SCHOOL PROFILE
Gilman Elementary School
Box 188
Gilman, Wisconsin 54433

Type of School:	***Elementary (PreK-5)**
Location:	***Gilman: Located in rural northwestern Wisconsin**
Size:	***Typically 3 classes at each grade level**
	***Approximately 300 students**
	***Student-teacher ratios are typically 1-15**
Student Population:	***Majority of students are Caucasian**
	*** Includes students with cognitive, learning, emotional and physical disabilities**
Principal:	***Former Principal: Al Arnold (1990-1999)**
	***Current Principal: Paul Schley (October 1999-Present)**
Teachers:	***Majority of the teachers have lived in the Gilman area all of their lives**
	*** Most of the teachers have many years of teaching experience at Gilman Elementary**

Summary of Classrooms, Teachers, and Students Involved in the Research Study
Gilman Elementary- Gilman, Wisconsin

Spring Semester, 1999:

Grade:	**Third**
Teacher:	**Brenda Thompson**
Target Students:	**Terri, Student with moderate/severe CD**

Grade:	**Kindergarten**
Teachers:	**Sandy Gunderson** **Joan Chwala** **Michelle Fastbender**
Target Students:	**Susie, student with ADHD; Hal and Danny, students with academic problems**

1999-2000 Academic Year:

Grade:	**Kindergarten**
Teachers:	**Sandy Gunderson** **Joan Chwala**
Target Students:	**Joey, student with ADD; Danny, student with academic problems** **Fiona, Katie and Kelsey, students with behavior problems**

Grade:	**First**
Teachers:	**Kim Trawicki**
Target Students:	**Debbie, student with**

Grade:	**Third**
Teacher:	**Brenda Thompson**
Target Students:	**Terri, Student with moderate/severe CD**

Fall, 2000:

Grade:	**Kindergarten**
Teachers:	**Sandy Gunderson** **Joan Chwala**
Target Students:	**Whole class observation**

Grade:	**First**
Teachers:	**Kim Trawicki**
Target Students:	**Whole class observation**

Grade:	**Second**
Teachers:	**Bob Mechelke – Special Educator**
Target Students:	**Whole class observation**

Grade:	**Second**
Teachers:	**Lois Schufeld**
	Mrs. Beadle – Guidance Counselor
Target Students:	**Whole class observation**

Researchers who observed and recorded data

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

People Interviewed

2-4-00	Paul Schley	School Principal	Interview by: DeHart
3- 3-00	Kim Trawicki	First Grade Teacher	Interview by: DeHart
3- 3-00	Joan Chwala	Kindergarten Teacher	Interview by: DeHart
3-22-00	Sandy Gunderson	Kindergarten Teacher	Interview by: DeHart
3-22-00	Bob Mechelke	Special Educator	Interview by: DeHart
4-20-00	Shelly Keepers	Parent	Interview by: DeHart
11-2-00	Mrs. Siemek	Parent	Interview by: DeHart
11-2-00	Kelly Emstrom	Parent	Interview by: DeHart
11-2-00	Denise Korenuk	Parent	Interview by: DeHart
11-2-00	Lisa Rucks	Parent	Interview by: DeHart

Curriculum:

Gilman Reading Model for reading instruction
Integrated Thematic Units for all instruction in the Kindergarten classrooms

EMPOWER CITIZENS IN A DEMOCRACY:

- An Elementary Site-based Council includes community members, parents and students.
- Teaching staff researched and created the Gilman Reading Instruction Model which is implemented school-wide.

INCLUDE ALL:

- All students with disabilities are included full-time in general education.
- Teachers certified in special education serve as classroom teachers, team teachers, and consultants.
- Students with moderate mental retardation, physical disabilities and mild disabilities area all included.
- Currently Gilman does not have any students with severe disabilities residing in the district.

TEACH & ADAPT FOR DIVERSITY:

- Appropriate accommodations for students with and without disabilities are made by classroom teachers and consulting specialists as needed.
- No specialized or different curricula are used for students with disabilities. All students participate in the general education curriculum with adaptations and modifications.
- All students receive their literacy instruction at their instructional level. Groups are fluid and flexible as the instructional needs of children change.
- The Gilman Reading Instruction Model was developed by the teaching staff and is implemented school-wide. The Model teaches every child at his/her instructional level and instructional rate.

BUILD COMMUNITY & SUPPORT LEARNING:

- Community members, high school students, and specialists all work with classroom teachers and students to support learning.
- Commitment to lower class sizes supports all learners.
- Special education staff work with all students, not just students with disabilities.

PARTNERING:

- The school provides a very comprehensive community education program in the evenings.
- A parent coordinator is employed through the school.
- A Parent Resource Center has been developed and is used by parents in the community.

Introduction

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

Principle 1: EMPOWER CITIZENS IN A DEMOCRACY

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

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

Paul Schley is the principal at Gilman Elementary School and started his tenure there in the fall of 1999, which was the first fall of the Whole Schooling Research project. Previous to becoming the elementary school principal at Gilman, he had been a high school agriculture teacher. It was clear from teacher and parent interviews that Mr. Schley's administrative style was different from that of the previous principal and that there were mixed feelings about how this was impacting the school. Some teachers voiced strong support for Mr. Schley's leadership as one teacher expressed when she said, "I'm very happy with our principal, I think he has done a good job. He is a fair person, he listens to everyone and then makes a decision." Other teachers expressed the opinion that Mr. Schley had some strong leadership capabilities, but was not familiar with the workings of an elementary school. On this topic one teacher said, "I would like for him to spend more time in our classroom, to see what we do. His background is junior high and his role was to enforce discipline. He has come out and told us that he has not had the experience at the elementary school." Another teacher said, "I think he is really trying to understand SAGE and Whole Schooling. Is he failing as a leader? No. He just needs experience. He really prefers middle school and high school."

As far as Mr. Schley's support for democratic decision-making in the school, one area where Gilman teachers clearly felt they had decision-making power was related to curriculum decisions. Evidence of this came through teacher interviews as the following comment illustrates: "We have the leeway of how we want to teach to the standards and the [district] curriculum. We can decide how to teach and what resources to use." Another teacher said, "I think teachers have pretty decent input on curriculum. We've been supported by administration so far." Evidence of the power Gilman teachers had over curriculum was also demonstrated in the Gilman Reading Model. The Gilman Reading Model was a school-wide reading program that had been entirely researched and created by the school staff. The reading model was set up in such a way as to include all students, provide instruction at the appropriate developmental level for all students and

provide access to the same curricular content to all students. While the reading model had been developed under the leadership of the previous principal, Mr. Schley was supporting its continued implementation in the school pending research and testing results.

Gilman Elementary School also has a site-based council that helps with decision-making in the school. The site-based council includes a board member, one administrator, a community education director, three classroom teachers, one special teacher (the arts), three parents and one community member. The site-based council meets once a month and addresses issues related to curriculum, programs and staffing. The role of the site-based council was described as "advisory." Items are brought to the site-based council for discussion and then final decisions are made by the administration. As was discussed previously, most curriculum decisions were made by teachers, but any fiscal decisions were made by administrators. As one teacher stated, "If it is money matters, we don't make the decision." There was some disagreement amongst teachers about whether the decision-making power of the site-based council had changed, one teacher said, "My understanding it that it was always advisory," another teacher said, "The role of the site-based council has changed recently. Now they just make a recommendation, no decision is final."

