A YEAR-ROUND SCHOOL PROGRAM:
A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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by Anne M. Lundquist
February 2001
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An abstract of a Dissertation by
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The problem. This descriptive qualitative study analyzed the year-round program at Irving Elementary School in Indianola, Iowa at the conclusion of its fourth year of operation. Stakeholders' perspectives were ascertained to understand the issues that arose when it was offered in addition to a traditional calendar program and to provide insight to others interested in this alternative calendar program.

Procedures. Thirty-eight semistructured interviews and 19 informal conversations with knowledgeable people associated with the program were conducted and analyzed along with documentation using qualitative research methodology. Four research questions guided the analysis from which conclusions, implications, and recommendations were developed.

Findings. Respondents' perceptions revealed the following:
1. The intent for starting the year-round program came from a site-based effort designed to benefit learners.
2. Structural issues resulting from the initiative were minimal while educational and emotional issues led to conflict which was subsequently resolved.
3. Most year-round teachers and students perceived teaching and learning were enhanced.
4. Most felt the alternative calendar should continue to be offered as a voluntary elementary level program. The concept of year-round school in general was perceived by most to be of value.

Conclusions. Physical plant and operations issues associated with the program were not as difficult as expected. While the concept made intuitive sense, emotional issues surrounding the change initially created some problems for the district. Over time, the year-round program was favorably accepted by most in the district and community.

Implications. Implementation of year-round programs can be problematic in terms of structural and operational issues. It is important to be sensitive to the emotional needs of stakeholders and to scheduling issues involving specialist teachers when initiating year-round programs. Districts should consider alternative calendar options as a means of offering stakeholders choices in school programming.

Recommendations. Additional research addressing student achievement may be prudent at this site as would a replication of this study in the future. The study of similar year-round programs in the state is recommended to acquire additional insight into alternative calendar programs.
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

It is well documented that a number of changes are evident in society today which affect educational organizations. Schools were increasingly portrayed as places where professionals must take on a number of responsibilities beyond those which were traditionally expected (Robbins, 1993). Parents and families experienced similar pressure which impacted home and school cooperation (Bradford, 1991). As a result of this growing burden, various educational reform movements designed to address the needs of educators, students and their families became prevalent in the previous 20 years. School improvement initiatives increasingly focused on accountability and on programs to address the emotional and social well-being of a changing student population.

One reform measure which received attention was the manner in which schools utilized time (Kneese, 1996). Of particular interest were reform initiatives which addressed the configuration of the yearly attendance calendar. There was some question as to whether the traditional nine month agrarian calendar utilized by most school districts could adequately meet the needs of society and fully realize the potential for student learning (Adelman, Haslam, & Pringle, 1996). As a result, extended and year-round school programs at the elementary level were adopted by some schools in the nation in an effort to reconfigure the school calendar to better address the needs of stakeholders and the relationship between time and learning.
Alternative Calendar Programs

The number of public school districts adopting year-round calendars in the past decade increased by 600 percent (National Association for Year-Round Education, 1998). There were various configurations of extended or year-round school programs. Those which placed students on multiple, overlapping attendance schedules were generally designed to increase the number of students served in each building. These were often described as multiple-track programs. Other alternative calendar programs, called single-track models, were designed to improve or extend the time students attended school and better meet the needs of teachers, students and their families. Some of these programs provided the same number of days of attendance as the traditional calendar and others offered additional days of instruction. All single-track calendar models provided short, periodic vacation times throughout the year and had shorter summer breaks than the traditional calendar. Intersessions, which provided instruction during the break times, were optional in some models and mandated in others. The majority of non-traditional calendar programs were located in the southern and western regions of the United States. Relatively few such programs were in operation in the Midwest.

Iowa Context

During the past five years interest developed in the state of Iowa regarding the concept of alternative calendar schedules for schools. In 1998, the Iowa Department of Education encouraged districts to explore year-round
programs by making grants available to support the examination and initial
implementation of extended or year-round education programs. Additionally,
the Governor's Commission on Educational Excellence for the 21st Century
(1997) recommended the implementation of year-round schools. Furthermore,
the state of Iowa enjoyed a long-standing culture in which local control of
schools was favored, making it relatively easy for districts to explore new and
different methods for educating children and creating a climate receptive to
changes in school calendars. Yet few districts in Iowa had implemented
alternative attendance schedules. Of the 374 districts in the state, only six had
year-round programs at this time. Therefore, the intent of this study was to find
out about the issues which influenced the initiation of a year-round program
and what happened when a school adopted an alternative calendar.

Rationale for Irving Elementary School

I chose to study Irving Elementary School in Indianola, Iowa. It was one
of the few schools in the state with a year-round program. Because it was in
operation for four years, I was afforded the opportunity to discuss issues that
surrounded its implementation over time.

Description of the Program

Irving's year-round program was a voluntary, elementary level program,
which provided 180 days of instruction that began in mid-July and concluded in
June at the same time the traditional calendar program closed for summer
vacation. There were four, nine week quarters each year which were followed
by three week breaks each fall, winter, and spring, and a six week break during
the summer. Optional intersession courses of two weeks in length were offered during the fall and spring breaks which provided students, if families chose to enroll students, with an additional four weeks of instruction.

This optional year-round program was housed within the same building as a traditional calendar program, which enabled data to be gathered from respondents who were involved in both calendars. This feature was important for two reasons. First, most Iowa districts considering an alternative calendar would likely be required to offer it in addition to the traditional calendar program, as it is doubtful the entire population would be willing to abandon the traditional calendar in favor of an alternative calendar program. This may be due in part to the fact that change was difficult for some to assimilate and that the majority of school districts in Iowa were located in or near rural areas and may have had stakeholders whose livelihoods were affiliated with the agrarian calendar.

Offering an alternative calendar option in addition to the traditional schedule would accommodate those whose lifestyles favor a non-traditional program as well as those who preferred the agrarian calendar. Secondly, most districts did not have an entire building available to dedicate exclusively to the start-up of a year-round program and as a result, it might be necessary for those districts considering an alternative calendar option to administer it within the same building as a traditional calendar program. Therefore, if alternative calendar programs are to be implemented in the future, it is likely they will be instituted in addition to existing traditional calendar models and may operate concurrently within a single building.
Questions were being asked throughout the country and in Iowa as to whether or not the traditional nine-month agrarian calendar structure common in elementary schools was appropriate for the needs of today’s society. The purpose of this study was to find out from knowledgeable people who were engaged in a non-traditional school calendar what it meant to make such a change and to understand from various perspectives how it affected schooling and the lives of those involved. It was assumed that by speaking with people engaged in such an effort that their perceptions regarding a change in the traditional elementary school calendar would yield valuable information of interest to parents, administrators, teachers, school board members, and state-level policy makers regarding one school’s efforts in a calendar change initiative.

Problem Statement

What issues arose when a school attempted to make a substantive change in the traditional calendar? How were stakeholders affected when an elementary school adopted an alternative calendar? Specifically, the problem of this study was to describe and analyze the year-round program at Irving Elementary School in Indianola, Iowa, in order to provide insight to others interested in the issues surrounding this non-traditional school calendar.
Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. Why and how was the Irving year-round program initiated?
2. What changed in the district and school with the implementation of the year-round program?
3. How was the year-round program described in terms of teaching, learning, and family life?
4. What did those affected by the change think should happen with the year-round program in the coming years?

Methodology

This research took the form of a descriptive qualitative study because answers to the questions were best determined through the detailed verbal explanations provided by individuals involved in a year-round school program (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1988). The information was gathered through semistructured interviews and informal conversations with individuals, and analysis of documentation at Irving Elementary School, during the spring and early summer of the year 2000. The year-round program had just completed its fourth year of operation at the time the data were collected.

In-depth semistructured interviews, as defined by Merriam (1998) and informal conversations, as I have termed them, were conducted with stakeholders associated with the year-round program. Semistructured interviews were used with 38 individuals including teachers, administrators, parents, Area Education Agency personnel, board members, and community
members. Some interviews took as little as 45 minutes to complete while others lasted as long as three hours. Conversations were generally less formal and were conducted with 19 respondents including grade five students enrolled in the year-round program, middle school students who were previously enrolled in the year-round program, and support staff members. Some of the conversations were as brief as 20 minutes and others lasted one hour. Individual and small group formats were utilized for both the semi-structured interviews and the informal conversations.

Data were analyzed by identifying the most prevalent issues that emerged from the respondents’ statements and the documentation. The identification of issues was guided by the research questions from which categories were formed. The most salient themes from within the categories served as the basis for the conclusions from which the implications of the research were formed. Recommended topics for future study were also suggested.

Limitations

1. The intent of the study was to understand why and how a mid-sized, elementary school in Iowa adopts a non-traditional calendar. The descriptive findings of this qualitative study cannot be generalized to other schools, nor can the findings, discussion, or conclusions be considered reflective of others who have engaged in similar calendar changes.

2. Interviews and conversations were conducted at the conclusion of the year-round program’s fourth year of operation and the data from this study
represented a single point in time. The respondents' explanations were dependent on their ability to recall events from memory.

Organization of the Study

The second chapter of this study provides an historical overview of extended and year-round education and includes a review of pertinent literature. The third chapter details the methodology used to conduct the study. Chapter four presents the findings as they relate to each of the research questions and includes a brief summary of the most prominent points. A discussion of the findings and relevant literature is provided in the fifth chapter along with conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

Definitions

Year-round (YR) and/or extended school year (ESY) program - These terms, which are often used interchangeably, describe alternative calendar schedules. There are several program configurations, all of which hold classes for several weeks followed by a short vacation break. Some offer intersession classes during the breaks which can increase the number of days available for attendance while others require additional days of attendance as part of the program. For the purpose of this study, the term "program" is used to describe the components of the alternative calendar and includes the options and activities associated with it and the typical vacation times.

Intersession - This term is used to describe the break from regular classes in extended and year-round education programs. School may be closed during this time or may offer classes apart from the regular curriculum. Intersession
courses are designed for both enrichment and remediation and attendance may or may not be required.

**Traditional calendar (TC) program** - This type of schedule was inspired by an agrarian society. Classes begin in late summer and conclude in late spring. This calendar option is often referred to as the September to June schedule. Again, the term “program” describes all components of the traditional calendar program and includes the options and activities associated with it and the typical vacation times.
Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The review of literature is presented in four parts. The first part offers a brief historical overview of alternative calendar scheduling. The second part details literature relative to increased student achievement associated with alternative calendar scheduling and includes the presentation of research which addresses specific student populations such as those considered to be disadvantaged, at-risk, or learning English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL). The third part focuses on the degree of stakeholder satisfaction among those involved in year-round programs. Of particular interest in this section is the discussion regarding the perceptions of stakeholders prior to and following the implementation of alternative calendar programs. The fourth part focuses on the inconsistencies in the language used to discuss extended and year-round school programs and the difficulties these discrepancies present to the analysis of research.

History

A review of school calendar schedules found they were designed to accommodate the needs of an agrarian society and a traditional family structure (Warrick-Harris, 1995). The length of the school year was approximately 12 weeks in length in the mid-nineteenth century and increased to 180 days over the next one hundred years in response to society's growing need for an educated citizenry (Copple, Kane, Levin, & Cohen, 1992).
Alternative calendar programs have been in operation in various forms since the early part of the last century. Although there was evidence of summer schools operating in the nineteenth century, the earliest year-round education model designed to fully utilize facilities and focus on student learning was implemented in 1904 (Glines, 1995). The number of extended and year-round programs and the public’s interest in them have shifted periodically over the past 100 years (Mutchler, 1993).

Alternative calendar programs were scarce prior to the 1960s. Most did not withstand the test of time, eventually reverting to traditional calendar models. However, this trend shifted as the number of year-round education programs increased during the 1960s according to Glines (1995). Howell (1988) suggested that the need to accommodate growing student populations coupled with the inadequacy of public funds for the construction of new facilities were the two fundamental motivators driving the exploration of alternative calendar programs during the 1960s. Increasing student achievement was recognized as a goal for some programs, although in most cases it appeared to be a secondary consideration. As a result, communities with increasing student enrollment adopted multiple-track programs in which students attended school the required number of days, with various vacation times, or “off-track” breaks, throughout the year. With this model teachers were employed for an extended number of days. Because students’ attendance schedules overlapped, approximately 25% more students could be housed in existing attendance centers.
This trend began to reverse in the late 1970s as the school-age population began to decrease in numbers and a trend to return to more traditional, conservative patterns re-emerged in society (Glines, 1995). When the interest in year-round programs reemerged in the late 1980s, increasing student achievement served as the primary motivation for implementation of alternative calendars.

Some of the interest in year-round programs may have resulted from the 1983 report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education entitled A Nation at Risk, which sparked a renewed interest in extended and year-round education programs. The report challenged various aspects of current educational structures and recommended attention be given to the exploration of a longer school year for the purpose of increasing student achievement. As a result, alternative calendar programs continue to be reexamined as an effective method for educating children.

The literature recommended several groups should assume the responsibility for reviewing this issue. Aronson (1995) maintained that policy makers are obligated to explore various methods for increasing student achievement and restructuring time in schools should be among them. Similarly, a report entitled Prisoners of Time, authored by the National Education Commission on Time and Learning (1994), suggested the responsibility for transforming learning in America lies with the government, higher education organizations, and the business community as well as parents, students, and school personnel.
The decision to subscribe to extended or year-round school programs must be based on the needs of the particular district (Bradford, 1991). Furthermore, the National Education Commission on Time and Learning (1994) recommended communities engage all stakeholders in dialogue about learning and the time spent in school to ensure support from those involved and to increase the likelihood that changes associated with time and learning would be accepted by stakeholders. This advice indicated that the level of understanding regarding alternative calendars and the attitudes held by the public regarding such programs may have an influence on whether or not implementation is successful and enduring.

**Student Achievement**

Of the 18 studies addressing student achievement, seven reported that the alternative calendar had a positive effect on student achievement. An additional five studies reported a combination of mixed results which included positive, neutral, or negative findings in terms of student achievement. Six studies claimed that alternative calendar options had no effect on student achievement, and there were no studies which reported a purely negative effect. It was apparent after examining the grade-levels involved in the alternative calendar programs that the most positive effects of extended and year-round school programs occurred at the elementary level (Ananda, Borneman, & Henry, 1997; Curry, Washington, & Zyskowski, 1997; Fardig & Locker, 1991; Haenn, 1996; Gandara & Fish, 1991,1994; Green, 1998; Quinlan, George, & Emmett, 1987; Roby, 1995; Shields, 1996), one of which dealt
specifically with early childhood programs (Frazier & Morrison, 1998). The studies conducted by Campbell (1994), Prohm and Baenen (1996), and Van Mondfrans, Quinn, Moody, and Aslett (1985) incorporated elementary level students to some degree and did not show an increase in student achievement.

The effectiveness of extended and year-round school programming on disadvantaged, at-risk, and ESL learners' achievement was of special note. Six studies found a positive association between the two variables (Curry et al., 1997; Gandara & Fish, 1991, 1994; Haenn, 1996; Quinlan et al., 1987; Shenkman, 1997) and one reported year-round school had no effect on the achievement of either ESL or disadvantaged learners (Campbell, 1994).

**Stakeholder Attitudes**

The majority of the research found the opinions of those involved in extended and year-round school programs favored the alternative calendars and that stakeholders were satisfied with the nontraditional schedule (Baker, 1990; Barrett, Ferrett, & Beaty, 1992; Campbell, 1994; Christie, 1989; Curry et al., 1997; Fardig & Locker, 1991; Gandara & Fish, 1991, 1994; Prohm & Baenen, 1996; Quinlan et al., 1987; Serow & Banks, 1992; Shenkman, 1997; Shields, 1996; Utah State Board of Education, 1989; Van Mondfrans et al., 1985). Parents tended to express preference for the model in which their children were enrolled (Shields, 1996). Much of the research indicated that students appeared to respond well to extended and year-round school programs in general, with an improvement in attitude, confidence, and in some
cases, self-reported acceptance of the alternative schedule (Ananda et al., 1997; Axelrad-Lentz, 1996; Barrett et al., 1992; Christie, 1989; Fardig & Locker, 1991; Quinlan et al., 1987). Those studies which reported student disfavor for the alternative calendars found issues such as dissatisfaction with 'track' placement and the extension of the school year into the summer months (without additional breaks throughout the year) as the primary sources of their objections (Gandara & Fish, 1994; Green, 1998; Quinlan et al., 1987).

Perceptions of stakeholders were most positive in those instances where participation in the alternative calendar program was optional (Axelrad-Lentz, 1996; Campbell, 1994).

In contrast to the overwhelming support of extended and year-round programs, a study by the Utah State Board of Education (1989) found an indication of emotional exhaustion reported by teachers and an increased level of burnout for administrators was cited by Gandara and Fish (1994). The required rotation of classrooms was also cited as a disadvantage in multiple-track programs by Barrett et al. (1992) and Shields (1996). Completion of graduate courses and continuing education credit was more difficult for teachers on an extended or year-round calendar according to Barrett et al. (1992) and Fardig and Locker (1991). Scheduling staff development was more problematic in alternative calendar programs according to Curry et al. (1997) because faculty members were scheduled for breaks at various times throughout the year and the entire faculty was not in the building at the same time. The occurrence of discipline-related incidents appeared to decrease with
the alternative calendar according to several studies (Axelrad-Lentz, 1996; Fardig & Locker, 1991; Gandara & Fish, 1991, 1994; Utah State Board of Education, 1989).

In many cases, the degree of stakeholder satisfaction was relative to whether or not the alternative calendar was operational at the time the research was conducted. Christie (1989) found stakeholders were more favorable overall to the extended and year-round education programs after implementation than prior to the change. A number of studies supported this assertion (Robinson & Forsyth, 1984; Hoffman, Wallace, & Reglin, 1991; Sardo-Brown & Rooney, 1992; VanderHooven, 1994; Van Mondfrans et al., 1985). It was inferred that adjustments to the extended and year-round education programs were generally less troublesome for stakeholders than anticipated and the advantages of the year-round program compensated for the concerns as reported in a number of studies (Axelrad-Lentz, 1996; Baker, 1990; Campbell, 1994; Curry et al., 1997; Fardig & Locker, 1991; Green, 1998; Quinlan et al., 1987; Serow & Banks, 1992; Shenkman, 1997; Utah State Board of Education, 1989). However, it should be noted that in some instances the anticipated disadvantages of the alternative calendar were realized (Baker, 1990; Barrett et al., 1992; Curry et al., 1997; Johnson, 1997). Generally speaking this implied that although some of the issues cited in opposition to the alternative calendar continued to be problematic, for the most part those stakeholders who had an opportunity to engage in the program found they favored the schedule.
Clarity of Language

Of the 29 articles highlighted in the formal review of literature, eight referred to the alternative calendar as an extended school year in some form or another while 20 referred to it as year-round school or year-round education. One study referenced the topic as a longer school year. It was interesting to note that of the extended and year-round education program studies, there were no consistencies in attendance schedules. The calendar model, number of days required for attendance, and the degree to which the intersessions were offered as optional extensions of the alternative calendar program, was not made clear in many instances. Therefore, when referring to extended school year programs and year-round education models in the literature it is unclear whether or not the specific programs offer or require students to attend additional days of instruction. Other details of the programs and definitions for the terminology used to identify various aspects of the models were often not specifically stated, which resulted in confusion when extrapolating implications from the findings. After completing a meta-analysis of current research on extended and year-round school, Kneese (1996) found that the difficulty inherent in the study of such programs was due to the inconsistencies in the vocabulary used to describe the programs, the variance in calendar designs, as well as numerous confounding variables within each of the schools.

