussion and therefore it was better to have this type of dialogue on a needs basis only. In related discussion, one parent (who had withdrawn her child from the school) raised a concern that some teachers (especially new teachers) are ill-equipped to deal equitably with the broad range of student attitudes and behavior they face in a school such as ABC and that additional efforts need to be taken to promote appropriate understanding and skills on the part of teachers related to dealing with all types of students (i.e., across gender, religion and ability) if the integrated ethos is to be effectively achieved.

Similarly, most parents saw the school policy that prohibits the display of cultural emblems or symbols as unfortunate but without viable alternative at this time. While most stated they believed it would be better if students were able to celebrate and honor their respective cultural heritage in an integrated environment, most simply felt that the current policy was the “easiest way out” given students’ adolescent tendencies to tease and instigate competitive antagonism amongst themselves, as well as the deep-seated sensitivities that continue to keep sectarianism alive in Northern Ireland. One parent recounted the difficult history behind the development of this policy including the sadly failed attempt a number of years ago to bring people together from both traditions to discuss the benefits of a more tolerant policy related to the display of emblems at ABC. Divisions on the issue were seemingly exacerbated in the midst of feverish comments made at that meeting and, as a result, the whole matter was shelved and is not resolved to date.

Teachers

A total of 24 teachers (approximately half of the faculty) were surveyed through written questionnaire and individual interviews on a wide range of issues related to integrated education at ABC Integrated College. Additionally, nine faculty members were observed in their classroom teaching as a further means of assessing pedagogical practice in the context of the integrated ethos at ABC. The teachers who participated in this assessment represented a full range of subject areas and averaged 9 years of professional teaching experience (with an average of 4 years teaching at ABC) among them. Two-thirds of the teachers

surveyed identified their own tradition as “Catholic” with approximately one-third indicating their tradition as “Protestant” or “Christian” or giving no response. The vast majority of surveyed teachers were female, corresponding to the overall faculty makeup.

When these teachers were asked for the reasons they came to work at ABC, most acknowledged that they came to ABC because it represented a “good job opportunity” for them. About two-thirds of those surveyed secondarily noted that they were also attracted by the opportunity to teach in an integrated environment.

When asked to reflect upon the value and the problems associated with integrated education in general, most surveyed teachers expressed strong belief in the ideals of IE and in the indefensibility of the current sectarian system and saw an integrated system of education as the ‘only way’ bridges of understanding and tolerance would be built in Northern Ireland’s divided society. Although many of these teachers acknowledged not having come to ABC because of any steadfast commitment to the principles of integrated education, almost all of them expressed significant belief in the integrated education system at this time. This would suggest that continued involvement in the integrated education system facilitates an understanding and commitment to the ideals of integrated education on the part of teachers.

In considering the future of integrated education in NI, most teachers readily acknowledged that there continues to be significant resistance to the furtherance of integrated education demonstrated by certain segments of Northern Ireland society. They noted the inconsistent support that exists in local communities for IE and the concerns held by many that mixing traditions could lead to a loss of identity. The sense that many from other educational sectors impugn IE as an inferior academic delivery system was also noted with concern as a problem to overcome. In discussing the roadblocks associated with furthering integrated education, these teachers alluded to the difficult drain on general resources involved in instituting IE as a “third type” of education in NI. They noted how difficult it is to obtain approval, funding and facilities to establish viable integrated schools in NI with the onus primarily falling upon individual groups of volunteer parents. Another concern that was commonly identified by these teachers as impeding the meaningful success of IE spoke to the notion that these students, although nurtured for 8 hours a day in an integrated ethos, return to their homes and neighborhoods where old histories of discrimination and division often continue to prevail and the lessons learned by day are put aside.

In considering how well the ideals of IE were working in practice at ABC, most of the surveyed teachers voiced a vote of confidence in the school’s success in achieving an integrated ethos. The vast majority of these teachers thought that ABC was successful in carrying out the IE ideology comprehensively across gender, religion and ability level. Despite their recognition that “out of

school” sectarian influences (i.e., from peers, neighborhood and even family) represent an ongoing challenge in the lives of their students, the vast majority of these teachers stated their belief that students at ABC genuinely hold attitudes of tolerance and acceptance of diversity. While a few mentioned infrequent incidents of intolerance or prejudice toward ethnic and foreign minorities, others were quick to note the high degree of tolerance their students exhibited in particular toward classmates from all ability levels.

A number of teachers mentioned concern over the disproportionate enrollment of one tradition in the school and alluded to the possibility that some students coming from mixed marriages might be enrolled as “Protestant” when they are actually being brought up as Catholic. Additionally, many of the teachers surveyed spoke of their concern that “a lot of parents” were not necessarily committed to the IE ideology and, in point of fact, had sent their children to ABC because of its all-ability orientation and exemption from the transfer system. A note of caution was raised in this regard by a number of interviewed faculty who, while proud of the job ABC was doing in the area of all-ability education, felt that school public relations may be presenting an image that ABC is focused on special needs education which they thought, in the end, might alienate parents of high-ability children. A few teachers were further chagrined to think that ABC may be “turning into a secondary school” with fewer higher ability students maintaining enrolment, possibly due to the notion that the rigor and challenge for the brighter students in the classroom is jeopardized when there is a heavy valence toward addressing the special learning needs students.

It was quite clear that these teachers saw communications between the school and parents as critical and felt strongly about the need for parent involvement both in and out of school. Some noted that the parents of recent intake classes were much less involved in the school than those from the beginning years. They felt that this lack of commitment on the part of many parents was disadvantageous to the school’s ability to effectively achieve its integrated mission and wished the school would do more to foster parental commitment to the ideals of IE so as to better insure an overall team approach between school and home/family.

When asked for their own opinion regarding NI’s selective system, just about every surveyed teacher responded vociferously against this assessment procedure which they described among other things as “despicable,” “elitist,” “destructive,” “a bureaucratic holdover,” “an unreliable measure” and “blatantly unfair and indefensible at such a young age.” They went on to voice their judgment that the “11+” assessment “lowers student morale,” “creates a stigma of failure that can last a lifetime” and “procreates a two-tier society.” The words “fail” and “failure” are typically used to refer to students’ performance, according to these teachers. Furthermore, the notion that the selective system promotes a “brain drain” which negatively impacts the quality of all sectors of education in NI was brought out as was the distressing sense that grades on the “11+” are

mistakenly accepted all too commonly as the overall estimation of the child. It was extraordinary to see such solidarity on this issue (despite it representing the long-term practice in the province) and to hear the free flow of personal anecdotes shared to illustrate their position.

In a related vein, these teachers were asked how their own sociopolitical and religious background affects their work in the school. Most of the surveyed teachers felt that their own background was not an issue at all in how they performed their work, interacted with or were received by others in the school. A number reported heightened awareness regarding their own cultural background because of their teaching at ABC to the extent that it helped them remain more sensitive to students from all backgrounds.

One of the elements of inquiry this study sought to focus on related to how sectarianism (that is, the prejudicial attitudes and discrimination that exists in Northern Ireland based on religious and political differences) was being addressed in the classroom at ABC. With the school's mission being aimed toward promoting tolerance and mutual understanding among all members of the school community (otherwise living in a divided society), it would seem likely that purposeful activity would be taking place in the classroom to contribute to accomplishing this goal.

When teachers were asked how the issue of sectarianism was addressed in their classroom teaching, almost all indicated that, other than generally maintaining a climate of acceptance, tolerance and respect in their classes, issues of sectarianism were only addressed as the occasion or need arose. On such occasions (for example, when students make prejudicial remarks in reference to or display of cultural symbols in some classroom discussion), these teachers indicate that they "take the matter seriously" and do not tolerate sectarian diatribe in their classroom. Some teachers noted that "as issues arise" they open discussion wherein "both perspectives are given" and the emphasis is placed on respect and acceptance. Some were apprehensive in discussing these occasions, noting "horrendous" and "frightening" situations they had encountered in this regard.

As a number of these teachers alluded, some of this reticence to confront the ills of sectarianism up-front through planned curriculum and instruction stems from the lack of formal training or preparation they feel they have received in this area. Furthermore these teachers admitted having had no exposure to "personal awareness" issues as part of their pre-service or professional development training (that is, to help them recognize and address their own biases as they prepared to move into the schools).

From this input, it appears that most teachers in the classroom at ABC are not proactively addressing sectarianism. When asked if this lack of proactive treatment reflected "school policy," these teachers were not clear on what

specific policy requires other than for teachers to deal with all such situations with respect and equity in the classroom when they arise. There does not appear to be any formal guidelines written up for teachers at ABC related to dealing effectively with sectarian attitudes and behaviors in the school community. On some levels, it appears that there is an avoidance of openly addressing the sensitive issues that continue to divide society in Northern Ireland in an effort not to broach dissension in the classroom (ironically steering clear of the very issues that serve as IE's *raison d'être*).

As part of supporting an integrated ethos, one might expect that there would be activity in the school that purposefully provides opportunity to examine and address the attitudes and behaviors underlying sectarianism. The dilemma of how to address the display of cultural emblems represents one such opportunity. As mentioned, ABC has been plagued since its inception with trying to address this contentious issue and, for many reasons, has opted for a policy that prohibits all such display. Rather than maintaining a policy that prohibits such display in school (which in essence takes away rights from each tradition and automatically underestimates the ability of young people to behave in responsible and tolerant ways), it would be more reflective of an integrated ethos to developmentally incorporate learning activity that sought to educate students about the objective facts and, by so doing, dismantle the power imbued in these symbols through their prohibition. Through relevant instruction and dialogue in the classroom, students can build the necessary tools to problem-solve and make responsible choices of behavior not only in this integrated setting but also in society at large. Two teachers, both of whom I interviewed as well as observed in class, offered their opinion regarding the lack of direct treatment of these issues in the classroom. They explained that by not initiating discussion related to issues of sectarianism in the classroom, a safe and peaceful climate is more likely to prevail, which they saw as being the best antidote to sectarianism. While this may represent prevailing belief and practice at ABC, it was still somewhat of a surprise not to see more use of the established vehicles such as EMU or PSE as a proactive way to tackle these areas. Among all the teachers I interviewed, observed or surveyed, only two explicitly referred to the EMU initiative as a viable means through which sectarian issues can be addressed in the school.