The area of democratic decision-making is one that Gilman Elementary School administration and staff are encouraged to explore and discuss further. When important decisions are taken out of the hands of teachers, the result can be cynicism and negative feelings about the working environment. This comes through in one teachers comment about Mr. Schley's leadership, "His leadership is the old school of top going down. He says why should I have the input of everyone when I can just make the decision." As part of an examination of democratic decision-making, Gilman administrators and staff may want to invite the voices of parents. In one interview, a parent expressed frustration with the site-based council when she said, "I go to the site-based management meetings and the principal comes for five minutes. I know they don't want Grandparent's Day but they really want athletics. I wish academics were stressed more than athletics. With decreased enrollment, the first things that are cut are special needs teachers rather than other things." The risk of excluding teachers and parents from making important decisions is the lack of support they may then give to initiatives that are instituted by district administrators, even those that might be good for children.

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

Since the teaching of democratic skills and principles is such an important function of schools, all of the schools in this study were examined for the ways in which they encourage students to take on leadership roles and make decisions in the school and classroom. In Gilman Elementary School, student involvement in leadership and decision-making took two forms. The first type of leadership activity observed was that of students serving as teachers. In classrooms where students were observed acting as teachers, the teacher either stated or modeled a belief that students could gain a great deal from teaching and being taught by their peers. The following example illustrates how students took on teaching roles at Gilman Elementary:

> Mr. N. said, "We are going to do Word Wall now. Four of you may go up and pick out your pointers." Three of the students went up to the front board and took a pointer that was hanging on magnet hooks on the front board. The pointers looked like jester's sticks and had cartoon characters' heads on them like Tweetie Bird and Daffy Duck. Mr. N. called on a female student and she went to the Word Wall, pointed to each word and read, "Are, again, black, boy, best, bug, car, city, etc.

Students in this classroom and others often took on the role of teacher, especially during reading instruction. Taking on the role of teacher helped Gilman students to develop speaking and leadership skills and encouraged them to be actively involved in classroom interactions.

The second area where Gilman Elementary students got involved in decision-making and leadership was when they had the opportunity to choose instructional and other special activities in which to participate. Students as young as kindergartners were observed making decisions about how they wanted to spend their "Free Choice" time. In Gilman Elementary, kindergarten students were routinely given time during the school day to choose activities and given a variety of high-interest activities from which to choose. Some examples of activities from which students could choose include making puzzles, working on the computer, drawing pictures, building with Lego's, reading books and playing in the role-play area. The role-play area contained items like toy kitchen items, dress-up clothes and tools.

In another classroom, there was a reading lesson in progress when a neighboring teacher walked in and spoke softly to Mr. N. Mr. N. said to his class, "Now we have a decision to make, the other class is putting on a play. We can either stay here and work or we can go to the play. We have to vote to see what we want to do." He then called on each student and each student said, "Watch the play." So Mr. N. and his class went into the other room to watch the play. As is illustrated in both of the above examples, having the power over one's time helps students to learn how to set goals, choose priorities and allocate limited time, all of which are skills children need to be successful as students and also later to lead productive lives as adults.

Due to the importance of students learning how to participate in democratic settings by the time they are adults, this is an area that Gilman Elementary should continue to examine and support. While there were some examples of student leadership and decision-making found in Gilman Elementary, this is a crucial aspect of Whole Schooling and one that could be developed more in any school.

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

The one rapid change that Gilman Elementary School experienced at the start of the Whole Schooling Research project was the hiring of a new principal. Mr. Schley, the new principal expressed a different philosophy on special education and inclusion from the previous principal, which impacted the ongoing reform efforts spearheaded by the previous principal. One teacher shared that the school was also working with a new

CESA person, who had different beliefs about inclusion than the previous principal. Staff members that had been very committed to the reform efforts of the prior principal were apprehensive about what would happen in the school. Some changes teachers mentioned as possible were moving away from the Gilman Reading Model and a push for less inclusion and less teaming between general and special educators. At the end of the Whole Schooling Research project, the teachers' fears about change were partly realized. The approach to inclusion had moved in a different direction with a cut in special education staff and less support for team teaching between special and general educators. One change that had not occurred was any dismantling of the Gilman Reading Model, which was a relief to teachers who were strongly committed to it. Because of the tension and fear that a change in administration can cause in a school, this may be an area for further examination and discussion in Gilman Elementary. For reform efforts to proceed successfully, teachers and administrators must work together to continue current programs and/or implement new ones.

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

There was some evidence in Gilman elementary that school leaders believe that continual staff development, research and collaboration improve the quality of education for all. The first indicator is the ongoing study and implementation of the Gilman Reading Model. As was described in a previous section, the Gilman Reading Model is a school-wide reading program that had been entirely researched and created by the school staff. The reading model was set up in such a way as to include all students, provide instruction at the appropriate developmental level for all students and provide access to the same curricular content to all students. The administration and staff worked closely together to develop the reading program and were involved in ongoing research to study its effectiveness. The results of the research was intended to help those involved make decisions about expanding and/or revising the program. As one teacher stated, "Our testing and our research are important for supporting learning. We are doing our own research in our district to see which programs are effective."

A second indicator that professional development, research and collaboration were supported at Gilman Elementary was seen in the many ways teachers worked together. Teachers within grade level teams were often seen collaborating, combining their classes to complete activities, and creating student work groups that included students from across the classrooms. There was also evidence of cross-grade collaborations like reading buddies between first and third graders and older students helping to take kindergarten students on a field trip. In addition to collaboration between general educators, observations also revealed collaboration between special and general educators. Students with disabilities were fully included in the general education classroom and special educators often worked in general education classrooms. When the special educators worked in the general education classroom they were observed helping students with and without disabilities.

One final indicator of the willingness of Gilman administrators and teachers to engage in professional development, research and collaboration is their participation in the Whole Schooling Research study. Mr. Schley and the staff of the school opened all aspects of the school's operation to close scrutiny. The attitude of the school community was that they were proud of the things happening at Gilman Elementary and wanted to share this with others who could benefit from their example. School personnel also expressed a desire to receive feedback that might help them be even more effective.

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

Diversity in the traditional sense of the word, which usually means race, was not very evident in Gilman Elementary School. Gilman is a very small, rural community in northwestern Wisconsin and the majority of residents are Caucasian. The homogeneous nature of Gilman community is reflected in the student population. While there was little racial or cultural diversity in Gilman Elementary, a form of diversity that was embrace was that of ability. All students with disabilities were fully included in general education classrooms with special educators providing supports within the classroom and doing minimal pullout. One classroom included a student with fairly significant CD and all classrooms included students with learning and emotional disabilities. A quote from a teacher exemplifies the approach to inclusion taken by Gilman teachers: "I have a student who is borderline CD and I really try to make sure he is included in everything. He was the one who was crying over milk break. He has really come out of his shell in the last month." The Gilman Elementary School staff are encouraged to continue to support diversity in the form of ability and any other diversity they may encounter in the future.

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

As was discussed in a previous finding, Gilman teachers had control over curriculum decisions in their classrooms and were observed implementing integrated, creative and engaging lessons in their classrooms. The control over their classroom curriculum allowed teachers to express their true selves through the lessons they taught. In one classroom, a teacher who clearly loved children's literature and drama often integrated children's books into his teaching, even in math class. He read expressively and often got the students involved in acting out parts of the story or saying repeating verses in the book. In another classroom, a teacher expressed enthusiasm for the thematic units she taught. She even went as far as dressing the part. For one of the days in a bat unit she was teaching to her students, she came to school dressed all in black and wearing a special hair band with a black velvet bat mounted on it. Dressed in her bat outfit, she read a book to students called "Bats on Parade," which told the story of a bat marching band.