Generally speaking, the terminology describing alternative calendar programs appeared to have cycled in the last 30 years. Most of the references of the 1970’s referred to extended and year-round calendars as Year-Round
School or Year-Round Education. Later in the 1980s and 1990s the term Extended School Year became increasingly popular in the literature.

To further complicate the issue, changes in special education practice during the last five years popularized what became known as Extended School Year Education (ESYE) services in which districts were obligated to provide summer programs to students with special needs, when appropriate. As a result, confusion continued to surround the nomenclature of alternative calendar programs. It appeared, however, the term year-round has regained popularity as the preferred choice when referring to alternative calendar programs designed to reconfigure the traditional nine month calendar.

Summary

The concept of year-round education was something with which school districts have experimented periodically over the last one hundred years. The emphasis on student achievement as the impetus for the change was a relatively new approach which may have been inspired by changes in society and reports such as *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) and *Prisoners of Time* (National Education Commission on Time & Learning, 1994). Adjustments in the configuration of school calendars were most productive when they involved members of all stakeholder groups in efforts which advanced the level of understanding regarding such changes.

Findings were mixed regarding increased student achievement relative to extended and year-round education programs. Those which reported the most positive effect were in operation at the elementary level. Additionally, ESL
students and those considered disadvantaged or at-risk reportedly achieve the most positive results from extended or year-round education programs.

The opinions of stakeholders engaged in extended and year-round education programs were favorable for the most part. Issues involving student discipline were reduced in alternative calendar programs. The degree of stakeholder satisfaction was greatest in those programs which were offered to stakeholders as options. Generally speaking, stakeholders were more supportive of the year-round program after the change than prior to the implementation and adjustments to the alternative calendar schedule were less problematic than expected, although in some instances the anticipated disadvantages were realized.

The terminology used to describe extended and year-round education programs was inconsistent as was the specific attendance requirements of the various models. This, along with the many confounding variables inherent in many of the studies, made contrasting and comparing the literature arduous and extrapolation of the findings difficult in most instances. Most recently the terms year-round school or year-round education appeared to be the most popular nomenclature for alternative calendar programs designed for all student populations.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

I chose to conduct a descriptive qualitative study because detailed, verbal explanations provided by people knowledgeable about the year-round (YR) program were needed to provide the insight necessary to answer the research questions, draw conclusions from the data, and suggest possible implications of the research. This information was not readily observable and was best determined through semistructured interviews and informal conversations in which respondents expressed their opinions (Merriam, 1998). Additionally, an analysis of documentation was conducted to add clarification to respondents’ statements. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), “Qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (p. 2). I felt my experience as a school administrator qualified me to assume the role as an "instrument of data collection" for a study of this nature (Creswell, 1998, p. 14).

Site Selection

There were a number of reasons I selected Irving Elementary School as the site for this study. The YR program was well established, and completing its fourth year of implementation at the time the data were collected. Research regarding changes in school programs is best directed toward those that have been in operation for four years or more according to Kneese (1996). Because this program operated in the same building as a traditional calendar (TC)
model, I was able to gather data from individuals who were directly involved with both programs and were well equipped to provide meaningful data as a result of their first hand experiences (Creswell, 1998). Additionally, the district administration indicated a desire to take part in the study which afforded me access to the necessary documentation and cooperation throughout the research process. Because the completion of a qualitative study can be intrusive due to the nature of the data collection process, it was important to have the support of those involved to ensure the acquisition of useful data. Furthermore, because the site is located only 30 miles from my home I was able to make frequent visits throughout the data collection process which made undertaking a study of this nature feasible and the sampling strategy one of convenience (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Initial entree was established with the superintendent, curriculum coordinator, and building principal several months prior to completion of the research proposal to determine the district’s level of interest in contributing to the study. I received support from these three key district administrators, however, final authorization to conduct the study was not given until after the proposal was completed and approved. To accomplish this I presented my proposal to the board of education in a public meeting and made a statement articulating the intent of the research in which I addressed the following issues as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992):

- Why the site was chosen for study
- What was to be done at the site during the research study (time
and resources required by participants and amount of time spent at the site by the researcher)
- Assurance the researcher's presence would not be disruptive
- How the results would be reported
- What the participants would gain from the study

Additionally I informed the board of education of my willingness to share the results of the study in a public meeting upon completion of the research and to furnish the superintendent with a copy of the dissertation. At that time I requested and received written consent to participate from district administration, a copy of which is included in Appendix A.

After I established access to the site, the building principal at Irving Elementary School was used as my primary contact. She acted as key informant and gatekeeper for the collection of data. I enlisted her assistance in locating documentation and data collection opportunities which were most likely to produce useful, meaningful information (Creswell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Research Plan

Research Design

My research design used the research questions to direct the focus of the study, however, there was sufficient latitude within the data collection process to permit themes to emerge from the interviewees' responses. This design was best described as one which was halfway between a tightly structured, predetermined design and a loose, emergent plan. This approach
provided clarity to the process and kept me from being inundated with extraneous data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). A graphic representation of the research design illustrating the process, the key components of the study, and their connection to each other is shown in Appendix B.

The process began with a review of literature from which the primary research and interview questions were determined. As the data collection progressed, additional review of pertinent research was conducted as needed to address emergent themes.

Both the semistructured interviews, as defined by Merriam (1998) and informal conversations, as I have termed them, took place concurrently with the document review. A total of 38 semistructured interviews were conducted and consisted of dialogue which was at least 45 minutes and as much as three hours in length. Informal conversations were conducted with 19 respondents. The conversations were as brief as 20 minutes and in some instances lasted one hour. The interview protocol was used for both the interviews and the conversations and occasionally all or part of one or two of the questions was omitted if it was evident the interviewee did not have any opinions or insights to offer in response. Both individual and small group formats were used with various respondents for both the semistructured interviews and the informal conversations.

The examination of documentation comprised the third component of the data collection process and included minutes from board meetings, newspaper articles, district documentation including brochures, attendance
records, budget figures, and other physical evidence which was provided by
district representatives and relative to the YR program. Review of documents
occurred throughout the interviewing process to clarify or substantiate
respondents’ statements (Hodder, 1998).

Data Collection

The problem and research questions guided the data collection process
and allowed me to maintain the focus of the study (Creswell, 1998). The
gathering of data was not confined to a time limit, but instead it continued until I
felt the categories were saturated and the forthcoming information was
redundant (Merriam, 1998). The primary methods of data collection included
semistructured interviews, informal conversations, and analysis of
documentation.

defined the interview as a professional conversation “whose purpose is to
obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to
interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena” (p. 6). Interviews are a
valid and effective means of collecting data and were an appropriate method for
this study as the information desired was not readily observable (Merriam,
1998). Semistructured interviews and informal conversations were conducted
with individuals knowledgeable about the YR program and were guided by an
interview protocol which contained the research questions and relevant probes.
The use of open-ended questions encouraged participants to effectively
communicate their personal perspectives, while the use of probes capitalized
on their knowledge by allowing respondents to clarify their responses and supply examples to support their opinions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). I assumed a neutral role in the interviews and conversations and avoided the display of any personal perspectives I might have. This presuppositional stance ensured neutrality for the participants’ opinions and presumed each had valuable information to contribute (Fontana & Frey, 1998; Merriam, 1988).

The protocol containing the research questions and probes used during the interview permitted me to determine the wording of the questions in advance and ensured each respondent was presented with a similar interview experience (Merriam, 1998). A copy of the form is included in Appendix C. This approach reduced the likelihood that excessive, useless information was gathered and aided in the data analysis. I pursued leads beyond the protocol whenever appropriate, which encouraged a liberal format conducive to the emergence of unexpected and novel themes. Interviews and conversations were tape-recorded, and noteworthy observations which arose during the dialogue were written directly on the interview protocol.

When scheduling interviews and conversations I presented the rationale for the study as well as the logistics for the interview. The interviews and conversations were conducted at the school, the district’s central administration offices, or where otherwise requested by the participants. A Human Subjects Consent to Participate Form was presented to all respondents for their authorization. Signatures were required from either the parent or guardian of all respondents not yet the age of majority.
Reputational selection was used as my primary sampling strategy (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). The selection of respondents was based upon the recommendations of my key informant, the building principal (Creswell, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Her experience as an administrator, long-time community member, and former teacher in the district qualified her for this duty because she had the insight necessary to suggest respondents who were likely to provide valuable information (Creswell, 1998). I pursued additional leads as a secondary sampling strategy as they became evident.

The initial listing of respondents expanded as the data collection process developed and included the following 57 individuals:

Semistructured interviews:

• Five teachers from the YR program
• Five teachers from the TC program
• Three teachers who taught both YR and TC students
• Four community members
• Superintendent
• Five parents of students in the YR program
• Three Area Education Agency personnel
• Four board members
• Five teachers from other elementary schools in the district
• Curriculum coordinator
• One elementary principal (from another school in the district)
• Irving Elementary School principal
Informal conversations:

- Six grade five students
- Eight support staff members
- Five middle school students

Analysis of documentation. Minutes from board meetings, newspaper articles, district documentation such as brochures, attendance records, budget figures, and other relative physical evidence provided by district representatives was examined in this study. "A full sociological analysis cannot be restricted to interview data. It must consider the material traces" as asserted by Hodder (1998, p. 113) especially if there are multiple or conflicting opinions. The analysis was guided by intuition, questions, and emergent leads and required that I examine and incorporate all pertinent information regarding the research questions into the study (Merriam, 1998).

The district was reimbursed for expenses incurred for copies of the documentation and for a substitute teacher who was needed to cover classes during some of the individual teacher interviews.

Data Management

The collection of data was managed in an organized and systematic manner and began soon after the data collection process ensued (Huberman & Miles, 1998). Records of all dialogues, meetings, and correspondence regarding the research study were kept in notebooks designated for this purpose. Periodic journal entries were added to provide a written record of the study as it progressed.
The interview and conversation tape-recordings were transcribed verbatim. The observational notes taken during the dialogue were filed in a notebook along with the transcripts to provide the most accurate record of the dialogue (Merriam, 1998). Back-up copies of all transcripts were stored on diskettes. Two tape recorders were used at each interview in order to create two copies of the dialogue concurrently as the interview transpired. One was used as a back-up in the event the original was destroyed.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the interviews, conversations, and documentation was cataloged as it was acquired and initial analysis began at that point (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). The analysis process was somewhat loose and assumed an inductive stance. Such an approach was appropriate because the research was being conducted on a rather complex, single case and the objective of the study was exploratory and descriptive (Huberman & Miles, 1998).

I maintained all of the original data in tact and manipulated copies of the data record during the management, coding, and retrieval process. Throughout the analysis process I reduced the data record as needed in order to eliminate unnecessary information and to direct focus on critical areas. Abstraction was minimal and did not critically impact the data record (Huberman & Miles, 1998).

The research questions guided the development and identification of categories. I read transcripts and subsequently coded all pertinent information using notations in the margins to summarize and reduce each section to a
specific code based upon recurrent issues (Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). To ensure that the source of the data was easily recognizable, I assigned each respondent a code which was printed vertically in the margin of each transcript. The data record was literally cut apart into sections and dispersed into file folders representing each category. I chose to use paper copies of the data record in the analysis phase of the study because it allowed me to move sections from one category to another when necessary. I utilized a constant comparative method of analysis to determine placement into categories (Creswell, 1998). The process was iterative and spiraled in various directions as the study progressed and I periodically returned to the literature to find clarification or support for my findings (Huberman & Miles, 1998).

After all of the data had been coded and placed into categories I examined each to ascertain what commonalities were present and which of them lent themselves to emergent themes. The themes, according to Ely, Anzul, Friedman, Garner, and McCormack-Steinmetz (1991), serve the important purpose of "anchoring the findings in the field that gave rise to them" (p. 155). Conclusions of the research were drawn from the themes. Finally, implications and recommendations inferred from the study were provided to the reader.
Chapter 4

FINDINGS

Introduction

The findings in this chapter are presented in four parts, each of which addresses one of the research questions. All of the information gathered in the interviews was based upon the respondents’ perceptions regarding the research questions. Participants were asked to respond in terms of their beliefs, opinions, and understandings regarding how and why the year-round (YR) program was initiated and the changes they felt took place after it began. They were also asked to describe the YR program in terms of teaching, learning, and family life and to state what they believed should happen to the YR program in the coming years.

Question One:

*Why and how was the Irving year-round program initiated?*

There are two areas of focus in the first research question, the first of which answers the question of why the YR program was initiated and the second offers an explanation as to how it was implemented.

*Why*

Most respondents suggested the motive for initiating the YR program was to benefit learners. It was generally agreed that shortening the summer break would increase students’ retention of information by requiring less time for review when classes resumed. This opinion was shared by members of all
groups of respondents including support staff, teachers, parents, AEA personnel, community members, board members, and administration.

Several respondents believed that lower achieving students were the targeted population however, some reported that the primary purpose for implementation was to provide additional educational opportunities for children. Another group of those interviewed suggested that the district’s desire to offer choices to consumers was the reason the YR program began. None of the respondents suggested the purpose for the YR program was to target the high achieving student population yet the percentage of Talented and Gifted (TAG) students enrolled in the YR program far exceeded that of the traditional calendar (TC) program. It was generally accepted by most respondents that highly motivated students were attracted to the YR program. Additionally it was noted that students with special needs and those for whom learning was especially challenging also found the YR program appealing. The building principal believed the group of parents who initially sanctioned the YR program did so because they wanted what she described as,

More time. More time to get to some of the things that we really wanted to try. Some of that kind of learning that is not as much out of the textbook, but that are definitely things kids need to know. We do a lot of those things through the intersessions.

YR program teachers reportedly spent less time reviewing and therefore had more time for new learning experiences. Furthermore, the intersessions offered an additional four weeks of instruction for those who chose to take part.
How

There was a general consensus among respondents that the initial study of YR education was promoted by the former principal who sent two teachers to a national conference on alternative calendar programs. As a result of this professional development experience these two teachers spearheaded interest in the concept. One of the teachers (who was subsequently named as building principal), continued to research the topic and became one of the primary forces behind the calendar change. Shortly thereafter the district challenged the faculty and staff to form building level improvement teams to explore better ways to meet the needs of learners. Irving School employees considered several options, two of which were multi-age grouping practices and YR programs. It appeared there was more interest in the YR school option as a majority of the team felt it showed the most promise for school improvement and therefore decided to pursue study of this option. The team met regularly to determine if such a structural innovation was feasible beginning in the fall of 1994.

The current principal was advised by the former superintendent to keep the innovation and related changes within Irving Elementary School. Parents were surveyed to determine their level of interest in a YR education program. There appeared to be sufficient interest to seek approval from the board of education. In February of 1996 a request to offer YR education as a two year pilot program at Irving was made by the principal and members of the improvement team to the board of education. The request was granted. An
informational meeting was held to inform parents about the YR program during the 1995-96 school year at which time a sufficient number of students enrolled in the YR program to secure one class section in grades one through five. The principal made the faculty aware that the YR program would be offered at their school and gave all teachers the option of teaching on the YR calendar. The YR program was implemented the following July.

In the spring of 1998 after the two year pilot period had passed, a second request was made to the board of education to continue the YR program at Irving Elementary School. The Board voted to expand the option of participating in the YR program to all students and teachers in the district. Transportation, which was not provided by the district during the first two years of the YR program, was added the following year in the summer of 1999. The program continued to grow gradually. One class section was added each of the last two years.

**Question Two:**

What changed in the district and school with the implementation of the year-round program?

Three primary themes emerged during the analysis of data for question two. The first addresses issues which involved the operation of the physical plant facility, including employment of support staff, cost and budgetary affairs, transportation of students, and building maintenance. The second deals with issues that emerged relative to the changes in the educational program as a result of the calendar change and the emotional aspects of those changes.
This includes such matters as personnel assignments, scheduling, professional development, class size and enrollment demographics, public relations and communication regarding the change, the climate within the district, and the affective repercussions of changes in these areas. The third theme presents information regarding the conflict and subsequent resolution which resulted from the addition of the YR program.

Using these themes as guidelines, findings are presented in the following three areas:

1. Structural - Physical plant, operations, and cost issues.
2. Educational and Affective - Program and organizational issues and the feelings associated with them.
3. Conflict - Issues associated with the discord and subsequent resolution.

**Structural**

The YR program at Irving was a single-track model in which children were required to attend the same number of days as the TC students. YR classes began in mid-July and were divided into four, nine week quarters. The first, second, and third quarters were followed by a three week break, which was referred to as an intersession. Students had the option of attending intersession classes for two of the three weeks during the fall and spring break times. Classes concluded for both the YR and the TC programs on the same day at the end of each school year, which was typically sometime between the end of May and the beginning of June. It was interesting to note that many
respondents, most frequently students, stated that they felt most people did not understand the attendance schedule of the alternative calendar. This misunderstanding was a source of frustration for most of these respondents.

The YR program was plagued by physical movement to and from various classrooms and buildings throughout its four-year term. The year the YR program started the district reorganized the configuration of the grade-levels offered at the elementary schools at the same time the newly constructed Middle School was occupied. At that time grade five students were relocated from the old Junior High facility and distributed into all three of the elementary buildings, at which time each became kindergarten through grade five facilities. Furthermore, because Irving was not equipped with central air conditioning and had window air conditioners installed in only one wing of the building (which had been previously used for the summer day program), it was necessary for all of the YR classes to be located in this area of the building when the program began in 1996. As the YR program expanded, and with the addition of central air conditioning at Irving, some of the YR classrooms were located in the grade-level wings of the building. In addition to this movement within the building, the YR program was relocated in Emerson Elementary School, another building in the district, for two of the past three summers so that renovations could be completed at Irving. The first summer the YR program was displaced for only two days, although the staff believed at the time they made the move that they were to be housed at Emerson for the entire summer session. The second summer the YR program operated for the entire summer
term at the alternate site. Although it was inconvenient, by most accounts it was a manageable situation. Some of the teachers at the Emerson building resented the intrusion because the operation of the YR program in their building limited access to their rooms and made it difficult to complete some of the necessary preparations before the start of school. Although the principal at Emerson reported that the shared building arrangement created little disruption overall.

Several respondents said they were gratified that one of the school buildings was being used in the summer. Two board members suggested that utilizing district facilities during the summer months was both prudent and practical.

