

A STUDY OF THE REFORM PROCESS TO PROVIDE AN INCLUSIVE MODEL OF SERVICE DELIVERY  
WITHIN A MANITOBA MIDDLE YEARS SCHOOL

By

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

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## Acknowledgements

My sincerest thanks are extended to Charlotte Enns and Gareth Neufeld for their faith and encouragement throughout this project. To my husband, John, and my children Braeden, Sarah, Emma and Madeline, thank you for your tolerance, patience and love.

## Dedication

To all of the students I have worked with...thank you for teaching me that a square peg can, in fact, fit into a round hole.

## Abstract

Several current social agendas in the province of Manitoba are impacting the demographics in our classrooms. Recent changes to the Public Schools Act, the Educational Administration Act, an aggressive immigration initiative and a trend for movement from rural to urban settings have contributed to classrooms where the learning and behaving needs of students are diverse, their motivations to learn are different and they have varied areas of strength and weakness. In order to meet these new challenges and to provide educational programming that reflects the needs of our global society, schools need to change the way they are delivering service to students in schools. This study used qualitative research methods to examine the conditions that facilitate building an inclusive middle school in Manitoba.

Data from both focus group interviews and a document study yielded multiple themes under the headings of actions, culture and strategies. A historical scan of the school's reform process highlighting the changes in beliefs, leadership, structures and processes over time resulted from the data analysis. Collectively, the findings identify the specific steps the school took to move to inclusion.

The information contained in this study will provide a path to help educators move to creating inclusive school environments where all students feel a sense of belonging and fulfillment from their educational experiences.



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## CHAPTER I

### Introduction

#### *Preamble*

“This isn’t why I went into teaching,” is a comment sometimes spoken aloud or muttered under the breath of school staff. The characteristics of the students in many of today’s classrooms vary greatly from those of twenty or even ten years ago. Teachers are being faced with teaching students who they have not had to accommodate in the past; within school cultures where this change may or may not be welcomed.

In this chapter, I present a rationale, sparked by our legislation, to suggest that schools move to inclusion. The importance of this study as it relates to inclusion, school reform and school-based service delivery is outlined. I will identify my proposed research questions, my research design and definitions of key terms used in this proposal.

#### *A Rationale for the Study*

Recent changes to the legislation in Manitoba that reflect a history of dialogue and advocacy for social justice call for an examination of the processes and structures that facilitate the development of inclusive schools in Manitoba. There exists a rationale to move away from what is being done now and to consider what might be possible in the future. In October, 2005, *The Public Schools Amendment Act* was proclaimed in Manitoba. It outlines Manitoba’s commitment to providing all students with appropriate educational programming in support of both their academic and social goals (Public Schools Act, 2005). This legislation defines appropriate educational programming within the *Appropriate Educational Programming Standards for Student Services* document (2006) as:

a collaborative school-family-community process where school communities create learning environments and provide resources and services that are responsive to the lifelong learning, social and emotional needs of all students (p. 1).

Manitoba Education (ME) identified its commitment to fostering inclusion as a part of Appropriate Education legislation and defined it as:

...a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship (Manitoba Education, 2006 p. 1).

Providing appropriate educational programming within the concept of inclusion is a shift in thinking for Manitoba educators. Although advocacy groups and parents have lobbied for inclusive programming for many years, this recent legislation has strengthened the initial efforts of educators to integrate students with special needs within the broader context of regular education. That inclusion movement started with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which, in Section 15 (Department of Justice, 1982) states:

- (1) Every individual is equal before and under the law and has the right to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law without discrimination and, in particular, without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability

The inclusion of students with special needs within regular classrooms and away from segregation is not only a Manitoba and Canadian phenomenon, but it can be seen worldwide. It was stimulated, in part, by the Salamanca Statement of 1994 (UNESCO, 1994) which supports inclusion via a guiding principle stating that public schools should accommodate all children, regardless of their physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic or other disabilities. It goes on to indicate that learning should be adapted to meet the needs of all children in order that they learn together. This dialogue about inclusion continues to be the focus of worldwide discussion as a summit on the status of inclusion in the world was revisited in the fall of 2009 in Salamanca, Spain. The legislation from Manitoba and Canada as well as the Salamanca summits suggest that locally and in many countries around the world, both advocacy and legislation have caused many current movements towards educational reform to have as a component of that reform, the inclusion of students with special needs within regular classrooms (Lieberman, 1996).

Many schools within Manitoba aspire to implement this reform, yet appropriate educational programming for all students represents a change from an approach that historically was one of exclusion and segregation. Over the last three decades the progress made towards the inclusion of students with special needs into regular classes has challenged educators to shift their thinking and their instructional practices. Like many other provinces, early models of Manitoba's educational programming for students with special needs were based on assumptions in educational practice. Skrtic (1995) considers the development of special education as being based on these four assumptions:

- a) “Student disability is a pathological condition” (p. 210): any learning or behaving problem lies with the student versus the instruction or another ecological factor.
- b) “Differential diagnosis is objective and useful” (p. 210): identification or labeling of the learning or behaving problem(s) is beneficial for prescribing interventions.
- c) “Special education is a rationally conceived and coordinated system of services that benefits diagnosed students” (p. 210): a disability specific system of services and supports that is rigid, routine oriented and standardized
- d) “Progress in special education is a rational-technical process of incremental improvements in conventional diagnostic and instructional practices” (p. 210): fine-tuning of the system is made through increased standardization of processes and outcomes, further specification of professional roles and through more precise student classification.

In support of these assumptions, a special education service delivery system was developed in Manitoba, across this country and in other countries as an attempt to find a solution to the educational problems in the public system (Kauffman, 1994; Porter, 2008). Pedagogic practice within this system attended to the remediation and separation of students with special needs from their peers and resulted in the development of both remedial and special programs (Lipsky & Gartner, 1987). It was thought that non-disabled students had a right to an education free of distraction which helped to justify this separation (Christensen & Dorn, 1997).

In recent years, significant efforts have been made to move away from these assumptions and the service delivery models that were developed based on them. However, work still remains to develop a fully inclusive educational system. “Our education system was never designed to deliver the kind of results we now need to equip students for today’s world – and

tomorrow's. The system was originally created for a very different world; to respond appropriately, we need to rethink and redesign," (Wagner, Kegan, Lahey, Lemons, Garnier, Helsing, Howell and Rasmussen, 2006, p. 1). To date, identifiable, workable solutions for schools to change their cultures and ensuing service delivery to inclusive ones have not been published in our province. Our universities undoubtedly promote the concept of inclusion, yet the operationalization of this notion is a most difficult achievement when few examples exist. The idea of equating inclusion with mainstreaming or placement in a regular classroom still exists. Appropriate educational programming, as defined in the *Standards for Student Services* document (Manitoba Education, 2006), has been left to the interpretation of individual school divisions and schools within those divisions. In order to include all students and to program for them appropriately, several items require addressing: a) a clarification of the role of education in our more global world, b) the identification of the reform process required to achieve this role and c) a description of the specific components of service delivery that allow for the support of the students within the standards demanded by this new educational role. Each of these topics is addressed in chapter two. Both whole system change, in addition to changes in the classroom require consideration for appropriate educational programming to be implemented within an inclusive setting.

Although the process for school reform has been examined by many, how to apply it to the context of inclusion has not. A gap exists in the philosophical statements about inclusion and its practical application. How school staff move from a segregated model to an inclusive one has not been documented and the practical evidence on supporting strategies is varied. That said, some school staff have led the way by creating inclusive environments for students. By

describing and analyzing the processes and challenges that school staff have taken to become more inclusive

and by identifying the beliefs, structures and service delivery required to support such a shift in the schools' culture, others will be able to move more easily in this direction.

### *Research Questions*

The purpose of this study is to use qualitative research methods to describe and analyze the processes used by one Manitoba middle school staff to move its practice to a school-based service delivery model where the needs of all students were to be met in regular classrooms.

Specifically, the study will address:

- a) What specific actions did this school staff take to move to an inclusive model of service delivery?
- b) What aspects of the school's culture - beliefs, leadership, structures, processes – were important in facilitating the move from segregation to inclusion?
- c) What strategies did this school staff employ to ensure that all students were successfully supported in inclusive settings and what data exists to support student success?

The study of this school staff's reform process and its model of service delivery will provide a detailed record of the school's actions, beliefs and behaviours over time and will provide an in depth understanding of this school staff's particular experiences with school reform in the area of inclusion.



## *Methodology*

Both face-to-face interviewing and document review were used to gather the data for this study. I conducted two focus group interviews with staff from this middle school. Four staff members participated in the interviews. Three of the participants were longtime members of the staff and had been at the school prior to the start of the reform process; one participant started working after the first year (2006). Two of the staff were school-based student services staff (resource/counseling) and two were classroom teachers. Both focus group discussions were recorded in written format on large chart paper which was later transcribed into field notes. I kept a journal during the research study and analyzed internal school documents related to attendance, discipline, academics and student perceptions. The two focus group interviews were approximately two hours long and revolved around guiding questions related to my research questions. The intent of the first focus group was to gather data related to the school's culture before and after the reform, to identify the trigger for this reform and to develop a timeline of actions that the school staff employed to move to an inclusive model of service delivery. The goal of the second focus group was to fill in any gaps that existed in the school's identified change process and to gather more specific details of the change agents in the school's culture. Strategies that the staff employed to allow all students to be supported in inclusive settings also were identified. Collected data was validated by the focus group participants.

The research design for this study of the change process used in a particular educational setting followed the process outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (2007). Analysis of the data involved the production of broad themes to generate a consolidated picture of the reform

process and ensuing service delivery model. I returned to the volunteer group of staff to seek additional information to fill in gaps in the data that I collected and to verify that my analysis was correct. I organized data into file folders and sub folders based on the themes that I identified and then developed a visual model of the change process. My findings are reported in a narrative manner, using figures and tables that respond to the research questions. As this school's reform process spans several years, the discussion involves both a chronology of events and experiences and also incorporates links to current research. Limitations of the study and recommendations for future research are included. A summary of the results of the study has been shared with the staff at the school.

### *Definitions*

I realize that a study of this nature poses some challenges regarding the complexity of interpretations related to specific concepts. In this thesis, the terms administrator, appropriate educational programming, inclusive education, segregation, school culture and students with special needs will be defined as:

- a) Administrator(s) - the school principal and/or vice-principal
- b) Appropriate educational programming – the creation of learning environments responsive to the learning and behaving needs of all students
- c) Inclusive education – meaningful opportunities and involvement of all students in all aspects of school life in regular classrooms with age-appropriate peers
- d) Segregation – the separation of students with special needs from receiving educational instruction with their peers in regular classrooms

- e) School culture – the sense of community that is created by the shared beliefs and structural supports in a school that demonstrate how day-to-day activities are carried out
- f) Students with special needs – students with identified learning and behaving needs

### *Significance of the Study*

As a young child, I often spent time at my mom's sister's home as our extended family frequently gathered for celebrations of one sort or another. On many occasions one of my uncle's nephew's, Glenn, would be at their home. Glenn was older than I was and as a child, I thought that he talked and walked sort of funny and really was not very good at any of the games we played. We included Glenn in all of our games and very naturally made accommodations for his needs. I knew that Glenn did not go to school like I did, but I did not know why. I knew that there were not any kids like Glenn at my school, but I thought that was just unique to my school. Several years later, I learned that Glenn had contracted encephalitis and polio as a small child which had left him both cognitively and physically challenged and that he was not permitted to attend public school.

As a youth, when I was in high school, I needed to take the transit bus to and from school. There was a boy a bit older than I who rode the bus each day and got off the bus just a few stops before I did. Danny was a most gregarious person who told silly stories to anyone who would listen and sometimes made the passengers on the bus feel quite uncomfortable with his somewhat unorthodox understanding of personal space. There were 1200 students in my high school – none of whom had characteristics like Danny. Years later, I learned that the reason Danny got off the bus before I did was because he had to attend a separate school for

students with special needs. I sometimes see Glenn and Danny in the community now...bowling or timekeeping for an old-timers hockey game. Both are contributing and valued members of their communities. It warms my heart to see that they lead full and meaningful lives. These two experiences, and some others, stand out in my mind as having influence on my career choice and the roles I have had within my chosen career. I often think about my role in education and how I can assist all students to feel valued, to belong, and to have choice.

Since the concept of inclusion still is a relatively young one, the processes and practices of schools that have moved from segregation to inclusion can help to identify a path for future policy and practice in Manitoba. The benefits of studying this school staff's experience include learning one way of moving toward a vision of inclusion and identifying the supports that need to be put in place to grow this construct; it provides a foundation for planning to others interested in school reform that supports inclusion. For the staff at this school, it provides a unifying story that honours their efforts and celebrates their accomplishments; other educators can benefit from that learning. School board personnel may find a vision for education in the future and will be able to examine critically the steps to get there; should these steps involve the redistribution of human resources, the alteration of formal and informal structures and/or the reorganization of systems within the division or schools themselves. Administrators and school leaders can compare and contrast their current model of service delivery against the beliefs, structures and framework of the model used in this school in order that they develop a vision and process for reform. Classroom teachers who are open to the review of their pedagogical practices can reflect upon the concepts presented here and thus enhance their craftsmanship in the teaching-learning process in order that the intent of the Salamanca

Statement, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and the Manitoba legislation is fulfilled. By understanding the specific procedures used in this school's reform process, as well as the components of their service delivery, educators may feel empowered to embark on a reform journey of their own.

### *Closing*

There is an educational, social and moral desire to move schools from segregation to inclusion in Manitoba, Canada and the world. Over the past 30 years, educators in Manitoba have implemented the concept of mainstreaming but are not yet at the point to real inclusion; a move that both advocates and provincial legislation are requiring. The importance of school reform and school based service delivery in supporting inclusive instructional strategies in our schools is paramount. The focus of this study is on improving service delivery for all students, including those with special needs, with the goal of enhancing student learning and behavior and ultimately their success. The school experiences of students should provide them with a sense of belonging and satisfaction such that it allows them to choose a place in life rather than being forced into one (Littky, 2004). This study provides a possible structure for educators to do just that.

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

#### *Introduction*

This chapter will summarize what already is known about school reform and the movement from exclusion to inclusion. Following this introductory section, the literature review is organized into six major sections: a) educational change and special education, b) history of special education in Manitoba, c) models of service delivery, d) components of school reform related to inclusion, e) gaps in the Research, and f) summary. The purpose of this literature review is to provide background information into the current context of the inclusion movement and to identify gaps in the literature. It will use Manitoba's experience with special education as an example of this change movement. The deficiencies of our current system of service delivery will be identified as a means of demonstrating that although Manitoba educators value inclusion, staff are somewhat unclear about the process required to implement inclusive practices. Each of these topics will solidify the notion that the concept of inclusion is valued in our global society and that there is a desire for school reform to accommodate it. Specific agents of change that can be found in the research will be identified as strategies that some schools have used to support students in inclusive settings, which provides a rationale for my proposed study.

#### *Educational Change and Special Education*

##### *Inclusion and Change*

Many aspects of our everyday experiences are the result of social agreement, institutional practices or collective social action. Our social reality, thus, is grounded in our behaviours,

culture and practices, (Flamand, Lee, 2012). In the past, there was social agreement that students with special needs be excluded from public schools and regular classes; this concept became an institutional practice in education and in essence, our social reality. Collective social action...advocacy...caused some educators and policy makers to reflect on these practices and spurred research on the efficacy of segregated environments and ultimately resulted in changes to legislation. This first section of the chapter will highlight the existing literature on educational change and relate it to inclusion.

According to Fullan, Hill and Crevola (2006), the new mission of schools is to increase the learning and behaving success of all students. They indicate that prior to this new mission, schools were satisfied with providing access for all. This statement is analogous to the movement in special education: moving from mainstreaming or placement to inclusion. Wagner et al. (2006) and Silva (2009) reinforce the notion that all students need to acquire new skills in order to function in today's world. They go on to make the argument that our educational system is obsolete as it is virtually the same as it was a hundred years ago and that it no longer is meeting the needs of students who can be found in today's classrooms. Students in today's classrooms have diverse learning needs and although it is an admirable goal to improve the learning and behaving outcomes for all students, it seems that "no one has yet provided a feasible platform for such a grand accomplishment" (Fullan et al. 2006, p. 12). "Transforming public schools to teach all students the new skills required for success in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a monumental challenge" (Wagner et al. 2006, p. 63).

Research on transforming schools from the model developed in the industrial era that grouped students by age and assumed equal rates of readiness and learning to one of post-

industrialism where programming matches the needs of individual students and where all students are included in regular classrooms is limited (Murphy & Meyers, 2008). To date, much of the literature on school reform has been based on and compared to the reform movement in business (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Murphy & Meyers, 2008). Although some parallels exist between education and business, the particulars break down quickly. Murphy & Meyers (2008) summarize the research base on school turnarounds saying that it is informative but not deeply developed. When considering school change to reflect the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, reforming and restructuring schools is not enough to meet the new mission (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Changes also will require all adults to develop new skills and to work in different ways (Wagner et al. 2006).

Most educational reform processes in the literature identify the theoretical steps schools could take to begin the change process, yet they lack the examples of the specific strategies required to achieve the new mission of schools and to include all students. The need to move to an inclusive educational system where students achieve learning and behaving success versus simple access has both merit and positive intent, but the process needed to get there is unclear. Fullan, Hill and Crevola (2006) suggest that school change is needed if academic and social success for all students is an overarching goal of schools in this century; all students want to be successful.

### *The Movement from Exclusion to Inclusion*

The first supporters of inclusion included John Dewey who “believed that all students thrive in an environment in which they experience and interact with curriculum and other students” and Paulo Freire who emphasized a “socially just model of education... (with) equality



of access to education and the transformation of educational settings to accommodate all students” (Ketley, 2011, p.1). Although the specific research on the steps to promote educational change related to inclusion is limited, considerable change has occurred over the past three decades as schools have moved from total exclusion towards inclusion. This section will review those changes to date.

As recently as the 1960’s and 70”s, individuals with learning and behaving needs were separated from the general public and received their education in institutional settings. A segregated special education system existed both in North America and elsewhere, that paralleled the regular education system. Educational programming for students with special needs initially was based on four assumptions of special education as summarized by Skrtic (1995):

- a) “Student disability is a pathological condition” (p. 210): any learning or behaving problem lies with the student versus the instruction or another ecological factor.
- b) “Differential diagnosis is objective and useful” (p. 210): identification or labeling of the learning or behaving problem(s) is beneficial for prescribing interventions.
- c) “Special education is a rationally conceived and coordinated system of services that benefits diagnosed students” (p. 210): a disability specific system of services and supports that is rigid, routine oriented and standardized
- d) “Progress in special education is a rational-technical process of incremental improvements in conventional diagnostic and instructional practices” (p. 210): fine-tuning of the system is made through increased standardization of processes and outcomes, further specification of professional roles and through more precise student classification.

By removing students with special learning and behaviour needs from regular classes, the teachers in those classes were able to teach more homogeneous groups of students and thus the idea of “teaching to the middle” was practiced and accepted (Sapon-Shevin, 1996). Although the belief existed that teachers were able to teach this homogeneous group better, in reality, it contributed to their deskilling as it limited the range of student needs in their classrooms. It was not until the 90’s, when the literature began to show that limited benefits were evident for students placed in special education classes (Reschly, 1996) that a rationale for educating students with special needs in integrated settings was proposed to ensure their normalized transition to the community. Considerable dialogue, changes in legislation and new research contributed to the development of a justification to move students from segregated settings to inclusive ones.

As data began to show that there were limited educational benefits for students with special needs who were being educated in self-contained classes, (Reschly, 1996) a decline in special education schools and classes occurred. This shift, which transpired in the late 80’s and 90’s, required classroom teachers to deal with the students they had not had to teach in the past and through no fault of their own, without the necessary skills to teach them. This reform movement signified the decline of segregation and labeling, yet it did not end the necessity for specialized service delivery, supports, services and resources in integrated classrooms (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994). To assist with this new concept, a continuum of placements and a cascade of services were identified, which involved some mainstreaming and some “pulling-out” of students with special needs for specialized instruction. This “pull-out” model of service delivery encouraged schools to serve students using a combination of resource rooms and regular

classrooms (Bassett & Smith, 1996). Although an improvement over segregation, it still tended to locate students' learning and behaviour problems within the students, supporting Skrtic's first assumption, and absolving the classroom teachers of some of the responsibility for varying their instructional practices. The expectation of some classroom teachers was that the special education or resource teacher would "fix" the students and then return them to their classroom. "Pull-out" programs did not work well for most students as they sometimes resulted in the fragmentation of instruction when the students came and went from the classroom (Brownlie, Feniak & Schnellert, 2006; Lieberman, 1996).

Many researchers lamented that inclusive education needed to be viewed as part of a broader agenda to unify school resources and to integrate the programs of curriculum and student services in order that all students benefited (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Johnson & Pugach, 1996; Laycock & Gable, 1991; Lieberman, 1996; Lipsky & Gartner, 1996). In support of this advocacy, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) position on Inclusive education (2009, p.1) states that "Inclusive education is based on the right of all learners to a quality education...it seeks to develop the full potential of every individual. The ultimate goal of inclusive quality education is to end all forms of discrimination and foster social cohesion."

Inclusive education as defined in the literature is about values and principles; it signifies the end of labeling, of special education and of special classes; it is about the kind of citizenship and education that is valued by our society (Evans & Lunt, 2002; Fuchs & Fuchs; 1994). The UNESCO position and the literature on special education completed in the last 15 years

supports the notion that inclusion is valued in our global society and that the movement from exclusion to inclusion is a validated one.

### *History of Special Education in Manitoba*

#### *A Chronology of Events*

Locally, education in Manitoba shifted as the concept of inclusion became more prominent, more accepted and valued. A chronology of change follows.

Prior to the amendment to the Public Schools Act in October, 2005, students with special needs in Manitoba did not participate fully in the education environment. During the 1950's and 1960's, children and youth who were identified as having a mental handicap were excluded from public school and were allowed to attend the Kinsmen Centre. This centre focused on the instruction of functional academics and assembly line type of work skills. In 1967, Bill 16 allowed children with mental handicaps into public school and required school divisions to assume responsibility for educating students with special needs. At that time, several separate schools and classrooms were created for students with special needs. In 1976, Bill 58, which supported the integration of students with special needs into regular classes was passed by the government but was never proclaimed into law. Low incidence, student-specific funding was introduced in Manitoba to support students with special needs in schools in the 1980's. In 1981, the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms was proclaimed. From this proclamation, each province established its own educational goals and priority documents. In 1987, the Manitoba Human Rights Code was passed and the Policy and Procedural Guidelines for the Education of Students with Special Education needs in the Public School System was introduced in 1989 (MECY, 2004). Each of these milestones helped to move our education system from

segregation to inclusion. In 2005, the public schools amendment act was proclaimed, which solidified the rights of all students to appropriate educational programming in their catchment schools. Advocacy groups and parent organizations rallied for and obtained these changes to Manitoba's education system which further demonstrate that inclusion is valued by provincial policy makers and the general society. A timeline of events is depicted in figure 1.