Previous examples were given of Gilman students serving as teachers and choosing instructional activities and other special activities in which to participate. Having opportunities to serve as teachers and having choices about how to spend classroom time can provide them with opportunities to develop their true selves. An example of this was

observed in a kindergarten classroom. Students had a thirty-minute "free choice time" at the end of the day. One of the choices was a role-playing center and in the center were dress-up clothes, pots and pans, a toy camera, a phone and play food. A group of nine girls were observed playing "house" in the role-play center. One part of their play included the coming of a tornado whereupon the girls pretended to run to the basement to be safe. Tornado safety is generally part of the school curriculum, and these girls were using the role-play time to practice the safety measures they had learned. In another "free choice" observation another group of girls was seen pulling items together from the role-playing center to sell in their "garage sale." As is illustrated in this example, the girls being observed were able to be creative and dramatic and to rehearse possible scenarios they might encounter in their future lives.

In addition to involving students in decision-making about classroom activities there were other attitudes observed in Gilman Elementary that encouraged students to develop their true selves. One very interesting finding was the way in which student behavior was viewed. There were some classroom examples where students engaged in behavior that might have been viewed by teachers in more traditional settings as "problem" behavior, but was instead interpreted as an expression of individuality and viewed as an opportunity for the teacher to learn more about the student. An observation in a kindergarten room illustrates this point. The following scenario occurred after students had been asked to draw pictures of themselves:

> As the students worked on the drawings of themselves, one little boy said he was sitting on the "poddie." Mrs. D. walked over to him and said, "I think you were trying to draw yourself and it didn't look exactly the way you wanted so you said you were on the 'poddie.' What would you like to change?" Mrs. D. walked over to the observer and said, "I'm keeping my eye on his drawing, he started out by drawing facial features, which is a higher level skill and then couldn't draw the body the way the other students were so he said he was sitting on the pot."

Notice that in the above interaction Mrs. D. said, "I am keeping my eye on his drawing," instead of "I am keeping my eye on him." In a later conversation, Mrs. D. made a statement that seems very much reflected in the above scenario, she said, "You just listen to the kids talking and you learn a lot about what they know." Rather than jumping to the conclusion that students are goofing off and trying to cause trouble, this teacher looked beneath the behavior to see the unique individual underneath and what he/she is trying to express. In this way, rather than punishing students, teachers open the door for students to continue to discover their true selves.

Principle 2: INCLUDE ALL

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

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

Gilman Elementary is the only school in a small rural area and serves all of the children who live in the community. This includes students with and without disabilities. No specialized or different curricula are used for students with disabilities who attend Gilman Elementary. Students with disabilities are fully included in the general education classroom with minimal pullouts. An example that exemplifies how all Gilman students are included in the general education curriculum is the Gilman Reading Model. As has been discussed previously, the Gilman staff worked together to develop the Gilman Reading Model to provide reading instruction to all students at the level that is appropriate for them. Teachers work within and across grade groups to provide reading instruction at each student's level.

An observation of and conversation with Mrs. H., one of the Gilman kindergarten teachers, helps to illuminate how the Gilman reading model works. During the observation, Mrs. H. and two other kindergarten teachers were seen working with three reading groups in two different classrooms. Mrs. H.'s group, which consisted of seven students, was reading a big book about a train. As they read the story together, Mrs. H. helped them to focus on the words "stop" and "out." As the students read in unison with Mrs. H., she had students come up to the book one at a time to put a colored, transparent sticker over any occurrence of "stop" or "out." One particular student struggled with finding the word "out" and Mrs. H. provided him with clues and supports until he was able to find it. Next, students were introduced to a new sentence that was added to a series of sentences they had been working on from a previous lesson. The sentence read, "We made it to the fair on time." Students counted the number of words and then read the sentence together. Each student was given a word card with one of the words from the sentence on it. The students matched their word cards to the words in the sentence and then read the sentence again. The final activity that this reading group was observed completing was working with the "op" sound from the word "stop." Mrs. H. wrote ___op on the board and had student make new words by adding a new beginning letter.

After the observation, Mrs. H. was asked about her reading group and she explained that her students are in the all-day five-year-old kindergarten program, but that two of the students go between her reading group and the four-year-old kindergarten room. She said one of the students is a little less mature than the other five year olds and wants to play all of the time and the other student had trouble hearing sounds in a word and needed more work on sounds. Although this second student is still quite young and had not been tested, Mrs. H. said she suspected the child had a learning disability. Spending some time in the four-year-old kindergarten room provided the time to mature and support for sound recognition these students needed. Mrs. H. also explained that although her group

would be considered the lowest reading group, all of the reading groups are taught the same reading curriculum, but focus on different things depending on their needs. She said her group needs more work on sounds than the other groups, so she spends more time on sounds. She said that Mrs. D.'s group was working on cause and effect, which Mrs. H.'s group had worked on the day before, but Mrs. D.'s group would go farther with cause and effect because they were ready to do more with that concept. In this way, reading instruction was provided to all kindergarten students in the general education classroom.

At the second grade level, the coordinator of special education in the school teamed with the other second grade teachers to teach reading. Each of the teachers, including the special educator, had a reading group and each group contained students with and without special needs. Although the special educator said his students would be considered the lowest readers, it included students with and without disabilities. Because the special educator worked with one of the reading groups, the second grade teachers were able to keep group sizes small and provide instruction that was suitable for the developmental level of each group. Regardless of the reading level, all students were immersed in literacy development including word recognition, vocabulary building and the reading of a wide variety of children's books. All classrooms at the K-2 level spend two and a half hours per day receiving reading instruction through the Gilman Reading Model. The second grade special educator said he felt the success of the reading model explained why they only had seven students identified as EEN out of a school of 200 – 300 students.

Another example of students with disabilities being included in the general education curriculum was observed in a third grade classroom. Terri, a child with moderate CD, was participating in a math lesson. Mrs. P. the third grade teacher demonstrated to students how they could draw pictures to help them solve math problems. Mrs. P. discussed with students some of the things they could draw. Students suggested things like stars and Christmas trees. Mrs. P. asked Terri what holiday was coming soon and Terri said, "Christmas." Mrs. P. said, "Yes, but what is coming even sooner than that? The colors are orange and black." Terri replied, "Thanksgiving?" Another student in the classroom suggested, "You get candy." Terri said, "Halloween?" Mrs. P. said, "Yes, and what could you draw from Halloween?" Another student said, "Ghosts?" Mrs. P. said, "Yes, you could draw ghosts." It was common to see Mrs. P. involving Terri in classroom activities as much as possible.

While there were numerous examples of students with disabilities being included in the general education curriculum, there were also times when students with disabilities were pulled out of the classroom and times when students with disabilities were in the general education classroom, but not participating in the same activities as the other students. In another classroom observation of Terri's classroom, Mrs. P. played a spelling game with the students called "Apple Pie." Mrs. P. gave a word from the spelling list and students took turns spelling one letter at a time from the word. When a word was completed, the next student would say, "Apple Pie" and then sit down. The last person standing was the "apple pie winner for the week." While the Apple Pie game was being played, Terri was observed sitting in her desk watching, but not participating. There were other times when

all of the third grade students went out for recess and Terri stayed in the classroom working on the computer.

Although Gilman students are placed in inclusive classrooms, it will be important to continue monitoring their degree of participation and their academic outcomes in order to make adjustments in the amount of services that are provided to individuals and the structure or format in which those services are provided.

Finding 2: Inclusion is valuable for kids with disabilities.

The primary way students with disabilities benefit from inclusion at Gilman is related to the ways in which teachers team together. For example, the three kindergarten teachers worked closely together and developed curriculum and class activities that included all students across the three classrooms. As one of the kindergarten teachers said of this arrangement, "With three teachers we are able to keep small groups so we can do things that students who have special needs can adapt to what we are doing. We try to do the intelligences so that we do a story and hands-on. If a student doesn't learn through one intelligence they can do it through another like a song or playacting." The three teachers were observed facilitating a wide variety of engaging, hands-on activities with students. The students worked in groups and moved from teacher to teacher, thus interacting with three different adults and participating in a greater variety of activities than they might have been able to in a traditional classroom. A special educator also worked with the three kindergarten teachers during reading instruction, so they were able to divide students into four different reading groups. Because the kindergarten teachers were able to reduce the pupil to teacher ratio through their grouping practices, and utilized engaging instructional practices, it was almost impossible to tell which students had special needs and which did not.