In terms of air conditioning, most of the respondents understood the air conditioning upgrade completed at Irving in the summer of 1999 was not related to the YR program but was the result of a district-wide systems upgrade. However, some believed the YR program was responsible for the district’s decision to add this feature. In fact, until Irving was upgraded, it was the only building in the district without air conditioning.

The YR program, which served 150 children in the 1999-2000 school year, had an estimated annual cost of approximately $9,500 which included the costs incurred in providing transportation, wages for added support staff, and physical plant operations. This amount was perceived as relatively minimal by most accounts, although one respondent believed this cost to be substantial. The principal voluntarily supervised the YR program without extra
compensation, as did the other licensed staff members. Specialist teachers in art, music, and physical education were permitted to ‘trade’ each of the additional days they worked in the YR program during the summer for a day during the TC school year. The enrichment portion of the intersession program was self-funded through tuition assessed for each participant. The charge was slightly below the average cost for day care in the area. The remediation portion of the intersession programs was free to all children for whom they were recommended. This practice was consistent with the district’s policy for summer school remedial programs, which were also free of charge.

Some respondents were under the impression that more money was being spent on the YR program, although I found little or no evidence to support this assertion. One TC teacher stated, “I don’t think they [YR teachers] necessarily get more money. I think if any of us approached [the principal] and said ‘we’d like to try this’, she’d be willing to do that for traditional or year-round.” However, another TC teacher suggested, “We’re cutting back on a lot of options and necessities at this time, so adding a new option during this time makes it kind of hard to take.” A board member made the following statement, “I don’t think there’s anybody that feels like there is a real budget drain as a result of the program,” and an administrator added, “When you analyze the dollars, they’re [the YR program] not getting that much more money. If you analyze various programs within our district, you’d see some huge inequities in where dollars are going.”
The costs associated with transportation were responsible for the largest percentage of the YR program's projected expenditure and although the transportation director said $12,000 was allocated in the budget for this purpose, the actual cost for bus service last year was $5,328. It is common for budget estimates to exceed actual expenditures because they are based on what the district expects might be the maximum amount of money needed for an expense. By making generous estimates the district is less likely to overspend and create a deficit. It was also noted that as the district purchased new buses, attention was given to vehicle cooling features such as roof vents, white roofs, and tinted windows in the event the responsibility to transport children in the summer months continued, according to the transportation director.

The district began busing YR students in the summer of 1999 at the beginning of the YR program's fourth year of operation. This additional service was viewed by several respondents as important to ensure all students access to the YR program. Some felt families may have been excluded from the YR program because they were not able to provide their own transportation. It was suggested by one district administrator that the lack of district transportation during the pilot period may have had an influence on the overall demographics of the enrollment because fewer low-income and single-parent families were able to provide their own and as a result were unable to take part in the YR program. Transportation became an especially important issue after completion of the two year pilot program. At that time the district decided to
continue to offer the YR program and to make the option available to all elementary students in the district.

In terms of building maintenance, the calendar prohibited the deep cleaning of some areas of the building during the latter half of the summer. This was not something the head custodian was concerned about. She stated,

The staff here at Irving are very helpful. They'll do anything they can to help us out to prepare for the next year. That enables us to get their rooms cleaned a lot faster and on time... by doing this it enables us to do what we have to do in the amount of time we have to do it.

The fact the YR program was in session during the summer months required a custodian to be on duty during the evening. This meant the custodial staff was reduced during the day in order to assign someone to clean the YR classrooms in the evening. The head custodian did not see this as problematic.

The head cook felt there was no change in the delivery of service in the cafeteria as a result of the YR program, either during the TC school year or during the extended summer program. She felt her department was able to adjust schedules, menus, and the quantity of food without difficulty.

The transportation director reported that although the YR program added to the amount of work he was required to do by increasing his responsibility to provide bus service to students an extra six weeks each year, he was reportedly unaffected by this.
I'm a salaried employee so it doesn't matter to me one way or the other whether we have YR because I'm under contract. I fluctuate maybe my vacation times a little different because I want to be here when it starts. Definitely during that week. A few things like that.

He added that he considered this added obligation as merely a part of his job.

The secretary expressed similar indifference to the added responsibility resulting from the YR program which required, among other things, the keeping of two sets of attendance and grade card records. She indicated that although this was not difficult, it did require a high degree of organization. She articulated her feelings in the following statement,

No, I feel fine. I have no problem with it [YR program].... It really has not been a hindrance.... Well, the only thing is that I could say in that respect would be if you're going to be a school within a school, which is what Irving is, realize that you are going to have to give forth a little more effort and time.... I don't feel that the year-round program has necessarily put a burden on me.

Both the head custodian and cook felt the hiring and scheduling adjustments necessary for the YR program were easily overcome. Similarly other support staff members including the secretary, teacher associate, bus drivers, as well as the food service and custodial employees were reportedly willing to work extra hours and adjust their schedules accordingly to meet their personal needs. Those support staff employees who worked additional hours in the YR program were compensated for their time at their regular pay.
Educational and Affective

**Enthusiasm and support.** The YR program reportedly generated much enthusiasm from students, their parents, and many of the staff members associated with it. This enthusiasm was cited by a number of respondents, including board members, community members, AEA personnel, parents, support staff, administration, and both YR and TC teachers. This excitement appeared to have fueled the YR program from the onset, as evidenced by the fact that parents asked to enroll their children at the initial informational meeting, which was much earlier than the principal expected. One interesting comment regarding the enthusiasm associated with the YR program came from a community member who stated,

> I went to a meeting at the high school auditorium where it was sort of an open forum type of thing and watched all facets of our society stand up and talk about what it [the YR program] was doing for them and what it was doing for their family. Our little neighbor boy stood up and he was in second grade and said, “I wish I could come to school every day. I get bored going to the pool in the summer and I love to learn.” That was exciting.... I’ve seen so much enthusiasm among students who were involved with YR school and their parents... it’s very refreshing to see parents and children excited about going back to school in July.

Support staff, teachers, and administrators said that the degree of parental involvement in the YR program was tremendous. Several respondents
suggested that this high degree of involvement affected the teaching and learning in both programs.

**School-within-a-school.** The YR students were somewhat segregated from the other students by virtue of the fact that most of the classrooms were currently located in one wing of the building, although all students in grades kindergarten through five had either all or at least one of their recesses with TC students. All of the children with which I spoke favored the smaller, multi-age, YR grouping configuration. The YR program’s “school-within-a-school” configuration, as it was termed by many respondents, was credited with fostering a caring, family atmosphere according to some staff members and several students.

The physical constraints of the facility made it necessary to schedule the YR program’s lunch break at a separate time from the TC schedule in order to accommodate the band and orchestra schedules. This, coupled with the fact that the YR program was typically involved with curriculum units several days if not weeks ahead of the TC students, meant that less social and professional interaction took place between the YR program participants and their TC counterparts. This created a division between the teachers and students in the two programs. The separation was perceived as exclusionary by some teachers at Irving, some teachers from the other elementary buildings, and a community member. One TC teacher felt that the implementation of the YR program actually isolated those teachers from their TC colleagues. Conversely it was noted by another TC teacher that with the addition of the YR program, all
three of the TC teachers were able to have common planning time with the entire TC teaching team because the schedule for art, music, and physical education permitted a common planning period for only three grade-level teachers at a time. If there had been a fourth TC class, one member of the grade-level teaching team would not have been able to have common planning time with the other two teachers.

In regard to the students’ ability to transition from the YR program to the TC program, one TC teacher commented that the segregation of the students had no influence on the two children in her class who moved from the YR program to her program last year. The teacher said,

I know the YR fifth grade class has recess with us the first recess... there is contact between the TC kids and the YR kids. I know this year in my room I have a couple of kids that were in YR last year and they’ve made that transition without any problems. They knew the kids in my room and they weren’t totally oblivious to them when they walked in. It wasn’t 20 brand new faces. That was good to see.

**Personnel.** YR classroom teachers maintained the same number of contract days as the TC teachers and had the option of teaching additional days during the intersessions. However, some confusion surrounded the schedules of the specialist teachers who taught art, music, and physical education. These teachers were expected to work several days in the summer to deliver instruction to the YR students as well as teach the TC students. As compensation for their time, these specialist teachers were allowed to take a
“trade day” in exchange for each day they worked with the YR students during the summer. This ‘trade day’ was most often taken during the intersession when the YR students were on break from school in the fall, winter, and spring. However, some teachers claimed the specialist teachers were not able to take advantage of all of their “trade days”. A check of faculty attendance records revealed all but one teacher received an equal amount of time off in compensation for the added work days in the summer during the 1999-2000 school year. This teacher ended the year with a deficit of one day. The perception that specialist teachers regularly did not receive compensation time for their summer work in the YR program was false. However, the administration noted that if the YR program continued to grow, the ability to schedule ‘trade days’ would undoubtedly present an increasing challenge. YR program classroom teachers had the option of enjoying a three week break, three times throughout the year, while the specialist teachers were limited to single days on an intermittent schedule and could not receive several ‘trade days’ in succession as an extended break. A committee of teachers requested permission to create the specialists’ schedule for the 1999-2000 school year, a duty which had traditionally been the responsibility of the principal. According to the principal the schedule created problems for the music teacher because it required her to report to school to teach a single class on one day of the six day cycle. This teacher would have had to make alternative arrangements with the classroom teacher in order to excuse herself from teaching class on that day.
Several respondents noted that the operation of dual calendars in one building regularly required the principal to work many additional days beyond those required in her contract.

The services provided by the AEA to students on both calendars were identical as noted by AEA personnel and one parent. The AEA staff reported that they were able to adjust their personal schedules accordingly so that if it was necessary they were able to work at Irving during the summer and compensate themselves for this time at some point later in the school year. This enabled them to deliver the needed services to YR students and receive time off in exchange for their efforts. They also suggested that although they had to consider the timing of the intersession breaks in order to include the YR teachers in their meetings, this did not present a problem.

Teaching assignments associated with the YR program were complicated by the district’s decision to place grade five in the elementary buildings, which reduced the number of sections offered in grades kindergarten through four at Irving. Most of those opposed to the YR program cited it as the reason teachers were reassigned within the district, rather than credit the movement of grade five into the elementary buildings as the stimulus for the change. However, when specifically questioned about this issue, the majority of respondents agreed that the movement of personnel within the district was due primarily to the addition of grade five at Irving, and cited the implementation of the YR program as a secondary factor in the reassignment of staff.
One administrator said that he was not aware of any teacher who was transferred to make the YR program work. He added that seniority was not a factor required for consideration of assignment within the district, but was only used for reduction in workforce. One board member commented that movement within the district was simply part of what was necessary in the effective operation of a school. She added that all three elementary buildings were excellent, desirable facilities and that movement between any one of the three should not cause a great deal of distress. Another administrator suggested that movement within the district typically took place every year and was not unusual. Assignment to teach on the YR calendar was voluntary and the administration planned to continue this policy.

The selection of teachers for the YR program was criticized by some respondents and some suggested the principal “hand-picked” the teachers for the YR program. When questioned about this allegation the principal stated that although she selected teachers she felt would be well-suited to the alternative calendar, she established criteria to guide her decisions in advance. She maintained that all faculty members were invited to apply for the YR positions soon after the board agreed to pilot the program. At that time she received approximately twice the number of requests for transfers than there were available positions. She said,

And so what happened was, if there was only one person that wanted first grade, that was kind of it. So did I hand-pick them? Yes and no. But if they were the only one, they got it. There were three fourth grade
teachers that wanted in. So that obviously wasn’t going to work, however, I was able to talk one into taking a higher grade and one a lower grade.

In response to the issue of seniority, the principal explained there were a number of people who weren’t accepted to teach in the YR program and most of those were special education teachers who wanted to work in the regular education setting. She chose to take regular education teachers before special education teachers in consideration of their experience in the regular classroom. In those few instances when she had to pick between two teachers she usually selected the teacher with more experience. In some instances her decisions were based on the advice and consensus of the administrative team relative to what was considered in the best interest of the district. One respondent added the following comment in reaction to the assertion the principal chose teachers for the YR program who were favored,

There was some dissension when the program first started among those not chosen [to teach in the YR program] that perhaps wanted to be in the program, that the principal had selected her favorites for the program. I still hear that occasionally. However, I do know that there are a couple of teachers in the program that aren’t considered the top in their class and so in that respect, I don’t think that’s true.

The master contract required the posting of vacancies within the district. When vacancies were available to teach in YR positions, they were not posted. According to one administrator, the YR positions were considered different than typical TC openings by the former superintendent. Because the YR program
was developed as part of a site-based, building initiative, the former superintendent reportedly instructed the building principal not to make the openings available to faculty members outside of Irving School. The principal addressed this directive with the following statement, "He seemed to think this was a building initiative and needed to stay here. I think he was more worried about opening it up and having that cause more problems... because teachers would have to move." She added, "When there's an opening, it has to be posted, they have to offer an interview. That doesn't mean that they have to hire you. That has been addressed and that does happen now, but it didn't at the time."

**Professional development.** The district made efforts to coordinate its professional development classes around the YR schedule, which according to some respondents, was not always the case in the past. This adjustment in the scheduling of district staff and professional development activities enabled YR teachers to take advantage of most of the summer offerings prior to returning to school in July, and ensured similar training opportunities presented during the school year took place at a time when the YR program was in session.

**Attendance.** Three of the five parents interviewed reported that their children had better attendance on the YR schedule while two of the five did not see any change. The building principal stated the attendance records of the YR teachers were as good or better than those of the TC staff, generally speaking.
Scheduling. Scheduling the two programs within the same building presented a number of problems. As noted previously, because grade five was being moved into the building and the music booster club was outlining specific guidelines for the scheduling of band, orchestra, and chorus, arranging time for students to go to lunch and recess was an arduous task. Scheduling art, music, and physical education classes was equally challenging as stated by teachers and administration.

Three respondents said the Title I and TAG services were not always available to the YR students in the summer. Additionally, the building was left without counseling services on those days when the guidance counselor chose to take a “trade day”. One respondent cited this as a problem.

According to three respondents, the scheduling and distribution of teacher associate time initially created some controversy early on with allegations that the YR program received additional time allotments above that of the TC program. However, this inequity was reportedly corrected and was no longer an issue when the data were collected.

Class size. The number of students in each of the YR and TC program classes was the subject of contention. It was the district's desire to keep the number of students in the YR classrooms equal to that of the TC classrooms. However, if class size in both the YR and TC programs was equivalent at the beginning of the year, the potential for an increase in the number of students in the TC classrooms was greater. This was due to the fact that students who moved into the district during the first three-quarters of the year were placed in
TC classrooms to ensure they had access to the required number of days of instruction. The exception to this rule occurred when students registered during the fourth quarter. Students who enrolled at this time were placed in YR classrooms because the number of days remaining in the school year at that point in time was equal in both programs.

Many respondents claimed the number of students in the YR classes was smaller than the TC classrooms. The size of classes in the two programs was reported as a concern for some teachers. They felt increased pressure to improve student achievement scores and found this to be more challenging with larger classes. It was interesting to note however, that in the four years the YR program was in operation, the elementary building principal documented only two instances when the number of students in the YR classes was fewer than that in the TC classes. However, it was expected that the number of children in the two YR kindergarten classes in the fall of 2000 would be smaller than the district's average class size. Several respondents suggested that it was normal for class size to fluctuate throughout the district in various schools and that historically that occurred often from year to year.

**Demographics.** Most respondents felt the demographic make-up of the YR program was different from the TC program. A large number of respondents said they believed the percentage of high achieving students enrolled in the YR program was greater than that in the TC program. According to one teacher, this resulted in a lower percentage of students with academic leadership abilities in the TC program. All but one of the respondents agreed that the
demographics became more similar each year and they expected this trend to continue. Several suggested, however, that significant improvement in this area could not take place unless the YR program expanded. One administrator made the following statement regarding efforts to achieve a more representative demographic make-up in the YR program, "As long as it's a one section program, we're not going to get there.... We really need to have a larger group before it's going to really bear out our demographics."

The building principal noted that the population at Irving was not matched demographically to the students in the other two elementary buildings. She asserted, 

We don't have a bell shaped curve. Irving doesn't have a bell shaped curve, that's not our population. We have more special education students and we have more TAG students and that's our general population in traditional as well as YR. That's who we are. That's what we look like.

One teacher noted that in the past it has been the practice to place a larger percentage of special education students in some classrooms in order to accommodate instructional schedules. This resulted in considerably fewer students with special needs in some classrooms and a higher percentage of average and above average learners in others. This statement suggested that unequal demographics were typically found in some classrooms at Irving regardless of whether the YR program was in operation.
As long as enrollment in the YR program remained optional, according to one teacher, the demographic inequities were likely to continue. She stated, 'The other thing I tell people is that we can’t help who comes. This is the program. It’s a choice for parents. If they choose it, we can’t help it. I mean we can’t say, “Oh, you can’t come, you’re smart.” It just doesn’t work out. So you have to take what you have.'

One teacher who instructed students in both programs maintained that the YR classes did contain a larger percentage of high achieving students and questioned whether that was in the best interest of all children. She supported her query with the following statement, ‘I feel like... it ends up with the faster students a lot of times being together, which is great for them, but I’m not so sure it’s as good for the traditional students.’ A district administrator said, ‘The district... has worked very hard to keep it balanced and to keep a cross-section... if there are any charges of elitism that are true, it would be in parent support. But I don’t think that the kids are more gifted. I don’t think the kids are brighter.'

**Elitism.** The discussion regarding the unequal demographics between the two programs led to charges of elitism from some respondents toward the YR program participants. One teacher stated that the initial involvement of families who aggressively sought more educational stimulation for their children established the elite reputation that characterized the YR program. Another teacher felt that those students who were considered at-risk often did not have parents who actively pursued educational advantages for their
children which may explain why those families tended to show less interest in the YR program.

The name given the YR program at its inception, Education Plus, may have inadvertently contributed to its reputation as an elitist organization according to some. The YR program maintained a high profile due to the high degree of parental support and enthusiasm associated with it and the publicity which ultimately led to the growing controversy surrounding the innovation. This drew much attention from the public. The principal cited the following result,

I'm not so sure with the editorials in the paper that say it's a school for the elite, doesn't draw the elite. If I read in the paper that you don't want to go here because just the elite students go and I thought my child was pretty good, that might be where I'd want to go. I think some of the controversy has drawn the type of the students it was trying to discourage.

According to several respondents, the added educational opportunities available to the YR program during the summer months such as field experiences at the County and State Fairs and RAGBRAI (annual, state-wide bicycle ride), fed the allegations that the group had additional opportunities available to them that were not typically a part of the TC program and were, in some respects, elite. One respondent commented, "And so right away there was an awful lot of disgruntledness [sic] amongst the staff over this program and it was looked as though this program was receiving special privileges, special favors."
Regardless of their involvement in the YR program and its reputation as an elitist program, several respondents commented that they would have enrolled their own child in the YR program if they had the opportunity to do so because they believed it was an excellent educational option.