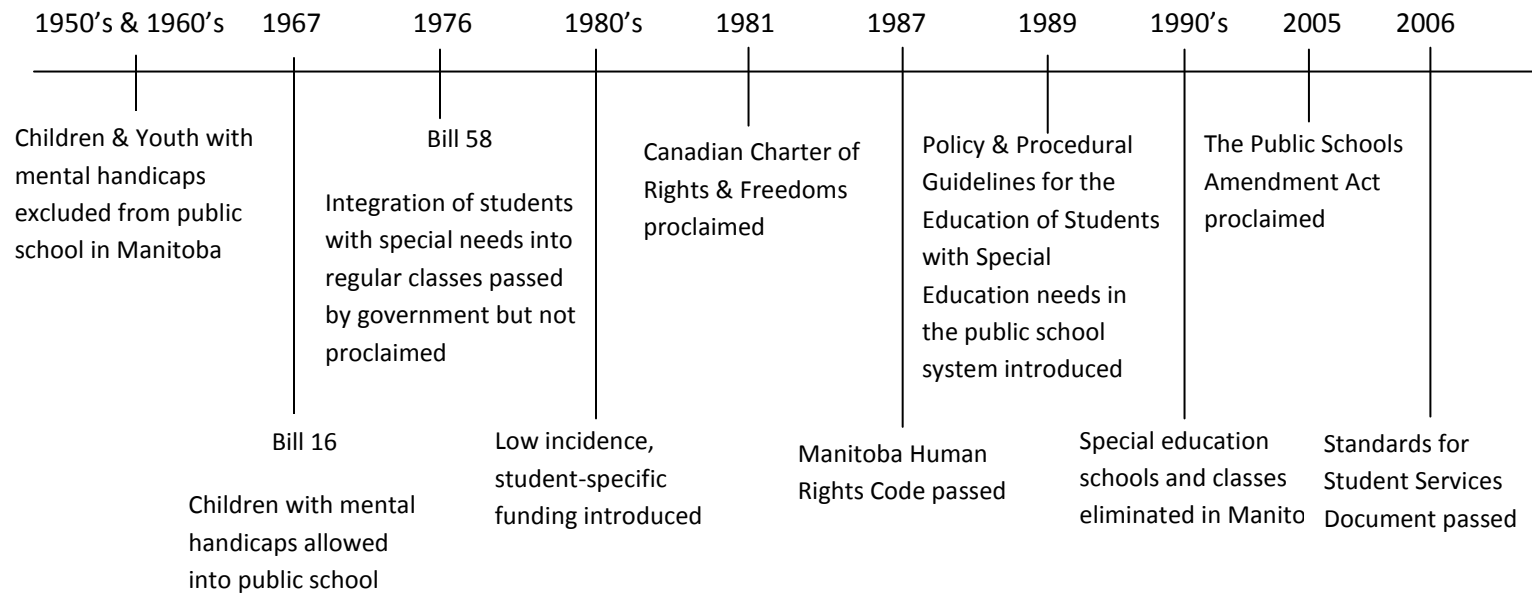
### *A Shift in Service Delivery*

A climate of change was created, in part by legislation and the work of advocacy groups, and in part by the diversity of the learning and behaving needs of the students who were entering the educational system in Manitoba and across the country. The re-allocation of resources to accommodate this de-institutionalization and integration of students with special needs occurred in Manitoba schools at varying rates. This section will summarize that shift.

To support the notion of inclusion at a school-based level, the service delivery options for students with special needs in Manitoba changed with this changing legislation. In the 70's and 80's, with the existence of special education schools and classes, a perception of "teaching expertise" existed for teachers who taught in these schools. Although a few school divisions in Manitoba continued to create and promote self-contained, segregated classrooms, most moved to a combined model of service delivery with students with special needs spending some time in the classroom and some time in the resource room. The expertise of those teachers who taught in special education schools and classes was utilized in the public system as they became the special education teachers who worked with students in the resource rooms.

Figure 1

*Timeline of Events to Appropriate Educational Programming*



This concept of mainstreaming was seen as a progressive reform in Manitoba schools when it was developed in the 1990's and was an improvement over self-contained classes and schools, however some parent and community advocacy organizations challenged schools to move beyond offering parallel programming for students with special needs. They wanted schools to create cultures where every student felt a sense of belonging and where service delivery and classroom instruction supported all students in the regular classroom without the need for "pull-out".

To accommodate this shift in programming, in the 1980's provincial funding was made available for students who required extensive supports as determined via a comprehensive needs assessment. Students with high incidence disabilities (learning disabilities, attention deficit disorder, mild/moderate cognitive disabilities, mild/moderate physical disabilities, etc.) were not identified or tracked and they were not allocated student specific funding, but rather school divisions were given a block grant of money, based on their enrollment, to support the learning needs of these students. Categorical funding support was available for students with special needs who had low-incidence disabilities and who required individual instructional support for a major part of the day (severe/profound multiple disabilities, severely psychotic, severely autistic, deaf/hard-of-hearing, severely visually impaired/blind, severe/profound emotional/behavioural disorder). This funding process continues to be in place today. Schools are required to complete a funding application for each student who qualifies for the support. Student-specific funding dollars are allocated at level II (LII) - (\$8,565) or level III (LIII) - (\$19,055) based on the severity of the disability and the extent of the involvement by the school and community agencies. Schools determine the best way to utilize the funding to

support appropriate educational programming for the student, although in most situations, the funding is used to hire teaching assistants. Similar systems of funding exist in most provinces in Canada. The use of teaching assistants will be discussed later in this chapter.

In the 1990's, it was reported that the number of students with special learning and behaving needs in Manitoba who would be educated in regular classrooms would grow markedly (Freeze, 1995; Minke & Bear, 1996). Local evidence supports this prediction. Data from one school division in Manitoba regarding the number of students in that division who qualify for student – specific funding (low incidence support) shows that the number has grown markedly in the past six years. It is summarized in table 1. Although only the growth from one school division is reported in the table, the trend is a province-wide phenomenon and concern has been expressed regarding the increase in the number of students with special needs across the province (Manitoba Education, 1999). The Auditor General's report on special needs education (Bellringer, 2012) indicates that, "between 2000/01 and 2009/10, enrolment for student-specific needs funding increased 86%, from 3,850 to 7,156 students...".

These historical changes in Manitoba's education system support the acceptance of inclusion and the desire of many Manitoba schools to implement inclusionary practices. The specific steps to get there, however, have not been articulated.



Table 1

*Number of Students with Student-Specific Funding – Data From One School Division: 2004 - 2009*

| Year | Number of students with funding |
|------|---------------------------------|
| 2004 | 363                             |
| 2005 | 437                             |
| 2006 | 478                             |
| 2007 | 555                             |
| 2008 | 605                             |
| 2009 | 635                             |

### *The Use of Teaching Assistants*

Over the past 30 years, educators in Manitoba have shifted their thinking about programming for students with special needs from that of segregation to one of inclusion. This section will build on the chronology of events by highlighting the role of teaching assistants in the inclusion of students with special needs.

In Manitoba, it is somewhat of a foregone conclusion that the way to include students with special needs is to assign a teaching assistant. With increased pressure from legislation and advocacy groups to provide appropriate educational programming for all students, it is important to scrutinize our province's increasing reliance on teaching assistants and some researchers consider alternative solutions (Giangreco, M., Yuan, S., McKenzie, B., Cameron, P. & Fialka, J., 2005; Giangreco, M., Broer, S. & Edelman, S., 1999). In the same way that separate

schools and classes served a purpose as we began to integrate students with special needs into regular classes, the use of teaching assistants has served as a first step towards inclusion.

Assigning a teaching assistant to support students with special needs has become the primary service delivery model to operationalize inclusion. This dominant and growing practice has been driven by the categorical funding model in Manitoba and has become an expectation of funding by both teachers and parents. The use of teaching assistants in Manitoba is wide spread enough that Manitoba Education published a document outlining their role in Manitoba Schools, (Manitoba Education, 2009). Since the assignment of a teaching assistant is based on student characteristics, it puts an emphasis on what is wrong with the student, which perpetuates Skrtic's (1995) assumptions and limits the consideration of other contributing components such as the characteristics of the school, the classroom and the teacher. In spite of the popularity of the use of teaching assistants, "the professional literature is nearly devoid of student outcome data as it pertains to the utilization of paraprofessionals " (Giangreco, 2002, p. 3). Little data exists to show that teaching assistant support results in increased academic and behavioural success for students with special needs. In fact, the literature has shown that using teaching assistants has undesirable effects (French 2003; Giangreco & Broer, 2005; Giangreco, 2002 & 2003; Giangreco, Edelman, Broer & Doyle, 2001; Giangreco et al. 1999). Although the intent in assigning teaching assistants to students with special needs is a positive one, sometimes classroom teachers abdicate their instructional responsibility for the student to the teaching assistant, which is not ethically sound (French, 2003; Giangreco, 2002 & 2003). This relinquishing of instructional ownership results in teaching assistants who feel that they have sole responsibility for the students. They sometimes make curricular

accommodations, liaise with other professional staff and communicate with the family with limited support from the teacher (Giangreco et al. 2001). In addition, students with special needs sometimes are seated at the periphery of the class where there is room for the teaching assistant who supports them to sit. This positioning separates the student from the rest of the class causing stigmatization, an interference with peer relations and promotes less teacher involvement (Giangreco et al. 2005; Giangreco, 2003; Giangreco et al. 2001; Giangreco et al. 1999). The use of teaching assistants has assisted many schools to include students with special needs in regular classes, yet if the new mission of schools is to be achieved, some researchers are suggesting that alternative models need to be studied.

#### *Students with EBD*

There is an extensive body of research outlining the challenges of including students with emotional and behavioural issues in regular classrooms (Eber, Sugai, Smith & Scott, 2002; Mayer, 1995). Thus, when considering the inclusion of students with special needs, students identified as having emotional and behavioural disorders (EBD) need to be noted as they sometimes are identified as the exception to the practice of inclusion (Eber et al. 2002). This section will build on the information related to the use of teaching assistants.

Like other students with special needs, students identified as EBD, are most likely to receive supports and services from teaching assistants (Bradley, Doolittle and Bartolotta, 2008) and some researchers have suggested that students with EBD are best served in segregated programs (Cheney & Muscott, 1996; Harrington -Lueder, 1995; Kauffman, Bantz & McCullough, 2002). As the concerns related to the assignment of teaching assistants and the use of segregated classrooms were reviewed earlier in this chapter, consideration for alternative

models of support for students identified as EBD have been suggested by some authors. For example, Mayer (1995) recommends that school personnel create an environment that promotes pro-social behaviour and where academics are delivered to address the individual needs of all students versus the use of self-contained classrooms and teaching assistants. This statement mirrors that made by Fullan, Hill and Crevola (2006) at the beginning of this chapter.

### *Models of Service Delivery*

#### *Introduction*

The Manitoba Special Education Review (1999) identified three major themes upon which the foundation for an inclusive service delivery model could be built:

- a) Equity – recognizing that different students require different supports, services and programming in order to access the opportunities to achieve success
- b) Capacity – understanding that student success is grown by building on their strengths and supporting their challenges; understanding that the success of students is dependent on the capacity of the staff to provide appropriated educational programming for all students
- c) Community – knowing that a sense of belonging is a prerequisite for successful student learning and behaving.

Some progress already has been made towards inclusive service delivery in Manitoba that incorporates these three components. Advocacy, legislation and dialogue have led to multiple changes in our education system, which has been detailed in this chapter. However, in order to highlight the components of service delivery that require improvement and also those good practices that exist currently, a discussion of school-based service delivery follows.

## *School-based Service Delivery*

### *The model.*

In Manitoba, as the learning needs of students became more diversified, different configurations of collaborative service delivery models evolved to support classroom teachers. In spite of the myriad of service delivery options outlined in the literature there was and continues to be an absence of comparative studies of their effectiveness. As a result, choosing appropriate models for service delivery was difficult here and elsewhere (Laycock & Gable, 1991; Lipsky & Gartner, 1996).

The service delivery model that was and continues to be implemented in most Manitoba schools involves three stages:

1. Classroom teachers teaching the curriculum to a heterogeneous group of students with diverse learning and behaving needs. For most students, the use of good teaching practices being employed by these classroom teachers, like differentiated instruction/assessment and adaptations supports them well and they achieve success.
2. For some students, the classroom teacher notices a disconnect between their learning and behaving and the classroom instruction and expectations. A referral to the resource teacher is made and consultation, collaboration and problem-solving occurs. Instructional interventions are suggested to the teacher and/or pull-out for remediation occurs with the student. The strategies put in place at this stage are effective for many students.
3. However, for a few students, the disconnect continues. These students are referred for specialized assessment by qualified practitioners. Once formalized assessments are

complete, instructional interventions are suggested to the teacher and/or pull-out for remediation and/or referral to a specialized program occurs for the student.

By implementing the recommendations of resource and clinical staff at each of these stages, classroom teachers have gained more skill in teaching students with diverse needs and the students have been successful. However, in some situations, this model fails to support both the classroom teacher and the student.

*Some challenges.*

The problems that sometimes result at each of the three stages in the Manitoba service delivery model and their relation to Skrtic's (1995) four assumptions of special education are summarized here. In spite of the many successes this model provides, it is evident that its deficiencies grow out of fundamental flaws in our conceptualization of general and special education (Kauffman, 1994; Lipsky & Gartner, 1987).

In stage one, teachers teach the curriculum to a heterogeneous group of students with diverse learning and behaving needs. Although the skill set of many classroom teachers enables them to instruct and assess all students, for some the concept of an average student exists and thus supports the practice of "teaching to the middle" (Sapon-Shevin, 1996). In some schools, good teaching practices are inhibited because of the culture of the school is such that instructional practices that address individual student needs are not practiced or valued (Skrtic, 1995). As a result, the same set of fundamental assumptions about teaching and learning that have characterized past practices are allowed to continue now (Zigmond & Baker, 1995). Fuchs and Fuchs (1994) and Lipsky and Gartner (1996) found that some teachers exhibited a lack of will and capacity to accommodate the learning and behaving needs of all students. Sometimes

teachers focus the teaching and learning process on the curriculum versus the needs of the students. Each of these matters prevents the current model of service delivery from supporting the learning and behaving success of all students.

Some problems also are apparent in stage two of our service delivery model. In this stage, the classroom teacher notices a disconnect between the learning and behaving of some students and the classroom instruction. A referral to the resource teacher is made and consultation, collaboration and problem-solving between the two occurs. The resource teacher suggests instructional interventions to the teacher and/or pull-out for remediation occurs for the student. This stage two process supports three of Skrtic's assumptions: a) Student disability is a pathological condition, b) Differential diagnosis is objective and useful, c) Special education is a rationally conceived and coordinated system of services that benefits diagnosed students. The specific concerns at this stage begin with the referral process. The referral to resource sometimes results in remediation for skill deficits in the student, which neglects the larger problem of the regular classroom learning environment that may not have accommodated the student's needs prior to the referral (Christensen & Dorn, 1997; Lieberman, 1996; Wang, Reynolds & Walberg, 1986). A stigma sometimes is attached to students who are referred; being identified as having special needs is not a valued status (Kliewer & Biklen, 1996; Stainback, Stainback & Ayres, 1996). Sometimes little assistance is received by classroom teachers to implement the recommended classroom interventions resulting in few being tried and some being implemented incorrectly (Walther-Thomas, 1997; Zigmond & Baker, 1995). Finally, the pull-out approach may present additional problems as it tends to attribute poor school performance solely to that of the student (Christensen & Dorn, 1997; Pugach & Lilly,

1984; Wang et al. 1986) and it may reinforce the impression on the part of classroom teachers that students who are referred belong to and are the responsibility of the resource teacher (Peters, 2002).

For a few students, the disconnect between the learning and behaving of the student and the classroom instruction continues and stage three interventions are implemented via a referral for specialized assessment. At this point, instructional interventions are suggested to the teacher by a multi-disciplinary team and/or pull-out for remediation and/or referral to a specialized program occurs for the student. The processes at this stage in our model support all four of Skrtic's assumptions: 1. Student disability is a pathological condition, 2. Differential diagnosis is objective and useful, 3. Special education is a rationally conceived and coordinated system of services that benefits diagnosed students, 4. Progress in special education is a rational-technical process of incremental improvements in conventional diagnostic and instructional practices. Although some teachers and students are served well by the practices used in this stage, others are not. The potential problems that exist are threefold. Some of the measuring instruments used in specialized assessments lack implications and recommendations for instruction (Wang et al. 1986) and the diagnostic assessment and classification procedures are time consuming (Pugach & Lilly, 1984) sometimes resulting in long delays between the initial referral and the communication of results. Finally, if students are removed from the classroom and placed in segregated programs it discourages some teachers from finding multiple, diverse and innovative ways of structuring their teaching (Sapon-Shevin, 1996).

A problem that was identified in stage two of this structure of service delivery and continues to be of concern in stage three is that, although classroom teachers received many



good ideas, they received little actual help implementing the strategies that were recommended (Walther-Thomas, 1997). The basis for this problem relates to the closed classroom structure that exists in education. Historically, educators have taught in separate, isolated classrooms that afforded little opportunity for peer collaboration (Fleming & Monda-Amaya, 2001). Our current model of service delivery continues to operate in a system where individual teachers work in isolation from one another (Wagner et al. 2006). This isolation means that teachers are left on their own to implement the recommendations of support personnel and of specialized assessments, which they sometimes feel inadequately prepared to do (Murphy & Meyers, 2008). Since students with special needs were not always taught in regular classrooms, some classroom teachers do not feel skilled enough to meet their needs adequately, which compounds the problem. Like our educational system, little has changed regarding the ways in which teachers' work is organized (Wagner, et al. 2006). The autonomy that continues to exist for teachers allows for huge variations in teacher quality and effectiveness (Fullan et al. 2006). "There is little doubt that regular education classrooms, as currently constituted and organized, do not meet the educational needs of many students" (Sapon-Shevin, 1996, p. 72). To accommodate the need for classrooms to become more academically and socially responsive settings to meet a wider range of learners increases, several authors have suggested changes in service delivery as one possible solution.

Brownlie et al. (2006) suggest that a collaborative, non-categorical support model is needed where the classroom teacher is central and is involved in the design of how students receive supports. This type of model of supports and services should enable students with special

needs to have success in meeting the outcomes of the curriculum within the regular classroom. Potential components of this reform are reviewed next.

### *Components of School Reform Related to Inclusion*

#### *Introduction*

In Manitoba and across the country, the call for educational reform to move to inclusion began with advocacy and has become more imperative with recent legislation and the new mission of schools. School systems and educators have worked hard to implement inclusive practices that support student success. Many practices have been effective in meeting students' needs, yet the new mission of schools calls for even greater achievement. This chapter will detail the direction that the literature suggests school systems move: to collaborative systems and a coordinated model of service delivery. It will highlight the recommended school reform components and where some of the literature has gaps.

Solutions to the dilemma of school reform that support inclusion and accommodate the learning needs of all students, require educators to think differently and to share the responsibility of educating students with special needs ( Deal & Peterson, 1999; Sindelar, Shearer, Yendol-Hoppey & Liebert, 2006). Fullan et al. (2006) suggest that a new approach which incorporates the essential components of the teaching/learning process into one system is required in order to establish an educational system that results in continuous improvement for all students and meets the demands of our changing world. This concept is echoed by Dorn, Fuchs & Fuchs (1996) and Peters (2002) who suggest that if the intent is for classroom teachers to change their teaching practice to accommodate all learners, then a more collaborative approach is required with a well-articulated and co-ordinated range of services and supports.

The analysis of our current model of service delivery showed that the assumptions of special education might serve as constraints when attempting to build a co-ordinated framework of service delivery that is responsive to all learners. To combat this possible barrier, there are a number of suggestions in the literature on the provision of service delivery that promotes effective learning and behaving opportunities for students with special needs.

#### *Four Areas that Promote Effective Education for All*

In summarizing the educational reform components from the literature that will create a coordinated model of service delivery that is responsive to diversity, four major areas are suggested as a focus: a) instruction, b) classroom environment, c) collaborative networking, and d) structure.

##### *Instruction.*

Several researchers suggest that instruction that is characterized by flexibility, innovation, experimentation and adaptation is what students require to be successful. They suggest that instruction for all students requires that there is a reduction in pull-out and segregated programs and that increased access to effective and comprehensive curriculum and instruction that considers the social, academic and physical needs of students is the direction to be taken (Cook, Gerber & Semmel, 1997; Creasey & Walther-Thomas, 1996; Freeze & Rampaul, 1991; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Gerber, 1988; Hunt, P., Hirose-Hatae, A., Doering, K., Karasoff, P. & Goetz, L., 2000; Kauffman, 1989, 1994; Peters, 2002; Pugach & Lilly, 1984; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Wang et al. 1986; Zigmond & Baker, 1995).

##### *Classroom environment.*

Research in the second area, classroom environment, suggests that school and classroom environments establish a sense of community where the learning and behaving of all students is maximized so that the students can master the basic skills in academic subjects while becoming confident in their ability to learn in regular classrooms (Freeze & Rampaul, 1991; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Hunt et al. 2000; Peters, 2002).

#### *Collaborative networking.*

Collaborative networking is the third area. The literature in this area supports a merger between curriculum and student services to form a comprehensive, unified system designed to meet the unique needs of every student via a collaborative, problem-solving network that provides direct and immediate assistance at the building level (Creasey & Walther-Thomas, 1996; Fleming & Monda-Amaya, 2001; Freeze, Bravi & Rampaul, 1989; Hunt et al. 2000; Kauffman, 1989; Laycock & Gable, 1991; Nelson & Smith, 1991; Pugach & Lilly, 1984; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Wang et al. 1986; Zigmond & Baker, 1995).

#### *Structure.*

Research in the fourth area, structure, suggests a re-conceptualization of organizational structures and resources, roles and responsibilities and accountability. This reorganization would allow professionals within a school system to combine their expertise to create a more responsive and resourceful system (Creasey & Walther-Thomas, 1996; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Hunt et al. 2000; Murawski, 2006).

Much of this information stems from research done in the United States. However, locally, the Manitoba Student Services Review (1999) found similar results to support the learning and

behaving of all students in their identification of the three components of equity, capacity and community presented earlier in the chapter. It is with these criteria at the forefront that researchers, locally and internationally, suggest schools reform their service delivery to accommodate the needs to all students.

### *Change Agents to Support Inclusion*

Specific school reform components are identified by several authors. Deal and Peterson (1999) identify organizational culture as critical to school change. In 2006, the National Audit Offices' Report associated improving school leadership, teaching standards and classroom management with successful change, (Fullan, 2006). Other researchers on educational change have focused on the need to improve school leadership as a catalyst for educational change (Fink, 2005; Fullan, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Dylan (2008) indicates that teacher quality makes the greatest difference and Fullan (2006) and Wagner et al. (2006) state that reform strategies need to be reframed to focus on teacher capacity building and accountability to enable teachers to help all students meet more rigorous standards. Creasey & Walther-Thomas (1996) recommended that school reform efforts focus on changing many traditional aspects of service delivery in schools: organizational structures, student grouping practices and teacher roles and responsibilities.

### *Seven Elements of School Improvement*

Many authors propose components required for school reform, as listed above, and some suggest specific steps for school improvement. Peter Holly (2003), identifies seven elements of school improvement: a) getting focused, b) creating a shared agenda, c) follow-through –

sustaining changes over time, d) grounding our change efforts in data, e) data show our progress, f) continuous improvement in the self-renewing school, and g) creating a data-driven school culture.

*Getting focused* involves the application of shifting, prioritizing, clustering, chunking, aligning and sequencing in order to draw attention to a manageable set of priority goals. It involves substance, what you will do, and allegiance, who will do it. To have focus, then, is to have a *shared agenda*, which is Holly's second element. He suggests that this agreement should develop through a participatory process where everyone contributes to the decision.

The importance of long-term commitment and the need to make adjustments are critical to successful change; this *follow-through – sustain changes over time* is the third element and involves monitoring progress and applying gathered feedback. In the fourth element, *grounding our change efforts in data*, Holly suggests that success criteria and data collection be used to select strategies and to support needs. Since data both drives the school improvement plan and helps to ensure that plans remain focused, Holly identifies the fifth element as *data shows our progress*.

With his sixth element, Holly says that, "the components and principles of student learning...are the same as those of organizational learning," (Holly, 2003 p. 91). *Continuous improvement in the self-renewing school* suggests using data to inform educate and create new knowledge in the school staff as a whole and also to improve individual staff learning. *Creating a data-driven school culture* is the seventh element and involves the establishment of an infrastructure that is well organized, interconnected and uses effective team processing skills.