To follow-up on these comments, I looked in classroom observations for indications as to whether and how issues related to sectarianism and integration were being addressed in the classroom by faculty. Specifically I wanted to determine whether these concerns were proactively discussed and integrated into the classroom learning activity as part of building the integrated ethos. Over the nine classes I observed, only two involved pedagogy that addressed such issues. In one PSE/Citizenship class I observed, the subject of stereotyping was being explored as part of the "Seeing Sense" anti-prejudice program curriculum that was being piloted at ABC as one of six schools in NI. In this case, it was apparent that the students were well able to openly engage in the classroom exercise that was intended to elicit and analyze prejudicial images and epithets

commonly held in reference to different groups. All of the students, regardless of gender or religion, appeared to be comfortable with the activity and benefit from the lesson. The fact that the teacher, who had been trained in the use of the curricular materials, was effective in keeping the discussion on target and well managed despite the potentially touchy subject matter demonstrated how this type of classroom learning experience can constructively address elements of sectarianism as part of a whole-school approach toward facilitating tolerance and mutual understanding.

The second class I observed that dealt specifically with issues related to sectarianism was one in which I had the benefit of serving as a participant-observer after being asked by the teacher to collaborate with her on a learning project she wanted to incorporate into the English curriculum that would address the concept of sectarianism and reconciliation. The idea was to have these year 10 students read and analyze the Joan Lindgard novel "Across the Barricades" which portrayed the story of two Belfast teenagers, a Catholic boy and a Protestant girl, and the difficulties involved in trying to maintain their friendship during the Troubles. As part of the project work, students were given a contentious scene selected from the novel that was representative of sectarian divisions and asked to write and produce their own play scripts that would allow them to determine their own endings in the vignette. To carry out this activity, they would need to reflect upon and tackle the sectarian behaviors and attitudes illustrated in the narrative. Based on a widely used pedagogical approach in the USA, I encouraged the relevant use of 'cooperative learning' techniques in this project to further promote the experience of cooperative problem-solving as germane to the learning objectives of the activity. Following a "cooperative learning" approach in this case, students were assigned to 4-6 member "teams" mixed by gender, ability and religious tradition, and given the opportunity to work cooperatively in the learning activity rather than as individual students carrying out the task on their own. The very methodology itself provides experiential learning benefit in cooperative interaction and problem-solving.

By all measures, this class project, extending over several sessions, was highly successful in meeting its content, process and experiential learning objectives. That is, through this project, students appeared to accomplish the curricular goals (such as reading comprehension, literary analysis, writing, public speaking), further develop skills in group discussion, negotiation and problem-solving, as well as consider the personal implications of conflict and reconciliation in people's lives. Furthermore, students engaged in the activity with energy and enthusiasm, seemingly enjoying their new role as cooperative learners at the same time as demonstrating their ability to formulate responsible positions on contentious issues. Efforts are currently being taken to obtain funding from the Integrated Education Fund (IEF) to develop this learning project as a model to share within the larger integrated school community in the belief that it is an excellent example of how the integrated ethos can be incorporated into the main curriculum.

When asked what teachers at ABC need to better enable them to meet the educational and psychosocial needs of all students, a large number indicated a felt need for additional training in the area of dealing with psychosocial issues that arise on the part of their students for which they currently feel ill-equipped (one teacher bemoaned “I want to help but I am not trained as a counselor!”). Similarly, a number felt the need for training in the area of how to address sectarian issues effectively with their students. Other teachers pointed to the need for more classroom support (for example, additional classroom assistants) to meet the behavioral as well as the instructional challenges of the all-ability classroom.

These challenges appear to contribute to elevated stress levels on the part of many ABC faculty. As mentioned, these teachers saw behaviour management in all-ability classes as increasingly strenuous. Others called for “more time” allowed in their day for taking care of all their professional duties. With the current requisite system of “covering” classes for absent teachers, most faculty often find that their scheduled prep/free periods are reassigned to cover absent teachers which in turn causes further stress on their schedule. When asked why the school does not hire additional staff to cover absences in order to better ensure teacher free/prep periods and lessen the felt stress and tension caused by workload and lack of time, these teachers understood budgetary and redundancy concerns to be the problem. In my simple observation, there seems to be a considerable and regular need for covering classes (that is, a good number of teacher absences require coverage on any given day). I did not ask to review faculty attendance records in order to gauge whether any problematic patterns of absences (requested sick days) were evident. When the faculty attendance policy was explained to me, I found it to be quite generous in comparison to American standards. I would wonder if there is any “vicious cycle” emerging here: high stress □ absences □ requiring other faculty to cover those classes and lose their own prep time □ more stress □ more absences, etc, etc.

Not surprisingly, a majority of these teachers underscored the need for more space and improved physical facilities and resources at ABC; the disruption and dislocation many have experienced by having to move from one mobile classroom to another (let alone monitor students in overcrowded, restricted hallways between class times) seems to be wearing on them.

In the final analysis, the concern would be that the felt stress levels and expressed concerns regarding workload and not being adequately equipped in relation to the unique challenges that exist in the integrated school setting could lead, if not constructively addressed at this stage, to problems such as loss of morale and the transfer of good faculty to other systems. In my observations, the most involved teachers (those with designated responsibilities beyond classroom teaching) revealed the most stress and would be in highest jeopardy of such “burnout.”

Students

Clearly, the most important group in this study in terms of assessing the impact of integrated education at ABC was the students themselves. It is important to note here that all of the data collected in reference to students were viewed as a collective whole to describe the general student population and, when feasible, group divisions by year of school were made to obtain more focused assessments and generate comparisons between students at different stages of experience in the school environment. Given the numbers, I did not attempt to examine students' responses grouped by religious tradition but in my overall sense during intake there were very few indications of response bias based on the student's reported religion, or gender for that matter.

When year 8 students (newly entered) were asked the reasons for coming to ABC, a majority acknowledged the integrated ethos and said they came to be able to get to know others from all backgrounds. However, a good number also mentioned that they did not take the "11+" (some of these were from integrated primary schools) and came to ABC because their parents thought it was a "better school" than a secondary school; some also came because their older siblings attended. (Note: For those not familiar with the "11+" transfer test, it is the highly controversial one-time placement exam taken by students in Northern Ireland at age 11 to determine whether they are eligible to pursue an academic grammar school education or a more vocationally oriented secondary school.) While most of the students interviewed from year 9 noted that integrated education was the reason they came to ABC, a few mentioned that they either did not take or did not pass the transfer test and that ABC was seen as a "good school" to go to. A change in this pattern seemed to emerge when students from year 10 provided their reasons for coming to ABC. The predominant responses these students gave indicated they came to ABC due to practical considerations such as the school's location, the fact they had not taken the "11+", or that they had siblings or friends who were there. The year 11 students were attracted by ABC's integrated climate and opportunities to "mix with all religions" and commonly identified their decision to go there as "my own choice." It is significant to note that when it came to speaking with year 13 and 14 students (17 and 18 year olds) most of whom had been at ABC since the earliest years of the school's inception, there was an overriding sense from these students that they had come first and foremost to ABC because of their parents' strong commitment to the ideals of IE. A number of the older students proudly stated that their parents were "pioneers" in establishing the school.

When students were asked to discuss their opinions about the "11+" system in Northern Ireland, an unleashed stream of emotions gave way. Those who took the test recounted months of fear and anxiety leading up to it; this group spoke of the nervous pressure they felt and, in those cases where scores were below the grammar school acceptance criterion, the resentment was

palpable but laced with a sense of vindication given the success they now were experiencing at ABC. It was striking how many of these students referred to the self-concept of “failure” in their narrative (through comments such as, “when you ‘fail’, it makes you feel really, really bad about yourself”; “people think you’re stupid if you don’t do well on the 11+”; “when I got grade C, I thought I was a failure for life” and “I felt bad about myself and sorry for my parents”). Even those who didn’t take the transfer test spoke with disdain about it being “unfair,” “unnecessary” and “useless” while demonstrating emotions ranging from anger to resentment to indignity. As if to prove their point, students frequently offered anecdotal references to cases of friends, family and their own selves that proved to their satisfaction that the test was not a real measure of one’s ability (for example one student claimed, “My friend from ABC Primary took the 11+ and failed it, she couldn’t get into Foyle & Londonderry, her first chABCe, and so came here and wound up doing really well and is now in her ‘A’ levels.”)

When the opportunity was given students to talk about their general impressions of ABC and to identify any concerns they might have or areas they would like to see change/improve, the overwhelming response was one demonstrating genuine satisfaction, appreciation and pride in (being a student at) ABC. It was impressive to hear these students articulate how positively they viewed the school and its “integrated ethos.” (Researcher’s Note: In my years of experience in American schools, I have never heard students speak about their school *ethos*, and as such it stood out in my experience. I imagine the fact that this is commonly used vernacular at ABC can be viewed as a direct manifestation of the well-pronounced mission of the school.) When students were asked however whether issues related to sectarianism and conflict in NI are addressed in the classroom, almost all of those interviewed could recall no such discussions other than when a bias remark or comment was made and the teacher had to correct the student. Students sensed that teachers purposefully avoided such discussions because “it will get students to argue” and one recounted his teacher saying, “this is not the place to discuss such matters.” The one exception students noted was in RE classes where they “learned about the other religions” and “found out things I never knew” and “could talk about religious beliefs openly without hurting anyone’s feelings.” Some students noted that they were taught how to get along with others through their PSE class.