Student achievement scores. The scores for students in the YR program are no longer shared apart from those of the TC students. The decision to cease this practice followed an article in The Des Moines Register in which student achievement scores from the YR and TC programs were disaggregated from one another and published. The results reflected positively on the YR program, which created animosity within the TC staff according to several respondents. The district recognized such negative feelings had an adverse influence on the district as a whole, according to one administrator. The comparison of scores was viewed by supporters of the TC program, including staff members from other elementary buildings in the district, as unfair by virtue of the varied demographics and class size between the two programs.

Public relations and the media. The media continued to publicize the YR program following the initial Register article. A district administrator said, “It gave Irving a program of their own that from outside the district makes Irving look very good: very positive. It has put Indianola on the map so to speak in regard to people who are interested in that.” Sentiments like that, along with the reported resentment felt by some regarding the additional attention the program garnered, sustained the distaste some held for the YR program
according to several respondents. Although one supporter of the TC program suggested that the coverage offered by the local paper was not fair to the YR program and placed an unfavorable slant on comments made by the principal. Another teacher suggested that the issue those opposed to the YR program felt was most troublesome was the way in which the public relations campaign was handled. She said,

I think it was just all in the way it was handled. Just like showing the scores and not showing the total class size as compared to the total class size across the district. I think it was all in the way it was presented and the words they chose to use like “great teachers”.

The actual quote made by the principal as reported in The Des Moines Register’s December 9, 1997, article stated there were three factors which contributed to the elevated scores in the YR program which included, “talented teachers, involved parents, and replacing a school year where much was lost during a three month summer.” The added media attention toward the YR program, along with additional promotion by those involved in the first couple of years of operation, further ignited the growing controversy between the two programs. A search of newspaper articles, features, and editorials from The Des Moines Register and the local newspaper, The Record-Herald Tribune, revealed that a total of 44 features, articles, and editorials on the YR program at Irving Elementary School were published from February of 1996 to present. One administrator commented, “I think... the momentum that was building up a few years ago and all the publicity, I think the traditional people felt that
whenever they [YR program participants] were praised it was slap in the face to them.”

Regarding the issue of increased, and in some cases unfair, publicity regarding the two programs the superintendent added,

YR received a lot of publicity through the media. There were statements and things being said that could be interpreted as being negative toward traditional programs. So we spent a lot of time addressing those issues making sure that whatever things were brought up were looked into and resolved. I feel good that we did that. We had a committee of traditional and YR people working on that. To my belief we’ve addressed all those issues and taken care of the concerns. One thing that we know is we can’t control the amount of publicity that the media decides to put on YR.... But of all the people I have talked to as far as our employees, our teachers, they’re not against YR, but they wanted to be sure that we’re not sacrificing traditional programs, traditional approaches, to benefit YR. So we’ve been very careful about that.

As a result of this controversy, the district put a directive in place which required the media to contact the central district office regarding coverage of all school programs.

The district’s original brochure, which promoted the advantages of the YR program, was objectionable to a number of respondents because they felt it unfairly promoted the alternative calendar. The original brochure was replaced by another which highlighted the elementary school programs in a more
general format and presented the YR program as one of two calendar options. The name of the YR program was changed from Education Plus to Year-Round Education.

Most respondents believed the district put restrictions on the promotion of the YR program for the most part, and that it was to be discussed as nothing more than a calendar option. The superintendent pointed out that it was recruitment that was discouraged and that promotion of the YR program for educational purposes was, and continues to be, very appropriate. It should be noted however, that a number of respondents felt that the YR program’s growth has been negatively influenced by the district’s failure to sanction communication about the advantages of the alternative calendar.

**Limited communication.** A number of respondents cited limited communication as the primary criticism of the YR program early on. Two board members suggested that there was little communication between buildings and with the community as a whole during the first two years. One teacher asserted that this absence of information regarding the YR program made many people uncomfortable with the entire change. One board member stated, I go back to the lack of probably everyone’s understanding of what was going on and there was just a lot of unknowns.... And that’s not to blame those [who raised the questions], there were some very, very, well thought out and legitimate concerns.

A few respondents described the information received by some individuals outside of Irving as one-sided and negative.
The building principal reported the amount of communication regarding the YR program was directed by the former superintendent and was limited primarily to the staff and families at Irving because the YR program was designed as a building initiative. Although the initial study committee had members from the district who were not on the Irving staff, the development of the YR program was handled as a site-based initiative.

**Climate and morale.** The climate and morale within the district and at Irving improved for some and worsened for others as a result of the implementation of the YR program. It positively affected some of those teaching on the YR calendar who reportedly felt an increased closeness between their colleagues and students. One stated an appreciation for the calm atmosphere within the building during the six weeks before the TC classes started in the fall. However, it negatively affected many staff and faculty members who reported a division amongst the faculty based on the issues raised previously including scheduling, staff assignments, public relations, class size, demographics, and score comparisons within the district. The climate and atmosphere in the building suffered as a result, particularly in the first two years of the YR program's operation.

The other two elementary buildings in the district were also affected by the growing negativism associated with the YR program as reported by some respondents who felt somewhat threatened by its implementation. It appeared that the majority of the faculty in the other two elementary schools did not want the YR program expanded to include their buildings.
One source for some of this opposition was based in the belief that some TC teachers felt as though they were being asked to cut back their budgets while the YR program continued to receive district funds. However, the superintendent reportedly made the following statement to those objecting to the funding of the YR program, “If you’re being critical because it’s costing us a few dollars more, you work with people and come up with a way to get parents excited, kids excited, and teachers excited, and the dollars will follow.”

Perceptions of the YR program from outside of Irving were described by one teacher in another building like this,

[They] made it sound like everything was so rosy over there. It wasn’t and it still isn’t. But I think it’s improved. Those kids in that program are good kids, those teachers are good teachers. But so are the rest of the other three-fourths of the school. And let me tell you, they didn’t get any credit for anything. Those people were working just as hard.

A number of respondents suggested that because the YR program was perceived by many as progressive, the choice not to be involved with it or supportive of the calendar implied an absence of a forward-thinking attitude.

One teacher from another building stated,

I think we are very sensitive.... I think teaching is kind of a thankless job for the most part anyway and [it’s upsetting] to have something new come along that gets all the recognition when what we’re doing is the same thing they are, just on a different calendar.
One TC teacher from Irving suggested that the perceptions of those in the other elementary buildings were not supported with fact for the most part because those teachers were not directly involved with the YR program. The teacher said that because communication was limited, their opinions were often one-sided. She stated, “They seemed to be a little more worried about it than we were.” However, all but one respondent reported an improvement in the climate within the building and district in the last two years. This improvement was credited to a number of factors presented in the next section.

Several respondents reportedly believed that the basis for much of the growing anxiety regarding the YR program was associated with the stakeholders’ fear of, and resistance to, change. One AEA staff member reported, “You get back to the whole concept of change, it’s hard to change just because it’s change.” One administrator felt that the reason so many feared school improvement initiatives was because change of any kind created distress for those involved by requiring additional work and energy. This opinion was supported with the following assertion,

Although their [teachers and administrators] hearts are in the right place and they want school improvement, if it’s going to cause a lot of work, if it’s a major change, [they say] “I’m going to send it down the road. I won’t bad mouth it, I won’t stop it, ... but if I have a choice, I’m not going to do it... keep it simple, I’m up to here with everything”.... There isn’t the energy and there isn’t the acceptance of change.... And it’s not an issue of what’s good for kids. And it’s not an issue of what parents want.
Commandeering change and doing whatever we need to do for that, it's tough stuff.

A board member supported this opinion by suggesting that throughout the ongoing discussions regarding the YR program before, during, and after implementation it was felt that when stakeholders understood that they didn't have to participate and that it wasn't going to impact them personally, most were able to accept the change.

**Conflict**

The conflict within Irving became evident soon after the YR program began. This was described by one YR teacher through an incident in which several of the YR faculty noticed the building seemed vacant one day after school. After gathering up several of her YR colleagues to find out where the majority of the staff had gone, the YR teacher found many of the TC faculty meeting privately in another part of the building discussing their dissatisfaction with the YR program. Additionally, respondents reportedly overheard comments regularly which indicated the growing level of discord among the staff. The educational and affective issues discussed earlier further fueled the controversy and led to increased dissension in both the building and district. The conflict was apparently fully realized after a number of teachers from Emerson Elementary School authored a letter articulating their dissatisfaction with the YR program. At that point the superintendent determined the best way to address the growing controversy in the district was to assemble a committee to determine resolutions to the issues raised by the Emerson staff members.
Advisory committees. The YR advisory committee included representation of board members, teachers, parents, and administrators. A teacher from another building commented that too much damage had already been done by the time the committee was established, however, the majority of respondents felt the work of the group was positive and provided sound resolutions to the issues raised with the implementation of the YR program. Some of those who favored the YR program felt the majority of the committee members were in favor of the TC program. Conversely, one respondent who supported the TC option believed most of the committee’s membership endorsed the YR program.

The YR advisory committee administered surveys to ascertain the feelings of elementary school faculty and parents regarding the YR program and to determine if and how it should continue. Several respondents felt that the survey provided valuable feedback, insight, and direction regarding the needs of stakeholders.

A subcommittee was assembled after the YR advisory committee completed its initial work and included members from the administration and faculty from all three elementary buildings. The subcommittee was charged with monitoring the enrollment and class size of the YR program by establishing guidelines for its growth and placement within the YR program. The committee’s goal was to equalize the demographics between the two programs. The subcommittee established guidelines which restricted enrollment in the YR program to no more than two students above or below the
average district class size. The subcommittee was also charged with the decision of whether or not to share the YR and TC students' scores separately and how, and to what degree, the YR program would be promoted. An administrator confirmed that persons named to serve on the subcommittee equally represented those in favor of each of the two programs. One committee member stated, "I think having the committee with both YR and traditional [representatives] on it has really helped. We sat down, we looked at the numbers.... I think the committee has really helped." Another member added, "I think they've tried really hard, and I think the committee has been really helpful because we get a wide variety of what goes on." An administrator endorsed the work of both committees and the district's plan to continue approaching issues associated with the YR program through the work of the subcommittee in the following comment,

[We will] continue to have our committee as issues come up, and that may be concerns, we'll let them address them and work with them. They've done a really nice job of trying to look out for the needs of all of our kids and come up with compromises and ways of making sure that those needs are being addressed at all levels. That's vital. They helped us get out of that mess and we need to stick with them.

A board member summed up the consensus of the respondents' opinions about the work of the committees by stating that the committee process led to a better understanding of the YR program and increased communication. It also established a slow, but acceptable pattern for growth of the YR program. A
teacher from one of the TC elementary schools made the following statement, "Being on the committee has opened my eyes a lot about what they [YR program participants] do." However, one respondent stated that not all of the problems expressed in the letter from the Emerson teachers had been satisfactorily addressed.

Resolution. The work of both committees at resolving the issues which generated conflict within the district provided a valuable learning experience for everyone involved. One administrator suggested the conflict and its subsequent resolution fostered an environment where professionals and parents were willing to take initiative to direct positive change in school organizations. One parent stated, "More people are learning about the different options.... I think that it has just opened people's eyes to the fact that there are options for how schooling can take place." As a result of this increased awareness, the district began to provide an opportunity for each of the principals to share success stories with the board of education several times each year. A district administrator supported this change in practice with the following statement,

Probably a by-product is that it [YR program] has brought some cohesiveness and some commonality there to promote everybody that wasn't there before. There wasn't a need before. We've all probably sold our programs more so in a positive way. So that's been a benefit, probably an unexpected benefit.
Level of involvement. One YR teacher suggested that the degree of support for the YR program might be related to the level of involvement. This teacher defended this claim with the following comment,

Some people [who] see something that's good, but they're not doing it, sometimes there is a tendency to run it down because they're not involved in it. I think that might have happened. Because some of the key people that are against it, if they were involved in it, they would think it was wonderful and would be wanting to promote it too.

Several respondents echoed this perspective, suggesting stakeholders' emotions colored their feelings about the YR program. Summarizing resolutions achieved by the district through the work of the committee, one teacher said, "I guess the biggest thing is not to compare, it's just a different calendar choice for some, that's great for them. And for those who don't want to do it, they don't have to."

The division within the district and community created by the implementation of the YR program, which by most accounts subsided, still inspired hard feelings for approximately 10% of the respondents. However, one community member suggested that the more familiar people became with any new idea, including YR school, the easier it was to accept. A district administrator supported this opinion with the following statement, "I do not get overrun with comments about YR one way or the other."
Question Three:

How was the year-round program described in terms of teaching, learning, and family life?

The changes which resulted from the implementation of the YR program that were raised in question two are presented in the findings of question three and are described as they influenced stakeholders in the following three areas:

1. Teaching
2. Learning
3. Personal and Family Life

Teaching

Curriculum. Administration, teachers, parents, and board members all agreed the curriculum was the same for both programs. However, the building principal felt the educational focus of the YR program appeared to provide a strong emphasis on academics, which was not necessarily a result of the alternative calendar schedule, but the preference of the YR classroom teachers.

Less review. Teachers in the YR program consistently reported they spent less time reviewing previously taught material and generally believed they covered more material each year. Conversely, TC teachers who had not taught on the YR calendar said they believed the amount of review time was very similar to that of their program. They supported this assertion with information gathered from teachers in YR schools in another districts who claimed that because they reviewed for a short time after each intersession
they spent the same amount of time in review by the end of each year. Some YR teachers felt they adjusted the types of units they taught as a result of the timing of some of the breaks, these teachers also believed they were able to add experiences that would not be possible in the TC program. For example, one class has had to forego the “apple day” activities in the fall because they were on break, but they were able to take advantage of fair activities in July and August.

**Dual program issues.** Those teachers who taught classes on both schedules reported difficulty in delivering instruction for the two calendars simultaneously. One teacher modified the order of instruction for the various units of study so the course work for both schedules closely matched throughout the year when both programs were in session. The teacher delivered the YR students’ six week summer instructional units to the TC students during the intersessions. This strategy was not the choice for all of the specialist teachers, however, and all three agreed that teaching both programs simultaneously required more organization. One teacher who was required to teach on both calendars said, “Sometimes I feel like I’m a little more frazzled because I’m trying to keep everything organized.... The curriculum doesn’t line up because they’re [YR students] six weeks ahead of the rest of the program.” All teachers agreed the operation of both calendars made it more difficult to collaborate with teachers from the opposite program.

The nature of the yearly instructional schedule made it difficult for teachers to regularly orchestrate group activities for students on both calendars.
because the YR classes typically were several weeks or days ahead of the TC by virtue of the fact they began classes six weeks before of the TC program. However, the YR and TC programs went on some field trips together and enjoyed a few grade-level activities throughout the year.

Advantages of calendar. Several respondents indicated the short breaks reportedly helped YR teachers, "stay on target," with their curricular goals. The breaks allegedly brought closure to specific units of instruction and grade cards were completed at the end of each quarter. This enabled teachers and students to return to school prepared to begin the next unit of study. Several YR classroom teachers reported the responsibility to conclude specific areas of study before the end of each quarter for grading purposes helped to keep the pace of the year's instruction in check.

All classroom teachers engaged in the YR calendar believed the configuration of the calendar was conducive to better professional practice and improved their instruction. They believed it was well suited to their personal lives and as a result, has had a positive affect on their professional life. They reportedly were better organized and spent less time working at school in the evenings and on weekends because they made preparations for the next quarter ahead of time during the intersession periods. These teachers spent one or two days during the intersession working in their classrooms for this purpose. One respondent said:

I feel that I am probably a better mother and a better teacher because of this calendar. I truly believe that because I can get geared-up and go
nine weeks and have a wonderful quarter and be well planned
and know what I'm doing in my units... and then know that I have three
weeks off that I can spend with my family and be pretty devoted there.

One parent suggested that the break between quarters permitted teachers to
reflect and analyze the previous quarter in order to prepare for the next. This
sentiment was echoed by YR classroom teachers.

**Graduate study.** The influence of the YR program on continuing
education courses and graduate study was reportedly minimal for three of the
five YR classroom teachers. Those who reported some difficulty with the
scheduling of summer school classes said that although many were available
in June, it was not possible to complete those which began in July.

**Professional development.** The administrator who scheduled the
district's professional development said the YR calendar was a primary
consideration when making arrangements for activities and classes. One of
the TC teachers from another elementary school in the district was dissatisfied
because the staff development activities had to accommodate the YR calendar.
She said that doing so meant two early dismissals would be scheduled in one
month, which she found bothersome.

**Volunteers.** Many respondents stated that the YR program had a larger
percentage of volunteers than the TC program, which meant more assistance
was available to the teachers in this program. One YR teacher suggested the
added volunteers her program enjoyed helped both programs during grade-
level activities such as Olympic Day or Earth Day. One TC teacher recruited senior citizens to supplement her need for volunteers.

Learning

Intersessions. The intermittent breaks throughout the year and the opportunity for additional instruction were an area of change identified by respondents as having both positively and negatively affected learning.

The continuous calendar schedule was cited as an advantage by a number of respondents including teachers, parents, community members, board members, administration, and support staff who believed it aided students in the retention of information and skills. The opportunity to “exercise their brains more,” was one respondent’s comment in favor of the YR schedule. For students who struggled more with the learning process, the calendar was cited as a positive influence by a number of respondents. One said,

Well I don’t think it’s [the three month summer break] mentally feasible either. If each one of these kids had a library card and was reading two or three books a week, and doing math problems, and doing a little phonics, and a science unit, I would think it’s wonderful. But they’re not doing that. They’re just not doing that.

The opportunity to engage in remediation during the intersessions was cited by several respondents as an important advantage of the YR program. One parent believed the remediation available to her child provided help to her in a timely manner and suggested her success in school was directly related to
the early remediation in the intersession program. Although all teachers felt the remediation program helped some students maintain their current skill level, most did not believe it was responsible for significant or extraordinary change in student achievement or performance. One teacher suggested that adding four weeks of instruction at the end of the school year may have similar results. Another said,

I think it's better for some kids because it's better than sitting in front of the TV for three weeks or whatever. So yes, it's good there. But I can't say I see these huge gains. Yes, gains in the YR calendar [schedule], but as far as gains in the intersession, I don't know.

Another teacher added, “Keeping them in the groove without loosing anything was almost a gain for some.”

One AEA staff member reported comparatively fewer special education referrals for students needing academic assistance from the YR program. She was unsure as to whether this was a result of the immediate intervention during the intersessions or if the shorter breaks were a contributing factor. It was possible neither of these assertions was true.