Holly suggests that the quality of the teamwork within the school will determine the success of the change process.

There exists in the literature, suggestions for both components to stimulate school change and also steps that school leaders might follow for school improvement, but the existence of detailed literature and concrete processes to assist schools to become more inclusive and to meet the demands of the new mission of schools do not.

### *Gaps in the Research*

The literature on the need for restructuring and redeployment of personnel in order for schools to become more inclusive is available to schools (Murphy & Meyers, 2008; Wagner et al. 2006), yet few concrete suggestions regarding the specifics of that change process exist. The need for school reform is agreed upon in the research, but how to turnaround schools is a new idea in education and very little data is available to assist schools with that change process and no consensus regarding the process has emerged (Murphy & Meyers, 2008). It appears to be relatively easy to ascertain the attributes required for successful school reform from current literature on the subject, but how to put them into practice seems to be lacking. Linking this reform to inclusion is almost non-existent.

### *Summary*

My review of the literature has highlighted some of the critical findings related to school reform and service delivery. I chose to discuss the literature surrounding these two major issues as they relate to inclusion and followed with their exploration in a Manitoba context. The review highlighted the formal statements issued by UNESCO and the legislation in Canada and

Manitoba which provide a clear definition of the desired culture of our educational system. Data was provided to show that the concept of inclusion is valued in our global society, in Canada and in Manitoba. The chronology of educational change in Manitoba verified that schools in Manitoba have tried to change their structure and system of service delivery to reflect the changes in legislation and to demonstrate their commitment to inclusion; however, the review demonstrated that although our current model of service delivery is meeting the needs of many students, it is not meeting the needs of all. Some advocates of school reform to support inclusion view our current model of service delivery as an extension of an uncaring public system (Andrews, 2000). I drew attention to the educational reform strategies which are becoming more prominent, however, I stressed that they remain at a theoretical level with few concrete examples. Murphy and Meyers (2008) indicate that reform efforts in education have not been especially well defined.

In spite of this lack of direction in the literature, some schools have moved from segregation to inclusion successfully and have increased the achievement rate of the students in their schools. They have been successful by utilizing strategies that meet the diverse needs of all learners such as the use of differentiated instruction and assessment, flexible groupings, planning and problem-solving strategies, co-teaching, school-wide supports and the re-allocation of resources (Brownlie et al. 2006; Friend & Cook, 2004; Kauffman et al. 2002; Mayer, 2002; Tomlinson & Edison, 2003; Wagner & Davis, 2006). By focusing on the reform process used by these schools and by detailing their path, other schools will be able to proceed in this direction. My study provides this data via a case study examination which describes and analyzes the reform process used to transform one school system into a more inclusive one. It



clarifies for others the specific steps used to shift a school community from segregation to inclusion, the type of culture required to support an inclusive model of service delivery and the specific strategies that this school staff employed to enable all students to be supported in an inclusive setting. This study will stand as a guide for future reform.

## CHAPTER III

### Research Design

#### *Introduction*

##### *Preamble*

In the previous two chapters, I examined the new mission of schools and identified the need for school reform with a consideration for alternative school-based service delivery models that support inclusion. This chapter outlines the process I used to study school reform and service delivery. It describes how a case study was used to identify some of the missing information about how to operationalize the notion of inclusion. It identifies the role of the researcher, the participants and research site and the procedures that were used to collect and analyze the data.

##### *Research Design*

The focus of this study is inclusive service delivery where school-based service delivery accommodates the needs of all students in regular classrooms. This qualitative study illuminates the change process a school staff used to move to an inclusive model of study. The procedure of inquiry is a case study which was used to explore the actions, culture and activities of the school staff in one middle school. This case study is retrospective in nature as it is based on the examination of existing data; on events that already have occurred. A retrospective case study design allowed me to formulate ideas about possible associations and investigate potential relationships as I garnered an in depth understanding of the reform process used to transform this school system to a more inclusive one. Through the examination

of the actions, culture and activities of this school's staff, the relationship between these areas and school reform related to inclusive service delivery has been ascertained.

The study examines the specific steps used to shift this school staff from one model to another, the type of school culture required to support a new model of service delivery and the strategies that the school staff employed to support their students. This case study is a holistic inquiry that investigated the topic of inclusion within the setting of an urban middle school. It involved the collection of in depth and detailed data from focus group interviews and documents that were rich in content. By looking backwards in time, by interviewing staff about their recollections of changes over time and by examining student discipline and achievement data gathered over several years, I gained a sharpened understanding of the reform process used by this school staff. It is an instrumental study as it serves to illuminate the topic of inclusive service delivery within an urban middle school setting.

### *Research Site and Participants*

#### *Introduction*

In order to provide insight and to develop an in depth exploration of inclusive school-based service delivery, I purposefully selected a specific middle school as the research site for this case study. For the past six years, I have observed this school's reform process and the establishment of an inclusive service delivery model there. The premise of the service delivery model in this school is that by providing an effective and instructionally rich environment that incorporates the development of appropriate social skills, the academic performance and social behaviours of all students, including those with identified special needs, will improve. In this

school's model, all students are taught in regular classrooms without student specific teacher assistant support.

### *Site*

The school is located in an urban area, which is marked by considerable social and cultural diversity. Many students have families who are recent immigrants to Canada; they come from all corners of the globe. The neighbourhood has been described as among the most socio-economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods in the city (Brownell, Roos, Fransoo, Guevremenot, MacWilliam, Derksen, Dik, Bogdanovic & Sirksi, 2004). Many of the parents of the school's students are unemployed, or underemployed. A high number of homes in the school's neighbourhood have lone parent families or have children being raised by grandparents or extended families. A considerable number of students come to school each morning without having eaten breakfast. According to Brownell, et al.'s study (2004), only about 37% of the adults in this community have completed high school as compared to 81% in high socio-economic neighbourhoods. Historically, the school's students have had a high rate of behavior-related office referrals and suspensions, with a considerable number of students failing to find academic success.

This middle school employs 24 staff and has approximately 300 students enrolled in it. The composition of divisionally funded staff is: a) one principal, b) one half-time vice-principal, c) two resource teachers, d) one counselor and e) 19.5 classroom teachers. At the time of this writing, there were nine students receiving provincial categorical funding LII and two receiving LIII funding. A description of funding categories can be found in the appendix.

## *Participants*

The participants for this study included any school staff, (principal, vice-principal, counselor(s), resource teacher(s), teacher(s)), who were willing to be a part of the focus group interviews. Staff have been instrumental in facilitating and implementing the reform process at this school over the past six years and thus had both the breadth and depth of understanding of their school's reform to contribute significantly to the data required by this study. I felt that the staff at this site were able to articulate best the reform process that successfully moved this school from segregation to inclusion.

I chose to conduct a study of this middle school so that I could describe, analyze and interpret the patterns of behaviour and beliefs that developed over time as the staff in this school changed their model of service delivery for students. I wanted to answer these research questions to provide an understanding of school reform related to inclusion:

- a) What specific actions did this school staff take to move to an inclusive model of service delivery?
- b) What aspects of the school's culture – beliefs, leadership, structures, processes – were important in facilitating the move from segregation to inclusion?
- c) What strategies did this school staff employ to ensure that all students were successfully supported in inclusive settings and what data exists to support student success?

The staff in this school have worked through this change process over several years. Although there were no direct benefits for their participation in this study, a detailing of their behaviours and beliefs over time would establish a detailed record of their journey. No third

parties were involved and the participants were not compensated for their participation. The identities of the participants were known to me and to each other, but were not used in any documentation and all identifying information regarding the school was kept out of the study.

### *Data Collection*

#### *Process*

I engaged in extensive data collection using both face-to-face interviewing and document study. Access to this site and to the participants was sought using the school division's identified approval process. A letter requesting approval to undertake the study was sent to the chairperson of the school division's ethics committee in September. Enclosed in the letter of request was the ethics approval document from the university, a detailed description of the study, an invitation to staff to participate in the study, a consent form for participants and letters of request to the administrator of the school and the superintendent of the school division (for access to student data). The processes that I used to protect the anonymity of the staff and research site also were detailed. All of these documents can be found in the appendix.

I received approval from the division's ethics committee later in the month of September and proceeded to contact the administrator of the middle school to gain permission to approach the staff. With that permission granted, I attended the school staff meeting in October to present my research study and to encourage participants to volunteer. At that time, I fully explained what was expected of them and that this study did not involve any deception of the participants nor were there any risks to them. Participation was optional. The script I used to request participants can be found in the appendix.

## *Focus Group Interviews*

### *Process.*

Four staff members responded to my call to participate in the focus group interviews; three of the four had been at the school prior to the reform process and one started after the first year. Two of the participants were school-based student services staff (resource/counseling) and two were teachers. I arranged two dates and locations for the focus group interviews that were at a convenient time and location for them; one in November and one in December. Staff who committed to the study were required to give written consent prior to their participation in the focus group interviews and they signed a pledge of confidentiality. The focus group agenda included an introduction to the group, a review of the purpose of the study and its components, a reminder of their voluntary participation and a review of the structure for the interview. I provided a definition of my role as a researcher and the boundaries of the research relationship. An assurance of confidentiality as indicated on the consent form was made clear. Copies can be found in the appendix.

The two focus group discussions each required about two hours of time. The participants were told that they could refuse to answer any questions and that they would be free to withdraw from the discussion at any time if they so chose. I let the participants know that a summary of the results of the study would be made available to them if they requested it. The focus group discussions were recorded on chart paper and were used to develop a historical scan of the school's reform process. At the end of the focus groups, staff were given

the opportunity to continue the conversation via a follow-up interview; this component was not a requirement of their participation.

As my intent was to seek an in depth description of this school's reform process as they moved to an inclusive model of service delivery, participants were asked to discuss details of their experiences over the past six years. I began my data collection process with two focus group interviews for two reasons. The group provided a collection of extensive data based on my questions and the interaction among the interviewees offered insight into the dynamics and patterns of behaviour that had been established in this school over time. The two focus group interviews permitted staff, who volunteered to participate, to describe detailed information about their actions, strategies and culture. The first focus group involved a review of the PATH that the school completed in 2005 and the second included the creation of a historical scan which provided the details for the data collected in the first session.

PATH is a person-centered planning and goal setting tool using graphic facilitation to map out a vision for a desirable future for an individual or a group of people. PATH is an acronym for Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope. PATHs are facilitated by two people, both trained in completing PATHs. The PATH process usually takes about two to three hours (with a break for refreshments). In schools, PATHs are often used to support a student's transition from early years to middle years, from middle years to senior years, and from senior years to the community. They also can be used by organizations for strategic planning, (which was the case for this middle school), or by individuals and families for personal goal setting. The process was developed by Marsha Forrest, Jack Pearpoint and John O'Brien and is recognized globally as a valuable tool for individual and organizational planning.



Both discussions were recorded in a written format on large chart paper which was later transcribed. Responses that were recorded during the focus group interviews were not attributed to any individual participant as no identifying information was written down with the response. Any references to individual persons on the school staff were attributed to their role in the school and not to their person. I did not audiotape the focus group interviews as the acoustics would not have been conducive to taping the discussion. These focus group interviews yielded good information as the interviewees had worked together on this model for several years. Some uncomfortable topics did arise during our conversation. I was grateful that a significant level of trust existed between me and the participants which enabled a high level of participant disclosure. Follow-up interviews were offered to those staff interested in continuing the dialogue, although none requested it.

*The Questions.*

The two focus group interviews revolved around these guiding questions:

Focus group #1:

1. As you reflect on your previous PATH, what surprises you?
2. How did you determine what changes needed to occur and what were they?
3. What new programs, approaches and/or instructional philosophies were initiated and implemented as a result of this PATH?
4. What is different now?
5. Who/what had a major influence on the school's direction since this PATH?
6. What were the steps you undertook to make the change process successful?
7. What insights were gained during these events?

Focus group #2:

1. Describe this school prior to the implementation of the reform process?
2. What were the major crises, controversies or conflicts that signaled that a change was required?
3. What events have occurred over the past five years that have been significant for you in this reform process?
4. What changes have occurred in instruction; the use of time/materials?
5. Which of the events were key turning points in the reform process?
6. How did you use data to inform your decisions – both school-wide and in the classroom?
7. How did you move from your initial reality/conditions to the future – where you are now?
8. How did you overcome resistors to change to generate engagement by staff?
9. What is the story that needs to be shared about these events?
10. Where will you go from here?

In identifying my focus questions, I tried to follow a focused conversation method supported by the Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) by identifying objective, reflective, interpretive and decisional questions. I then connected each of my focus group questions to one of the three questions I wanted to answer in my study. This link is shown as a chart in the appendix. When I received data and documents from the school administrator, I also plotted them in relation to the proposed research questions. The data from the focus groups offered clues as to how I should proceed with the document study.

### *Document Study*

The primary data for this study consisted of the recounting of events as told by the participants via the focus group interviews. Supplementary data was gathered from school documents such as the school's PATH, statistics regarding discipline and academic achievement and the results of a student survey related to their school experience. Any identifying information was removed prior to me receiving access to these documents. These data collection approaches garnered enough information to address the proposed research questions.

### *Storage*

The data collection process occurred over five months and the data gathered from the focus group interviews and the documents were verified by the participants to ensure authenticity of the report. Raw data was held in a locked cabinet in my home and will be destroyed within six weeks of the completion of the defense of this study.

### *Data Analysis*

#### *Analysis of Themes*

The research design for this case study of a specific school followed the process outlined by Bogdan and Biklen (2007). Analysis of the data involved the production of broad themes to generate a consolidated picture of the reform process and ensuing service delivery model. While analyzing my data, I referred to the chart that I had created where I linked my focus group questions to the questions that I wanted this study to answer. This reference helped me to organize my thinking related to the themes for each area. Next, I reviewed the data for regularities and patterns related to my research questions. I analyzed the responses from the

participants and coded them as actions (A), strategies (S) or culture (C). I then recorded all of the responses in each of the three categories on individual slips of paper and organized them using a consensus workshop method developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), (ICA, 1998). To implement this workshop method, I randomly chose 15 comments and looked for pairs that identified similar topics, relationships or ideas. I put a geometric symbol (circle, square, etc.) over each pair so that they formed a column. The symbol allowed me to sort the comments without naming the column. By waiting to name the columns until after all of the comments were placed, it allowed my emerging insight into the themes to grow and change. Any comments that did not fit into a pair, I left to the side of the columns. I took the remaining comments and repeated the process with a slight modification. This time, I either added comments to the existing columns to create clusters, or I began new pairings. I continued to repeat the process until all of the comments were assigned to a cluster. A visual of the process is shown in figure 2.

When naming the clusters, I started with the largest one and worked to the smallest. I looked for key words; the insights behind the comments. I tried to use a noun and a descriptive adjective in the name to try to convey the essence of the cluster of comments. Once all of the clusters were named, I re-read the comments underneath and moved some to other categories where I thought they fit better.

I organized data into file folders and sub folders based on the themes that I identified and then developed a visual model based on the data. I prepared a timeline of events from the data, which highlighted the actions of this school and detailed the key turning points during their reform process. I reported my findings in a narrative manner, using figures and tables that

respond to the research questions identified in the introduction. I needed to return to the staff to seek information to fill in gaps in the data I collected and to verify that my analysis was correct.

### *Analysis of Documents*

I reviewed the PATH the school staff created as well as documents related to student discipline and academic achievement as well as a student survey. When analyzing the PATH, I considered my research questions and how the contents might help to answer them. I considered the impact of the changes over time and when I reviewed the discipline and academic data. The data from the student survey was discussed in relation to the opinions of the focus group participants for congruency in thinking.

### *Discussion*

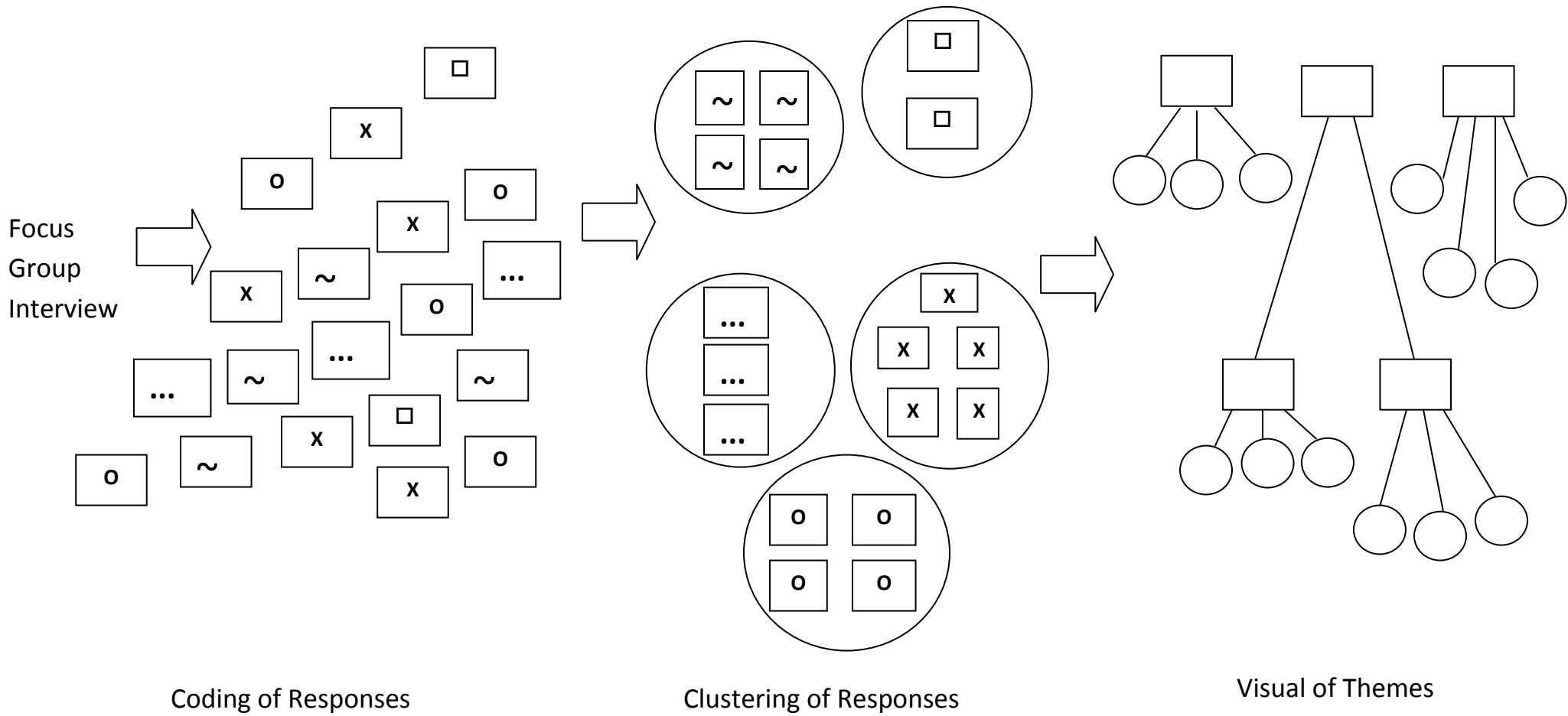
As this school staff's reform process spans several years, the discussion section involves both a chronology of events and experiences and also incorporates links to current research. Conclusions, implications, limitations and recommendations for further leadership and actions were drawn from the data analysis and follow the same flow as the findings.

A summary of the results of the study has been shared with the school staff in order that they have a chronology of their model. For the staff at this school, it provides a unifying story that honours their efforts and celebrates their accomplishments. For others, I believe that an understanding of the reform process used to implement inclusive school-based service delivery has emerged via a detailed investigation of this site, its staff and the processes and

strategies they used to successfully include all students in regular classrooms. It provides a foundation for planning to others interested in school reform that supports inclusion.

Figure 2

*Process Chart for Identification of Themes*



### *Role of the researcher*

Currently, I work as the manager of student services in a large urban school division in Manitoba. I have been an educator for 24 years with teaching experience in rural and urban Manitoba, at early years and at senior years and in regular classrooms and self-contained classrooms and with students who presented with diverse learning and behaving needs. I have been an active advocate for inclusion during my career through my participation and leadership in the Manitoba and Canadian Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) and in the Student Services Administrators Association of Manitoba (SSAAM). I always have been interested in improving the educational experiences for all children. Most recently, I have been involved in an international CEC workgroup charged with developing recommendations for CEC regarding the Council's international roles and responsibilities towards educational access for all and its international presence as a professional organization in special education.

I have worked with the school staff involved in this study in the past and I was known to all of the participants. I have completed some research for this school in the area of co-teaching, positive behaviour supports and school change.

My bias in this research study relates to my beliefs about education. I believe that the goal of education is to support its entire community of learners. I whole-heartedly embrace the philosophy of inclusion, as defined in this study, and in the rights of all individuals to have equal access to all aspects of citizenship. I believe that in all students, there exists the promise of their potentiality. I consider myself an advocate for inclusion and for the rights of students with special learning and behaving needs. I believe that my role in supporting these ideals is to engage in the dialogue needed to do the right things to improve the lives of students. To that



end, I approached this study with optimism; believing that school environments can be created which celebrate and respect diversity and individuality and still foster the self-fulfillment of all students to ensure their continued growth.

## CHAPTER IV

### Analysis of Data

#### *Introduction*

##### *Preamble*

The purpose of this study was to use qualitative research methods to describe and analyze the processes used by one Manitoba middle school staff to move its practice to a school-based service delivery model where the needs of all students were met in regular classrooms. A review of the literature related to inclusion and school-based service delivery demonstrated that there is world-wide attention being focused on this area and that few studies exist which illustrate the reform process used by schools to move from a segregated model of service delivery to an inclusive one. To address this gap in the research, a retrospective case study of one particular middle school was undertaken. Specifically, the study addressed:

- The specific actions this school staff took to move to an inclusive model of service delivery,
- The aspect of the school's culture – beliefs, leadership, structures, processes that were important in facilitating the move from segregation to inclusion, and
- The strategies the school staff employed to ensure that all students were supported successfully in inclusive settings and the data that exists to support student success

The school demographics, a summary of the themes and then an analysis of the themes from the two focus group discussions and the findings from a study of school documents will be presented in this chapter. The themes are presented first because they were determined from the responses of the participants to the focus group questions; the questions were developed to answer my research questions. This data forms the primary source of information for my study. The document study is presented second as the data from those sources was used to supplement that garnered from the interviews.