For the most part, students in the earlier years focused on their appreciation of their teachers’ support while students in the advanced years emphasized the value of the relationships they had formed with other students and acknowledged the confidence they had gained in themselves as a result of going to ABC. As an illustration of this, one year 14 student was poignant in his reflection of being a student at ABC saying “I am so glad I came here.... for seven years I have been in a peaceful school where you don’t have to be afraid and you can learn without the pressure of hostile influences.... I will really miss ABC when I leave at the end of this year.”

Despite the common student view that ABC provides a “tolerant,” “fun,” learning environment “where religion doesn’t matter” and “good opportunities to do things” have been provided, students at all year levels admitted to having heard biased and prejudicial remarks or seeing sectarian graffiti in the school but somehow seemed unperturbed by such occurrences. Throughout the interviews, there was little indication given that students felt particularly empowered to make decisions or influence policy in the school, but seemingly with little regret on their behalf. A few of the A-level students however voiced concern that there was less representation allowed for in student council on the part of year 13 and 14 students (one rep per year versus one rep per class for the younger years) who were perhaps “in the best position to provide leadership” for the student community. When asked about the school policy that prohibits the wearing/display of cultural symbols, most students acknowledged it as a necessary evil believing that people would be offended if those “from the other tradition” displayed their symbols/icons in the school (most students naively conceptualized this dilemma by virtue of the Celtic/Ranger antagonisms and how competitive hostilities are spawned by “showing colors”). It is noteworthy to point out that every student I asked whether others wearing cultural symbols in school would offend them stated that it would not bother them personally but could offend others. It was the A-level students however who referred to the policy as “taking the easy way out” and expressed belief that all symbols should be openly discussed and an effort made by the school to help students understand and accept the symbols without emotional vituperance. Similarly, these same students were the ones to indicate a degree of dissatisfaction with ABC’s accommodation of high ability students although mention of the school’s new enrichment program mediated their concern. The poor condition of the school building and facilities, in the end, represented the majority of the negative feedback given by students.

In an effort to gain a better sense of the psychosocial themes in these students’ lives, considerable interview time was devoted to giving them the opportunity to talk about their personal lives, needs and concerns. While students frequently acknowledged the support of their teachers at ABC, many indicated a sense of concern that there was not more help available for them to deal with difficult issues in their lives. They saw teachers (who are primarily the staff responsible for pastoral care support) as being “too busy” and not knowing who else to go to other than their friends.... who are the ones they indicated they rely on for such help. The older students were more likely than students in their first two years to express concerns about a need for personal-social counseling (not their term) and less likely to see the PSE classes given by form teachers as adequately meeting this need. Concerns related to family death and loss, health, self-image, decision-making regarding sexual behaviours and depression were among the most common areas of concern that were identified in these discussions.

In an attempt to assess the patterns of interactions and friendships these students maintained in terms of religious and sociocultural affiliations, I asked them to talk to me about who their closest friends were including their religious tradition, where they went to school and what influence their friends from other schools had on their involvement in integrated education/ABC. The students from the earlier grades in the school (year 8 and year 9) seemed more inclined than their older counterparts to be affected by sectarian considerations.

Other than a handful who said they had close friends both at ABC and other schools, about half of the interviewed year 8 and year 9 students indicated their closest friends were at ABC (especially students who had come through ABC Integrated Primary School, the local feeder school) while the other half said their closest friends were at different schools. They saw their friends at ABC as coming from “both traditions” (or said they “don’t know their religion”) but described their friends from home as being of the “same religion” as their own. Although most said they did not take it too seriously, they admitted to getting “stack” from their non-ABC friends (of the same religion) about the fact that they were going to school with students from the other tradition (for example stories of being called “fenian lover,” “in with the jaffas” and similar epithets were shared). Some were teased that ABC was inferior to the sectarian school their other friends were attending (for example, many said they were taunted about going to “Stokegrove”). While most of these younger students said their non-ABC friends had little influence on them in terms of their commitment to going to an integrated school they admitted to avoiding discussions about school with their non-ABC friends back home.

A shift seemed to occur on the part of students enrolled at ABC for three or more years (that is, years 10 and higher) who, by and large, reported their closest friends were now at ABC and from both/all religious backgrounds. A number of these students explained that some of their earlier friends from primary school years had “fallen away” over the years even if they still lived in the same neighborhoods. Most acknowledged that if it were not for going to ABC they would not have met or befriended a number of their current closest friends. In their own minds, almost all of these students saw the fact that they were going to an integrated school/ABC as a non-issue and not worth talking about with their non-ABC friends (one student said, “My friends from other schools don’t understand the ideals of integrated education so I don’t even discuss these things with them”). These students consistently spoke with confidence about their friendships being formed at ABC and maintained without concern to one’s tradition, even so much so that out-of-school socializing took place in friends’ neighborhoods/homes regardless of religious background. Some of these students did allude to the notion that some of their friends’ parents were more receptive to cross-community after-school visiting than others.

These findings regarding friendship patterns would suggest that the longer students spend in the integrated school environment, the more likely they are to

form meaningful friendships across religious traditions and disregard sectarian diatribe from other (same or different tradition) parties. This alone represents a significant finding in relation to the influence that attending an integrated school likely has on students' attitudes and behaviours of tolerance toward diversity.

In addition to the interviews and discussion, 135 students were given a 'School Climate' survey that sought to gather impressions of how they experienced the school environment in terms of tolerance of diversity. Although all students were included in the initial analyses, it was decided only to examine and report upon year 8 and year 14 students for this report (that is, 114 students in total) given the specific intention to look for differences that might be apparent between school entry and exit. Of these students, 62 were male and 52 female with 88 being first year entering students (year 8) and 26 last year students (year 14). As far as the breakdown of these respondents according to religious tradition, 79 self-reported as Catholic, 15 as Protestant, 6 as 'Christian' and 7 as 'mixed' with the remaining identifying themselves as coming from varying denominations of belief and non-belief systems including atheism.

As mentioned already, the intention here was to take a rough look at whether new entrant students differed in their perceptions from those who had spent 7 years in the integrated school environment. Therefore, it was decided to perform the primary analyses for differences (by using the statistical method ANOVA) only on the year 8 (new to the school) and the year 14 students (veterans to the school) while generating overall means as well. For the purposes of this report, student responses will be discussed both in general terms and by group differences by year of school, gender and religion. The 'School Climate' survey which included 20 items each providing a 5-point rating scale where 1='strongly agree', 3='neutral' and 5='strongly disagree' is included in the appendix of this report. In order to standardize the direction of the rating scale for all items, positively valenced items (those being # 3, 4, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19 and 20) were recoded in the analysis in order to rotate the rating scale so that all item response means would indicate the same direction. It was interesting to find that when each item was analyzed for overall mean and for group differences, few extremes of opinion emerged. By and large, when means (averages) were calculated for each item, almost all fell within a neutral range of response (that is, falling midway between 'agree' and 'disagree') in relation to the item.

Similarly, when responses to items were analyzed by respondent year of school, there were few group differences uncovered. In general terms, this would indicate that, on average, students who were surveyed seem to experience the school climate in ways that neither straightforwardly disclaim nor affirm a highly tolerant environment at ABC. For example, when students were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'I have experienced the discomfort of discrimination in this school,' the mean rating was 3.85 (sd=1.34) which falls in the between 'neutral' and 'disagree' on the rating scale. When responses to this item were analyzed for differences between the year 8 and the year 14

students, again the means were in the mid-range and showed very little differentiation between the two groups (year 8 mean=3.86 with sd=1.38; year 14 mean=3.69 with sd=1.32). These measures indicate that the entering and the exiting students were similar in their moderate stance on experiencing discrimination in the school, with a slight tendency toward disclaiming having experienced discrimination. This tendency for the response means to fall around the neutral point was seen in the analysis of most items (see Table 1) except for the handful that generated some degree of valence. For example, item#4 which was recoded for scale value to, 'this school does not actively welcome those from all different traditions' generated relatively strong disagreement consistently across all students (overall mean=4.42 with sd=1.14; year 8 mean=4.56 with sd=1.14; and, year 14 mean=4.44 with sd=1.17). That is, almost all of these students feel very strongly that ABC actively welcomes students from all traditions. Similarly, in response to item#5 which was recoded to 'this school does not have services that adequately meet the needs of students from all ability levels' the overall mean was 4.22 (sd=1.04) with year 8 students' mean=4.32 (sd=.98) and year 14 students' mean=3.84 (sd=1.08) indicating relatively strong affirmation of ABC's provision of services for all ability levels (with year 14 students a bit less certain).

As a result of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) that was performed on all the items, only one item generated significant differences between (year) groups: 'Sometimes a person's religion affects how they are treated in this school' produced an overall mean of 3.35 (sd=1.32) with year 8 mean=3.13 (sd=1.28) and year 14 mean=4.11 (sd=1.17). The between group difference ($F=12.24$) was significant at $p < .001$ which indicates that the year 14 students were significantly less apt to agree that a person's religion can affect one's treatment at ABC than were the year 8 students.

Understandably, when response means fall in the neutral range interpretation can be hard to discern. As such, this report will not include detailed narrative description of the response data that were generated by the ANOVA analyses. Rather, the means for the overall sample and by year are presented for each item in Table 1 for the reader's edification.