Another example of a student with disabilities benefiting from inclusion was observed in the third grade classroom in which Terri a student with fairly severe CD, was a student. During a lesson on Native Americans, Terri was paired with a non-disabled partner. The two of them were working together to paint an Indian pueblo. The two of them worked together for about twenty minutes until the pueblo was completely painted. Because the students were used to working with Terri, there appeared to be widespread acceptance of her disabilities amongst the other students. Sadly, in the fall of the second year of the Whole Schooling Research project, Terri transferred to another school where students were less accepting of her differences. Mrs. P., Terri's teacher, said that she talked to Terri's new teacher and she was struggling to get the other students in the classroom to embrace Terri as a fellow student. As this scenario illustrates there is an important social component to inclusion. If students with disabilities spend a good part of their day in a pullout program, both the students with special needs and those without are made more aware of the differences between them. The principal further highlights the personal and social impact of pullout programs on students when he said, "Being pulled out and labeled can really affect a kids' self-esteem. They know they are being called the dumb group."

As has been discussed previously, there was some concern expressed by teachers about how changes in personnel (the principal and the school psychologist) would impact the future of inclusion at Gilman Elementary School. The final quote in the previous paragraph seems to express support for inclusion on the part of the principal, but since teachers are expressing concern, the topic of inclusion probably warrants further discussion amongst all stakeholders at Gilman school.

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

As has been discussed in previous sections, a key to inclusion at Gilman Elementary School is the way teachers work together to group students and reduce the pupil to student ratio. General education teachers team together and general and special educators team together in creative ways to facilitate flexibility in grouping and smaller group sizes. The low pupil to teacher ratio is helped further by Gilman's involvement in the statewide SAGE program, which provides funds to school districts to help them reduce class sizes to fifteen students. The low pupil to student ratio at Gilman benefits students with and without disabilities. Due to the benefits of small classes that he had observed, Gilman's principal expressed strong support for the practice. He stated, "I really believe the key is small class sizes. I think there should be smaller class sizes for K through 12."

In addition to the low pupil to teacher ratio at Gilman Elementary, the practices implemented by the teachers as they teamed and worked collaboratively also created a positive learning environment for all students. Some of these practices include the implementation of multiple intelligences theory to help address the learning needs and interest of all students; the strong focus on literacy instruction practiced through the Gilman Reading Model, and the commitment on the part of special education staff to help and support all students in the classroom. Special educators were observed working with their own math and reading groups, tutoring individuals and small groups of students in the general education classroom, reading stories to the whole class and assisting with special activities like learning centers and programming for parents. One special education teacher was even observed serving as a stand-in for missing grandparents on "Grandparents' Day." The special educator explained that she didn't want any student to feel left out because his/her grandparents were unable to attend the special program.

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

There was definite evidence that inclusion provides positive, proactive supports for students at Gilman Elementary. One obvious support observed was the structure of the Gilman Reading Model. Within the model, special and general education teachers teamed together to provide reading instruction for small groups of students at the level that is appropriate for their development and needs. Also within the model, students were immersed in a wide variety of literacy activities including the building of basic reading skills, vocabulary development and the frequent reading of high interest children's literature. As one teacher stated about the Gilman Reading Model, "We are so committed to our reading program. With the way our reading model is set up, all of the students with special needs do everything that all of the other students are doing. That way we were able to move some kids up and we were able to move some kids into smaller groups if they need it. It can really help with self-confidence." As this quote highlights, the

Gilman reading model allows for flexible grouping, the smooth movement of students between groups depending on their needs and equal access to the same reading curriculum for all students. Also, as the quote indicates, students were observed becoming confident, capable readers.

Another positive, proactive support observed and discussed at Gilman Elementary School was the communication that occurred between teachers and parents. One general education teacher described how she worked to communicate with the parents of students with special needs. She said, "I do have two students with ADHD. I do give them medication after lunch and I really stay in touch with parents to keep track of what is going on. There is another girl who is having problems academically and I have a journal going back and forth with the parents as far as work that we are doing so they know what to help her with." Not only did the teachers communicate with parents through notes and phone calls, they welcomed parents who came to the school to talk about their children. Parents were observed frequently stopping in to classrooms to drop children off and pick them up and they often talked to the teachers about what was happening in the classroom. The efforts of the teachers to reach out to parents were recognized and appreciated by parents, which came through in parent interviews. One parent of a child with disabilities said, "The teachers [are a strength at Gilman School], last year when Billie was in first grade, his teacher would go as far as calling me and telling me what was happening. The support staff is wonderful, Billie had a tutor in reading over the summer. The tutor came in twice a week. The teachers are compassionate and they really, really care about the kids." This caring attitude on the part of teachers went a long way to making both parents and students feel supported.

Finding 5: Inclusion promotes the natural distribution of students.

Students with a wide range of cognitive, learning, emotional and other disabilities were included in the general education classrooms at all grade levels at Gilman Elementary and were naturally distributed. As described in previous sections, the kindergarten students flowed between two classrooms and two teachers (three teachers in the first year of the study) and were grouped and regrouped depending on the needs of the students and the type of activity being implemented. Special educators provided services to the kindergarten students in the general education classroom and also worked with small groups of students that included students with and without disabilities. At the first grade level, students with disabilities were naturally distributed across two classrooms with limited pullouts. At the second grade level the special education coordinator in the school teamed with the other second grade teachers. In this arrangement, the special education coordinator sometimes team taught with the general educators and provided instruction in the general education classroom, and sometimes taught a small group in his own classroom, as was observed during reading instruction. Regardless of whether the special educator was teaching in the general education classroom or in his own classroom, he worked with students with and without disabilities.

One area that Gilman Elementary School staff may want to examine is the practice of ability grouping observed in some of the classrooms. While there are definite differences between the ability grouping that is done within the Gilman Reading Model and

traditional reading groups because of the flexibility in grouping, the movement of students between groups and the practice of providing the same curriculum to all students, students are still grouped by ability. Ability grouping was also observed in several classrooms for math instruction. The upside to grouping students by ability is the ways in which the groupings facilitate delivery of instruction that is developmentally appropriate to students who are at a similar level of development. The downside to ability grouping occurs when students become stigmatized by being permanent members of the "low group," and when the lower ability groups contain high percentages of students with disabilities, which works against the natural distribution of students. Gilman Elementary staff members are encouraged to continue to examine their grouping practices to ensure that the positive effects of their inclusion practices are not undermined by ability grouping within inclusive classrooms.

Principle 3: TEACH AND ADAPT FOR DIVERSITY

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

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

There were several examples of instructional practices that were responsive to learner's needs, interests and abilities observed in Gilman Elementary School. The Gilman Reading Model has been discussed in several previous sections and the whole basis of the program is to provide reading curriculum to all students at a pace and level that is appropriate for their needs and abilities. The approach that was taken to reading instruction at Gilman would fall under the category of "multi-level" or "differentiated" curriculum in that the instruction included a variety of activities addressing multiple levels of difficulty at the same time. The teachers were able to accomplish a differentiated approach to reading by the ways in which general and special education teachers collaborated to create smaller groups of students who received the same curriculum, but the focus and pace of instruction varied depending on the developmental level of the students in the group. The utilization of small groups with low pupil to teacher ratios was facilitated by the creative use of parent, grandparent and high school volunteers in Gilman classrooms. The Gilman Reading Model varied from traditional reading groups in that all students received the same curriculum and there was frequent regrouping and movement of students between groups depending on the skills being taught and the readiness level of the children to learn those skills.