### *Summary of Themes*

#### *Introduction*

I chose to review the themes from the focus group interviews first because the interview questions were designed to provide data to respond to my research questions. In outlining the themes found in the responses to the focus group questions, I coded the responses in relation to the research questions in my study:

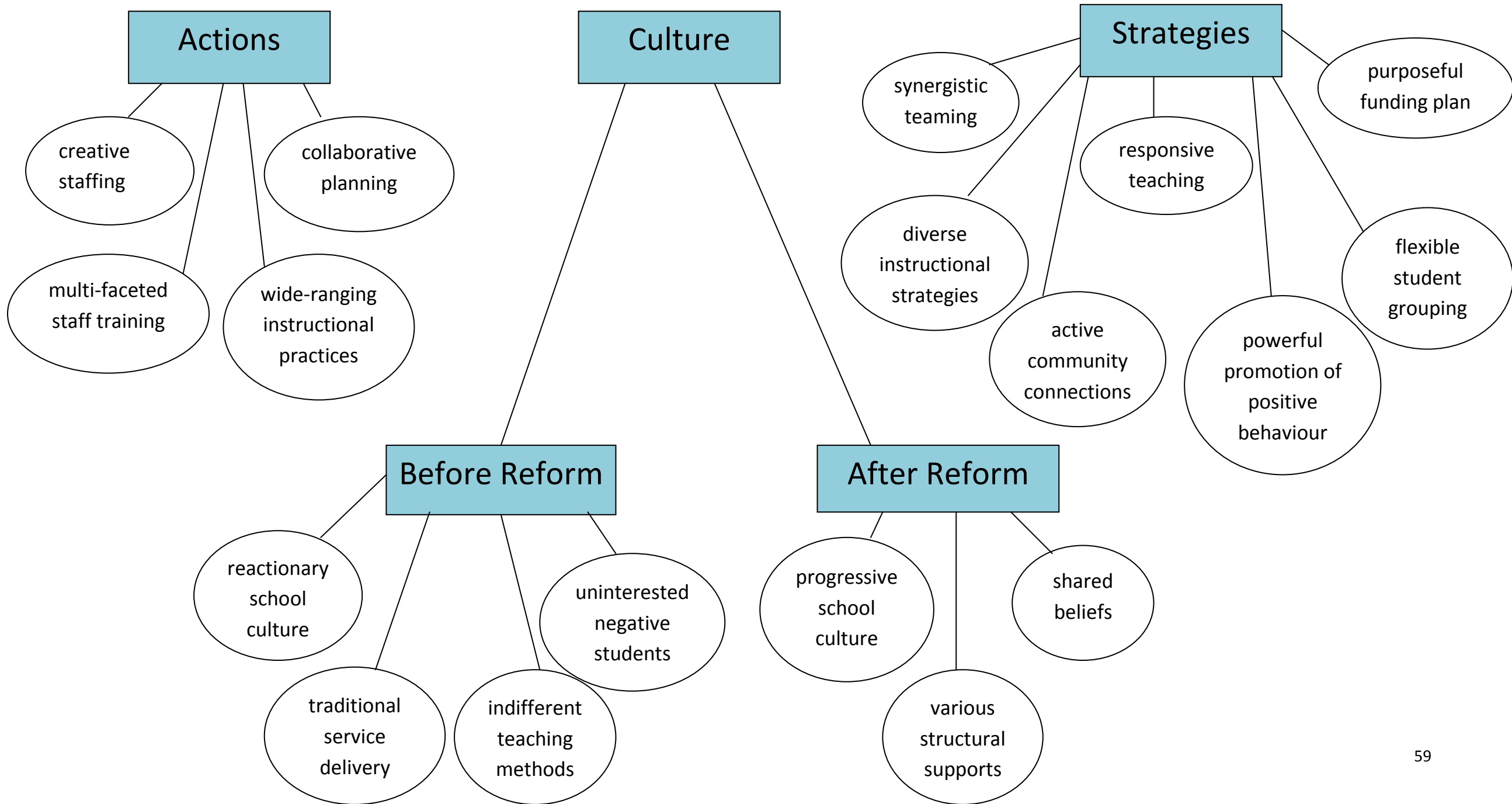
- What specific actions did this school staff take to move to an inclusive model of service delivery?
- What aspects of the school's culture – beliefs, leadership, structures, processes that were important in facilitating the move from segregation to inclusion?
- What strategies did this school staff employ to ensure that all students were supported successfully in inclusive settings and what data exists to support student success?

I referred to the chart that I had created prior to beginning the study where I linked my focus group questions to the three questions related to actions, culture and strategies that I wanted this study to answer. This initial reference helped me to code the responses as either actions, strategies or culture. Then, within each of the three areas of actions, culture and strategies, I looked for themes and sub-themes. To identify the themes, I recorded all of the responses in each of the three categories on individual slips of paper and then organized them using the consensus workshop method developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA), (ICA, 1998). A detailed description of this process is outlined in chapter 3.

I created a visual model of the themes, which is found in figure 3. In this section, I provide a brief listing of the themes from each of the three categories of actions, culture and strategies and identify which focus group questions linked to the three research question areas. Details of the themes are discussed after this short summary.

Figure 3:

Themes



### *Actions*

Focus group questions two and six from the first interview and three and seven from the second link to my first research question and asked participants about the specific actions taken to move their service delivery model from a segregated one to an inclusive one. The broad themes that were found in the actions that shifted the service delivery of the school involved:

- a) creative staffing,
- b) collaborative planning,
- c) multi-faceted staff training and
- d), wide-ranging instructional practices.

### *Culture*

The beliefs, leadership, structures and processes that made up the school's culture all were important aspects in facilitating the move from segregation to inclusion. Focus group questions one, five and seven from the first interview and one, two, five, six, eight and nine from the second interview asked participants about the various aspects of their school culture which helped to answer my second research question. Themes were found in the participants' description of the school before and after the reform.

#### *Before reform.*

The themes found in the responses from the participants which described the school before the reform were as follows:

- a) a reactionary school culture, which was characterized by,

- b) a traditional service delivery, with teachers using,
- c) indifferent teaching methods, to instruct,
- d) uninterested, negative students.

*After reform.*

After reform, the themes in the participants' responses describing their school were

- a) a progressive school culture, which was characterized by
- b) shared beliefs, among the staff who implemented
- c) various structural supports, to support staff and students in the teaching-learning process.

*Strategies*

My third research question involved the strategies used by the staff in the school. In considering those strategies that the staff employed to ensure that all students were supported successfully in inclusive settings, themes emerged from the responses that the participants gave both to the questions related to their new school culture and to questions three and four in the first focus group interview and question four in the second. It became apparent that these strategies that the participants identified were intertwined with what they now considered to be the structure supporting their new school culture. Seven broad themes were evident:

- a) powerful promotion of positive behavior,

- b) active community connections,
- c) purposeful funding plan,
- d) flexible student grouping,
- e) diverse instructional strategies,
- f) responsive teaching
- g) synergistic teaming.

The advantage of using the ICA (1998) workshop method to cluster statements under random geometric symbols is that it forces the naming of the clusters after the sorting process is complete. That step helps to ensure that the identified themes reflect the statements within that specific category. What follows is a more descriptive discussion of the themes found through the focus group interviews.

#### *Four Areas that Promote Effective Education for All Revisited*

Prior to an analysis of the themes, it is important to review the suggestions in the literature on the provision of service delivery that promote effective learning and behaving opportunities for students with special needs. They were initially presented in chapter two and they are referenced in the discussions that follow. Four major areas are suggested as a focus: a) instruction, b) classroom environment, c) collaborative networking, and d) structure. These four areas are discussed in detail in chapter two; a brief summary is provided here.

It is suggested that the first area, instruction, be characterized by flexibility, innovation, experimentation and adaptation in order for students to be successful. Instruction for all



students requires that there is a reduction in pull-out and segregated programs and that increased access to effective and comprehensive curriculum and instruction that considers the social, academic and physical needs of students is the direction to be taken (Cook, Gerber & Semmel, 1997; Creasey & Walther-Thomas, 1996; Freeze & Rampaul, 1991; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Gerber, 1988; Hunt, P., Hirose-Hatae, A., Doering, K., Karasoff, P. & Goetz, L., 2000; Kauffman, 1989, 1994; Peters, 2002; Pugach & Lilly, 1984; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Wang et al. 1986; Zigmond & Baker, 1995).

Research in the second area, classroom environment, suggests that school and classroom environments establish a sense of community where the learning and behaving of all students is maximized so that the students can master the basic skills in academic subjects while becoming confident in their ability to learn in regular classrooms (Freeze & Rampaul, 1991; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Hunt et al. 2000; Peters, 2002).

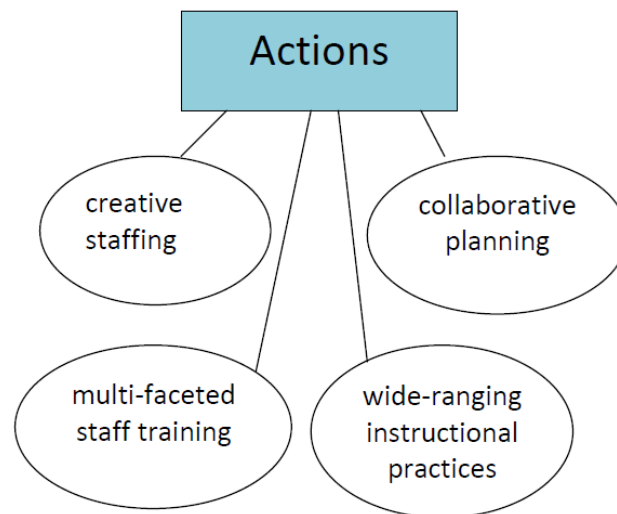
Collaborative networking is the third area. The literature in this area supports a merger between curriculum and student services to form a comprehensive, unified system designed to meet the unique needs of every student via a collaborative, problem-solving network that provides direct and immediate assistance at the building level (Creasey & Walther-Thomas, 1996; Fleming & Monda-Amaya, 2001; Freeze, Bravi & Rampaul, 1989; Hunt et al. 2000; Kauffman, 1989; Laycock & Gable, 1991; Nelson & Smith, 1991; Pugach & Lilly, 1984; Stainback & Stainback, 1984; Wang et al. 1986; Zigmond & Baker, 1995).

Research in the fourth area, structure, suggests a re-conceptualization of organizational structures and resources, roles and responsibilities and accountability. This reorganization

would allow professionals within a school system to combine their expertise to create a more responsive and resourceful system (Creasey & Walther-Thomas, 1996; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994; Hunt et al. 2000; Murawski, 2006).

### *Analysis of Themes*

#### *Action Themes*



During the focus group interviews, the participants listed multiple actions that the staff undertook to move its practice to a school-based service delivery model where the needs of all students were met in regular classrooms, which is my first research question. The four themes that evolved under actions included:

a) creative staffing, b) collaborative planning, c) multi-faceted staff training and d), wide-ranging instructional practices.

Creative staffing involved using the provincial categorical grant funding differently. Rather than continuing with the traditional practice of hiring teaching assistants, this school's administration chose to use the funds to hire more professional staff and to hire student teachers as educational interns in the classroom. The administrator chose to employ some additional qualified teachers and they hired a site-based social worker. A partnership was developed with two local universities which permitted the school administrator to hire the student teachers that the universities placed in their school as interns during the time they were not taking classes. French (2003), Giangreco & Broer, (2005), Giangreco, (2002 & 2003); Giangreco et al. (2001) Giangreco et al. (1999) have shown in their research that the use of teaching assistants to support students with special needs provides limited benefit to student learning and behavior success. By placing more than one teacher in a classroom, students were taught by two trained professionals. The use of student teachers in classrooms offered the students access to a professional-in-training who had received some post-secondary training in education and who knew the curricula. In addition, the student teachers were given the opportunity to practice their craft with a mentoring teacher. Murphy & Meyers (2008) and Wagner et al. (2006) identify a need to restructure and redeploy personnel in order that schools become more inclusive. This middle school staff implemented that practice when they shifted from using teaching assistants to professional staff. The student academic data and student survey data presented in chapter four and discussed later in this chapter support this change as a positive one related to student success. When the four areas of inclusive service delivery are considered, this restructuring of resources, of roles and of responsibilities reflects the components cited in the fourth area – structure.

The collaborative planning theme, the second theme in this area, consisted of a shared leadership model where students and staff were involved in site-based decision making. The details of this theme showed that the school leadership team had a shared vision, that they challenged traditional ideas and that they included divisional staff in their planning for the implementation of change. Fullan (2006), Fink (2005) and Hargreaves & Fink (2006) in their research about change and leadership, identify the school leadership model as being one of the major influences for educational change to be successful. During the focus group interviews, the participants identified the change in leadership as one of the key components to the success of their school change process. By involving staff in the decision-making processes in the school, this school's leadership team was able to foster school-wide support for the proposed changes. Details of the reform process over time, where the change in leadership style is identified, can be found in figure 8.

Dylan Wiliam (2008) talks about teacher skill level being the most influential component of student success. The third theme, multi-faceted staff training, involved a considerable amount of staff training in the area of differentiated instruction and assessment, data collection related to assessment for learning, adaptations and co-teaching. As this school's staff moved towards including all students in regular classrooms, staff realized that their skill sets to support all students was varied. Consensus was reached with the staff regarding their professional learning needs and then both formal and informal training was provided. Both Fullan (2006) and Wagner et al. (2006) indicate that successful reform processes should be framed to focus on teacher capacity building. Formal teacher capacity building through whole school professional learning workshops and informal training through scheduled collaborative

planning sessions with teachers and through the adoption of co-teaching practices was implemented.

The staff at this school experimented and implemented wide-ranging instructional practices, the fourth theme, to support student learning and behaving. They began to take students on field trips, a practice that was not common prior to the reform, and they differentiated their instruction and assessment practices to enable all students to access curricular outcomes. When the school staff began to collect data related to student achievement, they established several ability level groupings in an effort to “catch kids up” to the expected learning levels for their grade. As students gained academic skills, the groups were collapsed until all of the students were back in their classrooms. When the four suggested components of inclusive service delivery mentioned at the beginning of this section are considered, there is a congruency between this theme and the first area of inclusive service delivery which is instruction. This component suggests that instruction for all students is characterized by flexibility, innovation, experimentation and adaptation; interventions that this school staff put into practice.

Examples of some of the key comments that fell under the creative staffing theme included, “(We) realized that the skill sets of the teachers were different and we began to act on it” and “(we) hired certified teachers when the needs of the students (were) greatest.” Several comments highlighted the partnership that the school developed with the local universities to “hire pre-service teachers...to address academic needs.” The comments related to the collaborative planning theme focused on students, staff and administration working together. Comments such as, “student governance changed to a leadership group” and the

“administrator, resource teacher and special education teacher (had a) shared vision;” they “challenged traditional ideas.” Actions that the participants listed within the multi-faceted staff training theme involved a “two-day retreat,” the “PATH” and “speakers on differentiating instruction” to name a few. The participants remarks related to the final theme, wide-ranging instructional practices, captured the actions the staff employed in their classrooms and as a whole school team. The focus group participants spoke about “best practices” and the “need to make kids successful by differentiating.” They said that staff “experimented and implemented” and “took kids on field trips.” As a whole school, actions involved “all students in (grades) seven and eight (being) pulled out and tutored to catch up and (then) moved back in (to class).”

A listing of all of the specific actions under each of these four themes that the focus group participants identified can be found in table 2 .

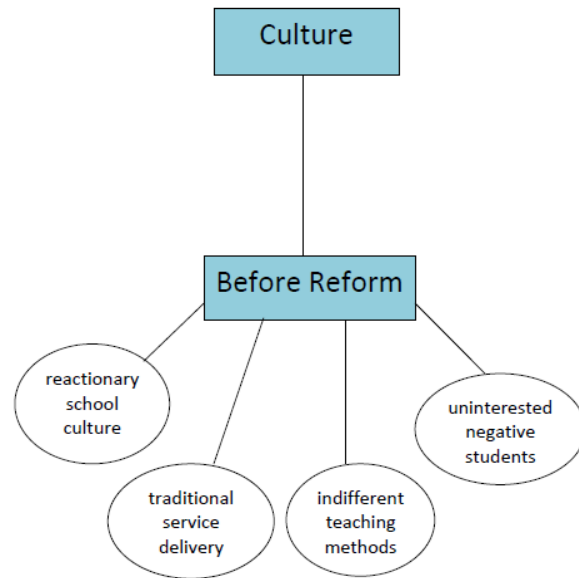
Table 2

*Specific Items Identified Under the Actions Theme*

| Creative Staffing   | Collaborative Planning  | Multi-faceted Staff Training   | Wide-Ranging Instructional Practices  |
|---|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• hired certified CT's when needs of students are greatest</li> <li>• resource practicum in lace</li> <li>• hiring university students to address academic needs</li> <li>• hired more bodies; pre-service CT's</li> <li>• supported CT's who needed it</li> <li>• master CT with high need students</li> <li>• get rid of paras</li> <li>• used funding to hire interns</li> <li>• secured good interns</li> <li>• started with two interns than increased</li> <li>• (u of W) partner</li> <li>• used funding to hire a tutor</li> <li>• creative funding with late entry EBD III</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• student governance changed to a leadership group</li> <li>• included divisional staff who could influence change</li> <li>• admin change</li> <li>• link between Learning &amp; Behaving stressed by admin</li> <li>• challenged traditional ideas</li> <li>• admin, RT, SpE CT shared vision</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PATH</li> <li>• 2 day retreat</li> <li>• speakers on DI, etc.</li> <li>• lots of PD on data-base</li> <li>• lots of PD to train CT's</li> <li>• realized that skill sets of CT's differ and began to act on it</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• took kids on field trips</li> <li>• experimented and implemented</li> <li>• best practices</li> <li>• need to make kids successful by differentiating</li> <li>• all students in 7 &amp; 8 pulled out and tutored to catch up and move back in</li> <li>• students started out of class then moved in</li> </ul> |

## Culture Themes

### *Before reform.*



The beliefs, leadership, structures and processes that made up the culture of this school community were important aspects in facilitating the move to inclusion. In analyzing the participants' responses related to school culture, my second research question, I sorted them by statements made about the school culture before the reform and after the reform. Before the school began their reform process, the participants described the school culture as: a) a reactionary school culture, which was characterized by, b) a traditional service delivery, with teachers using, c) indifferent teaching methods, to instruct, d) uninterested, negative students.

Prior to the reform, the participants in the focus groups described the culture of their school community as reactionary where school staff were unable to respond adequately to inappropriate student behaviours. There were students in the hallways and animosity among staff as to how to support students academically and behaviourally. A traditional model of



service delivery to students was in place at the school where students who demonstrated inappropriate behaviours in class were sent out to work with teaching assistants in the hallways or were sent to the office. Students who were struggling academically, were sent to the resource room for academic assessment and support, and a segregated classroom for students with special needs existed in the basement of the school. The instruction of students was done as a whole group using lecture style lessons. The students showed limited engagement in instruction and a lack of respect for authority. This initial culture is a result of a service delivery model based on Skrtic's (1995) four assumptions of special education as described in detail in chapter two and briefly summarized here.

Skrtic (1995) identified student disability as a pathological condition where all learning and behaving problems resided with the student versus the instruction or another ecological factor. He discussed the use of a coordinated system of special education services that benefited diagnosed students and he spoke of diagnosis being objective and useful. In this school's culture prior to the reform, students were sent out into the hall for academic and behavioural support versus changing instruction or the classroom environment; the problems belonged to the students. Some students were sent to the resource teacher for additional assessment and support; again, the problems were the students'. This additional assessment was another stage in the school's system of supports for students that continually removed them from the classroom.

Participants comments related to the first theme of a reactionary school focused on aspects of their school culture such as, "no time to be proactive due to the number of issues;

always reactive” and “no field trips for students.” “Teachers did not feel safe” in the school as there was “much destruction of property – broken windows, fire starting.” They spoke about a “white board in (the) staff room (which) listed student suspensions (as being) almost always full. (It was) a badge of honour for teachers; vacation from school; relief” for teachers.

Observations from the participants related to the theme of traditional service delivery highlighted “teachers (sending) students who were struggling academically to the resource teacher” and that there was a “self-contained special education classroom in the basement beside the band room.” For students with behavioural issues, “(teaching assistants) worked with students in halls (and) stairwells.”

Comments from participants related to the theme of indifferent teaching methods focused on the amount of time it took teachers to settle the class for whole group instruction and on the instructional methods employed – by the staff. It “took about 20 minutes out of a 45 minute class period to move students from class to class, out of the hall, and settled for instruction.” “Students (were) in class during whole group instruction and out for 1:4/1:5 work.” “Teachers felt that students were the problem versus their instruction.” The staff were “just surviving – getting through the day.”

In the final theme of uninterested, negative students, the focus group participants listed characteristics of the students. “Students pushed each other in halls, into lockers – lots of physical confrontations.” “Gang colours (were) an issue” and “the language in halls from students was foul and abusive.” “Many students drew others out (of class) – pack mentality”

and there was “never a time when there were no students referred to the office.” Table 3 provides details of the components in each of these themes.

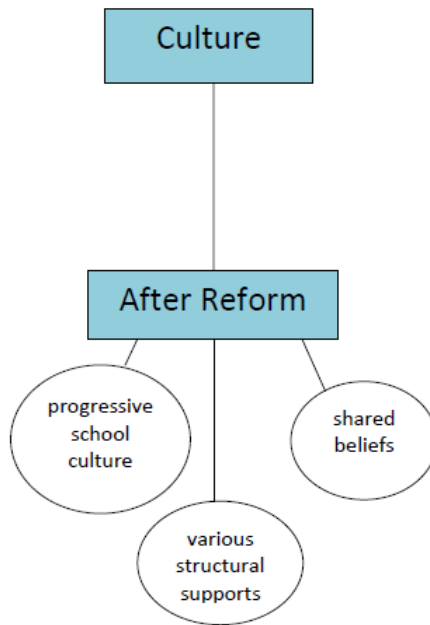
Table 3

*Specific Items Identified Under the Culture Theme: Before the Reform*

| Reactionary School Culture   | Traditional Service Delivery  | Uninterested Negative Students   | Indifferent Teaching  |
|--|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• white board in staff room listed student suspensions almost always full – badge of honour for CT’s – vacation from school, relief for CT’s</li> <li>• no field trips for students in the English program</li> <li>• students had to be herded into classes from the hallway</li> <li>• admin had clipboard with student body timetables to know where students needed to be</li> <li>• culture of school was a “street culture” – kids made the rules</li> <li>• much destruction of property – broken windows, fire starting</li> <li>• divisional clinical staff and others indicated that they did not feel safe in the school; CT’s in the school did not feel safe</li> <li>• no time to be proactive due</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• team meetings were about listing all students and their problems</li> <li>• paras W/D students to work with them out of the room</li> <li>• teachers sent students who were struggling academically to RT</li> <li>• self-contained SpE classroom in basement beside band room</li> <li>• paras worked with students in halls/stairwells</li> <li>• pull-out RT program</li> <li>• para support in classroom – student specific</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gang colours an issue</li> <li>• students pushed each other in halls, into lockers – lot of physical confrontations</li> <li>• never a time when there were no students referred to the office</li> <li>• many students drew others out – pack mentality</li> <li>• non-structured time resulted in foul and abusive language use by student</li> <li>• several incidents of conflict after school in the school yard</li> <li>• language in halls from student was foul and abusive</li> <li>• gang development</li> <li>• students didn’t value “good students” – they were made fun of</li> <li>• lots of lates, chasing students</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CT’s felt that students were the problem vs. their instruction</li> <li>• CT’s stressed; uncomfortable approaching students</li> <li>• us and them mentality, kids vs. CT’s</li> <li>• CT’s just surviving – getting through the day</li> <li>• disrupted learning process</li> <li>• students in class during whole group instruction and out for 1:4/1:5 work</li> <li>• less than ½ - may ¼ student engaged in instruction during class – estimate</li> <li>• CT’s worked alone, no teaming, no collaboration</li> <li>• took about 20 minutes out of a 45 minute class period to move student from class to class, out of the hall, and settled for instruction; class disruptions resulted in about 15 minutes of instructional time</li> </ul> |

| Reactionary School Culture   | Traditional Service Delivery | Uninterested Negative Students   | Indifferent Teaching |
|--|------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| <p>to the #'s of issues – always reactive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• response system reactive</li> <li>• school operating in a reactive mode</li> <li>• CT's had to ignore language problems (swearing) as there were bigger issues</li> <li>• could tell which kids were in French Immersion and those in English</li> <li>• differentiation between French Immersion L &amp; B &amp; English L &amp; B</li> <li>• no structure for lunch hours – student in halls</li> <li>• 80% of the band kids from French Immersion with 20% of bands kids from English</li> <li>• staff room place to unload</li> <li>• “caustic” school culture</li> <li>• couldn't keep up with behaviour</li> <li>• issues in the hall always</li> <li>• animosity between staff</li> <li>• staff desensitized to the culture</li> </ul> |                              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• approximately 20% chronic attendance issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– limited student engagement</li> <li>– kids in hall</li> <li>– 40% engagement</li> <li>– kids in and out of class</li> <li>– kids in hall distracting others</li> </ul> </li> <li>• lack of respect for authority <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– kids “owned” the school</li> <li>– kids has respect of peers and could draw others in</li> <li>– less respect for CT's</li> <li>– swearing at CT's</li> </ul> </li> <li>• escalated behaviour displayed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– intensive behaviour</li> <li>– violent behaviour</li> <li>– increased frequency</li> <li>– gangs/drugs</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |                      |

*After reform.*



When the participants described aspects of their school culture after the reform, their ideas centered on these three themes a) a progressive school culture, which was characterized by b) shared beliefs, among the staff who implemented c) various structural supports, to support staff and students in the teaching-learning process. The participants generated considerable data related to this aspect of their school culture. As a result, I was able to identify subthemes within each of these three themes. They are:

- Progressive school culture: a) collaborative leadership b) positive relationship building c) innovative, solution-based thinking, d) continuous professional growth, e) keen, productive students
- Shared beliefs: a) purposeful support of the whole child b) desegregated classrooms, c) unequivocal link between learning and behaving

- Various structural supports: a) powerful promotion of positive behaviour, b) active community connections c) purposeful funding plan d) flexible student grouping e) diverse instructional strategies f) responsive teaching g) synergistic teaming

The essence of each theme and sub-theme are summarized here with the specific details of the sub-themes identified in tables 4, 5 and 6.