The enrichment component in the intersession schedule reportedly gave students and teachers a chance to explore and experiment with different activities in multi-age groups. While many of the students who were interviewed did not regularly take advantage of the intersession offerings, all had in the past and reported the activities and classes were enjoyable and worthwhile. Some parents reportedly preferred the break from school over participation in the
intersession programs, and favored the opportunity to spend time with their families or take vacations. Because the intersession activities were removed from the curriculum and enlisted more experience-based activities, they reportedly gave students a break from the school routine. Intersessions included experiences off campus such as learning activities at Simpson College and with the County Conservation Commission. Theme-based activities such as sewing, cooking, and photography took place on-campus. One respondent said, "They [the students] get some other types of learning that they may never get. As far as the intersessions, we really get in-depth in some areas that they may never have had a chance to do." For those YR students who may have missed the opportunity to attend camp in the summer, they had the option of attending during the intersession break which gave them a chance to enjoy this experience and still take part in the YR program.

Each intersession was evaluated by the YR students' families to provide direction for future offerings. All of the grade five students were complimentary of the intersession activities, while the middle school students were mixed in their review. The middle school students indicated that although they enjoyed some of the intersession offerings when they were at Irving, they believed the choices currently offered to students were superior to those available to them in the past. The intersessions were taught by certified teachers, which gave some parents an opportunity to become involved with the YR program by teaching a class if they were licensed to do so. Short term substitute teachers were also
used to conduct the intersessions which afforded the administration an opportunity to observe the skills of potential teacher applicants.

A disadvantage to the intersession break was cited by one respondent who suggested the break presented a problem for some specialist teachers prior to the presentation of vocal or instrumental concerts since the YR students did not have class for three weeks during the break and often missed the opportunity for rehearsals prior to performances. Some students cited similar displeasure with the interruption in their band and orchestra lessons during the intersession as it required their parents to make arrangements to get them to school for practices during this time. One TC teacher suggested that the optional intersessions along with the district’s summer school program gave parents the opportunity to enroll their children in too many days of instruction, which she believed was unfair to students.

**Short, frequent breaks.** The shorter, more frequent breaks afforded in the YR schedule was the key element cited by students in support of the alternative calendar. Most said they liked the length of the breaks and that they were spaced appropriately throughout the year. One student said, “They come right when I really want them... right when I’m getting tired of going to school.” Another said,

It always seems like you are starting a brand new school year after the break which always makes you feel refreshed and you know you are ready to get back in the swing of things, which makes the rest of the school year go much smoother and faster.
A parent suggested that part of the reason the children were able to get along better was because the YR teachers were more refreshed, had a higher energy level, and were more patient with the children due to the frequent breaks. She stated,

I think there’s a freshness to the teachers and students. Because I’m there, I’m there every week so I get to see students in different classes on a regular basis and I just see more motivation.... You know we’re getting toward the end of the school year, I can see a difference in the energy level... in the teachers and students in the YR program because they get those break times. I think there’s more of a focus.

One teacher supported this with the following statement,

When it’s time for a break... there’s a sense of “It’s time for a break.” I can feel it. The kids can feel it.... But they’re ready to come back in three weeks.... I really feel like YR has adjusted to their needs.

Another teacher suggested that returning from the short breaks gave everyone a new start without all of the review. The students returned from break rested, refreshed, and enthused. She said,

They [the students] are so enthused when they come back from the break. It’s just like a new year starting all over again. They’re happy to be there... we don’t have to go over a thing. It’s just “bing”, they go right through the routine.

Summer instructional opportunities. Parents, board members, and teachers cited the additional learning opportunities available in the YR program
during the summer as a positive change. They believed these novel summer experiences enhanced learning. Although it was not possible to duplicate the identical experiences such as the field experiences at the County and State Fairs, similar types of activities can take place in the TC program. One board member stated, "There’s not anything really that goes on in the YR classrooms that any traditional classroom teacher could not also figure out a way to do."

**Student achievement.** The issue of student achievement and ability as related to the YR program was the subject of much contention.

The reduction in the amount of review needed after the breaks on the YR calendar was the most frequently cited advantage of the YR calendar in terms of learning. Respondents believed the shorter breaks allowed for better retention of previously learned material and because the amount of time needed for review was less, the time available to learn new information increased. Most respondents voiced support for this claim including administrators, teachers, students, parents, board members, and support staff.

One YR teacher asserted,

> You know how you say to the next year's teachers, "We did that, I swear we did that, they can do that." We really felt like there was a big difference as opposed to spending six weeks reviewing and relearning the rules. We felt like within a day or two we could be up and going and those kids hardly missed a beat, especially procedural things. We just got really, really, excited.
One district administrator expressed concern for the result the YR calendar may have on the Reading Recovery program which was to be implemented for the first time in the YR program in the upcoming, 2000-01 school year. The intensive, daily intervention, which generally took place over of 20 week period was to be interrupted in the YR schedule and as a result this respondent feared the alternative schedule may interfere with students’ progress.

AEA personnel, a community member, administration, and teachers said the YR program benefited special needs students by providing them with shorter breaks and more learning opportunities. One teacher and one administrator added that the YR program had a similar positive influence on the performance of high achieving students for the same reasons. In reference to the YR programs suitability for average students the building principal added, “I think it’s good for TAG kids… and special education kids. And if it’s good for both of these groups, it’s got to be good for those in the middle.”

The principal noted that the number of students who qualified for the TAG program was growing and that students in the YR program who did not initially qualify for TAG had shown an increase in achievement and ability scores great enough for them to qualify at that time. She said,

Now the thing would be, since we are getting more, we’re getting brighter students in the YR program, is it because it’s drawing brighter students or is it because it’s making brighter students? I think it’s a little of both.
She further suggested there could be many contributing factors in this phenomenon which included, the type of instruction and curriculum, the expectations of the teacher and parents, and less time spent in the review of previously learned material. One administrator reported the YR program had a positive affect on student achievement and that all students performed better and showed increased growth regardless of their ability. A board member had a similar opinion regarding increased growth in student achievement in the YR program. One TC teacher suggested that all students seemed to be benefiting from it but added,

I don't think that for the most part it [YR program] makes a humongous [sic] difference in our test scores. I think our kids are doing as well as the rest. I don't think that YR is that much better when it comes to academic growth, but I can see where they can go on with more and hit on things that they'll be hitting later on.

One parent, two administrators, and two teachers suggested that many of the children in the YR program would have done just as well in the TC schedule. They were resourceful, intelligent students who were eager to learn and were likely to succeed in school regardless of the calendar choice. Another parent stated that the achievement of the children in the YR program should not have to exceed that of their TC peers. She said, "I don't see why the test scores have to be better. Why should they? This is not an accelerated learning program."

She added, "They don't have to be better, they just have to be good. They just have to be regular."
The fact that a smaller percentage of TAG students was enrolled in the TC program than the YR program affected the number of students who typically exhibited academic leadership skills in her classroom according to one TC teacher. The principal suggested that while there may have been fewer TAG students in the TC classrooms generally speaking, often other children who did not show leadership skills in the past may emerge and assume positions as leaders, given the opportunity. One TC teacher felt that because there were fewer "top students" in each class, there were not as many opportunities for them to complete student-lead enrichment projects from which the entire group would have benefited.

The decision not to compare achievement results between students in the YR and TC programs inspired much debate. Most respondents agreed that such data were difficult to quantify and yet many continued to voice a desire to have such information. The most serious disagreement one administrator had with the decision not to share student achievement results was articulated in the following statement,

Well I think good, bad, indifferent, we report results in this district of everything, discipline, drop-outs, test results, honor roll,... I share them. I talk about possible reasons.... Why we would pick out a program and say, 'We're not going to tell you the results' is beyond my comprehension. Why would you do something and not evaluate it?

One board member responded to the issue of sharing test data by stating, "I'm a little bit uncomfortable because we like to be data-driven in
decision-making and it's a hard thing to get data on. It's more a philosophy, it's a feeling.” Another respondent added,

I think personally the qualitative stuff is more important than how they are doing on standardized tests. It comes down to what kids think and what parents think. If they’re happier and they feel better about school in that environment then that’s really what it’s all about.

**Discipline.** Several respondents reported improved student discipline in the YR program. Both teachers and teacher associates suggested the YR calendar, with its intermittent breaks, may have been responsible for the reduction in student discipline problems. They noted the children had short breaks throughout the year and believed this was the reason there were fewer disciplinary problems in the YR program. One supported this opinion with the following statement,

I’ve had a lot of people comment on how good the kids are, but I think it has a lot to do with the fact that they’re getting their breaks a little more during the year and they’re rested and ready to be back.

The building principal agreed with this statement and noted that by the end of the year the discipline referrals typically began to increase and there was a sense that the TC teachers and students were in need of a break. One teacher who taught on TC for many years prior to moving to the YR calendar conceded that when the TC drew to a close she was very eager for the year to end and the children displayed similar signs of fatigue. She said she didn’t feel that same sort of anxiety on the YR calendar, nor did she see it in her students.
She believed the intermittent breaks helped everyone maintain equilibrium mentally and emotionally.

Generally speaking, all respondents agreed the majority of the children enrolled in the YR program did not present problems in the area of student discipline. Some credited this to the suitability of the calendar while others suggested it was due to the fact a majority of the children in the YR program came from homes where children were well-disciplined. According to some teachers and parents, the children seemed to be happier in the YR program.

Separation of programs. The operation of two different calendars within the same building created division, as discussed earlier in this chapter. The segregation of the YR and the TC students by virtue of the many differences in the two programs may have been responsible for the YR program’s development of an elitist image. While this separation enabled the YR program to enjoy numerous multi-age grouping experiences, it limited the amount of exposure the children had with their peers in the TC program. Although the YR students had some opportunities to interact with TC peers, they had the chance to form stronger bonds with the YR students. One teacher compared the group to the country schools of the past where siblings, and various age groups were mixed in the classroom. She said the YR group feels like, “one big happy family.... It’s just a real community feeling.... We worked together well and everybody got along.” Grade five students added the following comments, “I think the older kids start to have more respect for the younger ones because they’re the ones that are working together.” Another added, “We can look up to
kids, which is nice. You can ask them what the next grade is like.” Finally a third said, “It seems like you’re more together.” The biggest disadvantage of the YR program, as cited by one administrator, was the inability to mix students in different classroom groupings from year to year. He said,

Those kids are pretty much locked in to the same group of kids for four years.... I see this as a disadvantage because it takes away some of our options. There’s always going to be some personality conflict, some teacher choices that you just don’t want kids to have. We also have kids that do not get along, they do not relate well, and they are not good for each other in an academic setting... and you can’t separate them.

None of the grade five students who responded in the study reported feeling left out as a result of their segregated schedules. When students responded to a probe which asked why they often played on opposite teams during their common recess time the students indicated that it wasn’t practical to waste their recess time “picking teams.” One TC teacher maintained that while she saw the YR students display an elitist attitude, she felt some of this type of behavior was normal for children, and was common in schools without an alternative calendar program. However, another TC teacher suggested that the children didn’t freely mix and play together on the playground, but commented on how well the grade one through five students in the YR program interacted on the playground. The YR students expressed similarly positive feelings regarding the multi-age grouping activities prevalent in their YR program and enjoyed the interaction they had with younger children. None of
the grade five students felt separated from their TC peers at Irving. One student stated that if they were able to have lunch with all of the other fifth grade students, they would not have been able to mix freely among them because students were usually required to sit with their own class during lunch.

**Quality of teachers.** Some respondents believed the teachers who chose to teach on the YR calendar were considered to be some of the most highly regarded in the building or district. One administrator said, “You may have teachers that would gravitate toward a program like this that are somewhat innovative and maybe your risk takers that really get involved with innovative programs.” Some parents reported that they were attracted to the YR program because they wanted their children to have these particular teachers in class. One parent stated,

One of my big reasons for having them in YR has nothing to do with YR, it has to do with the teachers.... Not that there aren’t good teachers in the other program too, but as a whole the teachers that are here are really, really, good.... If everything was traditional, I’d be opting for these teachers if they were back in the regular program. They tended to congregate here so it looked like a good choice to make. There are some excellent teachers that aren’t in the YR program. It was a combination of things, it certainly wasn’t only the calendar that swayed me over to the YR program.

Students liked the fact that they knew who would likely be their teacher in upcoming years.
Parent support. Three parents suggested that although the YR program had a reputation for attracting parents who were more actively involved with their children's educations, they felt that it was the YR program itself that inspired them to become more interested in the school. They became more involved through their efforts to ensure the YR program was maintained. One stated,

I think that because of the program it made me pay attention to the school board meetings. I could never listen to one them before, never went to one until they started to think about not having YR and then I realized how important it was for me to be aware.

Another parent added, “It also makes you feel a little like... [you] can make a difference.” A third commented, “I don’t think that it’s necessarily that the committed parents chose YR. It’s that in the process of doing this YR thing I think it strengthened our commitment.” Several respondents believed the YR program was “parent driven” from the beginning.

Personal and Family Life

Support staff. All members of the the support staff reported the YR program did not have any adverse influence on their personal lives. Some believed the change was positive because the opportunity to work additional hours increased their personal income. For those respondents who were employed on 12 month contracts, the calendar change did not require extra work days and therefore did not increase their salary. None of these employees reported dissatisfaction with the YR program. Support staff respondents who
served in supervisory positions did not report any adverse affects as result of the alternative calendar. They added that employees currently hired to work either evenings or during the summer to accommodate the YR program found the schedule worked well. However, some supervisors agreed this may become a problem in the future.

**TC teachers at Irving.** Most members of this group did not believe the YR program had any affect on their personal lives either positive or negative. However, one suggested that if the number of class sections continued to fluctuate from year to year, she would have some concern about whether changes in teaching assignments in the building will involve her in the future.

**Specialist teachers.** Those teachers of specialized classes such as art music, and physical education felt the YR program affected their personal life to varying degrees. For some, the additional required work days in the summer caused them to make only minor adjustments in their personal schedules. However, the schedule seriously influenced the personal life of one because it restricted the opportunity for travel during the summer months. One teacher said, "Well, it’s not a lot of days... I come in... two times week, sometimes just once. But you know, if you’re planning a trip or something, it breaks it up.” Another teacher said,

I think it’s better for the classroom teacher because they get the time off in the fall. With us we only get the time we spend. So it really breaks up the summer break and also, you don’t get much in the fall either, so it’s kind of a hard schedule.
In addition to the disruption of the summer break, the added work required of those who deliver instruction on both calendars was a burden for one specialist teacher whose personal life was adversely affected as a result.

**YR faculty.** All YR teachers reported the calendar change positively influenced their personal lives. They reportedly felt better prepared, spent less time at school during non contract hours, and liked the option of spending extended periods of time with their families throughout the year. One teacher said, “I thought it might have some affect on my personal life, having to start up in July, but it really didn’t. I was anxious to start.” Another added the following comment:

If anything, this calendar really suits a family I think. It’s all opinion, but I’d rather have my time with my [family]... throughout the year instead of all just clumped into one big break.... It’s not just a weekend or and extra day here or Thanksgiving break there. I think the three weeks will be really nice.

The building principal said that although the YR schedule was her preference because she believed it to be appropriate professionally and educationally, it affected her personal life. After four years of administering both calendars, with little time off to rejuvenate throughout the year, she was beginning to find it increasingly difficult to maintain the pace necessary to administer two calendars within a single building without an extended break. Although she added, that she did not feel this was a serious problem. Similarly, a teacher who regularly taught intersession classes during the break said he
did not feel as rested as he'd like when he returned to school after the week long fall and spring breaks. He said it was his personal choice to continue to teach the additional four weeks each year and to limit the length of his break to one week. He believed it was best for his family and did not regret his decision to teach during the breaks. Both of these respondents said they preferred the YR calendar over the TC schedule in spite of the extra professional and instructional responsibilities.

**Staff outside of Irving.** Most of the respondents, employed with the district but outside of Irving, agreed the YR program did not affect their personal lives. However, some teachers from other elementary buildings in the district felt distress in the past as they worked through the conflict and the emotional issues associated with it. They feared the YR program might be expanded to include their buildings at one point. Since the district agreed to keep the YR program at Irving, they said they were no longer troubled by this possibility. Some of these same teachers felt that family life was affected by the YR calendar. These respondents felt it would be difficult to put children to bed early in the summer months and did not want to impose the structure of a regular bedtime and routine on their children.

Respondents who were not able to coordinate their own children’s schedules with the YR program did not find the alternative calendar choice an attractive option. Although, all but one believed it was a desirable alternative, they didn’t want to teach in the YR program because their family’s schedules could not accommodate it.
AEA personnel. The YR calendar had no affect on the personal lives of the AEA staff. One said,

I like it actually. The only time it gets to be a problem is if we have a summer vacation,. but we just don't go then.... We're flexible enough that if one of us needs to take one of those half day's off we just do and the rest of us help out. It has worked out really nice.

Parents and students. All of the parents suggested the YR calendar improved their lives for various reasons. Parents often said that they were able to spend quality time with their children at various times throughout the year, schedule family vacations, and enjoy a “nice mental respite” during the breaks. Parents and students reported the calendar change went beyond the academic and achievement issues of student performance and included what many termed “quality of life” issues. One parent added,

The schedule change... helped our family immensely. My husband works a lot. He used to work one full time job and a part time job and when my kids were little that seemed like long days. Sometimes I felt like a single mom even though I had a good husband.... [The YR schedule] provided a break for me too so summer wasn't that long stretch.... I think it made me a better parent. I think I was losing my patience with my children by the end of the summer trying to entertain them. And now our time is more quality family time when we are home.

Those students enrolled in the YR program found the schedule preferable because they simply “get bored” in the summer and were ready to
return to school. They liked the fact that periodic breaks gave them a chance to rest and relax at various times during the year.

Because the YR program offered an additional four weeks of instruction it was appealing to families with children in day care when YR programs were not available. All respondents who commented on this issue found the intersession activities preferable over placement in day care.

Some parents said the suitability of the calendar with its intermittent breaks actually improved students’ and teachers’ ability to meet educational challenges. Parents felt their children experienced less “burn-out” with the frequent breaks. They said the breaks were well-timed and enabled their children to rest at those times in the year when they felt they needed it most. They felt this helped them maintain their focus when they returned to school which most believed enhanced their performance. One parent suggested the pace of the YR calendar enabled her disabled child to transition more easily from home to school.

The suitability of the calendar was the reason most often cited by parents in support of their decision to continue with the schedule because all of the parents interviewed believed their child was performing as well or better academically in the YR program. This reason for enrolling in the YR program was bothersome to a few respondents who seemed to resent the fact the district provided a program that they felt was nothing more than a convenient calendar option for parents. They felt parents who enrolled their children in the
YR program should base their decisions on the academic benefits of the alternative calendar and not on personal preference or convenience.

Some respondents suggested that it would be difficult for families to maintain two different school schedules in the same household, although none of those respondents who had children attending both the YR and TC programs cited this as a problem.

**Summer activities.** Some respondents who did not have children enrolled in the YR program suggested it may impede their ability to take part in summer activities with the Parks and Recreation Department, intramural sports, and the County or State Fairs. One respondent said that for this reason she would not enroll her child in the YR program, while those enrolled said it did not curtail their children’s social and recreational activities. One student suggested the six week summer break may not be an adequate time frame in which to take a family vacation because her family was sometimes not able to schedule their summer trip in time for the return to school July and as a result, either she or her siblings sometimes missed the first few days of school.