In order to determine the readiness and developmental levels of students, Gilman Elementary teachers became very adept at observing students closely to determine what each student was capable of doing. A kindergarten teacher describes her technique for identifying the needs and ability levels of her students:

> I find out over and over by the discovery work, by just giving them the materials and letting them work with them, it really tells us what they can

> do, more than just screening them. Screening would be like taking them to the board and putting sight words on the board and having kids identify the sight words and either they know it or they don't know it. That isn't the same as watching how they apply the knowledge and how they creatively work with the words.

As this quote highlights, providing multi-level/differentiated instruction requires close observation and reflection on what a student is able to do. This goes beyond a simple pass/fail approach to assessing skills where either the student can read a word or they can't. As was often observed in the kindergarten classrooms in Gilman, sometimes a student could not identify a word by sight or sound it out, but when prompted with the word could use it appropriately in a complex sentence. The Gilman teachers acknowledged that a student like the one just described is ready for instruction that goes beyond repetitive phonics drills on letter recognition even though they may struggle with their letters.

A classroom observation in a kindergarten classroom demonstrates how Gilman Elementary teachers helped students with a variety of needs, abilities and interests to develop vocabulary. Rather than a traditional approach to show and tell where students bring toys or other material items from home to share with classmates, the Gilman kindergarten students engaged in "letter show and tell." During this particular observation, a group of eight students was working on the letter "H." On the white board in the front of the room there was a list of 58 "H" words already written, so it was apparent that students had been working on "H" for a while. The teacher called on students one at a time to come to the front of the room and share their show and tell item and/or word. The first student walked up holding a little toy hammer. The teacher asked him what his word was and he said, "Hammer." The word hammer was already on the list so the teacher pointed to it and then wrote a tally mark after it to show that hammer was said again. Another student had a hot pad and a third had a deer horn. One of the little boys came to the front of the room and didn't have an actual item, so the teacher asked him, "What is your word?" He replied, "Help." She said, "Can you use your word in a sentence?" He said, "Please help me." She said, "That was a good sentence with the word help in it." She found the word help on the list and wrote a tally mark next to it. Some of the other "H" words listed on the board were helmet, harmonica, hair dryer, Happy Birthday, helicopter, hamburger and Harley Davidson. Through this approach to show and tell, students of varying levels of ability and needs could share new words, develop vocabulary skills, build a context and meaning for words and bring in aspects of their lives outside of school.

In a third grade classroom, an instructional approach to addressing multiple abilities, needs and interests at the same time was an independent reading time called "DEER." During "DEER" time all members of the classroom, including the teacher, read a book of their choice silently. During one observation of "DEER," Mrs. S., the teacher, called all students over to look at a book she was reading on Yugoslavia. She pointed to Yugoslavia on a world map and talked about how big it was in relation to the United States. She told students she wanted them to know something about Yugoslavia for when

they heard about it on T.V. After Mrs. S. described her book to students, she asked if any of them were reading a particularly good book. Several students volunteered to share and each one gave the title of the book and then told a little about it. With each student, Mrs. S. said, "Hold the book up and give the title again in case someone wants to read it." By implementing a daily reading time like "DEER," Mrs. S. encouraged students to find books that were at an appropriate reading level and were of interest to them. Regardless of what level students were reading at, what they could share with one another was the excitement of reading a "good" book, whatever that meant to each student.

One final way Gilman teachers were seen addressing the varying needs and abilities of their students was by using multiple methods of presentation during lessons. The teachers were observed utilizing manipulatives, pictorial representations, graphs, charts, maps, and video to present information. They also integrated literature, poetry, music, drama, art and technology in creative ways that appealed to a wide variety of interests and needs. Gilman teachers often referred to multiple intelligences theory when they discussed how they planned their curriculum and instruction. There was an awareness on the part of Gilman teachers that because students have different styles of learning, teachers need to utilize a variety of ways to present information.

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

The two primary ways that Gilman teachers were observed making their instruction motivating was the enthusiasm they conveyed about their teaching and the high degree of student involvement they built into their lessons. A particular classroom observation exemplifies both of these traits. The following interaction was observed in a second grade classroom during reading instruction:

> Mr. N. said, "Is there one more person who would like me to read their book?" Several students raised their hands and Mr. N. said, "Sally, I'll do your book." He first had Sally tell her picture story and then he read the book out loud to the class. The story was about a class of students who were putting on an animal play. As he read the story, he had students act out the different animals. He had Brody hop like a frog. He had Michelle fly like a bird. He had all of the students crawl like an ant.

Mr. N., a special educator who taught his own reading group, demonstrated an obvious love for literature and reading with his students. His tone of voice was very dramatic and he engendered a high degree of student involvement through the instructional strategies he employed. He told stories, he had students tell stories, he related what was being addressed in the instruction to students' lives outside of school, he had students act out stories as was described above, and he drew from a wide variety of children's books in his teaching.

Another example of enthusiastic teaching and high levels of student engagement was observed in a kindergarten classroom. The observation occurred close to Halloween and the teacher was telling the story of a little boy who planted some mystery seeds. As Mrs.

D. told the story of how the little boy tilled the ground, planted the seeds and cared for them, she acted out each step. She used suspense to hold the students' attention as she described how the plants grew into vines, flowered, lost their flowers and finally developed mysterious bumps on them. As she told the story, she had a brown bag that represented the dirt and from it she pulled out a long green vine with yellow flowers on it. When she got to the end of the story and the end of the vine, she finally said, "Finally the plant had a what on it?" All of the students said in unison, "Pumpkin!" This was the dramatic beginning to a whole series of hands-on activities related to pumpkins. Students applied their knowledge of shapes and colors to create a jack-o-lantern face, reviewed the life cycle of the pumpkin again when Mrs. D. read the book "The Tiniest Pumpkin of All," and practiced math skills by singing a pumpkin song and counting pumpkins. Students were highly motivated to participate in the activities because of Mrs. D.'s excitement about pumpkins, her creative introduction to the topic and then the engaging nature of the follow-up activities. Students with and without special needs were included in Mrs. D.'s group and there was no way to tell during this observation because all students were highly involved and successfully participating.

Related to the previous classroom description, a third way Gilman teachers made instruction motivating for students was through the development and implementation of thematic units. Like the pumpkin unit, teachers in all of the classrooms were observed teaching a series of lessons or learning centers focused on a specific theme. Kindergarten students were observed doing thematic studies of pumpkins, bats, weather, bears and winter birds. The two first grade classrooms were observed working on a thematic unit on the sea where they learned about a variety of ocean animals and plant life. The third graders studied about pioneers and Native Americans through thematic units. What was especially striking about the thematic units teachers developed at Gilman Elementary was the degree to which literacy was built into the thematic units. As a part of the thematic units, teachers utilized fiction and non-fiction children's books, poetry, videotaped versions of stories and song lyrics as vehicles for communicating theme-related content to students.

Finding 3: "Authentic" curriculum and instructional practices are implemented.

For the purposes of this study, "authentic" curriculum and instructional practices were defined as those that involved the construction of knowledge, disciplined inquiry and value beyond school. There were several examples of authentic instruction and curriculum observed in Gilman Elementary classrooms.