All four areas of inclusive service delivery as described in chapter 2 are reflected in this new school culture: a) instruction, b) classroom environment, c) collaborative networking, and d) structure. The culture after the reform involved increased student access to effective instruction that considered the social, academic and physical needs of students. It was characterized by classroom environments where a sense of community was established and the learning and behaviour of all students was maximized. The needs of students were met via a collaborative network of staff where professionals in the school combined their expertise to create a model of service delivery that was responsive to the needs of their student body. The organizational structures and roles and responsibilities of staff were adjusted to accommodate this new service delivery model.

Within the progressive school culture theme and sub-themes, the focus group participants identified a “sense of shared leadership” with “collaborative teaming (occurring) between resource and counseling (staff)” as key components. They went on to say that there were “positive relationships among teachers” and that “teachers (were) committed to establishing relationships with students.” The participants talked about a “proactive, solution-

based culture” in the school where “teachers used the staff room to problem-solve versus complain.” They said that “teachers (felt) that they (could) help all students to learn by improving their practices” and that “students (saw) teachers as educational leaders and (trusted) them to support their learning and behaving.” Table 4 details the specific concepts under this theme.

The participants’ comments related to the shared beliefs theme and sub-themes encompassed supporting the whole child through inclusive classrooms where learning and behaving were linked. Focus group participants talked about a “culture of how do we help students make better choices versus how best to punish them.” They said that “staff understood and accepted Appropriate Education Legislation” and that “students’ needs were being met in regular classrooms.” They also felt that there was an “acceptance that behaviour (was) related to lack of academic achievement” for some students. Specific items from this theme are listed in table 5.

The structural supports theme and sub-themes generated the most responses from the participants. The components of this aspect of the after reform school culture answer the third research question in this study, related to the strategies that the school employed to ensure that all students were supported successfully in inclusive settings. A comprehensive table of strategies can be found in table 6 with some key components that the participants identified captured here.



Table 4

*Specific Items Identified Under the Culture Theme: After Reform - Progressive School Culture Subthemes*

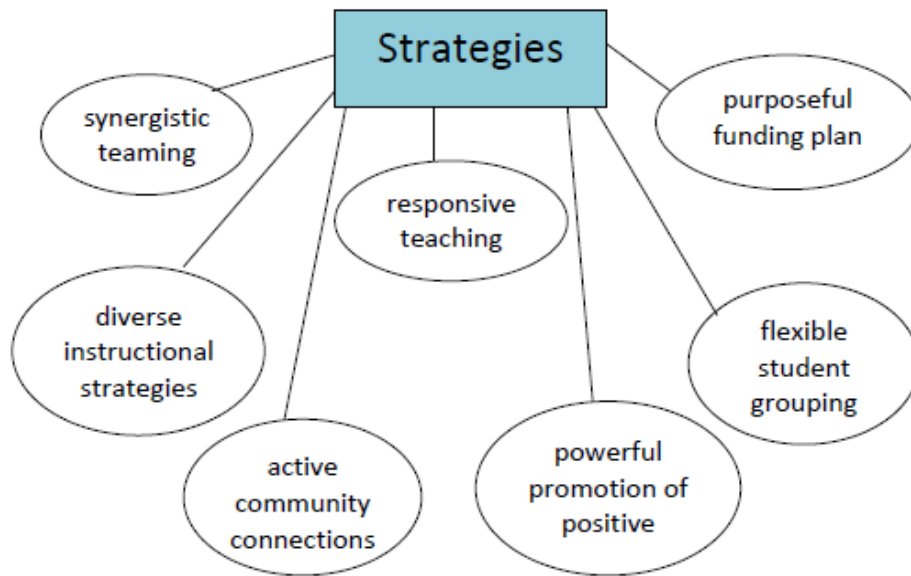
| Collaborative Leadership  | Positive Relationship Building  | Innovative, Solution-based Thinking   | Continuous Professional Growth   | Keen, Productive Students  |
|---|---|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• collaborative teaming between resource and counselling</li> <li>• resource teachers are educational leaders</li> <li>• resource teacher is an adult leader to support learning in the classroom – instructional coach</li> <li>• sense of shared leadership</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• positive relationships among teachers</li> <li>• students build relationships with teachers and educational interns</li> <li>• culture of school changed to one of mutual respect</li> <li>• teachers committed to establishing relationships with students</li> <li>• teachers feel comfortable approaching students</li> <li>• sense of family on the staff; lots of training and collaborating</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• risk-taking</li> <li>• open-minded about the best way to support kids</li> <li>• proactive, solution-based culture</li> <li>• teachers use staff room to problem-solve vs. complain</li> <li>• white board in staff room listing student suspension is no longer used</li> <li>• grade level team meeting focus on instruction versus problem students; on changing instruction proactively to support students</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• confident teachers</li> <li>• professional conversations around teaching are frequent</li> <li>• many teacher committees</li> <li>• teachers want to teach; good staff attendance</li> <li>• teachers feel that they can help all students to learn by improving their practices</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• students are keen and enthusiastic</li> <li>• quality of work has improved</li> <li>• students know the outcomes for assignments</li> <li>• students excited about being in school</li> <li>• students see teachers as educational leaders and trust them to support their learning and behaving</li> <li>• students excited about being in school; want to be there</li> <li>• student engagement very close to 100%</li> <li>• few attendance issues</li> </ul> |

Table 5

*Specific Items Identified Under the Culture Theme: After Reform – Shared Beliefs Subthemes*

| Purposeful Support of the Whole Child  | Desegregated Classrooms  | Unequivocal Link Between Learning & Behavior  |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• outcomes to be a solid, healthy student</li> <li>• address academic, social and emotional needs</li> <li>• students feel safe, valued and cared for</li> <li>• new students get “accultured” quickly</li> <li>• students know they can access administration and counsellor for mediation</li> <li>• culture of... how do we help students make better choices vs. how best to punish them</li> <li>• students feel that their needs are being met</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• staff do not support students being pulled out of class</li> <li>• stigma attached to pull-out</li> <li>• peers support achievement</li> <li>• students needs are being met in regular classrooms</li> <li>• staff understand and accept Appropriate Education Legislation</li> <li>• intentional shift from pull-out of classroom</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• student behaviour has decreased because engagement has increased</li> <li>• if student learning needs are met, appropriate behaviours will follow</li> <li>• school-wide Positive Behaviour Support plan in place; more proactive strategies in place</li> <li>• acceptance that behaviour is related to lack of academic achievement</li> </ul> |

## Strategies



Responsive teaching involved the school staff creating a skill continuum on the wall to identify the critical outcomes in the curricula to inform their instruction and the development of teacher-created instructional packages based on student need. Teachers engaged in synergistic teaming by sharing lesson planning, teaching and assessing through co-teaching and team-teaching practices. The use of diverse instructional strategies within an outcomes-based structure helped teachers to differentiate and adapt their instruction and assessment offering students multiple trials to meet curricular outcomes. Instruction occurred within flexible student groupings which allowed staff to restructure the classroom to allow for small group instruction by the teacher with independent and cooperative learning work spaces identified elsewhere in the classroom. These strategies match the suggestions identified in chapter two by several researchers. Dylan Wiliam (2008) indicated that teacher quality is a significant

component in improving student learning. Fullan (2006) and Wagner et al. (2006), echo Wiliam's statement by suggesting that teacher capacity building should be a focus of school reform. Making adjustments to traditional aspects of service delivery such as organizational structures, student groupings and roles and responsibilities of teachers, are critical changes that Creasey and Walther-Thomas (1996) focused on. The use of differentiated instruction and differentiated assessment, flexible groupings, planning and problem-solving strategies, and co-teaching were listed as important components of inclusive service delivery by Brownlie et al. (2006), Friend and Cook (2004), Tomlinson and Edison (2003) and Wagner and Davis (2006).

The powerful promotion of positive behaviour coincided with these instructional practices. All school staff were trained in conflict mediation and they utilized restorative discipline practices to deal with inappropriate behaviours. A purposeful funding plan was established to support student needs and the structural supports. Additional social work time and school beautification were a few of the ways that the school staff chose to make active community connections. The incorporation of school-wide behavioural support and the re-allocation of resources are identified by Mayer (2002) and Kaufman et al. (2002) as important parts of successful school reform.

The participants spoke of promoting positive behaviour among students by providing "whole class social skills instruction (co-taught) by the social worker and counselor" and the creation of a "respect agreement" between students and staff. The participants indicated that active community connections were supported by providing "additional social work time in school" which allowed the "social worker (to work) with families and supporting parents."

There was a purposeful funding plan where “funding (was) used for (these) structural supports.” The focus group interviews yielded that staff incorporated flexible student groups via a “restructured physical structure of (the) classroom” that more easily permitted “flexible grouping based on the skill set being worked on.” They said that staff incorporated diverse instructional strategies like, “differentiated instruction and assessment” and “outcome-based instruction” where “students have multiple trials to meet outcomes.” During the interviews, the participants talked about strategies involving responsive teaching such as the use of a “class profile” and a “skill continuum on the wall to identify the critical outcomes and to inform instruction” so that “students (could) work at their own level.” Finally, the participants talked about synergistic teaming as a strategy that the staff employed. Components within this sub-theme included, “shared lesson planning, teaching and assessing” among staff with “...parity between the teachers and the resource teacher.”

This synopsis of actions, culture and strategies details the myriad of interventions employed by this school to shift its service delivery. In addition to the data provided by the focus group interviews, this school produced several documents during its transition. The documents show the first steps the school staff identified as pertinent in their change process. They also provide data about student discipline and academic performance over time. An analysis of those documents follows.

Table 6

*Specific Items identified Under the Culture Theme: After Reform – Structural Supports Subthemes*

| Powerful Promotion of Positive Behaviour   | Active Community Connections  | Purposeful Funding Plan   | Flexible Student Grouping   | Diverse Instructional Strategies   | Responsive Teaching  | Synergistic Teaming  |
|--|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conflict mediation</li> <li>• coping strategies</li> <li>• 200 club</li> <li>• respect agreement</li> <li>• restorative discipline</li> <li>• culture of peace</li> <li>• physical/aggressive behaviour is the exception vs. the norm</li> <li>• staff trained in mediation</li> <li>• behaviour management is proactive vs. reactive</li> <li>• whole class social skills instruction by social worker and counsellor</li> <li>• 7 habits of effective teens taught to all students</li> <li>• training in PBS with T. Scott; creation of</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent Advisory Council</li> <li>• feeder schools</li> <li>• links to home</li> <li>• additional social work time in school</li> <li>• social worker working with families and supporting parents' assists in helping parents</li> <li>• field trips</li> <li>• school beautification</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• fund to support needs</li> <li>• funding used for structural supports</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ability grouping</li> <li>• heterogeneous grouping</li> <li>• co-operative group work</li> <li>• small group meetings</li> <li>• small group instruction (flexible) at level of students</li> <li>• students working in class and in alternate spaces</li> <li>• restructured physical structure of classroom</li> <li>• focus of small group instruction is for catch-up</li> <li>• flexible</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• differentiated instruction and assessment</li> <li>• adapted materials</li> <li>• teachers use adaptations and modifications</li> <li>• students have multiple trials to meet outcomes/show learning</li> <li>• moved to outcome-based instruction and assessment</li> <li>• identified critical outcome in ELA and Math                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– critical: outcomes that are terminated at that level</li> <li>– necessary: outcomes that are</li> </ul> </li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compacted curriculum</li> <li>• shared ownership for the teaching/ learning process</li> <li>• offers opportunities for learning at a student's point of readiness</li> <li>• teachers have ownership of all students</li> <li>• fewer transitions during the day</li> <li>• teachers feel and are accountable for learning</li> <li>• teachers are engaged in the learning process</li> <li>• students work at their own level</li> <li>• created a skill continuum on the wall to identify</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• shared lesson planning, teaching and assessing</li> <li>• collaborative relationships</li> <li>• reciprocal/ parity between the teacher and the resource teacher</li> <li>• improved student engagement</li> <li>• facilitates differentiation</li> <li>• team approach by staff</li> <li>• resource teachers co-teaching in classroom</li> <li>• intern support</li> <li>• cross – curricular</li> </ul> |

| Powerful Promotion of Positive Behaviour   | Active Community Connections | Purposeful Funding Plan | Flexible Student Grouping   | Diverse Instructional Strategies   | Responsive Teaching  | Synergistic Teaming   |
|--|------------------------------|-------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| <p>matrix and behavioural expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>taught kids skills to work co-operatively</li> </ul> |                              |                         | <p>groups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>students can more from group-to-group</li> <li>room arrangement reflects assorted stations for learning</li> </ul> | <p>prerequisites for another outcome</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>desirable: outcomes that repeat more than once</li> <li>change in reporting structure-to outcomes from percentages</li> <li>developed an excel data-base to record student progress</li> <li>assessment takes place in small groups</li> <li>assessment can be oral</li> <li>outcomes are listed at the bottom of each assignment</li> <li>teachers are flexible in their delivery of instruction</li> </ul> | <p>the critical outcomes and to inform instruction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>class profile</li> <li>student profile</li> <li>development of material packages based on student need</li> <li>challenged high achievers and supported struggling learners</li> </ul> | <p>planning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>admin. went into classes to model</li> <li>more peer coaching</li> <li>teachers and interns feel a sense of shared ownership for students</li> </ul> |

### *Document Study*

Documents related to the school's reform process and those detailing data related to discipline and academic performance were requested from the school administrator. These documents were requested to determine what changes occurred in student learning and behaving over the course of the change process: that is, what data existed to support student success; my third research question. Any identifying information was removed from the documents prior to my receipt of them.

The school administrator supplied me with a copy of the school's PATH, data related to discipline and academic achievement and the results of a student survey. Details of that data is presented here.

#### *PATH*

PATH is a person-centered planning and goal setting tool that uses graphic facilitation to map out a vision for a desirable future for an individual or a group of people. They are facilitated by two people, both trained in completing PATHs. PATH is an acronym for Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope. The PATH process follows a set sequence: Firstly, the participants spend some time identifying the dream for the issue/topic/person the planning involves. From that dream, the participants identify two or three goals that are positive, possible and can be reached within a specified time frame – usually one to three years. The participants then move to identifying their situation right now, in relation to each of the goals. They identify who they can enroll to assist them in reaching their goals and what activities and/or individuals will make them stronger/guild their capacity to succeed with their goals.

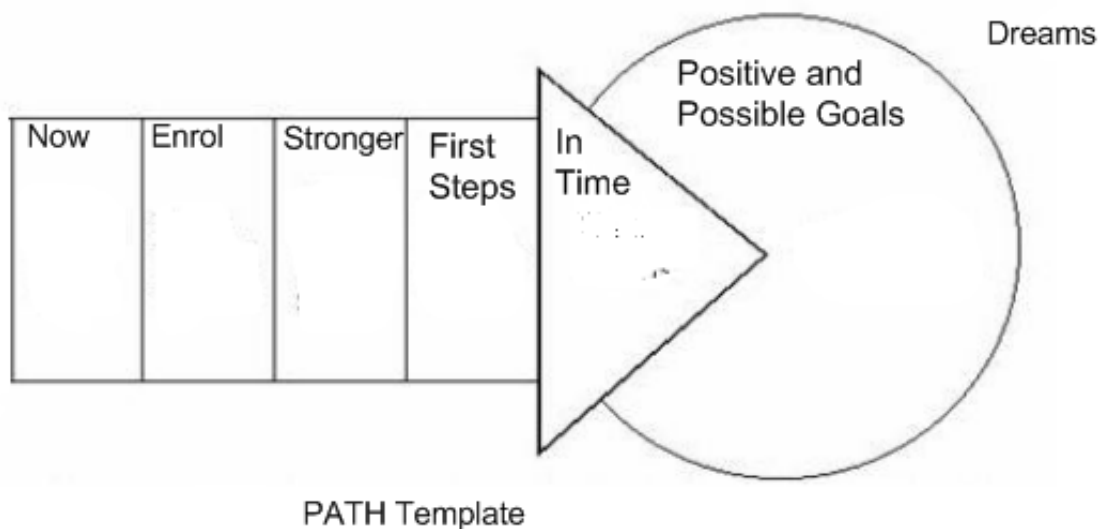


Finally, the participants list the next steps they are prepared to tackle (within the next few weeks) and those activities that will be completed within six months to a year, depending on the timeline for the goals. A blank PATH template is depicted in figure 3.

The PATH process usually takes about two to three hours (with a break for refreshments). In schools, PATHs often are used to support a student’s transition from early years to middle years, from middle years to senior years, and from senior years to the community. They also can be used by organizations for strategic planning, (which was the case for this middle school), or by individuals and families for personal goal setting. The process was developed by Marsha Forrest, Jack Pearpoint and John O’Brien and is recognized globally as a valuable tool for individual and organizational planning. Specific details of this process can be found in the book *All My Life’s a Circle* by Falvey, Forest, Pearpoint and Rosenberg, 1997.

Figure 4

*Blank PATH Template*



This school's PATH was recorded on a chart which provided a visual tool for keeping the staff focused their dreams and goals. A graphic record was created with colourful and creative images and drawings that assisted them with creative thinking, provided energy, and supported their memory of events. Goals were set and strategies were selected to achieve these goals. The colourful school PATH is shown in figure 5.

A listing of the responses in each of the PATH categories from this school's PATH are listed in table 7. The table is divided into three to reflect the three goals that the school chose to focus on. The items listed in the dream portion of the PATH have not been included.

Figure 5

School's PATH: 2006



Table 7

*Details of PATH Categories and Responses*

| Now   | Enroll  | Stronger   | Next Steps                               | 6 Months   | Goals   |
|---|---|--|--|--|---|
| -ready for action<br>-frustrated<br>-identified academic data<br>-needs scattered                                       | -Tammy for PD\$ and release time  | -sending team to T. Scott<br>-working with Rich Allen<br>Sept. 22<br>-explore PD plan for next year; want 2-day workshop earlier | -establish the team<br>-develop the plan | -data collected and analyzed<br>-direction established<br>-common expectations identified and shared | -a school wide positive behaviour intervention team is established with a plan for implementation completed |
| -one school trip planned for S1 & grade 7<br>-limited integrated planning happening<br>-planning a field trip to Quebec | -Arlis for PD\$ and release time<br>-Colleen & Karen for PD                                 | -working with Arlis, Colleen & Karen in Sc & SS<br>-liaise with AD<br>-integrating RBL into curriculum planning                  | -set dates<br>-set dates for visitation  | -timetable accommodates common prep. Time<br>-some integrated units are planned & carried out        | -integrated planning has occurred with units including out-of-school activities                             |
| -thinking, talking, planning<br>-library proposal being developed<br>-contacted Take Pride Wpg                          | -parent advisory<br>-service learning with Take Pride Wpg<br>-Urban Green Team<br>-students | -student involvement<br>-contact VG re: money sources  | -establish the team<br>-develop the plan | -gym renovations clarified<br>-plan activated  | -a school team has established a multi-year plan for school beautification                                  |

In analyzing the PATH document, I considered the questions I wanted this study to address:

- The specific actions this school staff took to move to an inclusive model of service delivery,

- The aspects of the school's culture – beliefs, leadership, structures, processes that were important in facilitating the move from segregation to inclusion, and
- The strategies the school staff employed to ensure that all students were supported successfully in inclusive settings and the data that existed to support student success.

The PATH process reflects several aspects of these research areas. The specific actions and strategies that the school initially took to move from one form of service delivery to the next are identified in the middle columns, between their dream and where they were at the time of the PATH. Who the staff felt they wanted to enroll to assist them with their transition is identified under the *Enroll* column, how the staff thought they might become stronger or gain the skill needed to make the change is listed in the *Stronger* category, what specific steps the staff committed to taking on their journey is provided within the *Next Steps* category and the staff's goals for six months and one year after the PATH are listed in the last two columns.

The first and last part of the PATH capture the culture of the school at the time of the PATH, as reflected in the *Now* column and the desired culture of the school, which is described in the *Dream* part of the PATH under the star. Specific details related to the action plans that the staff generated from this PATH were described in the focus group discussions.

The PATH was initiated by the staff during the beginning of their reform process to consolidate their dream for their school and to set some initial goals for action based on their current status. The staff posted the PATH on the wall in their staff room. It served as a reminder of where they were and where they aimed to be. The focus group participants identified the PATH process as one of the key elements in garnering support from staff for

change in their school. It validated the current culture of the school under the “Now” column and it synthesized the collective vision of the staff under the “dream” section. Advocates of educational reform that support inclusion suggest that educators need to begin to think differently in order to change their teaching practice to accommodate all learners (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Dorn et al. 1996; Fullan, 2006; Peters, 2002; Sindelar et al. 2006). The PATH process provided a vehicle for staff to begin that thinking and to set some goals to start the change process. Participants from the focus group felt that staff liked the process and thus other school staff might consider PATH as a good first step to school reform.

*Discipline Data*

The discipline data that I received from the school involved their suspension data over four school years (September to June). I have shown that data in a chart form in tables 8 and 9.

*Suspension data.*

Table 8

*Discipline Data Related to School Suspension: 2005 - 2009*

| School year & categories | 05-06 | 06-07 | 07-08 | 08-09 |
|--------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| # of students suspended  | 62    | 50    | 35    | 33    |
| % of student population  | 18    | 15    | 10.7  | 10.4  |
| # of days of suspension  | 320   | 195   | 159.5 | 115   |
| # of incidents           | 126   | 83    | 63    | 52    |

The data from this table shows a reduction in each of the categories over time. The number of students suspended was reduced by approximately 50% and the percent of the student population involved in incidents resulting in suspension decreased from 18% to 10.4%;

just fewer than 50%. The number of days of suspension showed the greatest reduction from 320 days to 115 days; a decrease of about 65%. The total number of incidents declined as well by just over 50%.

*Type of suspension data.*

Table 9

*Type of School Suspensions: 2005 - 2009*

| School year & type of incident resulting in suspension     | 05-06 | 06-07 | 07-08 | 08-09 |
|--|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Verbal Abuse (Staff) Disrespect<br>Insubordination         | 48    | 45    | 31    | 26    |
| Fighting<br>Physical Assault<br>Bullying                   | 46    | 45    | 29    | 22    |
| Suspensions requiring<br>involvement from Divisional Staff | 28    | 18    | 12    | 9     |
| Total  | 122   | 108   | 72    | 57    |

In reviewing the data from the table listing the incidents requiring suspension, the table shows that the number of suspensions decreased over time and that the incidents requiring involvement from Divisional staff also decreased over time. Verbal abuse, disrespect and insubordination decreased by just less than 50%, fighting, physical assault and bullying by about 50% and suspensions involving Divisional staff decreased by just under 70%. When the total number of incidents is considered each year, the data shows that over the four years, total incidents was reduced by just over 50%.