**Students viewed differently.** The children enrolled in the YR program reportedly believed they were perceived as being “different” than the TC students. They felt others viewed them as “snobs.” The middle school student respondents echoed this sentiment. One fifth grade student commented that none of the YR students were any more intelligent than any of the other children, but credited the strong academic performance of the group to their involvement in the YR program. The middle school students did not feel their
experiences in the YR program in elementary school had any adverse affect on their transition to secondary school.

**Day care.** None of the parents reported day care was a problem in the YR program. However, several respondents cited this as a potential problem. Intersessions were offered to students two of the three weeks during the fall and spring breaks which required parents to find child care for one week during each of these times. One respondent claimed some day care centers in the community did not adjust their schedules to accommodate children enrolled in the YR program.

**Choice / Community benefit.** Most respondents believed the YR program had a positive affect on the community and that it reflected favorably on the district. Two board members added that the biggest advantage to the YR program was the choice it offered families. One suggested, “It may cause somebody to move into the area and take a look at our community.” Another added, “It could be a selling point from the community’s standpoint to families coming in here because I think that it has a lot of real advantages.”

No adverse affects were reported by respondents relative to the business community as a result of the YR program. One respondent said, “It’s something we can say our community has that not that many other communities in Iowa have... that’s one plus that we can say we have that’s an option.... It’s definitely something we include when we encourage people to move here.
A board member said,

I have been really, really, proud of this district for having done it and stayed with it. Even though some of the opposition is strong, it has been very limited. Unfortunately we haven't been able to have some really positive stories out there that should be and I'm hoping that's yet to come.

**Question Four:**

What did those affected by the change think should happen with the year-round program in the coming years?

Respondents answered this question in two parts. First they stated their opinions regarding what they believed should happen to the YR program in Indianola, Iowa, and next they expressed what they felt should happen to the overall concept of YR programming in the future.

**In Indianola**

**Discontinue.** Some respondents felt that there was simply not enough interest in the YR program to justify its continuation, and that it should be discontinued. The reasons for this were varied and included the fact that it incurred added expense to the district which some believed should be spent elsewhere. Another suggested it was mismanaged from the beginning, and for that reason it should be stopped. Another opponent to the YR program stated, “I don’t think this community is ready for it because there aren’t enough kids to do it... I just don’t feel the numbers for enrollment are there to substantiate continuing the program.” Another suggested, “Because if it was as good as it
sounds, everybody in the country would have gotten on the bandwagon... if that's what it takes... just changing the calendar to make kids achieve more.”

**Continue.** Those who supported the YR program felt it should be allowed to continue indefinitely. Another group believed it should be continued for an additional three or four years to give it the opportunity to flourish and to allow the district to monitor student achievement. This group suggested that if it failed to grow, or if student achievement was not positively effected, the district should abandon the YR program at that time.

A small group of those interviewed felt the YR program was worthwhile and the benefits of the calendar were of value, however, they thought a modified version of the current program with shorter breaks and a starting date in August would be more appealing to the community overall.

**Location.** Regarding the buildings in which the YR program should be offered, again, respondents had varying opinions about what configuration was preferred.

Although some felt the best alternative was to continue to house the YR program at Irving, the overwhelming majority of respondents, including members from all groups, felt an entire school should be designated for the operation of the program which included use of an existing building or constructing a new facility for this purpose. The custodian felt this would enable the staff to maintain a cleaner, healthier building while a teacher suggested this would eliminate the division caused by operating two calendars within the
same building. Scheduling specialist classes, lunch, and recess, as well as all other school activities would be easier.

One board member felt the YR program should continue at Irving and be offered at the other two elementary buildings as well. The board member made this comment knowing the survey conducted by the advisory committee indicated there was not sufficient interest in the YR program to fill classrooms at the other two elementary schools. Those respondents who agreed this was the best configuration, cited the district’s interest in maintaining the neighborhood school concept as support for their opinion. One administrator said,

You would have a lot better attendance for YR... parents are loyal [to their neighborhood schools]. They bought their houses there because their kids could walk to school after they leave for work in Des Moines.... If it were in there neighborhood schools and if we were able to do that, you’d see it grow. I’m convinced of that... it’s unfortunate that we don’t go back and say, “We’re going to offer one section in each building.” We’d fill the sections. I know we would.

Neighborhood schools. District constituents were loyal to the neighborhood school concept according to many respondents. However, several suggested this commitment was becoming increasing hollow as parents transport their children to school and a growing number of children were transferred from their neighborhood school to another building to maintain equitable class sizes. Several respondents suggested that as time
passed, the neighborhood school concept may weaken as the community experiences growth in areas farther away from the three elementary schools and the number of students transported by school bus increases.

Placement in the building. Some of the YR teachers felt the multi-age grouping indicative of the YR wing was preferred over the grade-level wings. They said however, that as the YR program continues to grow it will be impossible to maintain this arrangement in the current facility. A larger number of respondents, including board members, teachers, students, and parents, preferred moving the YR classes back to the grade-level wings to encourage additional interaction between YR and TC peers and their teachers. One parent said,

I’m not sure the YR has to all be in the same hallway anymore. That was done because of the whole air conditioning thing to start. They don’t necessarily even see each other, the other fifth graders in the hall. You know, they really see all of the other YR kids and their brothers and sisters if they’re in it. I’d like to see it back to just intermixing in fifth grade hall, fourth grade hall, third grade hall, so that they have the opportunity at least to pass each other.

Increased contact in the halls would stimulate additional collaboration between teachers as reported by one educator’s comment,

I feel that we should all be with our grade-levels.... Just as far as the teachers’ position collaborating with my own colleagues and planning
and all that stuff. Also the children, just [being] with their own grade-level.

There's a camaraderie.

Another teacher made the following comment regarding the affects of the segregation between the two programs,

I think the biggest thing is trying to get the hallways lined up. I think that would help the kids even more to get to know each other instead of just at recess.... I think the way it is instantly creates some combativeness between them and that's not the best way to get them to know each other.

The building principal said that the long range plan is to move all of the YR classrooms back to the grade-level wings in the future.

Voluntary. Almost all respondents indicated the voluntary nature of the YR program was one of its major strengths. Most who strongly supported the YR program did not believe it should be mandatory under any circumstance. They felt the YR program was an ideal alternative because it was optional. Many of these same respondents believed the YR program should be viewed as one of the many educational choices offered and supported by the district.

Mandatory. A small group of respondents felt the YR program should be mandated, if not permanently, at least for a short period of time. One individual felt that if the district believed the YR program was a superior educational alternative then the district had a responsibility to require families to adopt it. Another believed the only way to make it manageable for families was to mandate it district-wide in grade kindergarten through 12. One student said,
"I think that it would be a good thing for the district to try it for one year, and if they don't like it they can go back to normal." To this, one child who currently enjoys the YR program, added "Yeah, because before I was in it I didn't think I'd like it at all."

Elementary level. A large portion of the respondents, including both groups of students, some board members, one administrator, and some teachers, felt the YR program worked best at the elementary level. Although all the students interviewed would have liked to have it offered at the middle school level, because so few of their peers enrolled and because they were certain others would not take advantage of it if it were offered, they preferred to stay on the TC program so they could socialize with a larger group of peers.

Through grade eight. A few respondents, including one administrator, two AEA staff persons, a support staff member, and three parents, felt the YR program should be offered through the eighth grade. One administrator suggested the logistics of offering it at the middle school level would be troublesome while another suggested it was entirely possible.

Growth. The majority of the respondents felt the YR program should be allowed to grow at its current pace. It was generally agreed the growth was organized, manageable, and interfered little with other district operations. Many of these same respondents felt that the only way to correct the inconsistent demographics was to allow the YR program to grow. One administrator added, I think that YR should continue.... I think it's growing the way it should be growing.... As long as it does not interfere with anybody else and as long
as it's as good as, if not better than, what they would get in the traditional, I see no reason for not having it.... There is no interference of YR with anybody. So for other people not to want it - it's for selfish reasons. I would be the first [to stop it] if it wasn't working, if it was treading on other people, or it dictated whatever, but YR is very careful not to. I'd like to see it continue. I see no reason for it not to.

Three respondents felt it was not likely the YR program would grow past two or three sections in each grade-level from kindergarten to grade five. They indicated this would not represent a successful program. Others felt a program of that size would be appropriate and desirable.

A few respondents wanted the district to give the YR program more flexibility in terms of the number of students required in each class. This would enable the YR program to achieve growth in the next few years. They felt the tight restrictions placed on the YR program discouraged some families from utilizing the alternative calendar. One parent said,

We have had times when we have been one or two kids short of having another section of a grade and they've made us drop all of those kids and deny them. There have been parents who have signed-up for YR year after year and they don’t get in and it’s because the district demands a certain number per grade to have a section.... That to me is not ever going to get a program off its feet.
Another parent made the following statement,

I know a family personally who tried for two years to get their child into the program and it was always full, always full, and they were always on a waiting list.... By the time the enrollment came around this year, they were burned out. They're not going to try this for three years in a row and keep getting turned away.

**Promotion.** A number of respondents including board members, both YR and TC teachers, support staff, and parents voiced a desire to be able to openly promote the YR program. They felt as though they were not able to promote the YR program, but that they were only to speak about it as an option offered in the district. They felt that if more information about the YR program was available to the community that more parents would be able to make informed decisions about whether it would be best for their children. One board member said,

I’m disappointed that we don’t promote it more because in my opinion it doesn’t just get down to grades, test scores, or academic achievement, it’s more than that. I think that there are a lot of positives to the program that the public doesn’t hear about because we have not actively promoted it and offered it only as an option. In fact it’s almost disguised in my opinion in most cases.... I think that if more parents knew about some of the options, not necessarily the advantages, but the options that are available to them with this program, there would be more participation.
Another board member said,

I don’t completely agree with the fact that we don’t tout this a little bit more than we are right now. If it is really a good deal for some kids then I think we should let them know that.

A number of respondents felt the district’s decision not to promote the YR program hampered its growth, while others reported it was wise for the district to prohibit the sharing of test scores and limit promotion of the YR program because they believed this was in the best interest of both programs.

Student achievement scores. In response to the fact the test scores were not shared separately from those of the TC students at Irving, another board member made the following comment,

I think it is something we should be public about and that our district constituents have a right to know. Not that we analyze it so much, but to say that this is what statistics show today…. As a parent I would have the opportunity to know that information. How it would impact my decision to place my child in the program, I don’t know. I would guess, positively.

One AEA staff member and two board members suggested that hard data regarding the academic growth of students in the YR program should be made available to the public at some point in the future. One administrator indicated that it may be possible for the district to draw some conclusions from longitudinal data regarding student achievement in the coming years.

Demographics. Most respondents agreed they would like to see the demographics of the YR program continue to change so that they more closely
matched those of the TC program. Some suggested that in order for this to happen it would be necessary to promote the YR program more actively, foster its growth, and consider strategies to involve those students who may have difficulty retaining information over an extended period of time. Several respondents believed however, that because participation in the YR program was voluntary it would continue to attract those children who were highly motivated to learn.

Advisory committee’s survey. The initial advisory committee conducted a survey to ascertain the views of parents and staff regarding the year-round program. It provided space for anecdotal feedback from respondents which I reviewed. I have included the information from that review in this section because I felt it was pertinent to this question.

My review of the parent survey revealed that 60% of the comments added by respondents were positive in nature or at least not in opposition to the YR program. The percentage of respondents who indicated interest in the YR program for their own children was split equally with approximately half expressing interest in the alternative calendar and half stating a preference for the TC program. My analysis of the comments made by teachers in a second survey revealed that half of the respondents favored expansion of the YR program while only 26% favored offering the program within their respective buildings. However, when asked whether the YR program should be expanded and offered exclusively at Irving, 61% were supportive of this option.
The Concept of YR Programming

Regarding the concept of YR education in the future, the building principal stated that she believed public schools were moving toward an extended school year without the institution of a formal YR program. She noted the district offered extended year services for many special needs students to maintain their skills in various areas and also noted the popularity of the district’s extensive summer school programs. She supported her opinion with information from the director of the alternative high school program who reportedly felt he loses a number of students over the summer months because when they were not attending school regularly they fell into bad habits and often got into trouble as a result. She stated that failing to attend some type of formal educational program for an extended period of time was not in the best interest of students, especially those at-risk.

Educational choices. Many respondents believed it was important to seek new options in education, whether it was alternative calendars or other innovations. They believed for the most part that offering parents choices in educational programming was important. One administrator stated,

In public education, if we don’t do some things like this, we’re going to continue to see erosion of the public support. Our challenge is to do more, come up with more ways of highly involving parents and kids in the community in successful programs, not less. We need to do more.
One parent suggested that as the needs of families continues to change, every community should give parents the choice of attending a YR program. One respondent made the following statement regarding the future of YR education,

People have changed, their needs have changed. Parents now like a choice and I think that’s why this has come. So maybe everybody wouldn’t go one way or another. But I think people like choices. Whether it’s choices in what kind of car you drive, to what kind of health care you have or whatever. People like choices. It’s another choice, another calendar option. I think that’s the first thing, the reason you would get into it. But academically it’s really sound. There’s just less repetition.

Another group of respondents suggested that the configuration of the YR calendar was more suitable than the TC program, and recommended all districts consider studying the concept. One respondent mentioned that she would like to see interest in the YR program grow both state-wide and on a national scale. One community member said, "I think it’s going to take a bit of a mind change, but again I think it’s a program I would like to see expanded. I like the idea of the optional introduction, and that it [YR school] makes sense." Many respondents agreed that they’d like to see acceptance of YR school grow but conceded that the growth must come gradually. Two respondents said they’d like to see all schools operating on a YR calendar in the future. Another stated,

If it’s better for the student then the other stuff has to fall into place whether people want it or not. What’s the [educational] process
supposed to be doing? It's not for the parents, it's for the student to learn better. If that happens, then everything else has to take a back seat.

Voluntary vs. mandatory. The opinions about whether YR programs should be voluntary or mandated were mixed. One AEA staff member said it would be best if YR school were mandated state-wide. This would eliminate much of the conflict associated with the operation of two different calendars. Others believed the concept must be considered only as an option, and that to present it otherwise would be unfair. Similarly these same respondents felt that to deny the option to those who want it would be equally unjust.

Abandon. A few respondents felt that the concept of YR schooling was of little value. One believed study of this option should be stopped because the conflict associated with the implementation was damaging to the community and that it divided, rather than united, stakeholders. The respondent supported this opinion with the following statement,

I know that everybody in education is always looking for something to help improve things. It seems like we are always looking for something new to be the salvation to the problems rather than maybe looking at what we are doing now that we should change.... This is a new idea that seems to make sense, that kids that don't have long breaks don't forget as much. Well there's actually research there that says this isn't true.... So I don't think society is ready for this. And I think there is an awful lot of people in society who feel that we want this time with our kids, even if we are working.
Chapter 5

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

This discussion explains the findings of the study that were described in the previous chapter. The discussion is arranged around the four research questions and, where pertinent, related to the literature on extended and year-round education programs. It should be noted however that in places these arbitrary divisions overlap and at times similar observations are made in two or more sections for the clarification of understanding. The three conclusions drawn from the research are presented in the second part of this chapter. The implications of the study are presented in the third section and include statements regarding alternative calendar programs and the issues associated with changes to alternative calendars. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future study.

Question One: Why and how was the Irving year-round (YR) program initiated?

All respondents agreed that the rationale for implementing the YR program was to benefit learners. This reflected the literature which indicated that increased opportunities for student learning were the primary motivation for the initiation of alternative calendars in recent years (Kneese, 1996). It was generally reported by respondents that they thought if the summer break was shorter, it would increase students’ ability to recall previous learning and reduce the amount of review necessary when classes resumed, thus
increasing student achievement. A few respondents believed the primary purpose was to offer students more educational opportunities.

Discrepancies emerged regarding respondents' perceptions of the targeted population. While none of the respondents suggested the primary purpose of the YR program was to target high achieving students, it seemed the nature of the alternative calendar, with its added educational opportunities for summer instruction and intersession classes attracted this segment of the population. Those opposed to the YR program criticized it because it appeared to them that the program was well-accepted and well-attended by high achieving students. A few of these respondents felt they were led to believe the YR program was initiated to target disadvantaged and at-risk students. They were disappointed more students like this were not enrolled in the program. The literature addressing this specific issue suggested that disadvantaged students and those who spoke English-as-a-second-language had the most to gain from YR programs in terms of student achievement (Curry et al., 1997; Gandara & Fish, 1991, 1994; Haenn, 1996; Quinlan et al., 1987; Shenkman, 1997). Because relatively few low achieving students were enrolled in Irving's YR program, some stakeholders in Indianola criticized the district for this discrepancy and perceived inequity favoring high achieving students.

The National Education Commission on Time and Learning (1994), suggested that government, parents, students, and school personnel should take responsibility for exploring YR programs which was clearly the case at Irving Elementary School. A small group of parents, students, and school
personnel took initiative in the implementation of YR education as a two-year pilot program in 1996. However, The National Education Commission further suggested that all stakeholders should be engaged in the dialogue regarding the implementation of alternative calendar programs in order to increase the likelihood they will be accepted. Such widespread communication was not the case at Irving. Because the initiative was located in one school and included only those individuals who were directly involved with the change, it appeared to many of the respondents in this study that the rationale for the calendar change was not made clear to all stakeholders initially. This ambiguity was evident in the expression of varying opinions as to the specific motives and the intended beneficiaries of the YR program. Communication regarding the change took place among those few who were directly involved, therefore, it was not surprising that the YR program met with opposition from those who were not part of the initial dialogue.

Question Two: What changed in the district and school with the implementation of the year-round program?

Structural changes. The YR program was plagued by frequent changes of location throughout its tenure and participants continually found it necessary to shift classrooms within the building and district over the years. Changing classrooms was cited as problematic by Barrett et al. (1992) and Shields (1996) and although their research was associated with multiple-track programs which regularly share and rotate classroom space, the point rests in the fact that in general, teachers find it inconvenient to relocate classrooms and
Irving is no exception. Thus, it is not surprising that changing classrooms and moving instructional materials created some problems for those associated with the YR program in this study.

The physical plant issues associated with the implementation of the YR program were of little consequence. This observation is supported by the fact that from the start air conditioning was available in the YR program and the perception expressed by most respondents that minimal expense was incurred in implementing this program. Also, several stakeholders expressed support for the utilization of the building during the summer months.

The district provided transportation to all students who chose to enroll in the program. This responsibility was assumed without difficulty which suggested that getting students to and from school was not particularly problematic. Furthermore, there were few problems with the acquisition and scheduling of either licensed or support staff as a result of the YR program. An ample number of employees voluntarily provided the personnel needed to operate the program, which indicated there were few obstacles in the area of employment.