The first example of authentic curriculum and instructional practices were observed during the teaching of science. At the beginning of a science lesson in a third grade classroom, Mrs. S. was observed putting a sheet on every student's desk that said, "Science Data Organizer." Mrs. S. called everyone to gather around her and sit on the floor. She had an ice cream bucket with tadpoles in it sitting on the floor in front of her. One of her students had brought the tadpoles from home for the lesson. Mrs. S. said, "I want everyone to think about one thing they would like to know about tadpoles." Students asked questions like, "How can they swim so fast with that big head?"; "Why do

they have such a big head?"; “How long do they live?” and “How do they hear?” Mrs. S. said, “I hope everyone has a different question. She then directed students to go back to their desks and write their question on their “Science Data Organizer” sheet and asked them what they would need to answer their questions. Students said they could look in books and study the tadpoles. As this particular lesson ended, Mrs. S. told them that they would be conducting the research necessary to answer their own questions about tadpoles. The authentic practice in which Mrs. S. had students involved was the scientific method. They used observations of the world around them to generate questions and were then going to conduct research to find the answers to their questions. This was a much different approach than hearing the teacher lecture on the characteristics of tadpoles.

Another example of authentic instruction was observed in the same classroom in reading. As has been highlighted over and over in the findings of Gilman Elementary School, literacy and reading instruction are high priorities in the school. The teaching of skills was usually taught within the context of reading actual text. An observation in a third grade classroom illustrates how this was done. Students were reading a chapter book called “More Stories Julian Tells,” and were nearing the end of the book. Mrs. S. said, “Before you read the last chapter, look at the picture. The picture isn’t very big, but look at it and tell me if you know what the last chapter might be about. How many of you see two lions? What could the lions symbolize?” One student hypothesized that they might symbolize the roaring river. Another student thought they might have something to do with nighttime. Mrs. S. said that her guess was that maybe the lions symbolized the dad in the story because Julian was always saying he roared. Mrs. S. said, “You’ll be finding out when you read the final chapter tomorrow.” In her reading instruction, Mrs. S. worked on prediction, vocabulary development, reading with expression, symbolic language, and decoding skills all within the context of reading children’s literature. Students learned all of the skills usually associated with phonics instruction, but students were never seen completing drill and practice worksheets of skills taken out of context.

As was discussed in a previous section, kindergarten students at Gilman also participated in authentic reading practices. An example already given was related to vocabulary development through a word show and tell activity. Students drew from text they had been exposed to and their life experiences outside of school to share new words with their classmates. In one kindergarten classroom, students were observed sharing words as sophisticated as violin, vacuum and velvet. Not only were the students able to share and pronounce the words, they were able to use the words in context as they told why they chose to share the word. In addition to this approach to vocabulary development, students were immersed in a variety of authentic reading practices like telling stories, reciting poetry, reading children’s books, and singing song lyrics.

Math is probably the subject area most likely to be taught in a drill and skill manner, yet authentic math practices were observed in Gilman Elementary School. One example revolves around the study of money. As part of a math unit on money, one teacher had students examine actual coins and bills to determine what is usually found on money and why. The students then worked in pairs to design their own money including symbols of

their choosing that were consistent with the symbols found on real money. The observer of this lesson asked students about their money designs and they were able to explain the meaning of the symbols they chose and why they had chosen them. In another example, kindergarten students were observed learning how to use standard units of measurement in order to figure out how long a man's beard was in a story they were reading. Mrs. D. was reading a story to a group of students and the story described a man with a beard ten feet long. Mrs. D. engaged in a dialogue of inquiry with students as she asked them how they could figure out just how long a ten-foot beard would be. A student suggested they use a ruler, so Mrs. D. proceeded to demonstrate to students how they could use a yardstick to measure out a ten-foot beard. Mrs. D. measured along the door opening so students could see that a ten-foot beard was longer than the height of the door. In this lesson, students learned about standard units of measurement, converting yards to feet and estimating length by making comparisons to everyday objects like a door opening. All of this was taught within the context of a story where understanding the actual length of the man's beard made the story more humorous and more meaningful.

While numerous examples of authentic curriculum practices were observed in Gilman Elementary classrooms, there were also examples of instruction that did not involve the students in construction of knowledge and disciplined inquiry. There were quite a few lessons observed where students spent the class period filling in drill and skill worksheets. An example of this kind of lesson was observed during reading instruction where students were completing a worksheet on the short "u" sound. The teacher said, "The directions say to circle all of the pictures that have the short 'u' sound." The teacher read the name of each picture and then told students to circle the ones that had the short "u" sound. Students completed one side of a worksheet in this manner and then turned it over and completed the other side of the worksheet in the same way except they drew an X under the pictures that had the short "u". While students may need to recognize the short "u" sound in a piece of text, this particular worksheet lesson gave students no context for the skill and gave the teacher no assurance that students would be able to read the short "u" sound if they encountered it in a story. Since the ultimate goal of reading instruction is not only to teach students to decode words and comprehend text, but also to become lifelong readers, Gilman staff may want to examine instruction to assure that students are learning skills within a meaningful context.

Finding 4: Instructional practices integrate curriculum.

Gilman Elementary School teachers were observed integrating content and skills across discipline/subject areas in several ways. A term that most accurately describes curriculum at Gilman Elementary is "literacy rich," meaning that students were frequently interacting with text in meaningful ways. The following quote by a Gilman kindergarten teacher when asked what instructional practices support learning at her school, seems to express a belief common to Gilman teachers:

> I think with the strong emphasis on literacy and love of reading. And once they have the love of reading, the other things follow. I guess there isn't a lot more you can say than that. By being careful to choose literature and other nonfiction materials that fit in with the curriculum in the other

subject areas, we are able to handle just about everything in the curriculum.

Literature was observed being integrated into the teaching of science, social studies, language arts and math. The integration of literature into the core subject areas makes a great deal of sense because it is a way to communicate content matter to students through stories, and stories are often more meaningful and interesting to students than straight factual information.

An example of this was observed in a third grade classroom where students were studying pioneer life. To help them understand what pioneer life was actually like, students were reading a book called, "Pioneer Cat." The story was about a young girl who takes a pet cat on a wagon train going west. During the lesson observed, students read one chapter of the book and learned about the clothing worn by pioneers, the size and structure of a pioneer schooner, how to make cornbread, and how to pack for a wagon trip west. While the story is fictionalized, it is based on the real life experiences of pioneers and is told through the voice of a young girl who is similar in age to the third graders. In this way, students are able to connect with the historical content in a way they couldn't without the use of literature.

While literature seems to fit naturally with social studies, it may seem more difficult to integrate literature with math. Yet, there were several instances of math and literature integration observed. In one example, Mr. N. a special educator teaching reading to second graders was observed reading a Christmas story to his students where the main character was trying to earn money to buy his mother a blanket. At different points in the story, Mr. N. would stop and ask students to solve the math involved to calculate how much the little boy had earned thus far in the story. The little boy earned money by selling trees so students had to multiply each tree by its money value and then add that number to what the little boy had already earned. This exercise reinforced math skills and modeled real world applications of mathematics. Also important, the integration of math and literature like the example just described breaks down the artificial boundaries between subject areas that are often seen in schools.

Another form of integration observed in Gilman Elementary was the integration of the fine arts like art, music and drama. The kindergarten teachers said they frequently worked with the art, music and physical education teachers to integrate the arts into their thematic units. Some examples of this integration include the art teacher having students construct and decorate kites to go along with a weather unit; the physical education teacher having students act and move like bears as part of a bear unit and the music teacher leading a song on coins because she knew the kindergartners were learning about money in their classroom. The kindergarten teachers said the teachers in the special areas were very open to this kind of collaboration and sometimes suggested their own ideas to go along with the themes they knew the classroom teachers were covering. Through the integration of the arts with the core academic curriculum, students were exposed to even

more opportunities for learning important skills and knowledge. This is especially important for students with disabilities who may struggle with a particular mode of learning like reading and need multiple exposures and multiple methods for learning important content and skills.