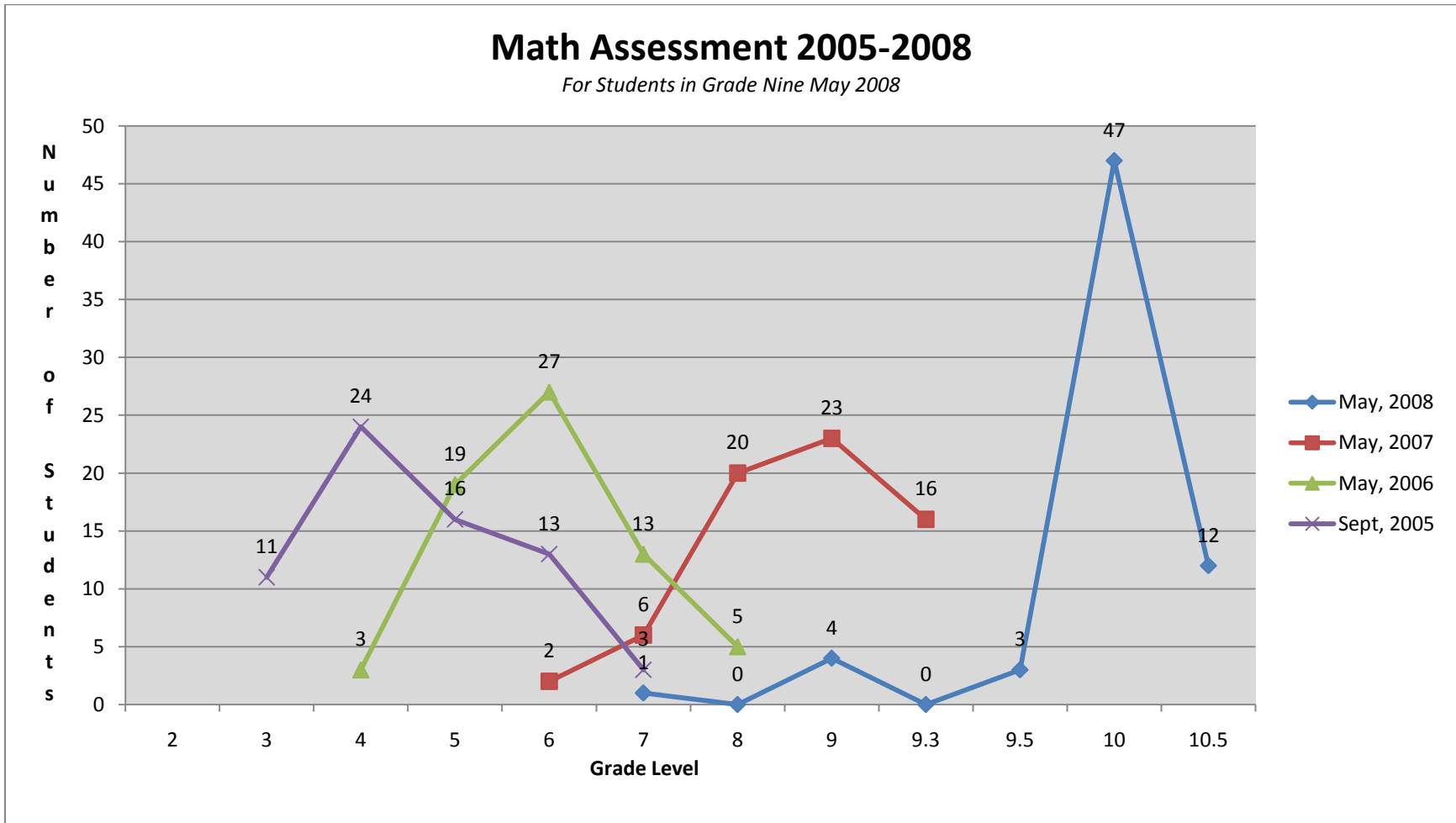
### *Academic Data*

Data related to the academic achievement of students from this middle school in the subject areas of math and reading was provided by the school. It involved graphs of the results of standardized math and English Language Arts (ELA) tests that were given to students at the beginning of grade seven, the end of grade seven and the end of grades eight and nine. The standardized test that was used for math was the Comprehensive Mathematical Abilities Test - CMAT (2003, Pro-ed) and the test for reading was the Test of Reading Comprehension - TORC (4<sup>th</sup> ed.) (2009, Pro-ed). Graphs of the results follow in figures 5 and 6 with different coloured lines being used to show student progress in the subject areas over time.



Figure 6

Student Performance on Math Assessment – Details of Growth Over Time: 2005 - 2008



*Math data.*

This graph shows the progression of student achievement in math over three years (no data was kept relating to the number of students who moved in and out of the division). The purple coloured line (beginning at grade three and ending at grade seven), with “x” marking the data points, identifies the grade level of math skills that the students had upon entering the school in grade seven. The numbers on the line show how many students were at that grade level. That is, in September of their grade seven year, 11 students had successfully completed math skills at the grade three level, 24 were successful at the grade four level, 16 at the grade five level, 13 at the grade six level and three at the grade 7 level. The range of student skills in math upon entering this middle school, was five grade levels, from grade three to seven. 64 students had math skills below grade seven level, six of the students were at grade seven level with none having skills above that grade.

The green coloured line (beginning at grade four and ending at grade eight), with triangles marking the data points, shows the math level of those same students at the end of their grade seven year. There were three students functioning at a grade four level, 19 at grade five, 27 at grade six, 13 at grade seven and five at grade eight. The range of student skills in math at the end of their first year at this middle school continued to span five grade levels, from grade four to eight, but improved by one year at each end. 49 students had skills below grade seven level, 13 of the students were now working at a grade seven level with five working above grade level.

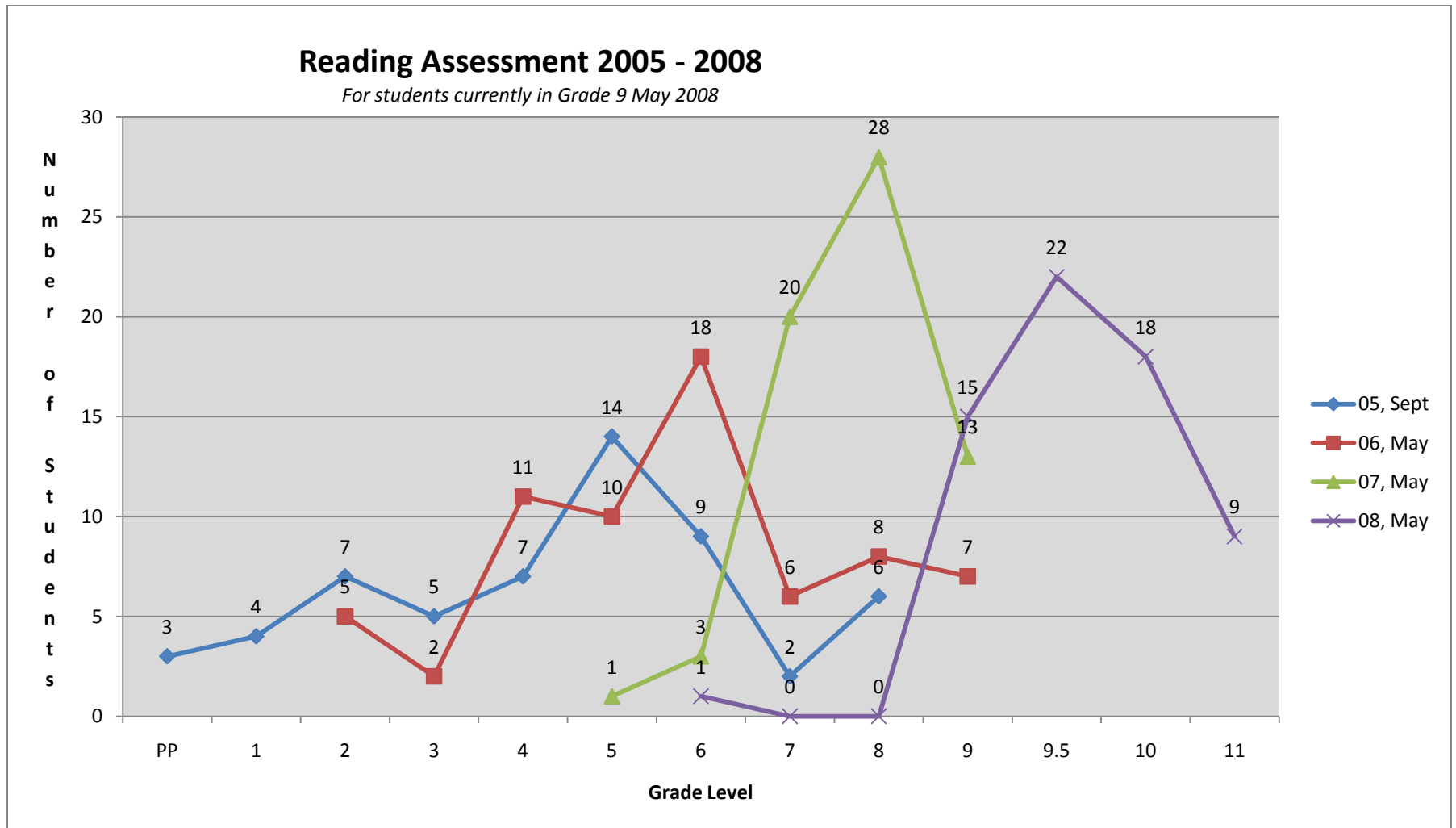
The red coloured line (beginning at grade six and ending at grade 9.3), with squares marking the data points, shows the grade level the students were able to master in math at the

end of grade eight. There were two students at grade six, six at grade seven, 20 at grade eight, 23 at grade nine and 16 at grade 9.3. The range of student skills in math at the end of two years of instruction in this middle school now spanned 4.3 years, from grade six to grade 9.3. There were eight students who had math skills below grade level, 20 students working at grade 8 level and 39 working above grade level.

The blue line (beginning at grade seven and ending at grade 10.5), with diamonds marking the data points, reveals the skill level of the students in math at the end of grade nine. One student was at a grade seven level, four at a grade nine level, three at grade 9.5, 47 at grade 10 and 12 at grade 10.5. The range of student math skills at the end of three years of instruction at this middle school spanned 4.5 years, from grade seven to grade 10.5. There was one student who had math skills below the grade nine level, four students working at grade nine level and 62 working above grade nine level.

Figure 7

Student Performance on Reading Assessment – Details of Growth Over Time: 2005 – 2008



*Reading data.*

This graph shows the progression of student achievement in reading over three years (no data was kept relating to the number of students who moved in and out of the division). The blue coloured line (beginning at pp – preprimer - and ending at grade eight), with diamonds marking the data points, identifies the grade level of reading skills that the students had upon entering the school in grade seven. The numbers on the line show how many students were at that grade level. That is, in September of their grade seven year, three students had successfully completed reading skills at the preprimer level, four were successful at the grade one level, seven at the grade two level, five at the grade three level, seven at the grade four level, 14 at the grade five level, nine at the grade six level, two at the grade seven level and six at the grade eight level. The range of reading skills for students entering grade seven at the middle school spanned nine years. There were 49 students who had reading skills below the grade seven level, two whose skills were at grade seven level and six whose had skills above the grade seven level.

The red coloured line (beginning at grade two and ending at grade nine), with squares marking the data points, shows the reading level of those same students at the end of their grade seven year. There were five students functioning at a grade two level, two at grade three, 11 at grade four, 10 at grade five, 18 at grade six, six at grade seven, eight at grade eight and seven at grade nine. The range of reading skills for students at the end of grade seven at the middle school spanned eight years. There were 32 students who had reading skills below the grade seven level, six whose skills were at grade seven level and 15 whose had skills above the grade seven level.

The green coloured line (beginning at grade five and ending at grade nine), with triangles marking the data points, shows the grade level the students were able to master in reading at the end of grade eight. There was one student at grade five, three at grade six, 20 at grade seven, 28 at grade eight and 15 at grade nine. The range of reading skills for students at the end of grade eight at the middle school spanned five years. There were 24 students who had reading skills below the grade eight level, 28 whose skills were at grade seven eight and 15 whose had skills above the grade eight level.

The purple line (beginning at grade six and ending at grade 11), with “x” markign the data points, reveals the skill level of the students in reading at the end of grade nine. One students was at a grade six level, 15 at a grade nine level, 22 at grade 9.5, 18 at grade 10 and nine at grade 11. The range of reading skills for students finishing grade nine at the middle school spanned six years. There was one student who had reading skills below the grade nine level, 15 whose skills were at grade nine level and 51 whose had skills above the grade nine level.

Both the suspension data and the data related to student academic achievement showed that the changes the staff put in place resulted in decreased behavioural incidents and improved academic success. The number of suspensions, the number of students involved in the suspensions, the number of days of suspension and the total number of incidents all decreased. That said, the data shows that discipline incidents continued to occur at this school; more work in this area still can be done. Student academic data showed marked improvements in student success. Upon school entry in grade seven, many students were working below grade level in both math and reading; after three years of instruction in this school, almost all

were working at grade level in both subject areas. Research by Mayer (1995) supports the use of good teaching practices to help diminish behavioural issues in students. The discipline and academic data was presented together to emphasize this link between learning and behaving. Clearly the strategies that this school used to restructure their service delivery to students to accommodate their learning needs positively affected their learning and behaviour.

### *Student Survey Data*

The final document that I reviewed was a student survey that the school prepared and administered to all of the students in the school via an anonymous electronic survey. The name of the school has been replaced with the words, “my school”. I included this document in the study to give the students a voice in responding to the changes in their school system. The first five questions listed in the figure required students to respond with a) strongly agree, b) agree, c) disagree, or d) strongly disagree. The remaining nine questions asked students to respond with:

a) always/usually, b) often, c) sometimes , or d) rarely. The second last question asked for a yes/no response and the final question was open-ended.

In summarizing the responses, I found it most helpful to put the data into a table format with the percent of responses to each question listed. Each of the questions is framed in a positive manner which made it easier to generate summative comments. Although the descriptors were not the same for each question, only two sets of descriptors were used by the school and I chose to group them together to form four columns of responses to make the data analysis more succinct. See Table 10.

Table 10

*Summary of Responses from Student Survey: Data by Column*

| Question   | % of responses as strongly agree or always/usually | % of responses as agree or often | % of responses as disagree or sometimes | % of responses as strongly disagree or rarely |
|--|--|----------------------------------|---|---|
| 1. I feel safe at (my school)  | 21.3%  | 67.1%                            | 8.4%                                    | 3.2%  |
| 2. When I'm having a problem with another student (for example, I'm upset at another student, or they're upset at me), I know how to get help from an adult in the building. | 16.1%  | 57.4%                            | 20%                                     | 6.5%  |
| 3. (My school) is a good place for learning – I feel that I'm making progress as a student   | 28.4%  | 60.6%                            | 9%                                      | 1.9%  |
| 4. When I'm having difficulty learning, I get help from my teachers  | 25.8%  | 29%                              | 34.2%                                   | 11%   |
| 5. My teachers are clear about what I have to know or be able to do  | 30.1%  | 48.1%                            | 19.9%                                   | 1.9%  |
| 6. The outcomes are clear to me  | 23.9%  | 47.1%                            | 22.6%                                   | 6.5%  |
| 7. I'm given work that I find challenging or difficult   | 8.3%   | 34.6%                            | 46.8%                                   | 10.3%   |
| 8. I'm given work that I find easy   | 10.3%  | 40.4%                            | 41.7%                                   | 7.7%  |
| 9. I am capable of completing the work I'm given   | 35.9%  | 47.4%                            | 14.7%                                   | 1.9%  |
| 10. The work I'm given is interesting  | 14.1%  | 27.6%                            | 36.5%                                   | 21.8%   |
| 11. I enjoy group meetings   | 28.2%  | 42.9%                            | 16%                                     | 12.8%   |
| 12. Having group meetings supports my learning as a student  | 27.6%  | 51.9%                            | 13.5%                                   | 7.1%  |
| 13. I enjoy my core academic classes, like ELA, Science, Math, Social Studies  | 21.3%  | 38.7%                            | 31%                                     | 9%  |

When the responses are analyzed by column, the highest percentage of students responded as strongly agree or always/usually in column one, to question nine, "I am capable



of completing the work I'm given" with 35.9%. Only 10.3% of the students indicated that they strongly agreed or always/usually found, "I'm given work that I find easy", which was the lowest percentage in that category. The average percent for all questions in that column is 22.4%.

In considering the second column, percent of responses as agree or often, the highest response was 67.1% to question number three, "I feel safe at (my school)" and the lowest response was 27.6% to question number 10, "The work I'm given is interesting". The average percent for all questions in that column is 46.6%.

The third column, which identifies the percent of responses as disagree or sometimes, puts question number seven, "I'm given work that I find challenging or difficult," as having the highest percentage at 46.8%. The lowest percent of responses lies with question number one at 8.4% of the students disagreeing or stating that sometimes, "I feel safe at school". The average percent for all questions in that column is 24.2%.

The final column lists question number ten as having the highest percent of responses as strongly disagree or rarely to the statement, "The work I'm given is interesting," and question numbers three. "(My school) is a good place for learning – I feel that I'm making progress as a student", five, "My teachers are clear about what I have to know or be able to do," and nine, "I am capable of completing the work I'm given", as having the lowest percent of responses. All three questions had responses of 1.9%. The average percent for all questions in that column is 7.8%.

I clustered the data further by combining percent of responses in the first two columns (strongly agree or always/usually with agree or often), which I chose to title as positive

responses and those in the last two columns (disagree or sometimes and strongly disagree or rarely), which I chose to title as neutral/negative comments. This data can be found in table 11.

In considering the responses to the questions that were positive, the highest positive responses were made to question number three, “(My school) is a good place for learning – I feel that I’m making progress as a student” and the lowest positive responses were made to question number ten, “the work I’m given is interesting.” Of the 13 questions, 11 of them had positive responses over 50% and eight had responses over 70%. The average percent for all questions in the positive response column is 68%.

The second column provided the percent of responses as neutral or negative. In this column, question number ten, “The work I’m given is interesting,” had the highest response at 58.3% and question number three, “(My school) is a good place for learning – I feel that I’m making progress as a student,” had the lowest response at 10.9%. The average percent for all questions in that column is 32.7%.

In the yes/no question, 43.5% of the students responded that they had opinions on how teaching and learning in their core classes could be better and 56.5% of the students did not.

When the data from the student survey is factored into this discussion about school change, it is obvious that the students responded well to the changes in their school. The students indicated that they felt safe in their school and that it was a good place for learning. Although a survey was not taken before the school began their reform process, the data from this survey confirmed that in most areas, the students valued their education at this school. This data appears to solidify the thinking of the focus group participants regarding the school

culture after the reform. That said, there is still work to be done. For example, some of the student body still consider the curricula uninteresting and not challenging.

Table 11

*Summary of Responses from Student Survey: Positive versus Neutral/Negative Response Data*

| Question   | % of responses positive | % of responses as neutral/negative |
|--|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1. I feel safe at (my school)  | 88.4%                   | 11.6%                              |
| 2. When I'm having a problem with another student (for example, I'm upset at another student, or they're upset at me), I know how to get help from an adult in the building. | 73.5%                   | 26.5%                              |
| 3. (My school) is a good place for learning – I feel that I'm making progress as a student   | 89%                     | 10.9%                              |
| 4. When I'm having difficulty learning, I get help from my teachers  | 54.8%                   | 54.2%                              |
| 5. My teachers are clear about what I have to know or be able to do  | 78.2%                   | 21.8%                              |
| 6. The outcomes are clear to me  | 71%                     | 29.1%                              |
| 7. I'm given work that I find challenging or difficult   | 42.9%                   | 57.1%                              |
| 8. I'm given work that I find easy   | 50.7%                   | 49.4%                              |
| 9. I am capable of completing the work I'm given   | 83.3%                   | 16.6%                              |
| 10. The work I'm given is interesting  | 41.7%                   | 58.3%                              |
| 11. I enjoy group meetings   | 71.1%                   | 28.8%                              |
| 12. Having group meetings supports my learning as a student  | 79.5%                   | 20.6%                              |
| 13. I enjoy my core academic classes, like ELA, Science, Math, Social Studies  | 60%                     | 40%                                |

*Conclusion*

This study used qualitative research methods to describe and analyze the processes used by one Manitoba middle school to move its practice to a school-based service delivery model where the needs of all students were met in regular classrooms. Specifically, two focus group interviews were conducted with volunteer staff from the school and a review of school

documents was completed. The focus group interviews yielded multiple themes related to the actions, culture and strategies the school employed during its reform process. The document study detailed the school plan for reform and the changes in student learning and behaving over time. The next chapter will discuss these findings, their implications and make recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

#### *Introduction*

My beliefs about education are idealistic. They ooze of optimism, expectation and hopefulness. I am a cheerleader for inclusive environments and practices that celebrate and respect diversity and individuality and still foster a sense of community. I think that the development of relationships and community are at the heart of what makes a school work. I believe that learning should involve the self-fulfillment of all students through equitable access and meaningful participation in quality educational opportunities; through curricula that is organized around student interests and learning goals; and through teaching that recognizes, develops and rewards analytical, creative and practical intelligence. Instruction, subsequently, involves building on students' current knowledge to ensure their continued growth. I trust that in all students, there exists the promise of potentiality. The role of teachers, then, is to coach, model, advise and motivate students to get there. I consider my role as one to engage in the dialogue needed to do the right things to improve the education of all students. It is with all of these biases that I entered into this study.

School reform in general has been examined by many, how to apply it to the context of inclusion has not. Philosophical statements about inclusion and commitments to the concept exist worldwide, yet practical evidence on strategies to operationalize it is limited. This study has illuminated the actions, behaviours and beliefs over time of one school's staff and has offered an opportunity to detail the reform process they used to become more inclusive.

The benefits associated with studying this staff's experience include both an opportunity to identify a foundation of planning for school reform and an opportunity to learn one approach to move towards a vision of inclusivity. School division personnel can evaluate their current models of service delivery against the actions, beliefs and strategies that this school staff used in order that they develop a plan and process for reform. By understanding and implementing the specific activities undertaken by this school's staff, educators can enhance their own skill set in teaching to diverse populations of students. If the goal of education is to support its community of learners, which includes all students and staff, then improving service delivery to one which is most inclusive – the focus of this study – is of paramount importance; this study provides one possible structure for others to follow.

This chapter will review some literature foundations as background for the discussion related to the actions, culture and strategies that this school staff used to move to inclusion. Implications, recommendations for further leadership, actions and research studies and the study's limitations are included at the end of the chapter.