Therefore, it appeared physical plant issues, expense, transportation, and personnel did not present barriers to the implementation of the YR program at Irving. However, if staff members are unwilling to voluntarily accommodate the YR program in the future, the district may have to involuntarily assign employees to fill these positions. This suggests that if this occurs, the operational considerations could become more problematic. Furthermore, if a
funding crisis were to arise which prohibited the expenditure of the $10,000 needed for the YR program, this issue could become more compelling.

**Educational and affective changes.** YR programs reportedly generated considerable support and enthusiasm from those enrolled in, and teaching on, an alternative calendar (Baker, 1990; Barrett et al., 1992; Campbell, 1994; Christie, 1989; Curry et al., 1997; Fardig & Locker, 1991; Gandara & Fish, 1991, 1994; Prohm & Baenen, 1996; Quinlan et al., 1987; Serow & Banks, 1992; Shenkman, 1997; Shields, 1996; Utah State Board of Education, 1989; Van Mondfrans et al., 1985). To a certain degree, this was supported in this study as well. All of those directly associated with the YR program, with the exception of the specialist teachers, were enthusiastic about it. However, the literature did not detail stakeholders' perceptions regarding many of the specific educational and affective issues associated with alternative calendars which arose in this study, nor did any of the studies cited above feature a school where two programs were operating within the same building. Because a significant number of issues regarding educational and affective concerns were evident in this study, they will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The findings of this study indicated that, to varying degrees, the operation of dual calendars in a single building at Irving impacted teachers and students in both programs differently and that changes which positively affected one group, often negatively impacted another.

The multi-age grouping activities indicative of the YR program positively affected faculty and students in this group by enabling them to foster a “school
within a school" culture. This environment was described as caring and supportive and was favored by all of those who were enrolled in, or teaching on, the alternative calendar.

Conversely, the segregation created by the separation of the two programs created division between the students and teachers in the YR program and those in the TC program. The separation prevented the YR teachers from regularly collaborating with the TC faculty. However, the fact that the YR program's art, music, and physical education classes had to be scheduled apart from the TC classes indirectly resulted in common planning time for all of the TC teachers in each grade-level, which was an obvious positive result.

The scheduling of students for art, music, and physical education became more difficult as a result of the YR program and teaching classes on both schedules was especially challenging for this group of educators. Coordinating time off for certified staff who delivered instruction to both YR and TC students continued to be an arduous task and although many believed these teachers were regularly not getting the 'trade days' they were entitled to, attendance records kept by the office staff revealed this was seldom the case. However, the coordination of both the TC and YR curriculum was difficult by most accounts and added additional responsibility to those required to supervise instruction on both calendars simultaneously. Although attempts were made to alleviate the inconveniences for the teachers, it is likely the problem will persist and increase as the YR program continues to grow until
there are enough students enrolled in the YR program to support the services of full time specialists in areas such as art, music, and physical education.

Conversely, the AEA personnel did not find it difficult to adjust their schedules to meet the needs of the YR program. In fact, all three consultants stated that they preferred the YR schedule and the added compensation days allotted to them in exchange for their work in the summer. The appeal of the flexible scheduling option available to the AEA staff members may have ensured their willingness to serve the YR program.

The reassignment of teachers to the YR program created hard feelings. There was no evidence that any teachers were actually transferred out of the building as a result of the YR program, although a number of respondents perceived this was the case. The placement of grade five in the elementary buildings and the elimination of one classroom section at each grade-level was responsible for much of the personnel reassignment. However, unless questioned specifically about this, most respondents identified the YR program as the probable cause for the movement. Furthermore, the principal was criticized by some for her choice of teachers for the YR program, however most agreed these teachers were among those most highly regarded in the district. It was possible that some of the criticism of the principal’s choices may have been generated from the hard feelings of those who had not been selected to teach in the YR program initially.

The YR schedule’s interference with professional development offerings was minimal as reported by most respondents, however there were some
conflicts when the YR program was first implemented. Although the schedule was subsequently adjusted to accommodate the alternative calendar as a result of considerable effort on the part of the curriculum coordinator, a few TC faculty members said they experienced minor inconveniences as a result of these modifications. This was not surprising given the findings of Axelrad-Lentz (1996) and Curry et al. (1997) who asserted that conducting professional development was more challenging when administrators coordinated more than one schedule. It appeared to be a minor obstacle.

It was difficult to deliver the Title I and TAG programs to the YR program and as a result, these programs were denied to some eligible students over the duration of the YR program. Although the district corrected this inequity more recently, the fact that it was a problem in the past indicated complications in this area.

Maintaining equivalent class sizes in the YR and TC programs was also problematic and the perception of those inequities was the source of much controversy. This was somewhat puzzling given the fact there were only two instances in the four-year history of the YR program in which the TC classrooms had larger class sizes than the YR classrooms at the elementary level.

The demographic make-up of the students in the YR program differed from that in the TC classrooms. A larger percentage of high achieving students typically enrolled in the YR classes. Perhaps the YR program, with its option for added educational experiences, attracted students who desired additional
challenge. Similarly, because the YR program was voluntary and resumed classes in the middle of July, it seemed to appeal to motivated learners. Conversely, those children who were less motivated to learn, or whose parents may not value added educational experiences, were not likely to pursue this calendar option. This may have been the reason the YR program was characterized as an elitist group. Also, Education Plus, the name given the YR program at its inception may have enhanced the elitist image along with the added multi-age and field experiences common in the YR program, both of which were different from those typically of the TC program.

These factors, along with the animosity created by the disaggregation of the YR students’ scores from those of the TC students and the additional media attention afforded the YR program, created ill feelings among many stakeholders. This led the district to change school practices governing exposure to the media and public relations issues. This change was intended to prevent a disproportionate amount of attention for a single education program and may have led some stakeholders to conclude that they should not promote the YR program. There appeared to be confusion among respondents as to the exact nature of the district’s position on this issue. Many believed the request not to recruit students for the YR program meant they could not promote the merits of the alternative calendar. While district representatives felt it was appropriate to suggest the YR program option to those students for whom it may have educational benefit, they did not want supporters recruiting children for the YR program.
Limited communication and misinformation regarding the YR program influenced its implementation from the beginning. Although some respondents highly praised the YR program, others were critical of it. Many of those who opposed the YR program based their perceptions on information which was received second, or even third-hand. The growing controversy surrounding the YR program, which was due in large part to limited information or miscommunication, negatively affected the climate within Irving and the district. This, along with many of the stakeholders’ fear of change, may have adversely affected some stakeholders.

**Conflict and resolution.** The hard feelings associated with the implementation of the YR program fueled growing controversy and prompted the district to assemble an advisory committee and subcommittee of district representatives to address these issues. This was a positive attempt to solve the problem by enlisting the assistance of stakeholders from many different areas of the district. Most agreed that the conflict had subsided and unity within the district had been restored as a result of the compromises and resolutions established by the two committees. Although, some maintained the resolutions designed by the committee, such as restricting the size of classes, closely controlling promotion of the YR program, and prohibiting the publication of achievement scores, impeded the growth of the YR program. However, it is likely that the conflict would have persisted if the district had failed to adopt controls which could have had a more serious consequence on the district.
The implementation of the YR program had a harmful affect on the morale of some stakeholders in spite of the adjustments made by the district to ameliorate the situation. This may have adversely affected both the YR and TC teachers’ ability to provide instruction. It was evident that some of these stakeholders still harbored bitterness and resentment regarding the YR program and subsequent conflict.

The conflict and succeeding resolution made the district, as a whole, more conscious of innovative programs and practices in education. As a result of the experience the administration began to promote several other new or innovative programs throughout the district.

**Question Three: How was the YR program described in terms of teaching, learning, and family life?**

**Teaching.** Although the curriculum was the same in both programs, the instructional delivery and time spent on specific concepts varied. YR teachers claimed they spent less time reviewing concepts previously taught and felt that they were able to teach additional material as a result. This finding agreed with the research of Curry et al. (1997) who found YR teachers reportedly spent less time in review of previous material and believed students demonstrated better retention.

Some teachers involved in both calendars simultaneously found management of the two schedules difficult. This suggested the YR program may have served as a barrier to the implementation of some specialist
programs such as art, music, or physical education, and may have created unfair challenges for those teachers working with both calendars.

Both YR and TC classroom teachers reported that collaboration with peers who taught on a different calendar was challenging and as a result, often did not take place. While this adjustment may not adversely affect the programming for the core curricular areas within the YR program, it affected the degree of collaboration between YR and TC teachers at their respective grade-levels. This may have unfavorably influenced both programs indirectly.

The YR classroom teachers felt the periodic breaks throughout the year helped them keep pace with their curriculum goals and bring their classes to a suitable stopping point within units of study at the end of each quarter. Because grade cards were completed prior to each break, teachers were able to resume study at the beginning of most units. As a result, the YR classroom teachers felt the configuration of the calendar improved their professional practice and positively impacted their teaching which directly supported the findings of Shields (1996). Additionally the YR classroom teachers felt they returned from the short breaks rested and ready to begin teaching again which aligned with the research of Curry et al. (1997) who asserted teachers were reportedly rejuvenated and refreshed after the short vacation breaks.

The affect on the completion of graduate courses and continuing education classes was minimal and was relative to the schedule of the teachers' preferred educational institution. For example, if the college or university offered primarily evening and weekend courses, the YR schedule
had little affect. However, if classes were offered mainly during the day in the summer months, completion of course work was more problematic because teachers were required to return to teach school in July. These findings agreed with those of Barrett et al. (1992) and Fardig and Locker (1991).

A larger percentage of parents volunteered in the YR classrooms than in the TC classrooms, which left the TC teachers with less assistance. Because this additional help increased the ratio of adults to students in some classrooms, it may have affected the types of activities which took place. Although one YR teacher suggested that the volunteers in her classroom aided the entire grade-level during some large group and grade-level activities, this did not remedy the situation for the TC classrooms. Another teacher who recruited retired citizens to help in the classroom filled the void somewhat and increased the amount of contact elderly community members had with students.

Learning. Intersessions were cited as a positive influence on learning for many of those involved in the YR program, which agreed with the findings of Fardig and Locker (1991) who reported students enjoyed and benefited from the classes offered during this time. The opportunity for more continuous learning throughout the year was favored by many in the YR program, who believed it positively influenced students by providing the option for additional and more continuous intellectual stimulation.

While early remediation and added enrichment activities were cited as strengths of the intersessions, others suggested the added educational
opportunities available through the intersessions were of little or no impact. This indicated that the need for additional remediation opportunities may have influenced the degree of satisfaction held for them. Conversely, the enrichment courses which offered experience-based activities that were not typically available in the TC program and which involved the community to a greater degree than was usually found in either the TC or YR programs, were favored by some and disregarded by others. The YR students who took advantage of these options and found value in them, believed they were helpful. Similarly, those who did not feel they were worthwhile, did not take part. This agreed with a study by Barrett et al. (1992) which found students were more satisfied with the YR program than the TC schedule and also with a study by Fardig and Locker (1991) which found students enjoyed intersession classes.

The intersession breaks may have posed a disadvantage for music instruction because they made it difficult for students to maintain rehearsal schedules during the break. This may negatively influence YR students' performance in band, orchestra, or chorus. One advantage of the intersession breaks was that they were often taught by substitute teachers which gave the principal an opportunity to observe the skills of teachers from outside of Irving over an extended period of time. This assisted her in recruiting and hiring quality teachers.

Some suggested the timing and length of the breaks associated with the YR schedule improved students' attitudes. The short, intermittent breaks reportedly provided them with well-timed reprieves which many felt improved
their ability to progress when they were in school. This finding supported the research of Ananda et al. (1997), Axelrad-Lentz (1996), and the Utah State Board of Education (1989) who found learners enrolled in YR programs were more confident and expressed more positive attitudes toward school.

Student achievement was an issue associated with the YR calendar in which assertions were difficult to substantiate given that data were difficult to acquire and quantify. Although nearly all of those interviewed believed that shorter breaks between instructional periods would likely improve retention of previously learned material, I found citation of research which directly supported this assertion elusive. Researchers have found acquiring quantifiable data to adequately determine whether or not YR programs positively affect student achievement an arduous task over the years. This may be due to the fact there are many confounding variables inherent in studies of this nature which prevent conclusive evidence of causal relationships. Overall, the literature reported mixed findings in the area of student learning. However, the following studies asserted that YR programs positively influenced student achievement, with the most frequently cited support in programs at the elementary level (Curry et al., 1997; Fardig & Locker, 1991; Frazier & Morrison, 1998; Haenn, 1996; Kneese, 1996; Roby, 1995; Utah Sate Board of Education, 1989). Based on previous research and stakeholders’ reticence to attempt causal relationship studies, at this point in time the Indianola district was not interested in comparing student achievement between the two programs,
however, this was something some respondents indicated they wanted to explore in the future.

The YR program had a positive influence on student discipline. Some respondents attributed this to the frequent, short, breaks which afforded both teachers and students more motivation and patience for learning. Others suggested this was due to the fact that many of the students in the YR program were already well-disciplined children with supportive parents who had chosen this option. This agreed with the findings of several research studies which reported there was no increase, and in some instances a reduction, in the number discipline referrals for students in YR programs (Gandara & Fish, 1991, 1994; Fardig & Locker, 1991; Utah State Board of Education, 1989).

Because the YR program was considerably smaller than the TC program, participants were able to employ multi-age grouping activities while the TC program teachers typically grouped students by grade-level for multiple classroom activities. While it was not likely the multi-age grouping practices were designed to separate the YR program as an elitist group, the novelty of this practice may have had this effect. It was noted that none of the student respondents voiced dissatisfaction for their multi-aged grouping experiences and in fact, the majority preferred them over grade-level grouping at the elementary level. However, the fact that most agreed they would not be comfortable with the multi-age grouping at the middle school level indicated that older students preferred to engage in interactions with a larger group of their peers rather than a smaller group of multi-age students.
The YR program enjoyed a high degree of parental support from the beginning and the impetus for the implementation came from families as well as school personnel. Several of the parents who were interviewed credited the YR program for generating their interest in the school. They said they were compelled to become advocates for the YR program and thus, more involved in the school and their children’s educations. This implied that the implementation of this innovative school program may have positively affected the amount of parental involvement in the school by creating interest from within this group.

The quality of the teachers in the YR program may have influenced the YR program by attracting some stakeholders to enroll their children. Research suggested that those teachers who were inspired to volunteer for experimental programs tended to be ambitious and motivated, indicating innovative programs were attractive to motivated educators. Furthermore, when teachers with these characteristics were grouped together, their collective influence may have a positive affect on the learning climate and success of school programs (Gandara & Fish, 1991). This suggested that parents may have been justified in their belief that the YR program attracted and employed outstanding teachers whose collective efforts may have had a positive impact on the teaching and learning in the YR program.

**Personal and family life.** The support staff did not find that the YR calendar had an affect on their personal lives other than the added personal income it provided.
Although the TC teachers at Irving did not find that the operation of the YR calendar had any influence on their personal lives, many suggested that the conflict generated early on in the implementation created some anxiety. The only issues which continued to concern some were the concern for the YR program's affect on the TC program and the prospect that changes in teaching assignments to accommodate the alternative calendar would involve them in the future.

Some of those teachers required to serve students on both the TC and YR calendars found the experience to be more challenging and reported that they were not compensated for this additional responsibility. As a result some were not satisfied with their teaching assignments.

All YR classroom teachers felt the program had a positive impact on their personal lives, which agreed with the research of Campbell (1994) and Curry et al. (1997). Similar positive sentiments were expressed by the AEA staff. This indicated that the YR program presented a viable and desirable education option for YR teachers and AEA personnel.

The building principal found the administration of dual calendars to be challenging as did one teacher who regularly taught intersessions in addition to the regular classes. Gandara and Fish (1994) reported an increase in principal burnout and the Utah State Board of Education (1989) found 28 percent of the teachers reported emotional exhaustion as a result of teaching in an alternative calendar program that increased the number of days they were required to work. Both the building principal and teacher at Irving felt the
advantages of this YR program made the added stress worthwhile. This agreed with the findings of the Utah State Board of Education which reported 84 percent of the YR teachers preferred to teach on the alternative calendar.

Some of the faculty members from other buildings felt the adoption of the YR calendar created distress in their personal lives. The action taken by the district to address and resolve their concerns through the work of the committees had a positive outcome. However, the work was difficult and time consuming, and the energy and inclination to complete this type of work may be difficult to sustain over an extended period of time.

Parents and students involved in the YR program strongly favored it over the TC program because they believed it improved the quality of their lives. Some felt this was accomplished through the intermittent breaks and varied opportunities for family vacations, while others cited educational benefits such as remediation during intersessions. This supported the findings of Serow and Banks (1992) who reported respondents favored a YR education program and cited that parents, teachers, and students believed the alternative calendar was well-suited to their lifestyles. Sardo-Brown and Rooney (1992) found parents were concerned that the YR schedule might interrupt their summer activities. However, those involved in the YR program at Irving did not find that the alternative calendar conflicted with their summer plans, this agreement with Campbell (1994) suggested the commencement of classes in the middle of the summer was a problem for some. Shields (1996) found that parents generally expressed preference for the calendar model in which their children
were enrolled. Thus, the YR program's suitability may have been dependent upon the individual needs of each family.

Students were affected personally to some degree by the fact that they believed others viewed them as arrogant or elite. Although this did not appear to seriously distress any of the students, it was mentioned by both the elementary and middle school respondents. This indicated that the affect of dual programs in a single school which separated students of the same age may amplify these feelings.

Research regarding the acquisition of day care was mixed. Some studies reported little or no inconvenience in locating suitable care givers (Baker, 1990; Fardig & Locker, 1991; Serow & Banks, 1992; Shenkman, 1997; Utah State Board of Education, 1998), while two others reported day care was listed as a concern for some parents after implementation of YR programming (Barrett et al., 1992; Curry et al., 1997). None of the parents in the YR program at Irving found the availability of day care to be a problem, however, it is possible it may have presented difficulties for some. Those for whom securing day care was a problem were not likely to be enrolled in the YR program, and therefore would not have been included in this study. However, the YR program offered parents an additional four weeks of instruction for their children during intersessions at a cost similar to that of local day care centers.

Several respondents found the most obvious benefit to the YR program was the educational choice it made available. Similarly, many respondents felt
the YR program enhanced the image of the community by making a progressive option available in the district.

**Question Four: What did those affected by the change think should happen with the year-round program in the coming years?**

This question was asked of all respondents and presented to them in two parts, the first of which asked them to share their perceptions regarding the YR program in Indianola and the second asked them to share their feelings on what they believed should happen to the YR education movement. In addition to this I was able to review stakeholder perceptions of the YR program in Indianola from a survey conducted by the advisory committee. The first part of this section will address the YR program at Irving and include my extrapolations of the the survey as they relate to the literature. The second part will discuss the future of the overall concept of YR education.