There was some evidence that teachers at Gilman Elementary School integrated technology into the classroom curriculum. There was at least one computer present in all of the classrooms and students were observed completing a variety of reading, math and problem solving activities on the computers. There were two observations that demonstrated how students with special needs were included in the classroom through the use of technology. One of the students in kindergarten read at a fifth grade level so some of the reading activities completed by the rest of the kindergarten students were not at his instructional level. When this occurred, he was able to work with reading software on the computer at a level that was appropriate and provided some challenges for him. In a third grade classroom, Terri, a student with fairly severe CD was observed working with math software when she was not able to work on the math activities her classmates were completing. During one observation, Terri was observed using a math program called "The Graph Club." She loaded the program from a CD and moved adeptly through a series of bar graphing activities. The observer asked Terri interpretive questions about the graph she had created and Terri was able to answer every one correctly. While there was some use of technology observed in Gilman Elementary classrooms, this is an area that Gilman staff may want to study further, especially in the ways technology can be used to deliver differentiated instruction to students with varying abilities and needs.

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

There were many factors that influenced the degree to which students were encouraged and able to learn in Gilman Elementary School. Most of the major determiners of learning have been covered in the previous four findings, particularly those that focus on the importance of high-interest, motivating and authentic curriculum practices. Some of the curriculum practices that were particularly prevalent at Gilman Elementary were the differentiated approach to reading instruction, the strong focus on literacy, the integration of literature into all subject areas, the variety of hands-on strategies used to present content and skills and the excitement and enthusiasm of the teachers.

Principle 4: BUILD COMMUNITY & SUPPORT LEARNING

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

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

There were many creative uses of available time, staff, parents and peers observed in Gilman Elementary School. Some of these have already been discussed like the unique collaboration amongst the kindergarten teachers. In the first year of the study, there were 41 students in the kindergarten program and they were split between two fulltime teachers and one half time teacher. The three teachers worked collaboratively between two adjoining classrooms with the door open in between. In this way, the teachers could group and regroup students according to the activities and the students' needs and the students could flow between teachers and activities. In the second and third years of the study, the two, fulltime kindergarten teachers continued to work collaboratively between the two adjoining classrooms.

Also previously discussed were the ways general and special educators teamed together. Special education teachers were observed team teaching with general educators in the general education classrooms. The special education teachers frequently worked with their own reading groups, including students with and without disabilities, which reduced pupil to teacher ratios and helped to ensure that the needs of all students were met. During an observation at the beginning of the school year, a CD/ED teacher was circulating in a kindergarten classroom and was asked what her schedule was like in that particular class. She replied, "Right now I don't know because they haven't started 'guided' reading yet, but as long as I have time I'm going to spend it in this classroom."

A similar "I'm available" attitude was expressed by a special educator who was observed helping students in a second grade classroom. As the lesson progressed the special educator walked around and assisted any students who needed help making a Halloween project. The special educator explained to the observer that a little later she was going to be acting as a stand-in grandparent for students who would not have anyone attending the special Grandparents' Day program. She didn't want any students to feel left out when grandparents arrived to participate in classroom activities with their grandchildren. Both of the above examples demonstrate the commitment of the Gilman special education staff to inclusion and their support for all students in the general education classroom.

Another creative use of human resources in Gilman Elementary is the "Youth Tutoring Youth" program, which provides class credits to high school students who tutor children in the elementary grades. Because Gilman High School is in the same building complex as the elementary school, it is easy for high school students to go into elementary

classrooms during their free periods. The high school students frequently spent time in classrooms working one on one with students who needed extra support. In one kindergarten observation, a high school student was paired with a kindergarten student who needed help with her reading. Kelly, the high school student, and Fiona, the kindergartner sat down together with a book. As Fiona read, Kelly moved her finger across the sentences to help Fiona hold her place. When Fiona struggled with a word, Kelly helped her sound it out or read the word for her. Clearly, both Kelly and Fiona were benefiting from the time together. The young students looked to the high school students as positive role models and the high school students learned the skills of teaching and nurturing others as they tutored the youngsters. An interaction that really illustrates this interrelationship was observed as a high school student helped kindergarten students with their math. One of the little boys said proudly to the female high school student, "Look at my five." The high school student responded, "That's awesome!"

In addition to high school tutors, there were various other classroom helpers observed in Gilman classrooms. These included parent and grandparent volunteers who worked with small groups and individual students on a variety of educational activities. These volunteers provided additional supports for students with and without disabilities. Having extra adults in the classroom also allowed the teachers to implement active, hands-on learning activities that would have been difficult for a solitary teacher to conduct with fifteen to twenty students. This was especially true in the kindergarten classrooms where the teachers often had students involved in a variety of highly active learning centers.

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

There was some evidence in Gilman Elementary that peers served as supports for one another. Students were occasionally observed working in small groups or pairs to complete activities. An example of this was an activity observed where students across the two first grade classrooms were put into small groups to generate words. The students were given the letters b, a, l, y, u, d, and g and were asked to work with their peers to generate as many words as possible from the letters. Students in the kindergarten classroom frequently worked with peers as they engaged in centers and "free choice" time. During "free choice" students could spend time with the peers of their choosing and engage in a variety of activities like building with Lego's and blocks, putting puzzles together, drawing pictures, playing outside and participating in a variety of role-playing activities in the dramatic play area. The small groups and partners observed in these classrooms included students with and without disabilities so they had opportunities to work and learn together.

Although there were some observations of peers serving as natural supports for their classmates observed in Gilman Elementary classrooms, this is an area that may warrant further exploration. Many of the interactions observed in Gilman classrooms were between the classroom teacher and individual students within the context of a small or large group discussion. While these interactions were positive and supported student

learning, peers working with peers provide important social and academic supports that can't be developed in an adult/child relationship.

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

Gilman teachers were observed providing supports for student behavior in a variety of positive ways. During an observation in a kindergarten classroom, the teacher was leading a reading lesson and having students write words on their individual white boards when the following situation occurred:

> A little girl named Susie, who the kindergarten teachers called "ADHD" put her white board down on the floor and refused to work. Mrs. V. (a parent helper) picked up the white board and put it on the counter. Mrs. D said, "It looks like we'll have Susie work up front." Susie pulled her knees up against her chest, wrapped her arms around her knees and put her head down. Mrs. D. didn't force her to work. About a minute later, Susie stood up and started to move slowly towards the front board. Mrs. D. walked over to her, hugged her, and said something quietly to her. Susie continued to move towards the front board until she was standing right in front. She then wrote a word on the front board in response to a question from Mrs. D.

During another observation, Mrs. D. asked Susie if she would like to work with the helper in the classroom (the Whole Schooling researcher) and Susie started to run back and forth across the room. Mrs. D. said to Susie, "When we fill out your blank folder, you're not going to like what it says." Susie stopped running around the room and sat down to work. Mrs. D. explained to the observer that the blank folder was a discipline system they used to help Susie work on her behavior. The blank folder was a way to document how Susie was doing in the classroom so the information could be communicated to Susie's mom. In this way, Susie's mom helped to reinforce the behavior the teachers were helping Susie to work on in the classroom.

In this same classroom, teachers also used other subtle strategies for helping students to stay on track. During an observation of naptime, Mrs. H. stepped out into the hall for a minute. As soon as Mrs. H. was out of the room, several students got up off of their mats, moved about the room and talked to other students. When Mrs. H. walked back into the room, she calmly asked students to move back onto their mats. She then put a Sesame Street record on the record player. The students who had been moving around lay down on their mats, quieted down and listened to the music. The music worked wonderfully to calm students down and gave those students who were not able to sleep something to which they could listen.

