

Field Journal Response for Week 4  
The School as a Community of Learners

In order for community to exist, there needs to be cooperation – and in order for cooperation to be possible, members of a community need direction. One way to achieve direction is through vision and mission statements. Just like many successful businesses and organizations built on the concept of community, school often incorporate the use of vision and mission statements to meet their agenda. These statements provide a source of direction, inspiration, and support a commitment to principles the community feels will help it achieve its goals. Because schools aim for a sense of community, it seems inherent that they would require some guideline, and vision and mission statements fulfil this requirement.

The concept of community incorporates many values, but almost always present are those of respect, responsibility and honesty. Without these values, cooperation and working together are not possible – which are of course defining characteristics, and one could say the goals of community. By examining the F.E. Osborne Handbook, it is made clear on the cover page that Eagles (*the schools team name*) aspire to the values of honesty, respect, and responsibility. Further, these values are declared to guide the work of the school. Though each of these values are not explicitly defined, further reading of the handbook links these core values to Calgary Board of Education legislation pertaining specifically to respect and responsibility. Less implicitly in the handbook, responsibility, respect, and honesty appear as the underpinnings for explanations of school dress code, activities, class participation, and locker regulations. Even deeper though, these values speak to FEO's belief in the school as a community of learners by governing and guiding how members of the FEO community interact with each other.

Over my first four days at FEO, I have observed the values of honesty, respect, and responsibility in action – both the classroom and staff room. Teachers at the school seem to have excellent rapport with each other and with their students, which is evidenced by the personal and friendly interaction I witness on a minute by minute basis. In the class, students, despite sometimes being distracted and rambunctious, have been respectful. When asked to complete an assignment, they seem to understand that they are responsible for completing it. When asked why something hasn't been done, or what their opinion or feeling is, they seem genuine and honest in their response. Of course I have only been in the school environment for a few days, and consequently can't make broad assumptions, however I do get the impression that the schools vision is being met.

I believe that an important aspect of the field experience is learning to integrate myself into the community at FEO. I have been extended the opportunity to do so by the administrations taking in my placement, my partner teachers cooperation, inclusion and insight, and slowly but surely by the students, who constitute the largest membership of the community. This week's experience helped further integrate me in the following ways. During a class restructuring, Ms. Peyto was allocated an ESL class and another Grade 9 Language Arts class. ESL seems to me an inherently dependant on basic, hands on, involved communication – usually in the form of conversation. Because of this, I was able to interact with the kids on a more personal level. Another way I was able to get to know the students came on Thursday, when my partner teacher was away for the entire day and I was partnered with a substitute. Because Ms. Peyto left specific direction on what she wanted each class to accomplish, I was able to communicate her instruction to the class, and without her presence, felt responsible for

challenging myself to interact more and more with the students. Because of this, I am now building my own relationships with members of the community.

I had quite a few opportunities to get to better know the students this week, but the one which sticks out in my mind came in the ESL class when the students were describing their backgrounds, first languages, and personal interests. I met a boy who spoke Farsi, a language which I have some knowledge of, and I used this to strike up a conversation about how I was learning his language. I furthered this relationship by saying good morning to him the next day and asking him how he was in Farsi. I believe that in doing so I not only acknowledged his language as part of his identity and showed that I have an interest in it, but I exposed my desire to get to know who he is. The real challenge will be learning to what extent I can know an individual student while balancing the needs of other students, other members of the school community (*staff, administration, parents, colleagues, etc*) and meeting the demands placed on me as a professional.