Although the tendency toward neutrality prevailed for most items, the relatively large standard deviations that consistently emerged in these analyses suggest that there was a considerable degree of variability between students' responses. This raises concerns as to whether an accurate picture of the nature and variability of student responses would be made if only the item means are examined. With this concern in mind, descriptive analyses (i.e., frequencies) were further performed to see if any other telling information would emerge when the data were considered in different ways. Rather than treating the responses as continuous data, they could be reconfigured into categorical data. Through the SPSS frequencies procedure, the responses for each item were recoded to now categorize the response options 'strongly agree=1' and 'agree=2' as one response type labeled 'affirming' and the response options 'disagree=4' and

'strongly disagree=5' as a response type labeled 'disclaiming'. To clarify, this reclassification essentially permits the researcher to break down the response data into 2 main categories of basic agreement and disagreement (while counting responses of 'neutral' as a separate category) so that a picture of the percentages of students who basically affirmed the statement in relation to those who disclaimed the statement can be better conceptualized. Table 2 presents the relative percentage of student responses falling into these two categories (when responses were reclassified) for each item for the general sample.

As an illustration, when the item about experiencing discrimination in the school (#1) was analyzed this way, results showed that 18% affirmed having experienced the discomfort of discrimination in the school while 62% disclaimed experiencing discrimination in the school (the remainder fall into the neutral response category). When considered in relation to the overall mean that had been originally generated for this item (that is, 3.82 which more or less reflects a neutral stance), this new breakdown helps to offer additional information that can be useful in assessing where students stand in relation to agreement or disagreement with the variable being measured. Similarly, when students were asked in item #8 whether they agreed or disagreed with the statement 'discrimination exists in this school,' the overall mean was 3.11 (sd=1.34) with very little variation evident between the year 8 (m=3.02, sd=1.41) and year 14 students (m=3.23, sd=1.21). These figures would indicate students were relatively neutral toward this item.

[Include Table 1 Here]

Table 1: School Climate Survey Response Means¹

	<u>Overall</u>	<u>Year 8 (N=88)</u>	<u>Year 14 (N=26)</u>
1) I have experienced the discomfort of discrimination in this school.	3.8 (1.3)	3.8 (1.4)	3.6 (1.3)
2) Some people in this school are not comfortable with people who are from a different background than their own.	3.2 (1.3)	3.2 (1.3)	3.2 (1.2)
3) * I am very comfortable having a teacher who is from a different background than mine.	4.4 (1.3)	3.3 (1.3)	4.6 (1.2)
4) * This school actively welcomes those from all different traditions.	4.5 (.92)	4.6 (1.0)	4.4 (.80)
5) Sometimes a person's religion affects how they are treated in this school.	3.4 (1.3)	3.1 (1.3)	3.8 (1.2)
6) Not everyone from my sociocultural background is treated fairly in this school.	3.4 (1.4)	3.2 (1.4)	3.8 (1.2)
7) Many people in this school are biased against people who are from different backgrounds than their own.	3.3 (1.4)	3.2 (1.4)	3.6 (1.2)
8) Discrimination exists in this school.	3.1 (1.4)	3.0 (1.4)	3.2 (1.2)
9) Some people in school get different treatment because they are from certain backgrounds.	3.3 (1.4)	3.2 (1.4)	3.5 (1.4)
10) This school sometimes doesn't follow its stated policies against discrimination.	3.6 (1.3)	3.56 (1.4)	3.5 (1.1)
11) People of certain religious backgrounds are not well integrated into the school culture.	3.2 (1.3)	3.3 (1.3)	3.4 (1.1)
12) I often have heard prejudicial remarks at this school about people from certain religious backgrounds or ability levels.	2.6 (1.3)	2.6 (1.3)	2.9 (1.2)
13) The faculty and administration talk of accepting people from different backgrounds but they don't do much to promote this acceptance.	3.7 (1.3)	3.6 (1.3)	3.5 (1.1)
14) * This school has offered me good opportunities to learn about accepting and understanding mutual differences.	4.3 (1.0)	4.3 (1.1)	3.3 (.83)
15) * This school has services that adequately meet the needs of students from all ability levels.	4.2 (1.0)	4.3 (.98)	3.8 (.88)
16)* This school is a comfortable environment in which all students are helped to learn.	4.0 (1.2)	4.1 (1.3)	3.8 (1.1)
17) Sometimes students' gender, religion or ability level affects how they are treated by teachers in this school.	3.6 (1.5)	3.6 (1.5)	3.2 (1.5)
18) * My attitudes and behaviours toward those from different backgrounds are the same when I am in my home neighbourhood as they are while I am in school.	3.8 (1.4)	3.8 (1.4)	4.2 (1.0)
19) * My own sociocultural background is adequately respected and included in all aspects of this school.	3.8 (1.2)	3.7 (1.2)	3.9 (1.2)
20) * I feel that this school's environment is really helping me be successful as a person.	3.9 (1.2)	3.9 (1.2)	3.8 (.99)

* represents items recoded for standardized direction of scale

¹ Means range from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree), opposite scale for * items

Table 2: School Climate Survey Responses by Category of Agreement¹

	<u>% Affirming</u>	<u>% Disclaiming</u>
1) I have experienced the discomfort of discrimination in this school..	18.4	62.2
2) Some people in this school are not comfortable with people who are from a different background than their own.	22.8	36.9
3) I am very comfortable having a teacher who is from a different background than mine.	81.6	8.8
4) This school actively welcomes those from all different traditions.	84.3	3.5
5) Sometimes a person's religion affects how they are treated in this school.	27.2	42.2
6) Not everyone from my sociocultural background is treated fairly in this school.	24.6	42.1
7) Many people in this school are biased against people who are from different backgrounds from their own.	30.7	43.0
8) Discrimination exists in this school.	30.7	33.3
9) Some people in school get different treatment because they are from certain backgrounds.	28.1	42.9
10) This school sometimes doesn't follow its stated policies against discrimination.	21.1	50.9
11) People of certain religious backgrounds are not well integrated into the school culture.	23.7	36.8
12) I often have heard prejudicial remarks at this school about people from certain religious backgrounds or ability levels.	48.2	22.8
13) The faculty and administration talk of accepting people from different backgrounds but they don't do much to promote this acceptance.	20.2	49.1
14) This school has offered me good opportunities to learn about accepting and understanding mutual differences.	79.8	7.0
15) This school has services that adequately meet the needs of students from all ability levels.	73.7	4.4
16) This school is a comfortable environment in which all students are helped to learn.	71.1	11.4
17) Sometimes students' gender, religion or ability level affects how they are treated by teachers in this school.	26.3	52.6
18) My attitudes and behaviours toward those from different backgrounds are the same when I am in my home neighbourhood as they are while I am in school.	59.6	13.2
19) My own sociocultural background is adequately respected and included in all aspects of this school.	51.8	12.3
20) I feel that this school's environment is really helping me be successful as a person.	62.3	10.5

¹ 'Strongly Agree' and 'Agree' responses grouped into 'Affirming' category and 'Strongly Disagree' and 'Disagree' responses grouped into 'Disclaiming' category

However, as seen in Table 2, when ratings were considered as categorical rather than continuous data and categorized into two classifications (i.e., as either 'affirming' or 'disclaiming' responses), the results for item #8 showed that 31% affirmed that discrimination exists at the school at some level with almost the same number (33%) disclaiming such (with the remaining 36% of these students responding with neutral ratings). This reflects something different than the mid-range mean ratings suggested, that is, these data reveal that almost equal numbers of students affirmed, disclaimed and were neutral in their opinion as to whether discrimination existed in this school.

In looking further, a number of interesting findings emerged when the data were grouped categorically. The overall sense gleaned from these figures is that these students experience their school culture as one that is accepting of differences. For almost all the items relating to how students view the school's treatment of diversity, the majority of responses affirm that ABC is successful in providing and enforcing a tolerant environment where people from all backgrounds are welcomed and treated equally. For example, 84% of these students see the school as actively welcoming those from all different backgrounds (item# 4) and almost 80% affirm that ABC has offered them good opportunities to learn about and understand differences (item# 14).

Upon close inspection of these figures however, a level of doubt can be uncovered on the part of these students in some areas. For example, while 42% disclaimed differential treatment, over a quarter of these students (27%) affirmed the notion that 'sometimes a person's religion affects how they are treated in this school' (item 5). Parallel percentages were generated for the items relating to differential treatment by the school/teachers based on different backgrounds (items# 9 and 17). Also, about one in five of these students responded in such a way as to indicate doubt about the school's adherence to its policies against discrimination (items# 10 and 13). Although these figures are not extraordinary, they may suggest follow-up consideration.

As far as those items that assess students' perspective about discriminatory behaviours and attitudes of other people (including other students) in the school, there are indications that these students see a degree of prejudice in their midst. Countering an integrated ethos, almost half of those surveyed (48.2%) affirmed that they have 'often heard prejudicial remarks at this school about people from certain religious backgrounds or ability levels' (item# 12) and almost one-third of them affirmed that 'many people in this school are biased against those from different backgrounds than their own' (item# 7).

It is important for the reader to note the limitations of these data and to consider them as they were intended only, that is, as providing rough descriptions of how these students perceived their integrated school experience rather than as constructing statistical inferences. The author fully acknowledges the limitations of not having had the ability to follow students over time in order to

determine the effects of the integrated school experience over time. Other limitations included the unequal numbers in the survey grade groups being comparatively considered, the use of a survey instrument that had not been normed as valid with this population, and the application of gross recategorization procedures (aimed at clearing out the 'neutralizing' effect of the 'regression toward the mean' response mode and providing a better categorical sense of where students seemed to stand on the items). While caution needs to be taken not to over interpret these data, some useful indications are contained within the survey findings. Clearly this was intended as an exploratory, descriptive study and it would now be useful to follow up this assessment with a larger sample of students and to carefully review those areas indicated that represent potential roadblocks to the achievement of an integrated ethos. At the very least, this type of input can lead to responsive strategies aimed at enhancing the climate of tolerance and respect within the school community.