Another strategy used by Gilman teachers to support behavior in positive, proactive ways was to discuss appropriate behavior before starting an instructional activity. For example, in an observation of a first grade classroom, students were getting ready to work

together in teams to complete an instructional activity. Before the activity started the classroom teacher had this discussion with the students:

Mrs. U.: What is a rule for being a team?
Student: Work together.
Mrs. U.: Yes, it is important to work together. What's another rule for being a team?
Student: You try to win.
Mrs. U.: Is it really important to win?
Student: Talk to the other people in your group.
Mrs. U.: Yes, you have to talk to the other people in your group. What is one other rule for working in a group?
Student: No yelling
Mrs. U.: Yes, this is an inside game and you need to talk quietly.

After the review of how to work in teams, the teacher then randomly grouped students in teams and they worked together on the instructional task.

Principle 5: PARTNERING

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

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

Several of the ways that Gilman Elementary School joined together with families and community members have already been discussed under previous findings. These include welcoming parents and other community members into the classrooms to serve as volunteer helpers, the "Youth Tutoring Youth" program, and the special Grandparent's Day program sponsored by the second grade teachers and students. One explanation for the success Gilman Elementary School experienced in reaching out to the community was the fact that they employed a community education director to coordinate activities with community members. In an interview with the principal, he explained that the community education director helped recruit and coordinate volunteers to help tutor students during and after school. The principal also mentioned that no admission is charged for school events in the Gilman district to encourage more community members to attend. The principal said, "I think when people come in and see some of the good things that are happening, they will feel more positive about the school."

In addition to the community education director, Gilman Elementary School also has a Parent Resource Center. Of the Parent Resource Center, a parent said, "They are constantly sending out newsletters. I have gotten books on ADD and discipline. I took

an Internet class and a basic computer class through the Parent Resource Center." As this parent indicates, the Parent Resource Center has books and other materials on topics of interest to parents and offers technology classes to parents. Gilman Elementary School's special education director, who also helped to coordinate the Parent Resource Center, explained that in addition to the services already mentioned, the center was going to offer open computer lab time in the afternoon where parents could come in to use the computers and/or bring their children in to work together on computers. The special education director said, "We have been trying to get feedback from parents on what they want in their new center. If parents take advantage of it, it is just going to be wonderful."

One final way that Gilman Elementary School reached out to the community was related to the Wisconsin Education Association Council's Great Schools Program. Mrs. H., one of the teachers involved, explained that WEAC sent two people to Gilman to work with them on the Great Schools program. Mrs. H. said that she and several other teachers sent out eighty invitations to parents, business people, administrators, school board people, ministers, and other community members. She said that out of the eighty people, eighteen showed up to talk about what they wanted in their school. Mrs. H. said that the attendees were told not to worry about financing. Mrs. H. said some of the things that people wanted were low class sizes and having the playground finished. She said one of the participants specifically mentioned the Gilman Reading Model when they were asked what they definitely wanted to keep in their school. The Great Schools program is a unique way to reach out to the community and Gilman Elementary School administration and faculty are encouraged to continue to nurture the strong connection they have made with the Gilman community.

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

Many of the ways Gilman teachers collaborated with one another have been discussed at length in previous findings. These include the teaming of general education teachers within and across grade levels, the teaming of general and special educators and the teaming of general education teachers with the teachers of specials like art, music and physical education. The various ways Gilman teachers collaborated helped to lower pupil to teacher ratios, provided additional supports for students with and without disabilities, and facilitated the development and implementation of integrated/thematic instruction. Interviews revealed how committed Gilman teachers were to collaborating with one another. One teacher said, "We are really sold on all of the teachers using the same lesson plan where we are all using the same terminology and we have kids involved in a lot of different activities. We integrate everything and vary things so that all the kids can learn in some way." Another teacher, who was relatively new to the classroom said, "Sometimes I find I am not getting through to some of my kids and I will talk to the person I team with and she will come in and work with kids on it. I like to get other teachers' suggestions. The other teacher has a lot of experience so she has a lot of ideas."

Another way that Gilman teachers collaborated was through curriculum team meetings. Curriculum teams consisted of teachers across grade levels and were set up to examine different areas of the curriculum to help make decisions about future directions in that

area. For example, one of the teachers explained that Gilman currently had a writing team looking at writing curriculum and evaluation for the following school year. The teacher said that the curriculum team develops strategies and makes plans for other teachers to implement. The teacher said of the curriculum team meetings, "There is a lot of conversation going on. We are still very child focused. We try to make sure that the children are at the center of all of our decisions."

In addition to the formal ways that Gilman teachers collaborated, teachers were also observed working together and supporting one another informally. During one observation, Mrs. R., a second grade teacher, explained to the observer that the guidance counselor was going to be working with her class during the next period and she was going to go down to the computer lab with the other second grade teacher. Mrs. R. explained that the other teacher was not comfortable teaching in the computer lab by herself yet and she was going to go down to provide technological and moral support. The many ways that Gilman teachers collaborated with one another both formally and informally provided many benefits for the students and created a positive, supportive working environment for the teachers.

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

Observations and teacher and parent interviews revealed that Gilman Elementary School administration and teachers reach out to parents in many different ways. Some of these include phone calls, notes, district and classroom newsletters, parent conferences and report cards. In addition, teachers shared that they sent special attachments to report cards that explained what themes had been addressed in their classrooms and described some of the projects that went along with the themes. Of these summaries one teacher said, "Sometimes parents say they just can't believe how much information the kids come home with. I think parents still think kindergarten was the way it was when they were young." A parent gives her perspective on the same issue when asked how the school communicates with her, "They send a lot of notes home. Every once in a while they send a note home explaining what they are working on and telling parents how they can help. I really think they do a good job with that."

Gilman Elementary School also has a Parent Resource Center, which was described in a previous section. The Parent Resource Center puts out its own newsletter, provides books and other materials of interest to parents and offers technology classes. Additional activities involving parents are the Parent Teacher Organization. The school also sponsors a reading lock-in every fall where parents come in and read to their children. Pizza is served at the event and books are given away. The kindergarten and first grade teachers held a special math night for parents where they learned how they could work with their children on math skills at home. The second grade teachers invite parents to come in for a "Meet the Teachers Day," which gives parents an opportunity to get to know the teachers better. In this way, parents might be more likely to contact their child's teacher if they had a question or concern.

Parents expressed a strong appreciation for the caring attitudes of teachers in Gilman School. One parent said, "Everybody acts like they care about their job and care about

the mission. They care about each group of kids that moves through." Another parent described what she appreciated about the teachers and atmosphere at Gilman Elementary School, "Everyone is like a family and they know you and they like you and they ask how they can help you. If you have a problem, they are prompt with helping. They are willing to make you feel like you're doing a good job as a parent." And finally, a parent who had herself been a student at Gilman Elementary School said, "I have a lot of good memories here. It's just a real nice atmosphere to be in. The teachers work well with the kids."

While parents expressed appreciation for the many ways administrators and teachers at Gilman Elementary School reach out to them and support their children, one parent raised concerns about the state of the playground. For much of the time that the Whole Schooling researchers were observing in Gilman Elementary School, the school was undergoing major construction. For the duration of the construction, the playground was dismantled and students were not able to play on it. The parent who brought up the topic of the playground explained why she was concerned when she said, "The kids play on the blacktop and they are always getting hurt. The swings are lying on the grass. I keep asking the principal when the playground is going to be completed and he says when the building is completed. Now the building is completed and the playground still isn't finished." Since the playground issue was also mentioned by teachers and community members, this is an area Gilman Elementary School administration and staff may want to address.

Conclusions

Gilman Elementary School clearly demonstrates aspects of all the Whole Schooling Principles and is working hard to include students with disabilities into the school's general education classrooms. The administration and staff are encouraged to maintain their successful efforts with inclusion and to explore new ways to provide teachers and students with a voice in decision-making, include all students, teach and adapt for diversity, build community and reach out to parents. They are also encouraged to build on their success with the Gilman Reading Model through ongoing assessment, training of faculty in the model and outreach to other schools who might be interested.

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