#### *Summary of Data Analysis*

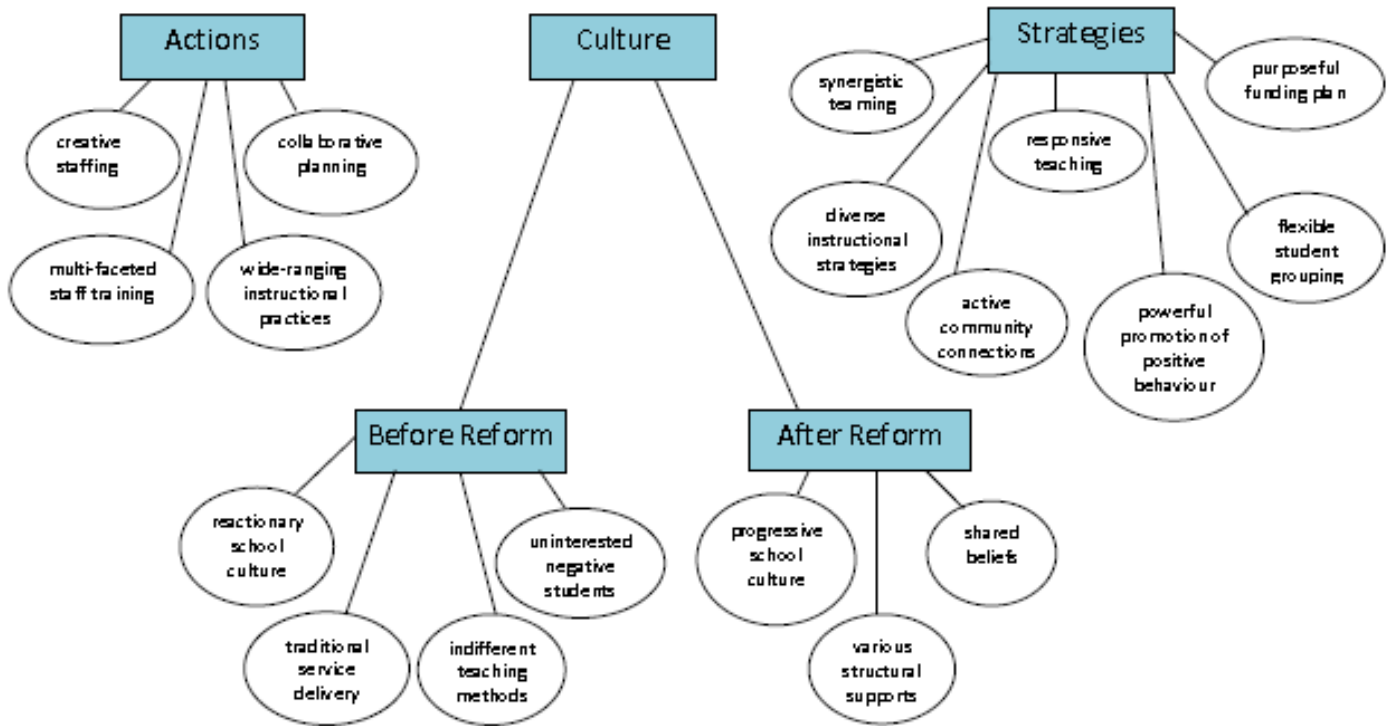
My experiences as a student services administrator and an advocate have provided me with ample opportunities to dialogue with professionals of the same ilk from across the province, nationally and internationally. Often in these gatherings, there were conversations that espoused theoretically sound reform process to transform school communities into utopias where everyone loved one another and every child was successful. Although these discussions were uplifting, they rarely moved from theory to practice. True, there were some success stories about individual students who were being included in all aspects of their

education, but none involved whole school reform nor did any provide solid data of improved student performance. Perhaps my professional circles were not cast wide enough, but I found that little data existed to help educators like me help school staff move towards more inclusive models of service delivery.

Because of the facilitation work that I had done at this school, not only was I intrigued by the path that they chose to walk down, but I also was excited. It appeared as though the thinking of a core group of staff at the school was congruent with my beliefs; and, they had the opportunity to and were prepared to act on those beliefs. Prior to undertaking this study, and when the school began its reform process, I had few expectations. Honestly, I was just pleased that they were taking on the challenge. As they moved through the trials and troubles that accompany any change process, I knew that theirs was a story to be told. Those chats with colleagues took on a new meaning for me. No longer were the discussions just theoretical in nature, they were real; a school staff was taking on the challenge of making every aspect of the teaching/learning process inclusive.

A large amount of data was gathered through both the focus group interviews and the document study. The focus group interviews garnered themes under the headings a) actions, b) culture, and c) strategies. These three topic areas match the three research questions in this study. The themes found under culture were divided further into two areas, those themes identified before the reform and those identified after the reform. Figure 2, in chapter four, provides a visual representation of the three headings and the themes under each. A small version of that figure is repeated here for reference.

Figure 2:  
Thomas



The details of each theme were discussed in chapter four. One interesting concept that became clear during the data analysis, was that under the culture heading, the structural supports the participants identified as being in place in the school after the reform matched the themes that were identified under the strategies heading. This link will be discussed later in the chapter.

The reform process that this school undertook and the resulting beliefs, leadership, structures and processes that make up its new culture are mired solidly in research theory about inclusive service delivery. The data from the document analysis shows improved student learning and behaving as well as a positive student attitude towards this school.



The documents studied included the PATH that the school staff generated, data related to student discipline and academic achievement and the results of a student survey. The PATH highlighted the actions and strategies that the school staff initially took to move from one type of service delivery to another and it captured the culture of the school community at the time. The student data mapped student progress over time in both learning and behaving and the student survey provided evidence about the culture of the school community after the reform. Together, the data from the focus group interviews and the document study yielded considerable discussion topics. A brief discussion of the findings as they relate to my research questions is presented next.

### *Research Questions Addressed*

#### *Actions Needed to Move to Inclusion*

My first research question dealt with the actions needed to move to inclusion. It stated: What specific actions did this school staff take to move to an inclusive model of service delivery? The broad themes that were found in the actions that shifted the service delivery of the school staff involved a) creative staffing, b) collaborative planning, c) multi-faceted staff training, and d) wide-ranging instructional practices. Each of these themes is discussed in detail in chapter four.

To synthesize the findings from the action area, I used the actions that the focus group identified, along with the strategies the school staff employed during the change process to develop a timeline detailing the journey this school took over several years to move from segregation to inclusion. This timeline is presented as a historical scan in figure 8. Although the

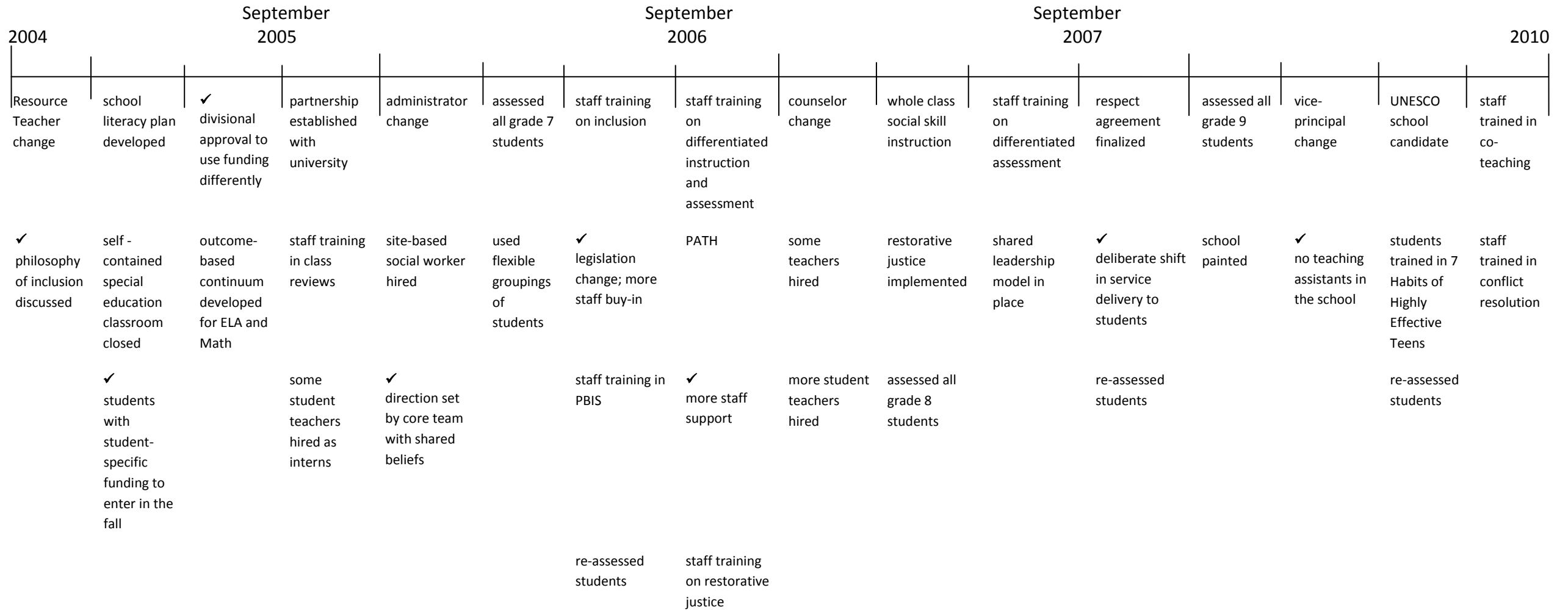
PATH that the staff developed is one of the actions listed on figure 8, the document, itself, details some of the strategies the staff undertook during their change process.

Figure 8 provides a historical scan of this school's reform process. It details the actions, over time, that the staff took as they moved from a segregated model of service delivery to an inclusive one. It highlights where the changes in beliefs, leadership, structures and processes occurred and it details the strategies the staff employed to support students in an inclusive setting. When this historical scan is considered in conjunction with the information gathered from interviews and documents, the specific steps this school staff took in 2004, to move to inclusion can be identified. It should be noted here that the provincial legislation related to inclusion triggered discussion at the school level regarding their self-contained special education classroom. With advocacy from the new resource teacher, the administrator of the school at the time began the process of closing the self-contained classroom. An increase of students entering the school in grade seven for the 2005 school year funded under the EBD category caused the school staff to reflect on how best to meet their needs. It was the accumulated effect of the legislation and the characteristics of the student population entering the school that began this reform. The new administration (2005) continued with the plan established by the previous administrator and then included all of the staff with a whole school plan for change using the PATH process (2006).

Figure 8

*From Intention to Reality: A Historical Scan of Events – One School’s Reform Process*

✓ **Key turning points**



### *A School Culture of Inclusion*

Research question two states: What aspects of the school's culture - beliefs, leadership, structures, processes – were important in facilitating the move from segregation to inclusion?

The beliefs, leadership, structures and processes that made up the culture of this school

community all were important aspects in facilitating the move from segregation to inclusion.

Themes were found in the participants' description of the culture before and after the reform.

The themes found in the responses from the participants which described the culture before the reform were as follows: a) a reactionary school culture, which was characterized by b) a traditional service delivery, with teachers using c) indifferent teaching methods, to instruct d) uninterested, negative students.

After reform, the themes in the participants' responses describing the culture reflected a complete shift: a) a progressive school culture, which was characterized by b) shared beliefs, among the staff who implemented c) various structural supports, to support staff and students in the teaching-learning process.

Subthemes were identified in the after reform data. After the reform, the focus group participants identified a progressive school culture where there was collaborative leadership, positive relationship building among staff and students, innovative, solution-based thinking and a commitment to continuous professional growth by staff. They found that students were keen and productive. Staff had shared beliefs related to the purposeful support of the whole child, the desegregation of classrooms and of the unequivocal link between learning and behaving. The structural supports that existed during this new culture included the promotion of positive

behaviour, responsive teaching and synergistic teaming by teachers as well as their use of diverse instructional strategies within flexible student groupings. The school staff had a purposeful funding plan and made active community connections. Chapter four provides details of these themes and subthemes.

### *Strategies to Accomplish Inclusion*

My third research question asks: What strategies did this school staff employ to ensure that all students were successfully supported in inclusive settings and what data exists to support student success? During the focus group interviews, I asked the participants three questions related to the strategies that the school staff employed to ensure that all students were supported successfully in inclusive settings. The themes that emerged from their responses to these three questions were the same as their responses to the structural supports which they identified when asked about the culture of their school community after the reform. That is, the strategies that the school staff employed during their reform process actually became those structural supports that the participants identified as existing under the culture heading after the reform; they moved from being simply strategies to solid structural supports. The strategies fell under these themes: a) responsive teaching, b) synergistic teaming, c) diverse instructional strategies, d) flexible student grouping, e) powerful promotion of positive behaviour, f) purposeful funding plan, and e) active community connections.

These strategies also fit well with the research regarding the first area of inclusive service delivery discussed in chapter two and then again in chapter four. The research suggests that instruction should be flexible and innovative; that there should be a reduction in pull-out

and segregated programs and that the social, academic and physical needs of students should be accommodated. The staff at this school took these instructional ideals and moved them from theory into practice.

The data related to discipline and academic achievement and the results of a student survey were all examined as a part of this study. These documents helped to validate the actions and strategies that the school staff employed during their reform. They show that the changes they put in place positively supported the learning and behaving of students.

### *Seven Elements of School Improvement Revisited*

Peter Holly (2003), identifies seven elements of school improvement: a) getting focused, b) creating a shared agenda, c) follow-through – sustaining changes over time, d) grounding our change efforts in data, e) data show our progress, f) continuous improvement in the self-renewing school, and g) creating a data-driven school culture.

*Getting focused* involves the application of shifting, prioritizing, clustering, chunking, aligning and sequencing in order to draw attention to a manageable set of priority goals. It involves substance, what you will do, and allegiance, who will do it. To have focus, then, is to have a *shared agenda*, which is Holly's second element. He suggests that this agreement should develop through a participatory process where everyone contributes to the decision.

Focusing for this school staff involved using the available data to determine what really mattered. The staff had information from the province and the division about inclusion, they had data about student behaviour from their own school and they had their own thinking about

the culture of their school community. The administration at this school triggered this reform process by drawing the attention of school staff to the changing legislation and to the characteristics of the student population entering their school. The school staff deliberated, scrutinized and reflected on the information and experiences they had. They decided to move to more inclusive practices by closing their self-contained classroom. They began to explore using provincial funding differently and as a result, hired pre-service teachers as educational interns versus using teaching assistants to support students' learning in regular classrooms. They hired an on-site social worker to support student and their families with student behaviour. With a change in administration, and the implementation of a shared leadership structure, the focusing began in this school with a core team of staff – principal, vice-principal, counselor, resource teachers and grade level team leaders. This core group identified the need for additional data on student learning and began assessing all grade seven students in reading and math. A class review process was implemented where teachers identified the strengths and needs of their classes through a discussion with the resource teacher and counselor. That additional data collection sparked staff training on inclusion, positive behaviour intervention and supports, restorative justice and differentiated instruction and assessment. Teachers began using flexible groupings of students and discussions about the changes spread throughout the school. The staff chose to participate in a PATH process to help them to focus on their school reform. The PATH process was collaborative and inclusive involving the whole staff coming to a shared agreement about their goals. Participation in the process brought staff on board and gave them ownership and collective resolve to move ahead with their plan. They had a shared agenda.

The importance of long-term commitment and the need to make adjustments are critical to successful change; this *follow-through – sustain changes over time* is the third element and involves monitoring progress and applying gathered feedback. In the fourth element, *grounding our change efforts in data*, Holly suggests that success criteria and data collection be used to select strategies and to support needs. Since data both drives the school improvement plan and helps to ensure that plans remain focused, Holly identifies the fifth element as *data show our progress*.

For this school staff, follow-through and sustaining their changes over time meant that they kept revisiting their goals and they made adjustments, as needed, over time. They posted their PATH in the staff room and added strategies and structures to their plan based on their data. For example, they hired some qualified teachers in addition to the teacher interns. With a change in their counselor, the counselor and social worker began providing whole class social skills instruction to students. They implemented restorative justice practices and developed a respect agreement with students. To add to their data on student learning, staff began assessing grade seven, eight and nine students in reading and math. Staff then used this data to identify their staff development requirements. Their data began to drive their school reform agenda as it detailed their progress and confirmed their path. Intellectually, this schools staff acknowledged a need to change and by tracking their progress, they grew an emotional commitment for success. They grounded their change efforts in data and used this data to show their progress.



With his sixth element, Holly says that, “the components and principles of student learning...are the same as those of organizational learning,” (Holly, 2003 p. 91). *Continuous improvement in the self-renewing school* suggest using data to inform educate and create new knowledge in the school staff as a whole and also to improve individual staff learning. *Creating a data-driven school culture* is the seventh element and involves the establishment of an infrastructure that is well organized, inter-connected and uses effective team processing skills. Holly suggests that the quality of the teamwork within the school will determine the success of the change process.

By involving staff in data collection and in using that data to make change decisions, this school staff created a shared agenda for continuous school improvement and renewal. The staff took some new learning about inclusion, instruction, assessment and behaviour and coupled it with their own student data to reform their service delivery to students. They created a data-driven school culture by continuously reviewing their data and renewing their goals. The move to training students in the Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens and the move to become a UNESCO school were decided upon by the school staff based on their data. The school staff used data to identify their learning needs and received ongoing training on differentiated instruction and assessment, co-teaching and conflict resolution. The historical scan in figure 8 lists the steps this school took to move to an inclusive model of service delivery.

### *Implications & Recommendations*

I was surprised by some of the challenges the participants identified through the focus interviews. They talked about push-back from teachers and parents. What initially appeared as

resistance was really about skill-set and a bit about motivation. Some teachers admitted that they did not know how to teach the wide range of students in their classes, some were willing to learn and others were not. Some teachers went on medical leave and others transferred schools. My idealistic view of educators became somewhat more realistic during those interviews. Resistance from parents dealt more with their perception of help for their child versus any indicators of improved success at school. Parents thought that their children were receiving the assistance that they needed if a teaching assistant was assigned to help them; they did not seem to need any data to support that their children were being successful with support from teaching assistants. Parents cautiously accepted the changes at this school, but did not become convinced of the success of this new model until they had data to show that their children were achieving academically and socially. I found this accepted way of thinking about teaching assistants extremely interesting considering the research data on the use of teaching assistants.

Employing the steps that this staff undertook can assist other school staffs and division personnel to implement inclusive educational strategies and to comply with national and provincial legislation related to inclusion. Instead of considering programming and placements for individual students within the current school structures related to service delivery, the approach this staff has to inclusive education emphasizes an examination of the existing beliefs, culture, activities and actions and asks how these three things can be made more inclusive. By following the steps this school staff took, other educators can move beyond the current status quo and towards educational services and structures that can be redesigned to create school environments that include all students.

Fullan et al. (2006) in their book *Breakthrough* discuss the new mission of schools as one where the goal is to increase the learning and behaving of all students; which is a shift from just providing access to all. As the students enrolled in today's schools have diverse learning needs, this school's service delivery provides a feasible platform to improving the learning and behaviour of all students. Most educational reform processes in the literature identify the theoretical steps school staff could take to begin the change process, yet they lack examples of the specific strategies required to move towards the full inclusion of all students. This study provides those examples. It begins to fill the gap in the research related to school reform and inclusion. It shows some specific actions, a culture and some strategies that can improve student success and how this change can be accomplished via a redeployment of funds versus the influx of additional money. This study is one path for future reform in the area of inclusion. It provides an example of the steps that could be used to shift a school from segregation to inclusion.

Advocacy, legislation and new research have contributed to the development of a justification to move students from segregated settings to inclusive ones. This data and the data from this study may cause some professionals to revise their assumptions about educating students with special needs. Some school division personnel also may need to rethink their use of teaching assistants to assist students with special needs. The use of teaching assistants has served as a good first step towards inclusion, but current data from researchers such as Giangreco et al. (2005, 1999), has shown that teacher assistant support does not result in increased academic and behavioural success. The use of more professional staff by the staff at

this school showed improved learning and behaviour by their students, which supports the use of professional staff over teaching assistants.

Changes to the legislation in Manitoba have prompted some educators to examine the processes and structures of their service delivery to students in order for students with special needs to be included in regular classes. In 1999, the Manitoba Special Education Review identified the three major themes of: a) equity – recognizing that different students require different supports, services and programming in order to access the opportunity to achieve success, b) capacity – understanding that student success is grown by building on their strengths and supporting their challenges; understanding that the success of students is dependent on the capacity of the staff to provide appropriate educational programming for all students, and c) community – knowing that a sense of belonging is a prerequisite for successful student learning and behaving. The service delivery model that this staff now uses incorporates each of these three themes. This staff moved away from the traditional model of service delivery which exists in most Manitoba schools and they developed a non-categorical support model where the classroom teacher is central and involved in the design of how students receive supports – a structure that is advocated for by Brownlie et al. (2006). Their model of supports and services enables all students to have success in meeting the curricular outcomes within a regular classroom.

The links between inclusive education and human rights, as defined by international statements, and national and provincial legislation demonstrate an understanding and value in providing rights and entitlements to students with special needs, but are not sufficient to

achieve the goal of full inclusion. Rather, school leadership and staff have the additional responsibility of creating conditions within their classrooms whereby all students are successful. The steps this school staff took to move toward inclusive service delivery are detailed in this study. Further documentation of the reform process used by other school staffs would enhance the list of steps provided here. Additional studies clearly are needed to understand and further illuminate other strategies that schools can employ to move towards inclusion. More in depth study of the particular strategies this school staff used could provide more detail to guide other staff in their implementation. Additional research in the area of inclusive service delivery would benefit both educators who want to move towards inclusion and advocates who want to see more inclusive strategies used by school staff. It also would provide additional models for educators to consider following. Policy makers who need to see indicators of success within new service delivery structures would benefit from additional studies that examined student performance levels over time within this and other service delivery frameworks. Additional research in the use of pres-service teachers as paid interns would be interesting both on their effect on student learning and on teacher preparedness.

### *Limitations*

There are several limitations to this study. The data comes from only one school; this research would have been enhanced with a study of the reform processes used by two or more schools with a comparison of the results. This study involved a middle school; a sample that added an early years and senior years school would have added to the strength of this research. The students with special needs in this school fell mostly into the emotionally behaviourally

disordered category. Findings for students with special needs in other categories may be different than those presented here. The researcher was familiar with the school staff and therefore responses to the focus group questions may have been less poignant. The use of a non-familiar researcher may have resulted in different responses. The amount of data generated by this study was massive. Only the surface of the data was analyzed; a more in depth analysis of each of the three areas I examined would provide more insight and direction for others.

In addition, the data from this study could be re-analyzed with a different lens. For example, a review of this reform process with a focus on the role of the administrator as a educational leader might be one area to consider. Strong leadership and the importance of the school administrator are referenced in the literature on school change ( Fink 2005; Fullan, 2006; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Attention to this aspect of the reform process would have yielded additional information for school staff.

### *Endings*

Upon completion of this study, I am contented. My ideals still are intact. I still consider myself an advocate for inclusion. I have a better understanding of the challenges associated with reform and of the sense of balance needed between patience and perseverance when making change. I have some more realistic ideas about education and inclusion and how to make the two come together. The results of this study demonstrate that the implementation of an inclusive model of service delivery improves student success. Support for inclusion is grounded in the data herein and thus I am wholly convinced that the information contained in

this study will help others move to creating inclusive school environments where all students feel a sense of belonging and fulfillment from their educational experiences.

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## Appendix

### Appendix A

*Descriptions of student specific funding categories in Manitoba:*

#### **Level II Support**

Students with the following conditions are considered for Level II Support

**Severe multiple-disabilities:** The student has a combination of two or more severe disabilities that produce severe multiple developmental, behavioural, and/or learning difficulties. The student may have a severe cognitive disability compounded by a physical disability so severe that he or she requires adaptations and modifications beyond the usual education programming provided for students with moderate special needs. If not cognitively disabled, the student may display two or more severe physical disabilities and consequently requires intensive assistance and/or individualized supervision.

**Severely psychotic:** This diagnostic category includes students with severe thought disorders and associated inappropriate behaviours that are beyond control and that do not appear to be caused by inappropriate school expectations. The severely psychotic student displays highly inappropriate school behaviour that is both chronic and excessive and may necessitate his or her removal from the regular classroom and placement in a specialized, highly intensive therapeutic setting.

**Moderate Autism Spectrum Disorder:** The student has a diagnosis of an ASD that is expressed in significant difficulties with social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication, and a narrow pre-occupation with a fixed range of interests and activities. Secondly, the student may have a significant cognitive disability or delays in adaptive skill development and require assistance with activities of daily living during the school day. The student also demonstrates persistent patterns of behaviour that interfere with his/her ability to learn. The student requires specific adaptations and instruction for a major portion of the school day.