When considering all the student feedback gained from interviews, surveys and observations conducted in this study, a number of general conclusions can be drawn. It is clear that the vast majority of students at ABC experience their school as a place that supports and cares for all of its students; in this regard, an ethos of support was very much validated in this study. Furthermore, most ABC students appear to demonstrate the ability to accept differences and interact cooperatively and comfortably with others from different backgrounds. At the same time, these students do admit to seeing prejudicial behaviour as part of their school experience.

There is little indication of sectarian hostilities or bigotry governing these students' behaviour in school (the question about their out-of-school behaviours remains, for another study). For the most part, they accept, agree with and abide by 'the conditions' of being in an integrated school even though many may not possess the psychosocial maturity, human relations understanding or socialization dynamics to be able to fully integrate tolerance as a worldview. One could project however that, as partially indicated in this study, continued exposure to the integrated ethos serves to facilitate the development of tolerance, equity and interdependence in their lives.

Senior Management

As part of the overall effort to assess the efficacy of the integrated ethos at ABC, input from the school's senior administrators of the school was of course essential. Three senior management staff members including the principal were interviewed in reference to their assessment of ABC in the context of achieving its avowed mission within the integrated educational system. In many ways, a school's senior management staff has a unique vantage point that affords a more systemic perspective than that of the other individual stakeholder groups. As such, a whole-school perspective was sought from the senior managers. Their

interviews were scheduled after most of the other constituencies in the school community were interviewed with the expectation that important issues would emerge from these first-order discussions and give shape to the subsequent questions for management. There were four primary areas of inquiry pursued in these interviews which focused on ABC practices related to 1) the teaching staff (including the qualifications, hiring, training, staff development and evaluation of faculty); 2) educating an all-ability student population; 3) parent involvement; and, 4) resource concerns.

When these senior managers were asked to discuss ABC's policies and practices related to the teaching faculty it hires and supervises in the context of further establishing an integrated ethos, the general consensus was that the quality and commitment of the ABC faculty is strong and clearly seen as critical to the success that the school has achieved so far. When I raised the notion (that came from my interviews with the teachers themselves) that for many teachers at ABC it was mostly practical job considerations rather than the integrated ideology that brought them to teach at ABC, the administrators were aware of this but were confident that, through their particular hiring process, they were able to identify qualified candidates who represented a good match to the IE ethos and were caring, understanding and would be "IE-cooperative." The principal made it clear that 'hiring the best' was the primary consideration and that because the school operated on a "team approach," prospective teachers were assessed in terms of whether they would be able to "work well with the team here at ABC." This notwithstanding, standardized procedures for ensuring these qualitative qualifications (including a candidate's level of diversity awareness and competence) on the part of prospective teachers as a term for hire did not seem to be firmly in place. Given the fact that teachers themselves come from their own respective religiopolitical traditions and have been educated themselves in sectarian schools (including teacher training for many) and that any prior teaching is likely to have been done in a sectarian school, their exposure to and competence in areas that underpin integrated education would understandably be nominal. This being the case, the question remains: if systemic achievement of the integrated ethos is the goal, how critical is it that the teachers who are hired be personally and professionally committed to the ideology and practices of integrated education?

At ABC, all new teachers go through an orientation at the outset of their work at which time the school's expectations related to teaching in the integrated environment are explained (among other important agenda items). The ABC staff handbook given to each new faculty member at this time contains a number of pages devoted to the principles of integrated education. There are two "Baker Days" of staff development sessions scheduled each year which cover topics such as child protection, discipline and the like; as part of this, new teachers meet with the school's Integration Coordinator in order to learn about the school's policies, expectations, resources and activities that are related to achievement of the integrated ethos at ABC. While the Western Education and Library Board

offers ongoing staff development sessions to teachers (from all educational sectors) throughout the year, these sessions for the most part are not particular to the issues involved in integrated education.

Beginning teachers receive additional professional development support at ABC through the Early Professional Development program and through the assignment of a Teacher Tutor for three years. It does not appear however that these two services are directly geared to focus on the profile of knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to work effectively in the integrated school environment but rather serve as otherwise valuable pedagogical in-service support. While relying on seasoned teachers to mentor new teachers has its obvious benefits, it is not clear just how IE ideology and practice are incorporated into this process (is it assured for example that Teacher Tutors themselves have the necessary awareness and skills in these areas to provide meaningful support on these matters?).

All teachers at ABC are subject to an annual staff development professional review (SDPR) wherein they present their own plan for staff development for the next year and are evaluated subsequently on their attainment of these own goals. It was not clear to me however whether these SDPR's were incorporated in any meaningful way to the teacher's expected role in helping to achieve ABC's mission as an integrated school.

All in all, it appears that there is a range of staff development activities open to teachers at ABC. However, additional emphasis regarding the school's integrated ethos may need to be woven into these offerings. Additionally, it is clear that the need for training and professional development support in areas such as cultural diversity awareness, human relations, conflict/behavior management and all-ability teaching strategies is indicated at this phase of the school's development (especially since faculty size and student enrolment have grown and the energy and excitement that motivated many to teach in an integrated school initially may now not be as much in place).

When the senior administrators were asked to discuss how ABC was succeeding in its efforts to provide education for the full range of ability levels, the development of the Resource Center and the Enrichment Program were highlighted as recent initiatives undertaken to effectively address the multiple learning needs of an all-ability student population. One administrator also noted as helpful her impression that new teachers are coming out of teacher preparation programs nowadays with better training in the area of special needs and all-ability education.

Along with noting these advances however the administrators openly acknowledged the ongoing challenges involved in properly administering a school that can meet the learning needs of students at every ability level when the budgetary limitations are considerable. Their concerns focussed on being

able to adequately address the learning needs of students at both ends of the spectrum (that is, special needs and high achievers in addition to the mainstream) in a cost-effective manner within the parameters of budget, personnel, sound pedagogical practice and the integrated education ideology. With approximately 20% of the current student enrolment considered “special needs,” there are additional designated functions that demand large chunks of operational time and capital (including assessment, development and monitoring of students’ educational plans, classroom assistance, parental consultation, troubleshooting/negotiation, etc.) and, as such, impose added burden on already constrained resources. A related concern (that is not specific to ABC) has recently centered on how best to remain in compliance with upcoming mandates in Northern Ireland that legally govern the education of children with special learning needs and disabilities.

As far as the high achieving students who move on to their A-levels, ABC’s resources are being further challenged (given smaller student numbers at this level) by the need to guarantee class offerings in all major subjects to meet educational standards for these students. When asked whether the problems related to guaranteeing high-level coursework might be influencing attrition/transfer rates at ABC for key stage 4 students, these administrators agreed it could lead to problems if not satisfactorily addressed. If this is the case, the prospect of higher enrolments and/or increased budget allocation at this level would likely help but the problem appears larger than this, in my estimation. In relation to this, the school might do well to consider other ways to better promote the value of the education that is acquired at ABC (not the least of which includes the development of tolerant, open, flexible thinking and the skills necessary to succeed in the increasingly diverse world of the 21st century). Furthermore, additional (cost-effective) enrichment opportunities such as those noted in the recommendations section below can be built into the school experience to further challenge and encourage high-ability students to actualize their potential.

In considering ways to address these problems, one administrator reiterated a notion that had also been voiced by a number of teachers which was that ABC needs to do more to augment its ability to attract high achievers and then “prove” what the school as a fully open learning environment can do with them in terms of expanding their academic and personal horizons. From an American perspective, an illustration of ABC’s success in “developing the whole student” can be seen in the fact that a good percentage of their graduates successfully go on to universities in countries outside of Northern Ireland (Note: When considered in the context of what will be required of young people to succeed in the increasingly diverse world of the 21st century, these educational outcomes cannot be overvalued.)

The issue of parent involvement was highlighted as a significant concern by the senior management staff. Noting that it was parents who built the school’s very basis from the community at large and that one of the major precepts at

ABC is parent participation, these administrators were universal in their acknowledgement of the significance of parents taking an active role in the “school team.” The Parents Council (and its role in decision-making and problem-solving) was identified as being an important illustration of how parents are involved in the ABC school community. In observing a Parents Council Meeting however it appeared that only a small number of parents attend these meetings with any regularity (this was confirmed upon general inquiry). Though understandable in light of today’s busy family schedules, such limited parent participation can be problematic and diminish the school’s ability to systemically achieve its mission. One concern that was reiterated (by teachers as well) related to the notion that a growing percentage of parents at ABC were not necessarily committed to the IE ideology. In addition to making the achievement of a whole-school ethos of tolerance more difficult, lack of parental commitment and collaboration seriously jeopardizes the child’s durable attainment of openness to diversity beyond the school day.

Although ABC attempts to provide ongoing communication with parents on issues important to their children, the senior management staff acknowledged that these links probably need to be strengthened. They recognize that the significance of parent involvement in the “educational team” cannot be overestimated as part of achieving the integrated education ethos at ABC.

Although universally acknowledged by everyone in the school community, it would be an omission not to specifically reiterate in this research report my estimation that, above all other areas of concern, the school’s physical facility stands as the single most damaging obstacle to achievement of the whole-school integrated ethos here at ABC; its state of disrepair, beleaguered aesthetics, inadequate space and unsafe conditions all serve as impediments to an affirmative and cooperative learning environment. The fact that ABC has achieved the level of success it has in accomplishing an ethos of tolerance and respect is in itself an outstanding illustration of the strength that lies within this school community.

Recommendations for the Next Phase of Development

The following recommendations are derived directly from the findings of the study and attempt to address the most commonly identified concerns that emerged through observation and discussion with students, teachers, parents and administrators at ABC Integrated College during the autumn of 2000. As in its first phase of growth, the next several years of development for ABC Integrated College presents significant opportunity and challenge. There is much to capitalize on and the hope would be that prior success builds further success at ABC. At the same time, thoughtful and purposeful consideration of those areas that have presented themselves here as potential markers for improvement would be well indicated. In formulating a framework for the next phase of development, the following suggestions might serve as illustratively useful.