In Indianola. Some stakeholders felt the YR program should be discontinued because the amount of interest did not justify its continuation. Others suggested it be allowed to continue for at least three to four years to permit the district to establish if it influenced student learning, at which time they recommended an evaluation of its effectiveness be conducted to determine if it should be maintained. Some indicated that after a period of several years, longitudinal data may provide meaningful insight into this aspect of the YR program using student achievement data. Another group suggested the YR program should be permitted to continue indefinitely. A small number were in favor of adjusting the current schedule to a modified version which
would begin in mid-August, and have shorter intersession breaks. This option could provide a viable compromise for the district. Although the modified calendar would not include the benefits of the intersession courses, the positive influences of the short, intermittent breaks could be realized. The lack of consensus among stakeholders regarding the future of the YR program in Indianola could lead to a resurgence of the controversy which surrounded the YR program in the past, although this outcome may be less likely to occur given the committees' history of success.

There was disagreement about where the YR program should be housed. Some respondents thought the YR program should continue at Irving while the majority felt it should be offered in a separate facility apart from the TC program. Another group suggested the YR program should be available at all three elementary schools, although it was clear in the committee's survey that there was not sufficient interest to pursue this option. Commitment to the neighborhood school concept, although cited by several as being of value to stakeholders, was something a few believed was beginning to wane. Many of the primary issues of dissatisfaction voiced by respondents, such as scheduling difficulties and the segregation of the two programs, would be eliminated by relocating the YR program to a separate facility.

The YR program's placement within the building was also subjected to mixed opinions. Some of the YR teachers found value in the program's location in a separate wing, although the majority of the respondents felt the YR classrooms should be placed in the grade-level wings. If the YR program
continued to grow at its current rate, the physical limitations of the building would force the relocation of YR classrooms into grade-level wings. The building principal indicated this was the long term plan. However, the multi-age grouping activities, which were highly regarded by participants in the YR program, could be more difficult to execute with this arrangement.

Although a few respondents felt the YR program should be mandated, the overwhelming majority thought it should continue as a voluntary program. There was a higher degree of acceptance for and success within YR programs in which attendance was optional (Axelrad-Lentz, 1996; Campbell, 1994; Prohm & Baenen, 1996). This finding was not surprising given the fact that the personal and family lives of stakeholders are often closely tied to school calendars.

The elementary level was the most popular preference for placement of YR programs, although some voiced favor for expansion of the program up to grade eight. Substantial support for this preference was found in the literature with numerous successful YR programs, in terms of student learning and/or stakeholder satisfaction, documented at the elementary level (Barrett et al., 1992; Campbell, 1994; Fardig & Locker, 1991; Gandara & Fish, 1991, 1994; Green, 1998; Haenn, 1996; Roby, 1995; Shenkman, 1997; Shields, 1996). The difficulties of scheduling extra curricular activities and interference with summer employment opportunities made the YR program less attractive to secondary students. Perhaps a modified version of the YR calendar could be successful
at the secondary level with short, week long breaks each fall and spring, and a winter vacation time of two weeks.

Many felt more closely matching the demographic differences between the YR and TC classes was important. Growth and promotion of the YR program were two areas in which this issue was raised. For those who believed the YR program should be continued, it was generally agreed that the current pace of the growth for it was acceptable. Several asserted that the expansion of the YR program was the only feasible solution to equalize the demographics. However, several of those who favored the YR program believed the current restrictions on class size allotment prohibited increased enrollment. If the restrictions were relaxed somewhat, additional classes could be offered in a more expeditious manner, however, this might result in inequitable class sizes in the TC program. Therefore, the current pace seemed to be the only option which would not adversely affect either program. Although it was reported that some of those individuals who were on a waiting list to enroll in the YR program felt their rights had been denied.

Many respondents wanted the district to increase publicity for the YR program in the future, while others felt the limited promotion espoused at this time was appropriate. It was believed that increasing knowledge about the YR program would lead to increased participation. Because a number of optional programs were sanctioned by the district and promoted openly, failing to allow the YR program the same privilege seemed unfair to many. Some believed it was possible to promote the YR program by sharing the qualitative benefits
they felt it offered without reference to quantitative measures involving student achievement.

The surveys conducted by the advisory committee in response to the initial conflict which developed regarding the YR program in Indianola indicated that the majority of the parents and teachers did not oppose it. However, about half of the respondents indicated they did not want to enroll their children in the YR program and three-quarters of the teachers did not want it expanded to include their classrooms. This suggested that overall, most stakeholders favored the concept as long as they were not forced to participate.

The survey results suggested a similar pattern regarding the degree of involvement in the initiative. Staff or family members directly involved in the program strongly supported it and those not involved directly with it stated varying degrees of satisfaction. In spite of their lack of support for the YR program, with one exception, all of those opposed to it admitted the alternative calendar had educational merit. This suggested that most who had experienced the YR program found it to be a valuable and worthwhile program with which they were satisfied while those who had not experienced it were not convinced it would work well for themselves or their families. The literature suggested that when stakeholders experienced the YR program they reported satisfaction with it and that those who did not participate, were unconvinced of its suitability (Green, 1998; Hoffman et al., 1991; Sardo-Brown & Rooney, 1992; Robinson & Forsyth, 1984; VanderHooven, 1994; Van Mondfrans et al., 1985).
**YR Programming as a concept.** The opinions of most respondents regarding the future outlook for the YR education movement were closely aligned with the opinions expressed for the YR program in Indianola. Those stakeholders who favored the program in Indianola, were also supportive of the concept. Similarly, if they did not feel the YR program was a viable option for Indianola, they did not favor the exploration of the concept in other districts.

Generally speaking, parental choice of educational programming was a popular notion expressed by many in light of the changes evident in the personal lives of families in today's society. The configuration of the alternative calendar was thought to be educationally sound by nearly all respondents and additional study of the concept was recommended by the majority of those interviewed to determine the YR program's suitability to the needs of individual communities.

Although a few respondents felt it was advisable to mandate a YR program at either the state or national level, most agreed that it was best to offer alternative calendars as an option to ensure support from all stakeholders. An overwhelming majority of the respondents felt the concept of YR education was best suited to elementary level learners.

A few respondents felt the concept of YR education was damaging to schools and communities in general because it created conflict and had no educational value. Others suggested that changing the school calendar was so disruptive it simply was not worth the discord it was likely to create.
As mentioned in the previous section, everyone who opposed the concept of YR educational programs (with one exception) felt that the idea of YR education, conceptually speaking, was sound. The objections to the concept of alternative calendar programs rested in the amount of disruption created by the change, the fact that it did not coincide with their personal and family lives, and the resistance to abandon traditional practices. Most of those who opposed the concept of YR education felt that the only school change initiatives that were acceptable were those that could be implemented without creating disruption of any kind to current programs. This suggested that if YR programs were to be successfully employed, they must accommodate the individual stakeholders’ personal schedules and be implemented without interference to current programs. Unfortunately it is difficult to initiate new programs in accordance with the needs and desires of all stakeholders and without some degree of disruption to existing structures. Therein lies the difficulty.

**Summary**

Stakeholders agreed the general objective of the initiation of the YR program was to benefit learners. However, they disagreed about the intended targeted population and the specific motives for initiating the change. Although many were involved with the implementation, representation from all stakeholder groups was not adequate to achieve the degree of ownership necessary for a consensus regarding the district’s need to institute the change.

The structural changes associated with the implementation of the YR program were minimal and easily assumed by the district up to the time when
the research was conducted. However, this could change if the YR program grows or requires changes in the physical plant and staffing needs, or if a funding crisis arises within the district.

Although the YR program generated much enthusiasm from supporters, the difficulties associated with the implementation in the areas of scheduling, the segregation of members in the YR and TC programs, demographic and class size inequities, publicity, and limited communication among stakeholders led to a period of conflict and unrest during the first two years after implementation. The conflict was successfully resolved for the most part, after additional stakeholders became involved. As a result of the implementation and subsequent conflict resolution, the district became more conscious of educational innovations and more actively promoted other education initiatives.

The YR schedule reportedly made teaching more difficult for some and more enriching and satisfying for others. Learning was positively influenced by the intermittent breaks, remediation, and enrichment available in the intersessions according to the opinions of those enrolled or teaching in the YR program. It reportedly had a positive affect on the lives of those who attended and taught on the alternative calendar and negatively impacted some of those who supervised both the YR and TC programs simultaneously.

Some believed the YR program should be continued while others felt it should be abandoned. Although there was no clear consensus for the desired configuration of the YR program in Indianola, the two most popular options included continued availability at Irving or relocation to a single facility.
designated as a YR school. An overwhelming majority favored the YR program as a voluntary option at the elementary level. In terms of the concept of YR education programs in general, most respondents felt that in light of the changing needs of society, exploration of YR education programs was warranted in areas in which it was well-suited to the needs of district stakeholders.

Conclusions

1. Issues involving physical plant operations, funding, and personnel changes were not as difficult as might be presumed in initiating the year-round education program at Irving Elementary School.

Oftentimes operational issues involving support personnel, building maintenance, food service, transportation, and funding are cited as barriers to the implementation of non-traditional calendars. This was not the case at Irving Elementary School. Here, both the licensed and support staff provided the cooperation necessary to maintain and deliver instruction to the YR program. Teachers and administrators were willing to work to see that instruction was provided to students in the summer months. Annual building maintenance projects were completed with the cooperation of the staff and faculty. Similarly, the delivery of food and transportation services did not present a problem. The added expense to the district was relatively minimal when compared to the entire operations budget. Air conditioned facilities were available to house the program.
2. While the concept of year-round education made intuitive sense to stakeholders, the emotional issues associated with the change created most of the problems in the district and community.

The operation of a different school calendar in the same district as a traditional calendar program created problems for some stakeholders on an emotional level during the first few years of implementation. Although all but one respondent agreed the concept of YR school had educational merit, many were still troubled by the addition of the alternative calendar option in Indianola. Some respondents were reluctant to accept the changes associated with the YR program and preferred that the district offer only the traditional calendar program. Others resented the enthusiasm and attention afforded the YR program. Because implementation of the YR program had an affect on existing programs in terms of class size, demographics, and scheduling, those opposed to the YR program were bothered by the disruption which they attributed to the implementation process.

As a result, disequilibrium developed which negatively affected the climate within the school and ultimately resulted in conflict within the district and community. Stakeholders made considerable effort to overcome the discord. The YR program became less controversial as advisory committees provided input and people became better informed about the change. The success of this strategy was evident throughout the district. Despite the efforts of many, however, a few respondents continued to harbor bitterness and
resentment toward the YR program with little indication they would ever fully support offering an alternative calendar option in the district.

3. The opportunity to participate in an alternative calendar program positively affected the lives and schooling of year-round teachers, students, and families in Indianola and, over time, offering the option of a year-round program was favorably accepted by most people in the district and community.

Many stakeholders felt that making the YR program available as an educational option positively changed their lives or the lives of others. Teachers reported that it improved their professional practice, and students and families believed it enhanced their attitudes about school. Administrators perceived it to have educational merit and to have met the needs of some students, families, and teachers. Community and board members felt it reflected positively on the community by making a calendar option available to students in the district which was perceived by many to be a progressive educational opportunity. As a result, these stakeholders found the YR program met the needs of some learners and most supported it as a viable educational option.

Implications

1. The implementation of a year-round program may be problematic or even impossible to sustain if an air conditioned building is not available or if employees are not willing to assume the added responsibilities of school operations in the summer months.
Air conditioning is important for alternative calendar programs that require students to attend classes in the summer. If it is not available the implementation of such programs could be difficult as the expense of upgrading facilities may be more than many districts are able to endure.

Additionally, requirements that staff members work during the summer or adjust their scheduled work hours to accommodate the program involuntarily might adversely affect the morale of employees. Employees may be less productive or chose to resign. Ultimately dissatisfaction of this nature could influence the district's ability to attract and maintain suitable applicants for support staff positions. Therefore, structural issues such as this can impede the implementation of year-round programs.

2. It is important to be sensitive to the emotional issues of stakeholders and to provide extensive communication to them regarding the change to a year-round program.

The exploration of YR programs should engage many stakeholders early in the decision-making process and supply members of all stakeholder groups with adequate information regarding the proposed changes. Initiation of change in schools without fully informing all stakeholders will leave some with incomplete or inaccurate information. In the absence of thorough and comprehensive knowledge of changes affecting traditional practices, stakeholders are likely to make erroneous assumptions. Very often an individual's perception of a situation becomes reality to the perceiver. Therefore, impressions must be formed cooperatively to assure they are
accurate. This process may circumvent misunderstanding and the conflict which can arise when a small number of individuals pioneer efforts to change the school calendar. Moreover, this will safeguard the needs of all stakeholders, including those who choose to take part in and maintain instructional programs on a traditional calendar schedule.

Change efforts in mid-sized school districts may want to avoid the use of site-based initiatives. Site-based programs limit information to a relatively small number of individuals. Consequently, many stakeholders not directly involved in the decision-making process may not become aware of the change until after it has been initiated. This may result in resistance and opposition to the change. Furthermore, in school districts of this size, changes in one building often affect and are of interest to others. This is not usually the case in large metropolitan areas where change in individual schools can be instituted more readily without affecting others. On the other hand, in small to mid-sized districts, a change in one building may greatly influence those in other attendance centers. Therefore, a site-based initiative may not be the best method for the implementation of YR programs. Instead, it may be prudent for those considering initiatives to enlist the efforts and foresight of stakeholders from all areas of the district and community when investigating or contemplating the implementation of alternative calendar programs.

3. A year-round program may create problems for specialist teachers who provide instruction concurrently on both calendars.
The added responsibilities inherent of concurrently providing instruction to students on two different calendars can be difficult for some teachers. If this is the case, it may be necessary to provide assistance to those teachers in the form of professional development which is designed to provided guidance and support to help them adjust the curriculum so that it can be delivered without undue complications. Additionally, it may be necessary to retain substitute teachers for the specialist teachers to ensure they receive appropriate release time.

4. School districts should consider offering stakeholders more choices in education programs to enlist and ensure continued support of stakeholders.

Public schools are being viewed with growing scrutiny as society becomes more skeptical of the public education system. As a result, some districts are becoming more competitive as they vie for enrollment. Therefore, it may be prudent for district stakeholders to explore educational options such as year-round school programs to more fully meet the needs of students and their families to ensure continued support for schools. Such efforts may effectively engage families in school programs which would enable them to enjoy the benefits of becoming actively involved in their children’s educations and at the same time afford schools much needed support from district families. School districts’ images may be enhanced by offering additional choices with added opportunities for families. Such choices may make districts more attractive to potential students. Positive public relations may enable districts to gain a
competitive edge as they seek to maintain or increase student enrollment. Ultimately, teachers, students, families, and the community could benefit from additional choices in educational programs.

**Recommendations**

1. This research was a descriptive, qualitative study intended to determine what it meant to adopt an alternative calendar program from the perspective of various stakeholders. During the data collection process a number of people raised questions regarding student achievement and numerous others requested a desire for quantitative data in this area. Therefore, a quantitative study of student achievement would be appropriate.

2. This research examined only one of the 374 school districts in the state of Iowa, six of which have extended or year-round education programs. It would be advisable to conduct similar, descriptive qualitative studies at each of the other year-round programs to enhance understanding about alternative calendar programs through the insights provided by others who have experienced such an initiative.

3. This study represented a single point in time at the conclusion of the Irving year-round program's fourth year of operation. It would be advisable to repeat this study in the future to determine the impact of the YR program change. Information acquired from longitudinal research of this nature would further inform those interested in alternative calendar initiatives about the full import of this program.
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APPENDIXES
Appendix A

Consent to Participate

District Form

Dissertation Research on Year-Round Education Programs
Anne Lundquist - Drake University School of Education

The following information is provided to you so that you can decide whether you wish to permit the district to participate in this study. Cooperation is voluntary and the district is free to withdraw at any time without repercussions.

The purpose of this research is to learn more about stakeholder perceptions regarding the year-round education program at Irving Elementary School. The program has been selected for study because it is an operational year-round program. The data collection process will include interviews with people knowledgeable about the program and analysis of documentation. I will spend several days on site over the next several months gathering data. The district will be reimbursed for expenses incurred in the collection of data such as photocopies. Interviews will be conducted at the convenience of the respondents and my presence will not be disruptive to the operation of the school. The results will be reported in a dissertation, supervised through Drake University.

Your are free to ask questions at any time regarding this study and you may also contact Dr. Liggett, my advisor at Drake University at (515) 271-3719, during the research process. I will present the findings upon completion of the research at which time you will have full access to the findings of the study.

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this inquiry. The satisfaction you receive knowing you have advanced the understanding of year-round programs is the primary benefit of participation.

The signature of the representatives below indicates the district's consent to participate in this research and full knowledge of its nature and purpose. The district will receive a copy of this consent form.

District representative________________________Title_________Date__________

District representative________________________Title_________Date__________

Researcher ________________________________Date__________

Appendix B

Research Design

Review of Literature

**Document Analysis:** Such as board meeting minutes, newspaper features, and school bulletins/newsletters.

**Semistructured Interviews & Informal Conversations:** Conducted individually or in small group format

**Interviews**
- *5 YR Teachers*
- *5 TC Teachers*
- *3 Specialist Teachers*
- *4 Community Members*
- *Superintendent*
- *5 Parents*
- *3 AEA Personnel*
- *4 Board Members*
- *5 District Teachers*
- *Curriculum Coordinator*
- *District Principal*
- *Irving Principal*

**Conversations**
- *8 Support Staff Members*
- *6 Grade 5 Students*
- *5 Middle School Students*

**Categories:** Guided by the research questions

**Themes**

**Conclusions:** Drawn from data

**Implications**

**Recommendations**
Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Anne Lundquist, Drake University School of Education

Dissertation about the year-round program in Indianola, Iowa

Date and time of interview:
Interviewee(s):

The problem of this study is to understand what it means to adopt an alternative calendar program by examining, describing, and analyzing perceptions regarding the year-round program at Irving Elementary School.

I would like for you to share your perceptions regarding the year-round program. Please be as honest and comprehensive as possible in your responses.

Questions:

1. Why and how was the Irving year-round program initiated? (*Eliminate this question in the group conversations for students.*)
   *Probes: history, why, who was involved, process, impetus for starting*

2. What changed in the district and school with the implementation of the year-round program?
   *Probes: managerial/administration, budget, facilities, air conditioning, personnel contracts, cost, schedule*

3. How would you describe the year-round program in terms of teaching, learning, and family life?
   *Probes for students & parents: advantages & disadvantages; similarities & differences; opinion of intersessions; desire to continue; affect on homework, attendance, and learning; length and frequency of breaks*
4. What do you think should happen with the year-round program in the coming years?
   * Probes: broad statement including and beyond Irving Elementary School

5. Is there anything you'd like to add?

I would like to thank you for your time. May I have your permission to contact you if I need clarification as I transcribe the interview?__________
What would be the most convenient time to call should I require additional information?__________ What number may I use to reach you?__________
Thank you again. I am very grateful for your cooperation.