**Deaf or hard of hearing:** The student is confirmed to be Deaf or hard of hearing based on a comprehensive assessment administered by a qualified specialist (audiologist, Teacher or Consultant of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, and/or speech-language pathologist). Due to a hearing loss that has significantly affected the development of speech and/or language, the student requires major programming modifications to participate effectively and benefit from instruction in the educational setting.

**Severely visually impaired:** The student's vision is impaired to the degree that extensive adaptations to the learning environment are necessary, specifically to print medium. Individualized programming is required. This may include direct instruction in Braille and Orientation and Mobility.

**Very severely emotionally/behaviourally disordered:** The student exhibits very severe emotional/behavioural disorders, characterized by inappropriate or disproportionate emotional and behavioural responses to various life situations. The student requires individualized programming and supports with ongoing formal interagency involvement.

### **Level III Support -**

Students with the following conditions are considered for Level III Support:

**Profound multiple-disability:** The student has a combination of extremely severe disabilities that produce profound multiple developmental, behavioural, and/or learning difficulties. Consequently, the student requires continuous individualized attention and instruction, as well as extensive additional supports.

**Severe to Profound Autism Spectrum Disorder:** The student has a diagnosis of an ASD that is expressed in severe and pervasive difficulties in social interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication, and a narrow range of interests, activities, and behaviours. In addition, the student has a significant cognitive disability with corresponding delays in adaptive skill development. Secondly, the student may also experience severe difficulty with managing change in daily routines and activities; severe reactions to sensory stimuli; and a persistent pattern of behaviours that are dangerous to him/her self or others. Consequently, the student requires highly individualized programming for the entire school day.

**Deaf:** The student is Deaf or has a hearing loss that affects communication so profoundly that he or she requires appropriate, full-time, individualized planning and support to participate effectively and benefit from instruction in the educational setting.

**Blind:** The student's vision is impaired to the degree that the primary learning mode is not visual. This necessitates extensive adaptations to the learning environment and highly individualized planning and support. Students require on-going direct instruction in Braille and Orientation and Mobility.

**Profoundly emotionally/behaviourally disordered:** The student exhibits profound emotional/behavioural disorders and associated learning difficulties requiring highly individualized programming and intensive support services at school and in the community. This applies to the student:

- who is a danger to self and/or to others and whose actions are marked by impulsive, aggressive, and violent behaviour
- whose behaviour is chronic -- the disorder persists over a lengthy period of time
- whose behaviour is pervasive and consistent -- the disorder negatively affects all environments, including home, school, and community
- who requires or receives a combination of statutory and non-statutory services from Manitoba Education, Family Services and Housing, Health, and/or Justice as defined within the *Child and Family Services Act*, the *Mental Health Act*, and the *Young Offenders Act*

From Manitoba Education Website (2012)

<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/funding/level2-3.html>



## Appendix B

### Letter to Ethics Committee

(On University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education Letterhead)

Date

Dear School Division Ethics Committee Chair,

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Education studying in the area of inclusive education. I am conducting a study in order to complete my Master of Education thesis in the area of inclusive education and my thesis advisor is Dr. Charlotte Enns. I am interested in school-based service delivery models used in middle schools. I am aware that one of your middle schools, Munroe Junior High School, has implemented an alternative service delivery model to support the needs of all students within a regular classroom environment. The purpose of this study is to use qualitative research methods to describe and analyze the processes used by this middle school to move its school-based service delivery to a model where the needs of all students are met in regular classrooms. Specifically, the study will address:

- a) What specific actions did this school take to move from one model of service delivery to another?
- b) What aspects of the school's culture - beliefs, leadership, structures, processes – were important in facilitating this move?
- c) What strategies did this school employ to ensure that all students were successfully supported in regular classrooms?

The study of this school's reform process and its model of service delivery will provide a detailed record of the school's actions, beliefs and behaviours over time. It will provide an in depth understanding of this school's particular experiences with school reform.

I am writing to you at this time to request your permission and to invite Munroe Junior High School staff (principal, vice-principal, counsellor(s), resource teacher(s), teachers) to participate in this study. With your permission, I will send the attached invitation to participate and the information letter to the school administrators. If they are interested in participating, they would contact me directly to make the arrangements. As the participation of their staff in this study will be completely voluntary, I will request permission from them to attend one of their staff meetings to explain the study and to distribute the information letter to all of the staff in their school. I will obtain the written consent of the staff to participate in the study prior to conducting the focus group interviews, which are a part of this study. Their participation will involve participating in two focus group interviews regarding the use of an alternative service delivery model in their school. The interviews will require approximately two hours

of their time each as the same staff will be involved in each interview. The interviews will be arranged at a convenient time and location for them and they will be free to disregard any questions or to withdraw from the interview at any time. Although the identities of the participants will be known to me at the time of the interviews, this information will be kept strictly confidential. Information only will be shared with my supervising professor and will be destroyed within six weeks of the completion of the study. The responses to the interview questions will be recorded on chart paper with no names attached to them. Some specific words used by the staff may be utilized when I am reporting the data, although none will be attributed to any person directly. Participants will have the opportunity to continue to dialogue individually with me after the focus interviews have been completed, although this is not a requirement of participation in the focus group interviews. Any follow-up interviews will be recorded on note paper without the use of any identifying information and they will not exceed 30 minutes in length. They will be held only at the request of the participants and will be held at a time and place convenient for them; a telephone interview is an option. Any written notes will not include the participants' names or identifying information about the school. A supplementary data source to the interviews will involve school documents such as their PATH and statistical information regarding attendance, discipline and academic achievement. Any identifying information will be removed prior to me having access. I do not anticipate any direct risks or benefits to the participants. One indirect benefit to them would be the knowledge that their experiences may assist other schools with their reform process.

This should give you the basic idea of what the study entails. At the completion of the study I would be happy to share the results of my findings with you. If you would like more information or clarification of any of these points, please contact me, Tammy Mitchell, at (204) 338 4770 or [tmitchell@retsd.mb.ca](mailto:tmitchell@retsd.mb.ca) or my advisor, Dr. Charlotte Enns at 474 9017 or [ennscj@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:ennscj@cc.umanitoba.ca)

This research has been approved by the Education//Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons directly or the Human Ethics Coordinator, CTC Building, 208-194 Dafoe Road, 474 7122. A copy of this letter has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Tammy Mitchell

Graduate Student

## Appendix C

### Letter to Superintendent

(On University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education Letterhead)

Date

Dear (Name of Superintendent

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Education studying in the area of inclusive education. I am conducting a study in order to complete my Master of Education thesis in the area of inclusive education and my thesis advisor is Dr. Charlotte Enns. I am interested in school-based service delivery models used in middle schools. I am aware that one of your middle schools, Munroe Junior High School, has implemented an alternative service delivery model to support the needs of all students within a regular classroom environment. The purpose of this study is to use qualitative research methods to describe and analyze the processes used by this middle school to move its school-based service delivery to a model where the needs of all students are met in regular classrooms. Specifically, the study will address:

- a) What specific actions did this school take to move from one model of service delivery to another?
- b) What aspects of the school's culture - beliefs, leadership, structures, processes – were important in facilitating this move?
- c) What strategies did this school employ to ensure that all students were successfully supported in regular classrooms?

The study of this school's reform process and its model of service delivery will provide a detailed record of the school's actions, beliefs and behaviours over time. It will provide an in depth understanding of this school's particular experiences with school reform.

I have written to the chair of your school division's ethics committee to request your permission for this study and to invite Munroe Junior High School staff (principal, vice-principal, counsellor(s), resource teacher(s), teachers) to participate in this study. With your division's permission, I will send the attached invitation to participate and the information letter to the school administrators. If they are interested in participating, they would contact me directly to make the arrangements. As the participation of their staff in this study will be completely voluntary, I will request permission from them to attend one of their staff meetings to explain the study and to distribute the information letter to all of the staff in their school. I will obtain the written consent of the staff to participate in the study prior to conducting the focus group interviews, which are a part of this study. Their participation will involve

participating in two focus group interviews regarding the use of an alternative service delivery model in their school. The interviews will require approximately two hours of their time each as the same staff will be involved in each interview. The interviews will be arranged at a convenient time and location for them and they will be free to disregard any questions or to withdraw from the interview at any time. Although the identities of the participants will be known to me at the time of the interviews, this information will be kept strictly confidential. Information only will be shared with my supervising professor and will be destroyed within six weeks of the completion of the study. The responses to the interview questions will be recorded on chart paper with no names attached to them. Some specific words used by the staff may be utilized when I am reporting the data, although none will be attributed to any person directly. Participants will have the opportunity to continue to dialogue individually with me after the focus interviews have been completed, although this is not a requirement of participation in the focus group interviews. Any follow-up interviews will be recorded on note paper without the use of any identifying information and they will not exceed 30 minutes in length. They will be held only at the request of the participants and will be held at a time and place convenient for them; a telephone interview is an option. Any written notes will not include the participants' names or identifying information about the school. I do not anticipate any direct risks or benefits to the participants. One indirect benefit to them would be the knowledge that their experiences may assist other schools with their reform process.

The primary data for my research will come from these interviews. However, I also would like your permission to obtain historical documentation about the school to supplement my interview data. I would like to obtain electronic copies of anonymized statistical data related to school attendance, discipline reports and academic achievement reports for the past five years. That is, the names, addresses, MET numbers and any other identifying information should be removed from the documents prior to me receiving access.

This should give you the basic idea of what the study entails. At the completion of the study I would be happy to share the results of my findings with you. If you would like more information or clarification of any of these points, please contact me, Tammy Mitchell, at (204) 338 4770 or [tmitchell@retsd.mb.ca](mailto:tmitchell@retsd.mb.ca) or my advisor, Dr. Charlotte Enns at 474 9017 or [ennsci@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:ennsci@cc.umanitoba.ca)

This research has been approved by the Education//Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons directly or the Human Ethics Coordinator, CTC Building, 208-194 Dafoe Road, 474 7122. A copy of this letter has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Tammy Mitchell

Graduate Student

## Appendix D

### Letter to Administrator

(On University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education Letterhead)

Date

Dear (Name of Principal and Vice-Principal):

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Education studying in the area of inclusive education. I am conducting a study in order to complete my Master of Education thesis in the area of inclusive education and my thesis advisor is Dr. Charlotte Enns. I am interested in school-based service delivery models used in middle schools and I am aware that your middle school has implemented an alternative service delivery model to support the needs of all students within a regular classroom environment.

I am writing to you at this time to request your help in inviting your staff (counsellor(s), resource teacher(s) and teachers) to participate in this study. You and the vice-principal also are welcome to participate in the study. With your permission, I would like to attend one of your staff meetings so that I can explain the study and distribute the attached information letter to all of your staff members. If they are interested in participating they will contact me directly to make the arrangements. In this way, their participation will be completely voluntary. I will obtain their written consent to participate prior to conducting the focus group interviews, which are a part of this study. Their participation will involve participating in two focus group interviews regarding the use of an alternative service delivery model in their school. The interviews will be conducted by me and will require approximately two hours of their time each. The same staff will be involved in both interviews. The interviews will be arranged at a convenient time and location for them and they will be free to disregard any questions or withdraw from the interview at any time. Although the identities of the participants will be known to me at the time of the interviews, this information will be kept strictly confidential. Information only will be shared with my supervising professor and will be destroyed within six weeks of the completion of the study. The interviews will be recorded on chart paper without the use of any identifying information. Some of the specific words used by the staff may be utilized when I am reporting data although none will be attributed to any person directly. Participants will have the opportunity to continue the dialogue individually after the completion of the focus group interviews should they so desire. Follow-up

interviews are not a requirement of participation in the focus group interviews and only will occur at the request of individual participants. Any follow-up interviews will be recorded on note paper without the use of any identifying information and will not exceed 30 minutes in length. They will be held at a time and place convenient for the participant; a telephone interview is an option. Any written notes will not include the participants' names or identifying information about the school. The primary data for my research will come from these interviews. However, I also have requested some historical documentation about your school from the superintendent, which will supplement the interview information about your reform process. These documents might include planning documents, statistical documents such as attendance, discipline and academic achievement reports. Any identifying information will be removed from the documents prior to me receiving access. I do not anticipate any direct risks or benefits to the participants who volunteer for this study. One indirect benefit to the participants would be the knowledge that their experiences may assist other schools with their reform processes.

This should give you the basic idea of what the study entails. At the completion of the study I would be happy to share a summary of the findings with you. If you would like more information or clarification of any of these points please contact me, Tammy Mitchell, at (204) 338 4770 or [tmitchell@retsd.mb.ca](mailto:tmitchell@retsd.mb.ca) or my advisor, Dr. Charlotte Enns at 474 9017 or [ennscj@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:ennscj@cc.umanitoba.ca)

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named person directly or the Human Ethics Coordinator, CTC Building, 208-194 Dafoe Road, 474 7122. A copy of this letter has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Tammy Mitchell

Graduate Student

Ethics Approval Document



CTC Building  
208 - 194 Dafoe Road  
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2  
Fax (204) 269-7173  
www.umanitoba.ca/research

**APPROVAL CERTIFICATE**

July 28, 2010

C.Enns

**TO:** Tammy Mitchell  
Principal Investigator

**FROM:** Stan Straw, Chair  
Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)

**Re:** Protocol #E2010:077  
"An Ethnographic Study of a Middle School's Reform Process to Provide an Inclusive Model of Service Delivery"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

**Please note:**

- if you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to Eveline Saurette in the Office of Research Services, (e-mail [eveline\\_saurette@umanitoba.ca](mailto:eveline_saurette@umanitoba.ca), or fax 261-0325), including the Sponsor name, before your account can be opened.
- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

**The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: [http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors\\_ethics\\_human\\_REB\\_forms\\_guidelines.html](http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors_ethics_human_REB_forms_guidelines.html)) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.**

Letter for Participants

(On University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education letterhead)

**Information Letter for Participants**

Date

Dear Staff members:

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Education studying in the area of inclusive education. I am conducting a study in order to complete my Master of Education thesis in the area of inclusive education and my thesis advisor is Dr. Charlotte Enns. I am interested in school-based service delivery models used in middle schools and I am aware that your middle school has implemented an alternative service delivery model to support the needs of all students within a regular classroom environment. I am very interested in finding out whether this model is effective or helpful and would like to get your feedback and perceptions about using it.

If you would be willing to share your experiences in implementing an alternative service delivery model, please contact me at (204) 338 4770 or [tmitchell@retsd.mb.ca](mailto:tmitchell@retsd.mb.ca). If you agree to be involved, I will meet with you at a time and place that is convenient and interview you twice for approximately two hours each time. These interviews will be in the form of a focus group discussion with other staff members from your school. Everything you tell me will be kept strictly confidential and you do not need to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable and you are free to stop the interview at any time.

The focus group interviews will be recorded on chart paper without the use of any identifying information. Some of the specific words used by the staff may be used when I am reporting the data, although none will be attributed to any person directly. This data will be used to provide a historical scan of your reform process but will not include your name or any identifying information about you or your school. After the completion of the focus group interviews, if you wish to continue to dialogue



about your experiences individually, you may choose to also participate in an individual interview, although it is not a requirement of your participation in the focus group interview. No additional questions will be asked during the follow-up interview, it simply is an additional opportunity for you to share your experiences related to the focus group questions. This follow-up interview will be recorded on note paper without the use of any identifying information and will not exceed 30 minutes in length. It will be held at a time and place convenient for you; a telephone conversation is an option. Information from both the focus group interviews and any follow-up interviews will be shared with my supervising professor and will be destroyed within six weeks of the completion of the study. Raw data will not include your name or any identifying information about you or the school. The information will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home at all times to ensure the confidentiality of the information.

It is important for you to know that your participation in the project is completely voluntary and will be kept confidential. Your participation in the study is not at all related to your job performance. I do not anticipate any direct risks or benefits to you if you choose to volunteer to participate in this study. One indirect benefit to you would be the knowledge that by sharing your experiences, you may assist other schools with their school reform process. Should you wish to receive a written summary of the results of this study, please indicate this on the consent form and I will forward the information to you.

I hope you will consider being involved in this study – your feedback will be very helpful in understanding the reform process used in your school to create a new service delivery model. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or if you require further information. You may also contact my advisor, Dr. Charlotte Enns at 474 9017 or [ennscj@cc.umanitoba.ca](mailto:ennscj@cc.umanitoba.ca)

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tammy Mitchell

Graduate Student

## Appendix G

### Consent Form for Participants

(On University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education letterhead)

### Consent Form for Participants

Date

Research Project Title: An Exploratory Study of a Middle School's Reform Process to Provide an Inclusive Model of Service Delivery

Researcher: Tammy Mitchell

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more details about something mentioned here, or information not included here, please feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Education studying in the area of inclusive education. I am conducting a study in order to complete my Master of Education thesis in the area of inclusive education and my thesis advisor is Dr. Charlotte Enns. I am interested in school-based service delivery models used in middle schools and I am aware that your middle school has implemented an alternative service delivery model to support the needs to all students within a regular classroom environment. I am very interested in identifying the reform process used to implement this model and its effectiveness and would like to get your feedback and perceptions about using it.

I am writing to you at this time to invite you to participate in this study. Your agreement will involve your participation in two focus group interviews for approximately two hours each. The same participants will be involved in both interviews. The questions you will be asked will be open-ended questions about your process and experiences using the service delivery model in your school. The information you provide will be used to understand more about the process of service delivery for

student success. The interviews will be conducted by me and will be written on chart paper to record your ideas and responses. No identifying information will be recorded; however, some of the specific words used by you may be utilized when I am reporting the data, although none will be attributed to any person directly. Only my supervisor and I will have access to these documents and they will be destroyed within six weeks of the completion of the study. Please note that all data is protected. The written documents will not include your name or any identifying information about you or the school, and will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home at all times to ensure confidentiality of the information. The documentation of these focus group interviews will inform my thesis findings and may be used for presentations at conferences or in academic journals, where the source of the data or your names will never be used.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You are free to disregard any questions during the focus group interviews or withdraw from the interviews at any time. I do not anticipate any direct risks or benefits to you, should you choose to volunteer for this study. One indirect benefit may be the knowledge that the experiences you share may assist other schools with their school reform processes. If you would like to receive a written summary of the results of this study when it is completed, please indicate this on the form below.

After the completion of the focus group interviews, if you wish to continue to dialogue about your experiences individually, you may choose to participate in an individual interview, although this is not a requirement of your participation in the focus group interviews. This follow-up interview will be recorded on note paper without the use of any identifying information and will not exceed 30 minutes in length. It will be held at a time and place convenient for you; a telephone interview is an option. No additional questions will be asked during this follow-up interview as it simple is another opportunity for you to respond to the questions asked during the focus group interviews. Only my supervisor and I will have access to these documents and they will not include your name or any identifying information about you. They will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my home and will be destroyed within six weeks of the completion of this study. You will be free to withdraw from the follow-up interview at any time. If you are interested in a follow-up interview, please check the box at the bottom of the form.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher or involved institution from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you would like more information or clarification of



## Script to Request Participants

### **Script for Potential Participants**

I will use this introduction script as a guide to explain to potential participants the details of the study and their involvement.

#### **Background to the study**

“I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Education studying in the area of inclusive education. I am interested in school-based service delivery models and understand that your school has implemented an alternative service delivery model.”

“The study I would like you to consider participating is one which is exploring school-based service delivery. Specifically, I would like to invite you to participate in two focus groups that will be carried out as a part of my research. In particular, I would like you to share your experiences in the reform process used to change your model of service delivery and your experiences in implementing an alternative model.”

#### **Explain the role of the participant**

“As a participant in this study, your role is to help me to get a better understanding of your experiences. Specifically I would like you to be involved in two focus group interviews which will take approximately two hours each. Your responses to the questions at the focus group interviews will be recorded on chart paper but will not include your name.”

“After the completion of the focus group interviews, if you wish to continue to dialogue about your experiences, you may choose to participate in an individual interview. Your comments will be recorded on note paper but will not include your name. It is not necessary to participate in an individual interview if you choose to participate in the focus group interviews.”

#### **Consent forms and data protection**

At this point I will distribute the information letter for participants and will hand out the consent forms; the forms reiterate the details of the study.

“If you are interested in participating in the study, please contact me at the telephone number or email address provided on the information letter. Please note that all data is protected. Your identity will be anonymous and only my supervisor and I will have access to the data. The data will be used for analysis as a part of my thesis and may be used for presentations at conferences or in academic journals, where the source of the data or your names will never be used.”

“Thank you for taking the time to hear about my study.”

Pledge of Confidentiality

**Pledge of Confidentiality**

As a participant in the focus groups for the research study “An Exploration of a Middle Schools’ Reform Process to Provide an Inclusive Model of Service Delivery”, I acknowledge and understand that I may/will have access to personal information about others, the confidentiality and protection of which is governed by the Personal Health Information Act.

I further acknowledge and understand that the University of Manitoba has written policies and regulations containing provisions for the security of personal information in the researcher’s possession during its collection, use, storage and destruction.

I further acknowledge that I have been provided with information related to the confidentiality of the information shared during the focus groups and that I agree to refrain from revealing what was said in the focus group or who attended the focus group.

---

Signature

---

Date

### **Script Template for the Introduction of the Focus Groups**

#### **Background to the Study**

“Hello. My name is Tammy Mitchell. Thank you for volunteering to be a part of these focus group interviews. Today I would like to have a conversation with you about your school’s reform process related to service delivery. What I’m trying to accomplish before we leave here today is to get a better understanding of your experiences during your school reform process and your experiences in implementing a new model of service delivery. Are there any questions?”

#### **Role of the Participant**

“Firstly, I’d like to review some rules to help the process to run smoothly.

- Please turn off your cell phones so we are not interrupted.
- Keep in mind that everyone has something valuable to contribute. So that I can keep track of what people are saying, please have only one person talking at a time.
- For all information that is shared, please presume the positive intent of the speaker.
- We will keep to the timelines outlined and will end by \_\_\_\_.”

#### **Consent forms and Data Protection**

“Each of you already has signed a consent form confirming your participation in this study. At this time, I would like to remind you that your participation in the study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit. Please feel free to ask for clarification or new information at any time during the interviews.”

“Your responses to my questions will be recorded on chart paper without any link to the names of individual participants. All of the data is confidential and only my supervisor and I will have access to it. The data will be used for analysis as a part of my thesis and may be used for presentations at conferences or in academic journals, where the source of the data or your names will never be used. As a further step to ensure anonymity, I would like you to sign a confidentiality pledge indicating that you will not reveal what will be said during these focus group interviews and that you will not discuss who attended them.” Distribute forms.

#### **The Process**

“To get us started, please tell us your name and how long you’ve worked in this school.” I will point to someone randomly to show that it is not necessary to talk in sequence.

“There are seven questions in this first interview (10 in the next), giving us approximately 15 minutes per question (10 for next interview). Let’s get started.” Begin with question 1.

End with question 7 (10 for the next interview). “Are there any final questions? Thank you for participating in the focus group today. It was exciting to learn about your experiences. I look forward to our next interview.”



Table A1

*Link Between Research Questions and Focus Group Questions*

| Research Questions  | Focus Group Interview #1<br>Questions | Focus Group Interview #2<br>Questions |
|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| What specific actions did this school staff take to move to an inclusive model of service delivery?   | 2 & 6                                 | 3 & 7                                 |
| What aspects of the school's culture - beliefs, leadership, structures, processes – were important in facilitating the move from segregation to inclusion?                  | 1, 5, 7                               | 1, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9                      |
| What strategies did this school staff employ to ensure that all students were successfully supported in inclusive settings and what data exists to support student success? | 3 & 4                                 | 4                                     |