1) Undertake expanded effort to re-engage the parent community.

This would include increased efforts toward improving communications, team-building and collaboration with parents as stakeholders in the school community. It is essential that the emphasis be placed on expanding the number and range of parents participating in the school enterprise and that the ideological commitment to the principles and practices of integrated education serve as a guiding force. This then would suggest that ABC needs to go well beyond the current Parent Council structure that exists in the school and look to reconceptualize ways more parents can be encouraged and supported in taking active membership in the team and not defer to or rely on the Parent Council for all leadership and decision-making. Initially, this campaign might begin by establishing a task force empowered to work on developing a game plan for improving parent-school communications. This action plan could identify specific goals and corresponding strategies that would serve as agenda for the next phase of the school's development. For example, this could include plans for conducting a needs assessment survey in order to determine parent concerns and needs, developing a monthly newsletter distributed to all school families that would provide important information and perhaps even share parent perspectives on critical issues, and running parent workshops that would provide guidance on topics of felt need (e.g., student study skills, the role of parents in monitoring homework, cooperative discipline strategies, communicating with your teenager about sex, etc.). Additionally, increased opportunities could be established for more parents to participate in regular ongoing school activities and serve as volunteer resources in school trips, classroom assistance, guest speakers, and in sharing their expertise with school initiatives, etc. Parent involvement needs to be considered welcomed and rewarding if they are to take advantage of the invitation.

2) Strengthen efforts to address teacher professional development needs as expressed in the areas related to proactive treatment of sectarian issues in the classroom, classroom behaviour management in the all-ability classroom, and pedagogical approaches to teaching students across ability, gender and sociocultural differences in the classroom (e.g., cooperative learning, discussion and group techniques); and, community relations and conflict management skills. Such efforts would be most effective if incorporated into a comprehensive approach specifically defined by and for ABC staff to meet stated needs and develop common understanding. Such staff development should focus on achieving competence on three levels: awareness, knowledge and skills. Because teachers come from their own respective traditions and typically have been educated and trained in sectarian schools and teacher education programs themselves, they have had little exposure to or training in these areas. As precursor to gaining knowledge and skills in these areas, these teachers would likely benefit from some form of cultural awareness training that would give them the opportunity (maybe for the first time outside of their own communities) to

reflect upon their own sense of cultural identity and biases so as to be more sensitive to related matters in their work with students.

In such an initiative, all teaching faculty would be expected to participate and contribute and, as such, would be recognized for their commitment to enhanced practice. An over-arching goal in this effort would be team-building within the school faculty as a means of raising a sense of morale and collaborative ownership. Such initiatives obviously require a degree of leadership and this could initially be achieved through the designation of a professional development working group comprised of selected teachers and a senior manager within the school and potentially include the collaborative participation of a university teacher education faculty member from one of NI's schools of education. (Note: Including teacher educators in this process could offer the mutual benefit of establishing linkages with the pre-service training of teachers.) If integrated schools are to be successful in maintaining the integrated ethos over time, teachers need to be considered a most essential ingredient and, as such, supporting the notion of "teachers as learners" through an ongoing, focused, well-designed, school-wide professional development program can further ensure that success.

3) Pursue curriculum and pedagogical development that promotes tolerance and mutual understanding for incorporation into classroom instruction. As part of this, methods and resources that would better equip teachers to proactively and constructively address diversity issues in the classroom could be implemented. This would include development of both content and process capabilities. For example, in addition to identifying specific teaching resources that can be incorporated into subject content as a means of proactively addressing such issues in the classroom, teachers also need to learn pedagogical methods and processes that are known to foster the development of cooperation, dialogue and mutual understanding among students. Central to the facilitation of a tolerant culture in the classroom are discussion-oriented and group methodologies. The English 10 *Across the Barricades* cooperative learning project mentioned in the report narrative above serves as a good example of the type of constructive curriculum infusion (not add-ons) that can be developed and shared across departments/subject areas. As part of this, interdisciplinary themes and learning crossovers can be developed to expand student learning value. In addition to enriching the curriculum for the sake of enhanced learning on the part of students, this type of an initiative would be aimed at equipping teachers (with curricular activities, resources, methods) to address sectarianism and pluralism appropriately in their classrooms rather than avoiding these challenging areas. Traditional lecture approaches are unlikely to develop attitudes and skills related to mutual understanding. Values-oriented approaches and participatory methodologies, on the other hand, foster such. Themes and activities involving critical thinking, debate, conflict resolution, tolerance-building, problem-solving and character development can be included throughout most

subjects and extracurricular activities. In-depth project and team work can also be a desirable vehicle for learning in and outside the classroom. Utilizing a variety of learning materials, including non-text sources, can help to enhance opportunities for learning, and also better accommodate the diverse learning styles of pupils. (Tibbitts & Torney-Purta, HREA 2000, highlighted some of these practices in relation to citizenship education).

Obviously, ABC or any individual school cannot take on this staff training imperative alone. It is perhaps obvious that these methodologies should be central to teacher education programs and be built into lessons and materials that teachers will subsequently employ in their work. Toward this end, integrated schools as practitioners in the field (perhaps with the assistance of NICIE) can be instrumental in offering input to the Schools of Education and the ELB's in NI indicating needed areas of competence to incorporate into teacher education and staff development curricula.

4) Develop a policy guidebook or manual for teachers (to supplement professional development training highlighted in previous recommendation) that would specifically address school policy and expectations related to treatment of sectarian issues in the classroom. Although not intended to be definitive or constraining in practice, such a guidebook would offer guidance and direction to teachers related to sensitive areas. To be of optimal use, such a guidebook would contain specific illustrations of how to deal with incidents of prejudice in the classroom or in parent interactions and could include presentation of potential scenarios with recommended approaches to take and strategies to pursue. By specifying policy expectations and offering guidelines for carrying them out judiciously, ABC would be increasing the likelihood that its teachers would be more apt (and more confident) to address contentious incidents skillfully as windows of opportunity for fostering tolerance and respect.

5) Fortify faculty personnel procedures in relation to the achievement of an integrated ethos by pursuing methods of staff hiring, development and management that are informed by the school's mission. As alluded to in the narrative above, attention might be given to standardizing hiring qualifications and selection procedures, the enhancement of the SDPR process, targeted enrichment of staff development activities and the selection and preparation of Teacher Tutors and other designated program coordinators such as emu and pse. All of this would be undertaken in an effort to better assure that ABC staff demonstrate appropriate competence in diversity issues and commitment to IE principles and practices. Similar considerations would make sense to provide auxiliary staff as well. A faculty trouble-shooting group might be formed and commissioned to assess teachers' experience of stress in the workplace and its impact on absenteeism and morale; such a group would be empowered to recommend corrective measures to the board of governors. Additionally, some form of problem-solving mechanism or support vehicle for faculty to call upon

when stress or distress in the workplace crops up and impinges upon their ability to contribute effectively would be of benefit.

6) Reopen discussion and problem-solving efforts related to the school policy of prohibiting display of cultural symbols in an effort to more straightforwardly address the need within the school community to live up to its commitment to integrated ideology. In this study, students, parents and teachers alike expressed belief that the display of cultural symbols should be allowed in an integrated setting but explained that they are prohibited due to the fear of offending others or of students misusing the right/privilege. Psychology would tell us that by prohibiting or avoiding an action we are potentially increasing the 'power' or importance that that action holds in people's minds. Considering this irony, it strikes me that an opportunity for learning responsible behavior and really living the meaning of tolerance is being missed for the whole school community. To reinitiate this discussion as a problem-solving process, a working group comprised of students and faculty could be formed and commissioned to propose revised school policy...if it is the fear of student transgressions that is standing in the way, students themselves would be in the best position, with adult consultation along the way, to consider a plan and negotiate a code of behavior that would guide the responsible display of such symbols in the school. There are models students could consider where this contentious issue has been addressed effectively, usually in the context of objective, egalitarian education, information and celebration. In the end, this would represent an excellent experiential opportunity for students to build cooperative problem-solving skills, a worthy learning goal in any educational system but most especially in an integrated school.

7) Pursue creative solutions to resource-related and public relations concerns that will further enable ABC to achieve its all-ability mission. The findings of this study would suggest that special effort needs to be taken at this time to ensure appropriate instruction and opportunity to high-achieving students at ABC. Given the very real budget constraints and enrolment requisites that seem to countermand each other in the pursuit of an all-ability school, this is unquestionably a tough challenge. While relative success has been achieved in meeting the needs of special learners at ABC, the following conundrum has ironically emerged: in order to attract and keep high-ability students, a full range of classes at that level need to be provided; in order to provide these classes, teaching resources are tapped sometimes in cost-ineffective ways; if appropriate classes/activities for the bright students are not offered, attrition to grammar schools becomes an option which in turn lowers enrolment at the high-ability level and the student profile can begin to mimic that of a secondary school.

A task force represented by all stakeholders could well be formed to explore creative means of addressing this dilemma (e.g., through strategies such as fund-raising, team-teaching, interdisciplinary teaching, class consolidation and collaboration with other local schools, development of enrichment activities,

conducting a targeted public relations and recruitment campaign, etc.). As part of this, holding exit interviews with those who transfer out of ABC would be instructive. Schools in the USA (equivalent to second and third level education in NI) have creatively developed cost-effective strategies to address similar issues. Some strategies that might be considered at ABC include collaboration with university and teacher training programs (e.g., use of Math graduate student as teaching assistants in advanced math class); connecting students to research and scholarly activities that exist in industry (e.g., internships or shadowing experiences in IT industry) or with university faculty (e.g., summer research assistant to professor conducting research in the life sciences); and development of an Honors Program that promotes and supports scholarly activity. Active engagement in the outside community would need to be part of this.

8) Expand the principles and practices of EMU and the cross-community contact initiatives into whole-school involvement. Currently, only a small percentage of students appear to be benefiting from cross-community program activities at ABC. As in most other schools, EMU seems to be but a vague reference at ABC. Both of these initiatives provide a potential framework of opportunity to further enhance the integrated ethos at ABC. Toward this end, a working group could be formed, led by the EMU coordinator and advised by NICIE (which just produced an useful resource publication, “Understanding through Integration” that provides guidance in how to better implement EMU and related processes in schools) in order to identify ways in which these two initiatives could be better integrated throughout the entire educational enterprise.

9) Enhance pastoral care service provision within the school. Students need to be provided with accessible, non-threatening and competent pastoral care support to help them negotiate emotional and social concerns, not the least of which can include the conflict, anger, prejudice, depression, victimization and identity issues stemming from living in a divided society. As part of this, at least one appropriately trained staff member (a credential in counseling would be necessary) could be designated with the overall responsibility of coordinating such support mechanisms within the school community (e.g., providing individual counseling support, developing a peer helper program, running groups for bullies or their victims, conducting bereavement and loss counseling, etc). This staff role would address both responsive and proactive areas of concern that would provide a safety net currently not provided at ABC. This staff member would need to have his or her teaching responsibilities eliminated or reduced considerably in order to carry out this significant role effectively.

Under the current staffing framework, pastoral care responsibilities largely have been subsumed under the Form Teacher’s auspices with Year Heads serving as support personnel in this function as an addition to their primary responsibilities as teachers. Feedback gathered in this study suggests that this arrangement further challenges teachers’ time and training capabilities. Students

themselves frequently indicated not having anyone to go to when personal problems plagued them because 'my teacher is too busy' not to mention the fact that teachers' capabilities are admittedly limited by the lack of training in pastoral care areas. To address this, in-house training could be conducted by the designated Pastoral Care coordinator/ counselor and offered to staff teachers on pastoral care considerations; guidelines for ongoing referral in selected areas of concern (e.g., signs of suicide risk, symptoms of an eating disorder, etc) could be drawn up and distributed. There are few who would argue against the notion that for students to learn effectively, they must be emotionally in tact. As an educational institution devoted to whole-student development wherein self-esteem and responsible behaviour are espoused as child-centered goals, ABC has an unique responsibility and significant opportunity to pursue in this area.

Conclusions and Discussion

Four months ago, under an action research design, I set out to take a look at the integrated ethos at ABC Integrated College and how it was influencing students' attitudes of tolerance and mutual understanding. As part of an ethnographic case study, the impressions obtained here through interview, observation, survey and document review across all segments of the school community help to provide an overall picture of what is working and what needs to work better at ABC in relation to achieving its integrated mission. In ethnographic research such as this, much of what is reported comes through the subjective eye of the researcher and, as such, needs to be considered in this light. Without the benefit of external or experimental group comparisons or even longitudinal assessment, the conclusions drawn from a study such as this need to be considered suggestive rather than definitive and recommendations derived from it as local rather than generalizable. This notwithstanding, I believe there is much that can be considered relevant to the integrated education system at large.

In summary terms, the findings of this study confirmed the achievement of an integrated ethos at ABC wherein respect for others and tolerance of diversity prevails across the school community. While much was uncovered in this study that serves to highlight areas of concern that need to be addressed if ABC is to sustain and strengthen its integrated ethos, the overall findings substantiate ABC's success in having fostered a learning environment in which people accept and interact cooperatively with each other regardless of background. The most pronounced indication of this would seem to be the consistently affirmative feedback I obtained from students throughout this study.... in truth, I did not speak to, observe or receive written input from even one student who presented with impressions of ABC as anything but a supportive and tolerant learning environment. The fact that students consistently spoke very positively about their teachers always being willing to help them 'sort things out' and collectively expounded on their enjoyment in going to school at ABC (despite some of the faults they readily identified such as lack of adequate space) serves as strong

testimony that students feel supported and encouraged at ABC. Indeed, much of what is working best seems to stem from the general atmosphere of support and encouragement that exists for students in the school. The commitment to fostering self-esteem and respect on the part of all students in the school appears to be a primary influence in developing a sense of comfort and positive attitude on their behalf... it is because they are encouraged to respect and accept themselves that respect and tolerance of others comes more naturally to them.

As a closing to this report of my study findings, I am compelled to pose a substantial challenge to the school community for its consideration. During the time I was privileged to have spent at ABC Integrated College in the role of participant-observer, I discerned what seemed to be a prevailing tendency toward avoiding open discussion of the issues, matters, behaviours and positions that underpin conflict, cultural identity and the sectarian divide in the larger NI society. Rather than promoting the expression and sharing of perspectives among and between members of the school community, the overall climate seemed to discourage open address of these matters by its lack of constructive acknowledgement, almost as if sectarianism and prejudice did not exist because school policies disallow it. Many would agree with the notion that silence is standard policy throughout Northern Irish society and that the attitude is to avoid rather than address cultural identity. This phenomenon was captured by Seamus Heaney, Northern Ireland's poet laureate, when he alluded to the coping strategy of silence that prevails in this deeply divided society in his now famous reference, "whatever you say, say nothing." While it is possible to achieve a superficial level of peace in any organization, if differences are not openly acknowledged, personal beliefs not addressed and societal difficulties 'swept under the carpet,' then the inner dynamics of the people in that organization are less likely to be meaningfully impacted.

Despite the overall affirming ethos achieved in this school, opportunities for meaningful transformation and personal development on the part of students (staff as well) were being missed every day in everyday ways at ABC. With this in mind, I would encourage the school in its continued efforts toward the achievement of a genuine integrated ethos, to move toward a more open climate in which these differences are acknowledged in the context of responsible and respectful learning and living. Although academics are undoubtedly crucial in shaping students' future progress, it will be the lessons they learn as a result of being trusted and given opportunities to debate, deliberate and make responsible choices while they are young that will shape their thinking and behaviours as the adults of the next generation.

APPENDICES

XXXXXIntegrated College

School Name and Address removed for report

October 2, 2000

Dear Parent,

I am an American visiting professor from Hofstra University in New York who is here in Northern Ireland this year on an academic sabbatical to study integrated education and its impact on students' attitudes toward diversity. As part of my research, I will be spending the next few months in XXXX Integrated College in order to assess how the integrated school experience impacts young people and their ability to cooperatively interact with all persons. It is my hope that this research will contribute to gaining a better sense of the value of integrated education in Northern Ireland and add to the ongoing efforts in American schools to provide a safe and tolerant learning environment for all students.

In order for me to accomplish this goal, it is important for me to be able to speak to students in the school as a means of getting their personal perspective on things. Toward this end, I am asking your permission to allow your son or daughter to sit with me for a short while (probably less than 15 minutes) so that I might inquire about the integrated school experience. Out of respect for the privacy of participants, all responses will remain anonymous. At the end of the year, my findings will be developed into a report given to the school principal, Mrs. XXX, for the benefit of the entire school community.

I appreciate of your support in this effort.

Sincerely~

Laurie Johnson, Phd
Sheelagh Murnaghan Visiting Professor
Queens University, Belfast

Dear Parent/Guardian

.

Please sign this slip if you have no objection to your son/daughter's interview being taped. Please do not hesitate to contact me if further clarification of the project is required.

--

Yours faithfully ,

Ms. XXXX.

Integration Co-ordinator.

Parent's/Guardian's

signature _____

STUDENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL Date:

Interviewee: Sex: Age: Year/Class: How long at XXX: Primary School: Religious Affiliation:

INTRO: Self & Purpose & Questions?

1) REASONS FOR COMING to XXX?

2) What does XXX REPRESENT to you?

3) IMPRESSIONS of XXX so far: POSITIVE:

NEGATIVE:

4) What are your thoughts on 11 + ASSESSMENT in Northern Ireland?

5) Where do your CLOSEST FRIENDS GO TO SCHOOL?

Are they from SAME or DIFFERENT RELIGIOUS TRADITION as yours?

6) What do you do AFTER SCHOOL and on WEEKENDS?

7) What do your CLOSE FRIENDS (not at XXX) SA V/DO to /'

ENCOURAGE and/or DISCOURAGE you In terms of going to school at XXX (and accepting those from different backgrounds)?

Student.interview.Prtcl. p2

8) What do your PARENTS specifically SAY or DO to ENCOURAGE or DISCOURAGE you in terms of accepting/appreciating those from different backgrounds?

9) What do your TEACHERS DO or SAY IN CLASS that DEALS WITH THE CONFLICT and PREJUDICE between Catholics and Protestants In Northern Ireland?

10) What is your "BIGGEST CONCERN here at XXXX?"

11) WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT WEARING OR DISPLAYING CULTURAL EMBLEMS OR SYMBOLS IN SCHOOL?

12) What are your HOPES FOR THE FUTURE?

School Climate – Student Survey

Instructions: The statements in this survey are concerned with many aspects of diversity. There are no right or wrong answers. Respond to every statement from your own point of view by circling the number that best corresponds to your position. Your responses will remain anonymous. Thank You.

	Strongly Agree		Neutral		Strongly Disagree				
1) I have experienced the discomfort of discrimination in this school.	1		2		3		4		5
2) Some people in this school are not comfortable with people who are from a different background than their own.	1		2		3		4		5
3) I am very comfortable having a teacher who is from a different background than mine.	1		2		3		4		5
4) This school actively welcomes those from all different traditions.	1		2		3		4		5
5) Sometimes a person's religion affects how they are treated in this school.	1		2		3		4		5
6) Not everyone from my sociocultural background is treated fairly in this school.	1		2		3		4		5
7) Many people in this school are biased against people who are from different backgrounds than their own.	1		2		3		4		5
8) Discrimination exists in this school.	1		2		3		4		5
9) Sometimes I feel people in this school get different treatment because they are from certain backgrounds.	1		2		3		4		5

School Climate Survey, p.2

	Strongly Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree		
10) This school sometimes doesn't follow its stated policies against discrimination.	1	2	3	4	5
11) People of certain religious backgrounds do not seem to be well integrated into the overall school culture.	1	2	3	4	5
12) I often have heard prejudicial remarks at this school about people from certain religious backgrounds or ability levels.	1	2	3	4	5
13) The faculty and administration in this school talks of accepting people from different backgrounds but really doesn't do much to promote this acceptance.	1	2	3	4	5
14) This school has offered me good opportunities to learn about accepting and understanding mutual differences.	1	2	3	4	5
15) This school has services that adequately meet the needs of students from all ability levels.	1	2	3	4	5
16) This school is a comfortable environment in which all students are helped to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
17) Sometimes a student's gender, religion or ability level affects how they are treated by teachers in this school.	1	2	3	4	5
18) My attitudes and behaviours toward those from different backgrounds than my own are the same when I am in my home neighbourhood as they are while I am in school.	1	2	3	4	5
19) My own sociocultural background is adequately respected and included in all aspects of this school.	1	2	3	4	5
20) I feel that this school's environment is really helping me be successful as a person.	1	2	3	4	5

School Climate Survey, p3

Please complete the following:

Your Year in School: _____

Your Current

Age: _____

Your Sex: _____

Your Religious Background

: _____

Please feel free to offer any comments you wish here:

Thank You for Your Time and Input in Completing this Survey.

Note: This survey derived in large part from the ODI (Hegarty&Dalton,1995)

November 13,2000

Dear XXXXXX Faculty Member,

As you probably are aware, over the past few months I have been conducting a study here at XXXX Integrated College as part of a larger research project I am undertaking this year as a visiting professor from Hofstra University in New York on the topic of Integrated Education in Northern Ireland and its impact on tolerance of diversity in young people. As part of my work to date, I have had the benefit of interviewing numerous students, parents and staff, and have sat in on many classroom sessions and observed various school activities.

At this time, it would be of considerable value to further obtain input from XXXX's teaching faculty regarding their professional perspectives and impressions. With this in mind, I am asking for your cooperation by taking the time and interest to respond to the questions on the enclosed survey and return it in the- attached envelope into the depository that has been set up next to the faculty mailboxes by November 27th, if possible. Please note that the survey itself is constructed with limited space for narrative answers to each item due to the fact that I am looking for succinct rather than detailed responses through this format. It is my expectation, therefore, that the survey should take no more than 15 minutes from your busy day to complete. All responses will remain strictly confidential; I have intentionally minimized any indication of respondent identification on the survey in the hopes that you will feel more comfortable in responding.

I am pleased to share with you that the work I am doing has been supported by the school administration with the expectation that the findings will be reported for the benefit of the school community at the end of the study. In this regard, I am hopeful that in taking the time to complete this survey you will not only contribute to this effort but benefit from the collective perspective it is intended to generate. As a teacher myself, I genuinely appreciate the openness you have already offered me in the last few months and thank you in advance for your support in this survey request.

Respectfully,

Laurie Johnson, PhD, NCC

Associate Professor of Counselor Education

Hofstra University School of Education and Allied Human Services

UN/INCORE Faculty Associate

Sheelagh Murnaghan Visiting Professor, QUB

INTEGRATED EDUCATION AT XXXXXX SCHOOL TEACHER SURVEY

Instructions: Please note that all information will remain confidential. If however, you would prefer not to complete any portion of the 'background' data, simply leave blank. Thank you.

Backaround Information:

Subject(s) You Teach at XXXX:

Overall Years Teaching: Years at XXXX: Other Teaching Experience (type&level):

Teaching Qualification: B.Ed- PGC- Other specify Your Religious Tradition: Sex:

1) WHAT ARE THE CHIEF REASONS YOU CAME TO TEACH AT XXXX?

2) IN GENERAL, WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE VALUE and the PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH INTEGRATED EDUCATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND?

3) IN PARTICULAR, HOW WELL IS THE INTEGRATED EDUCATION ETHOS (across gender, ability levels and religions) WORKING HERE AT XXXX ?

4) HOW HAVE YOUR OWN SOCIOPOLITICAL and RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS AFFECTED YOUR WORK IN THIS SCHOOL?

5) HOW, IF AT ALL, IS THE ISSUE OF SECTARIANISM ADDRESSED IN YOUR CLASSROOM TEACHING? Please discuss.

6) GIVEN YOUR OWN TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE, HOW ADEQUATELY PREPARED DO YOU FEEL TO DEAL WITH ISSUES RELATED TO SECTARIANISM IN THE CLASSROOM?

7) WHAT ARE YOUR IMPRESSIONS REGARDING THE GENUINE ATTITUDES OF XXXX STUDENTS' TOWARDS ACCEPTING DIFFERENCES (BOTH IN SCHOOL AND AT HOME)?

8) AS AN EDUCATOR, WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE 11 + SELECTIVE SYSTEM IN NORTHERN IRELAND? (positive & negative)

9) WHAT ROLE DO YOU SEE PARENTS PLAYING AT XXXX IN TERMS OF PROMOTING NONDISCRIMINATORY ATTITUDES IN THEIR CHILDREN?

10) WHAT DO XXXX TEACHERS NEED (resources, training, etc.) TO BETTER ENABLE THEM TO MEET THE EDUCATIONAL AND PSYCHOSOCIAL NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS (across gender, ability, religion)?

Additional Comments regarding Integrated Education at XXXX and its impact on students' attitudes & behaviors:

XXXXX INTERVIEW PROTOCOL TEACHERS

Interviewee Background Information:

Sex: Subjects Taught at XXX:

Overall Years Teaching: Years at XXX: Other School Experience (type&level):

Type of Teacher Training Received: Religious Affiliation (Optional):

1) HOW DID YOU COME TO WORK HERE AT XXXXX?

2) WHA BELIEFS DO YOU HAVE REGARDING THE IDEOLOGY AND EFFICACY OF INTEGRATED EDUCATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND?

3) HOW HAVE YOUR OWN SOCIOPOLITICAL and RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS AFFECTED YOUR WORK IN THIS SCHOOL?

4) BY AND LARGE, IS THE ISSUE OF SECTARIANISM ADDRESSED OR AVOIDED IN YOUR CLASSROOM TEACHING? Please discuss.

5) IF ADDRESSED, IN WHICH SUBJECT CLASSES? THROUGH WHAT MEANS? TO WHAT EFFECT ON THE PART OF MOST STUDENTS?

IF NOT ADDRESSED, DISCUSS RATIONALE

Teacher Interview protocol p2.

6) GIVEN THE TEACHER TRAINING YOU'VE RECEIVED, HOW ADEQUATELY PREPARED DO YOU SEE YOURSELF TO DEAL WITH SUCH ISSUES IN THE CLASSROOM?

7) WHAT ARE YOUR IMPRESSIONS RE. XXXX STUDENTS' GENUINE ATTITUDES TOWARDS ACCEPTING DIFFERENCES? DO YOU BELIEVE THEY DEMONSTRATE ACCEPTANCE OF OTHERS WHEN THEY RETURN TO THEIR HOME/NEIGHBORHOODS?

8) AS AN EDUCATOR, WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE "11 +" ASSESSMENT IN NORTHERN IRELAND? (pos & neg)

Reasons for its maintenance?

Expectations for its continuance in Northern Ireland?

9) WHAT ROLE DO YOU SEE PARENTS PLAYING HERE AT XXXX IN TERMS OF PROMOTING NONDISCRIMINATORY ATTITUDES ON THE PART OF THEIR CHILDREN?

10) CAN YOU IDENTIFY ANY NEEDED CHANGE IN THE ROLE PARENTS TAKE ON TOWARD THIS END?

Additional Comments re. XXXX or Integrated Education and its impact on student nondiscriminatory attitudes & behaviors:

XXXX STUDY - PARENT INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

INTERVIEWEE SEX: TRADITION/BACKGROUND:

TIME CHILD/CHILDREN AT XXXX: CURRENT GRADEYEAR(S) OF CHILD:

ROLE PLAYED AT XXXX:

1) REASONS FOR SENDING CHILD (REN) TO XXXX ?

2) IMPRESSIONS OF XXXX SO FAR: POSITIVE:

NEGATIVE:

3) WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS REGARDING THE EFFICACY and VIABILITY OF INTEGRATED EDUCATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND?

4) WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST CONCERNS ABOUT XXXX? 5) WHAT ARE YOUR BIGGEST CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR CHILD(REN)? 6) WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE 11+ SELECTION ASSESSMENTS?

7) WHAT CHANGES (ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS) HAVE YOU OBSERVED IN YOUR CHILD(REN) SINCE COMING TO XXXX?

Parent Interview Protocol p2

8) HAVE YOU OBSERVED THAT THE NON-DISCRIMINATORY BEHAVIORS EXPECTED OF THEM IN SCHOOL CARRY OVER WITH THEM TO THEIR HOME NEIGHBORHOODS?

9) ARE CHILDREN DEALT WITH DIFFERENTIALLY in any way at XXXX RELATED TO THE SOCIOPOLITICAL and/or RELIGIOUS TRADITION they/their family follows?

10) WHAT DO YOU THINK PARENTS CAN DO TO PROMOTE NON-DISCRIMINATORY ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS ON THE PART OF THEIR CHILDREN?

11) DO YOU THINK THAT THE ISSUE OF SECTARIANISM SHOULD BE ADDRESSED IN CLASSROOM TEACHING HERE AT XXXX?

12) WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ABOUT THE POLICY PROHIBITING THE DISPLAY OF SYMBOLS AND CULTURAL EMBLEMS AT XXXX?

13) WHAT ARE YOUR HOPES FOR YOUR CHILD(ren)? Other Comments: