

HAM OR EGGS?
TEACHER COMMITMENT TO INCLUSION

By

Mary-Ann Updike

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Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology
University of Manitoba
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ABSTRACT

It has been said that the difference between involvement and commitment is like a ham and egg breakfast – the chicken was involved but the pig was committed. To better understand teacher commitment to inclusion, this study examined the perspectives and experiences of 8 elementary teachers who had included students with significant disabilities in their general education classrooms. A questionnaire was developed to determine prior and current opinions about inclusion and participants were assigned to one of the following categories: (a) those who were optimistic about inclusion prior to their experience of including a student with a significant disability and who have remained optimistic, (b) those who were optimistic about inclusion prior to their experience but who have become sceptical as a result of their experience, (c) those who were initially sceptical about inclusion prior to their experience of including a student with a significant disability but who have become optimistic as a result of their experience with inclusion, and (d) those who were initially sceptical about inclusion and who remain sceptical. Interviews were conducted to explore the effect their experiences had on their opinions about inclusion and the factors that facilitated or hindered teacher engagement. Qualitative analysis of the data suggested that teachers who are able to include students with significant disabilities are more engaged, are generally satisfied with their experiences and have become more optimistic about inclusion and more committed to it. Implications for teacher education and professional development are discussed.

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my son, Gordon. You have given me the opportunity to discover the depth of my character, my commitment, my patience, and my abilities. You have taught me what is really important in life and about not taking things for granted. You drive me further than I would ever go on my own, seeking answers to my many questions with no answers. You are a child who cannot talk and I love you.

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CHAPTER 1

Full inclusion, in which all students are full and equal members of their general education classrooms and school communities, is a recognized and increasingly common educational practice. Across Canada, most provinces and territories have adopted or are adopting the term inclusive to describe their approach to providing services for students with special needs (Friend, Bursuck, & Hutchinson, 1998). In Manitoba, a recently published compilation of existing policies and procedures in student service (Manitoba Education Training and Youth, 2001) reflects a philosophy of inclusion and states “students with special needs should experience school as much as possible like their peers without special needs” (p. 3).

Interest in the practice of including students in general education classrooms has sparked a great deal of discussion and research. Some of this research has focused on the attitudes and perceptions of general education teachers either prior to or after their involvement in inclusion programs (Cook, Tankersley, & Landrum, 2000; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Other studies have focused on the practices used in general education classrooms implementing inclusive educational programs (Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997; Janney & Snell, 1997), particularly in those schools where inclusive efforts were considered successful (York-Barr, Schultz, Doyle, Kronberg, & Crossett, 1996).

From this research, it has become apparent that classroom teachers’ feelings of responsibility for and engagement with their students with disabilities are critical variables in the successful inclusion and education of students with disabilities in general education classrooms (Giangreco, Dennis, Cloninger, Edelman, & Schattman, 1993; Hunt

& Goetz, 1997; Kozleski & Jackson, 1993; Olson, Chalmers, & Hoover, 1997; Salisbury, Palombaro, & Hollowood, 1993; York-Barr et al., 1996). The detrimental effects associated with teacher disengagement, namely student isolation, insular relationships with paraeducators, and stigmatization, have been identified (Giangreco, Broer, & Edelman, 2001) and concerns have been raised regarding teachers abdicating their responsibility for students with disabilities to paraeducators. Brown, Farrington, Knight, Ross, and Ziegler (1999) expressed their concern that placing the least trained, least qualified personnel in the position of providing the majority of instruction and other key supports to students who present the most complex learning challenges jeopardizes their right to receive an appropriate education.

In Manitoba, the provincial government is currently drafting regulations, policies, and guidelines to accompany new legislation that is awaiting proclamation. Bill 13, An Amendment to the Public Schools Act (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2005) will ensure that all students in Manitoba are entitled to receive appropriate educational programming that fosters student participation in both the academic and social life of the school. The intent of this legislation is to ensure all students, particularly those with special needs, receive the appropriate educational programs they require. With the final assent of this legislation, schools will need to examine their existing procedures and policies regarding students with diverse needs. Therefore, this an opportune time to investigate teacher commitment to inclusion.

While some might feel that “bad” inclusion is always preferable to “good” segregation, others have used unsuccessful examples to question whether all teachers can or should be expected to accommodate all children with special needs (Winzer, 1998) and

to suggest that inclusion may not be the most appropriate choice for some students (Smith & Smith, 2000) . There are also objections to inclusion based on other considerations. For example, many in the Deaf community argue deaf students should be included only in deaf communities where peers share their language (ASL) and distinct deaf culture (Cohen, 1994). In addition, some educators argue that some students with disabilities that affect attention and concentration need irregular classroom environments that are less crowded, less noisy, less cluttered, and more structured than the regular classroom ever can or should be (Rempel, 1992). Finally, it has been argued that some students, typically those with psychiatric and severe behavioural and emotional problems, need therapeutic educational environments not suited to the needs of healthy children (Kauffman, Lloyd, Baker, & Riedel, 1995). Nevertheless, even if these three exceptional populations are exempted from consideration, as they are in this study, the inclusion of the vast majority of students with disabilities remains an important and controversial issue.

This is particularly true for students with significant disabilities. Despite the impact of the inclusive schooling movement, these students often are placed in separate classes. As these students require a modified or individualized program, which makes their inclusion in the regular classroom more challenging, they will be the focus of this study.

Several scholars (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998; Winzer, 1998) have noted the importance of clarifying the meanings of terms such as significant disabilities. What is significantly disabled to one person may not be so to another. For the purpose of this study, students with significant disabilities will be those who are eligible for modified or

individualized programming. In Manitoba, modification applies to students who have significant cognitive disabilities and require alteration to over 50 per cent of the learning outcomes in a subject area. Individualized programming recognizes that some students with significant cognitive disabilities will not benefit from provincial curricula (Manitoba Education Training and Youth, 2001).

Students with significant cognitive disabilities have significantly below-average general intellectual functioning with deficits in adaptive behaviour (Friend et al., 1998). Many of these students may have other diagnostic labels such as autism, cerebral palsy, Down syndrome, and fetal alcohol syndrome. However, not all students with these labels have a significant cognitive disability and not all students with a cognitive disability are unable to meet the curriculum outcomes without modification. Modified and individualized programming is not intended for students without significant cognitive disabilities who may be considered as having special needs, including those who have physical disabilities, emotional or behavioural disorders, or learning disabilities, as well as those who are blind or have visual impairments, who are deaf or hard of hearing, or for whom English is a second language.

Students with significant disabilities can and are being included successfully in classrooms every day (Hunt & Goetz, 1997). Successful inclusionists demonstrate a commitment to inclusion through direct contact with students with disabilities and active involvement in planning and implementing instruction along with other educational team members (Giangreco & Doyle, 2002). The question that begs to be asked is why do some teachers become engaged with and take responsibility for their students with significant

disabilities and, perhaps more importantly, what factors facilitate or hinder teacher responsibility and engagement?

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Four main bodies of work that support and inform the present study will be discussed in this review of the literature. First, the role of teacher attitudes toward inclusion and their effect on a teacher's willingness to include students with disabilities will be examined. Second, the effects of experience with inclusion on teachers' attitudes and willingness to include will be explored. Particular attention will be paid to those who have had experience including a student with significant disabilities. The third focus of this review will be on the experiences of those teachers who report that including a student with significant disabilities lead to changes in their attitude or willingness to include students with disabilities. Finally, research related to teacher responsibility and engagement will be reviewed and possible influencing factors will be identified.

Teacher Attitudes

It has generally been assumed that in order for inclusion to be effective, general classroom teachers must be receptive to its principles and demands (Garvar-Pinhas & Schmelkin, 1989). This assumption is based on the belief that teachers' support for any innovation in which they are participating will influence the effort they expend in its implementation (Sarason, 1982). Since putting the concept of full inclusion into practice successfully requires significant changes in curricular planning and instructional practices (Giangreco & Putnam, 1991), as well as in teacher roles and responsibilities (Rainforth, York, & MacDonald, 1992), considerable effort is required. Because of the assumed importance of teachers' attitudes on the success of inclusion, teacher attitudinal studies represent one of the largest bodies of research investigating inclusion.

In general, studies of teacher attitudes appear contradictory and inconclusive. Some research has characterized general education teachers as being resistant to integration (Coates, 1989; Semmel, Abernathy, Butera, & Lesar, 1991) while others have shown them to be supportive (Villa, Thousand, Meyers, & Nevin, 1996; York, Vandercook, MacDonald, Heise-Neff, & Caughey, 1992). Coates reported that general educators do not agree with the basic tenets of inclusive education, nor are they opposed to pullout programs. Similarly, Semmel et al. surveyed 381 general and special educators and concluded that teachers in elementary schools favour a pullout model of education over an inclusive one. On the other hand, Villa, et al. surveyed 680 teachers and administrators and found that respondents favoured educating children with disabilities in regular classes.

Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) tried to make sense of these contradictions by using research synthesis procedures to summarize this literature. Altogether, they examined 28 survey reports covering 10, 560 teachers and other school personnel from the United States, Canada, and Australia published from 1958 to 1995. They found that a majority of teachers agreed with the general concepts of mainstreaming and inclusion, and a slight majority were willing to implement mainstreaming or inclusion practices in their own classes. Overall, support for inclusion and the willingness to implement it appeared to covary with the severity of the students' disabilities and the amount of additional teacher responsibility required.

Although Scruggs and Mastropieri (1996) noted that support for inclusion and teacher willingness to include students with disabilities did not appear to covary with other variables, such as geographical area or year of publication, only one study included

Canadian teachers and the majority surveyed the attitudes of American teachers. Differences in the education systems, teacher preparation programs, and general views towards diversity, suggest that Canadian teachers may hold different views than their American counterparts. Bunch, Lupart, & Brown (1997) surveyed 1,147 teachers and school personnel and 345 pre-service teachers to determine their attitudes toward the inclusion of students with challenging needs across Canada. Practising educators were drawn from traditionally structured school systems having both regular and special education classes, and inclusively structured systems having regular classes, but few special education classes. Interestingly, their results also found that those surveyed generally believed that inclusion is sound educational practice and similar concerns regarding teacher workload were raised. More recent surveys of teachers in Nova Scotia (Edmunds, 1999) and Newfoundland (Edmunds, 2003) yielded similar results.

These findings suggest that many teachers support the philosophy of inclusion and are willing to implement inclusion in their classroom. However, this support is not overwhelming, and some reservations exist, particularly with respect to willingness. It is important to note that much of the attitudinal research was conducted with teachers who were not teaching in inclusive programs. This led Semmel et al. (1991) to conclude that the negative perspectives of teachers in their survey could have been influenced by the lack of experience these professionals had with inclusion. In addition, most of the research focused on students with mild disabilities. Given that, generally, the more severe the disability, the more negative the attitudes of teachers toward inclusion (Wisniewski & Alper, 1994), it would appear that not all experience is equal. Therefore, research into the role of teachers' experiences with students with significant disabilities is explored next.

Inclusion Experience

Research into teacher change has found that while commitment is critical to implementation of innovations (Fullan, 1991), teacher commitment often emerges at the end of the implementation cycle, after the teachers have gained mastery of the professional expertise needed to implement a new innovation (McLaughlin, 1991). In other words, teachers' negative or neutral attitudes at the beginning of an innovation, such as inclusion, may change over time as a function of experience and as their expertise develops through the process of implementation. A substantial amount of the research involving educators experienced with inclusion has focused on the implementation of inclusive education and a few researchers have focused on the attitudes and beliefs of teachers who had experience including students with significant disabilities.

Downing, Eichinger, and Williams (1997) conducted structured interviews with nine general educators, nine special educators, and nine principals representing nine different elementary schools concerning their perceptions of the inclusion of elementary level students with severe disabilities. They were particularly interested in the impact that professional role and level of integration had on their perceptions. The respondents worked in three different types of educational programs: full inclusion, partial integration, and no inclusive educational experiences with elementary students with severe disabilities. Fully inclusive sites were schools where students with severe disabilities were full-time members of the class they would have been in if not disabled and had individualized supports in accordance with their Individualized Education Programs. Partial integration sites were at schools where students labelled severely disabled were assigned to self-contained special education rooms, but went to the age-

appropriate general education classrooms for certain parts of the day with supports provided. Sites at which there was no implementation of inclusive practices were schools where students were educated in self-contained rooms and did not participate in general education classrooms.

Though responses, in general, were relatively consistent despite role or level of implementation, some differences were apparent. When asked their view on inclusion (whether positive, negative, or neutral), almost all were uniformly positive, although more people implementing full or partial inclusion were positive. In answer to the question, "If all resources were available, would you support full inclusion?" more principals and special educators responded affirmatively than did general educators. Three of these general educators said that it would depend on various factors. As expected, more people doing full or partial inclusion said "yes" than did those implementing no inclusion.

A comparison of the perspectives of teachers who were currently teaching in inclusive programs with teachers who were not teaching in such programs also was the focus of an investigation by McLeskey, Waldron, So, Swanson, & Loveland (2001). They surveyed 162 general and special educators from six schools. Teachers from three of the schools were completing the first year of implementation of an Inclusive School Program that they had developed as part of a school-university partnership. Teachers from the other three schools had not worked in inclusive settings and these schools used traditional pullout special education programs. Results revealed that the inclusion teachers had significantly more positive perspectives regarding inclusion than did the teachers who were not employed in inclusive programs. Although students with a variety

of needs were involved in the inclusive schools, the survey was limited to teacher perspectives on inclusion of students with mild disabilities.

Villa et al. (1996) assessed the attitudes and beliefs of 690 general and special educators and administrators who had varying degrees of experience attempting to educate all students, regardless of the nature or type of disability, in age-appropriate general education classrooms in local neighbourhood schools that were considered to be inclusionary schools. They found that general and special education professionals favoured the inclusion of children with disabilities and generally believed that educating students with disabilities in general education classrooms results in positive changes in educators' attitudes. In particular, those who had experience working with children with severe or profound disabilities were significantly more positive about the appropriateness of inclusion for all students.

Overall, these findings suggest that the many surveys that have been conducted with teachers regarding their perspectives toward inclusion, especially those surveys with teachers who were not teaching in inclusive programs, should be interpreted with caution. At the very least, such surveys provide a biased picture of teachers' views of inclusion, and likely are a more accurate reflection of teacher concerns and caution regarding change, rather than their opposition to inclusion. Initial resistance should perhaps be viewed as a natural part of the change process rather than as an indication that the change will be impossible to accomplish.

While these findings suggest that teachers with experience of inclusion have more positive attitudes toward it and believe that experience results in positive changes in attitudes, their attitudes towards inclusion prior to their experience with it and their initial

willingness to include a student are unknown. Furthermore, these studies have included the perspectives of special educators and administrators along with general educators. While the attitudes of the whole school are important, ultimately it is the classroom teacher who is responsible for including students with disabilities. Generally, administrators and special educators have had more positive attitudes toward inclusion (Winzer, 1998), which is supported by the results of Downing et al. (1997). In their study, eight of the nine administrators and six of the nine special educators responded affirmatively to the question, "If all resources were available, would you support full inclusion?", but only four of the nine general educators did.

Therefore, a closer look at the attitudes and initial willingness of general educators is warranted, although a different research methodology may be needed. All of the studies discussed so far have used surveys to gather information regarding attitudes and the effects of experience on attitudes. While this is an effective method for reaching a large number of participants, sometimes the results generate more questions than they answer. Qualitative research methods, such as open-ended interviews, enable researchers to probe into the reasons behind a particular response and allow for the exploration of unanticipated issues.

Transformation

In-depth analysis of the milieu of inclusive schools and classrooms and the process of the development of inclusive practices has shown that the attitude of the general education staff has changed over time from "resistance to cooperation to overt support" (Salisbury et al., 1993). Other qualitative studies have reported initial resistance to inclusion followed by generally widespread approval as teachers gained experience

(Kozleski & Jackson, 1993). However, two studies specifically asked general educators whether the experience of including students had led to changes in attitude (Giangreco et al., 1993; Snyder, Garriott, & Aylor, 2001).

As a major component of an inclusion course, preservice and inservice teachers interviewed 28 teachers who taught in inclusive settings to gather information about their perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, and experiences relevant to inclusion (Snyder et al., 2001). An inclusive classroom was described as a general education classroom in which students with special needs receive instruction along with general education students. In response to the question, has teaching in an inclusive setting changed your mind about students with special needs, 11 of the 28 respondents stated that teaching in an inclusive setting had not changed their minds about students with special needs. Of these, eight indicated no attitudinal change because they said they had always had positive attitudes about including students with special needs and their perceptions have not changed as a result of teaching in an inclusive setting. The responses of three teachers who indicated no attitudinal change suggested that they had reservations and remained largely negative about inclusion. In contrast, 15 of the respondents indicated that their experiences with inclusion had changed their attitudes in a positive direction. Interestingly, two of the respondents did not answer this question.

The authors were heartened by the finding that over half of the respondents reported a positive change in their attitudes toward students with special needs. Unfortunately, the special needs of the students in these classrooms were never described, so it is unknown if these findings relate to changes in attitude toward all students with disabilities or just a particular group. The fact that five of the teachers indicated that the

term inclusion means including only students with learning disabilities or students who are close to grade level performance suggests that these changes in attitude may not be all encompassing.

In examining the first hand experiences and perspectives of 19 general education teachers who taught students with severe disabilities in their general education classrooms on a full-time basis, Giangreco et al. (1993) found similar results. Semi-structured interviews were the primary method for data collection. Following each interview, each teacher was given a two-page survey. In response to the statement, “My attitudes about educating students with significant disabilities in general education have become more positive as a result of teaching a child with significant disabilities,” the teachers indicated strong agreement by responding with a mean score of 8.59 (SD = 2.46) on the 10-point scale. Fourteen of the teachers rated this item 8 or higher and 10 teachers gave it the highest agreement score. One teacher, who rated this item 1, widened the standard deviation. In reference to the statement, “Given appropriate supports, I would welcome a student with significant disabilities in my class in the future,” the teachers also indicated strong agreement by responding with a mean score of 8.74 (SD = 1.39).

These findings are significant for a several reasons. All of the participants were general education teachers, all of the students had similar significant disabilities, and most of the teachers were initially reluctant to have the student placed in their class. Generally, their initial acceptance was with the understanding that the placement was not necessarily permanent and with the condition that someone else (i.e., a special educator or a paraeducator) would have the primary or exclusive responsibility for educating the child. Nevertheless, over the course of the school year, 17 of the 19 teachers gradually

began making both physical and social contact with the student, learned how to include the student in class activities, and developed a sense of responsibility for the student.

Giangreco et al. (1993) refer to this process as a transformation.

Snyder et al. (2001) suggested that their findings might indicate that when teachers actually experience teaching in an inclusive setting, their doubts and fears are replaced with positive attitudes. While this is in accordance with the previously noted findings, it is important to note that not all of the teachers reported a positive change in attitude nor did all transform. Giangreco et al. (1993) acknowledged this and recommended that future research should address internal and external factors that may influence an individual's response to educational innovations.

In an attempt to better understand the role of experience in altering teachers' attitudes about educational change efforts designed to integrate students with moderate and severe disabilities into general education classes, Janney, Snell, Beers, & Raynes (1995) interviewed 53 general (n=26) and special education teachers (n = 12) and administrators (n=15) in five school districts where students with moderate and severe disabilities recently had been integrated into general education schools and classes. The sample of schools comprised three elementary schools, three junior high or middle schools, and four high schools. The researchers' intent was to examine teachers' and administrators' judgements about the success of the integration efforts and to examine their perceptions of factors that facilitated or hindered success. They were particularly interested in examining general education teachers' perspectives on factors that had reduced their initial resistance to the change. General education teachers who initially had been hesitant (22 of the 26) judged that their original fears and expectations were based

on inaccurate preconceptions about the integrated students' needs and abilities. They felt that by getting to know the students with disabilities on an individual basis, they had gained both knowledge of the students' unique abilities and a new perspective on disabilities in general. Furthermore, the teachers believed that the development of this student-teacher relationship was due to their having an "open mind" and was facilitated by special education teachers who provided practical information about the students' abilities and learning goals.

There are some similarities in the reported experiences of the teachers in the studies conducted by Giangreco et al. (1993), Janney et al. (1995), and Snyder et al. (2001). Although less is known about the experiences of the teachers in the study by Snyder et al., those who reported a positive change in attitude noted that the students were more capable than they had initially expected. The teachers who transformed in the Giangreco et al. study and the teachers in the Janney et al. study made similar comments. These two groups noted that the growing realization that their initial expectations regarding the student were based on unsubstantiated assumptions came about as the result of becoming involved with the student and the subsequent development of the student-teacher relationship.

For the teachers in the Giangreco et al. (1993) study, this involvement with the student lead to increased responsibility for the student's education program but this was not the case for the teachers in the Janney et al. (1995) study. Although all these teachers deemed the integration effort successful, this evaluation was based on the positive benefits for the students and the limited effect on their workload. The researchers had hoped that more teachers would say integration did require extra work, but was worth the

effort; because this would indicate that a great deal of change had occurred. Instead, all but two general educators reported that it had not required much additional work, because significant curricular modifications were not being made.

This difference may be due to the different levels of inclusion in the two studies. Whereas the students in the Giangreco et al. (1993) study were described as being in their general education class on a full-time basis, the percentage of the school day for which individual students in the Janney et al. (1995) study were integrated into general classes and activities ranged from 0% to 100%, with a median of approximately 25%. Unfortunately, the authors make no mention of the effects of level of integration on either the increased support for integration or the development of the student-teacher relationship.

While increased involvement with the student may not always lead to increased teacher responsibility and engagement, there is evidence that involvement with the student is necessary in order for teachers to detect any benefits of inclusion for the student (Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997; Wood, 1998; York et al., 1992). This is important because, although individual teachers' criteria for success vary and not all experiences deemed successful by teachers are necessarily examples of successful inclusion, the perception of some benefit appears to be a key factor in a teachers' evaluation of the successfulness of the experience. When teachers deem the experience to be successful, they are more likely to recommend that inclusion efforts continue or expand. In addition, since teachers are more likely to believe their peers' judgments of the worth of an innovation than those of an administrator or outside consultant (Huberman & Miles, 1984), these evaluations of success may be a pivotal factor in the willingness of other

teachers to include students with significant disabilities in their classrooms and, ultimately, the widespread implementation of full inclusion.

While knowing that the perception of benefits is dependent upon teacher involvement with the student emphasises the importance of teacher involvement, it unfortunately does not explain why some teachers come to be involved while others do not. Although the level of inclusion may be an intervening factor, the fact that two of the teachers in the Giangreco et al. (1993) study did not become involved with the student despite their full-time placement, cannot be overlooked. Furthermore, involvement with the student does not always lead to teacher responsibility and engagement.

Teacher Responsibility and Engagement

Recognition of the importance of teacher responsibility and engagement for the successful inclusion and education of students with disabilities in general education classes has arisen primarily from investigations into the development and characteristics of inclusive schools and classrooms, rather than from specific research on teacher responsibility and engagement. Teacher responsibility and engagement has emerged repeatedly as a key factor in the development of successful inclusive classrooms (Janney & Snell, 1997; Kozleski & Jackson, 1993; Olson et al., 1997; Salisbury et al., 1993; York-Barr et al., 1996). At other times, teacher responsibility and engagement have been conspicuous by their absence (Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997; Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, & MacFarland, 1997; Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999), or have stood out as noticeable differences between teachers (Giangreco et al., 2001; Giangreco et al., 1993; Wood, 1998; York et al., 1992).

Several researchers have discovered that when teachers fail to develop a sense of responsibility for educating students with disabilities placed in their classrooms, paraeducators have primary responsibility for educating the student (Giangreco et al., 2001; Giangreco et al., 1997; Marks et al., 1999). Although some researchers (Giangreco & Doyle, 2002) have speculated that the presence of the paraeducators may have interfered with the development of responsibility by general educators, it also has been asserted that paraeducators may have assumed this role by default (Marks et al., 1999). Regardless of the suspected cause, having paraeducators serve in the capacity of “teacher” is generally believed to be inappropriate and inadvisable (Villa & Thousand, 2000). No strong conceptual basis can be cited for assigning the least qualified staff, namely, paraeducators, to provide the bulk of instruction for students with the most complex learning characteristics (Brown et al., 1999), nor does a research base suggest that students with disabilities learn more or better with paraeducator support (Giangreco, Yuan, McKenzie, Cameron, & Fialka, 2005). Having paraeducators function as the primary teachers for students with disabilities presents a double standard that would be considered unacceptable if it was applied to students without disabilities (“The Education Administration Act,” 2000)

As often occurs in qualitative research, the theme of teacher engagement has emerged even though it was not the focus of the investigation. While studying how paraeducators are utilized to support students with disabilities in general education classrooms, Giangreco et al. (2001) discovered substantially different levels of general education teacher engagement with students with disabilities. Believing it was deserving of analysis, they reviewed their data from 56 semi-structured interviews and 51 hours of

observation in four schools (grades K-12) across a full school year and were able to identify characteristics of general education teacher engagement and disengagement with students with disabilities as well as phenomena associated with lower levels of teacher engagement with students with disabilities.

Characteristics of teacher engagement. General education teachers who were most engaged with students with disabilities expressed an attitude of responsibility for the education of all students in the class. They were highly knowledgeable about the functioning levels and learning outcomes of their students with disabilities, and they collaborated closely with paraeducators and special educators based on clear roles. Engaged teachers were more likely to plan lessons and activities for paraeducators to implement and to provide initial and ongoing on-the-job training, modeling, and mentoring. They also faded out paraeducator supports or declined such services when they thought they weren't needed.

Within the classroom, general education teachers who were more engaged interacted with their students with disabilities in substantially the same ways as they did with their students without disabilities. They spoke directly to the students with disabilities, interacted socially with them, and spent approximately as much time with their students with disabilities as with those without disabilities. They also spent time teaching their students with disabilities, especially when it came to teaching new skills.

Characteristics of teachers who are less engaged. Conversely, less engaged general education teachers indicated that special educators and paraeducators bore the primary responsibility for educating their students with disabilities and they were less knowledgeable about their functioning levels. There was little collaboration with

paraeducators and the general education teachers who were less engaged were less clear about the roles of paraeducators and the boundaries for utilizing their services.

Paraeducators played a large role in planning instruction and designing accommodations.

Overall, the less engaged general education teachers interacted with their students with disabilities in substantively different ways than they did with their students without disabilities. They interacted infrequently with students with disabilities and when they did, the interaction was brief and usually noninstructional. They communicated indirectly with students with disabilities, often speaking through or to the paraeducators about their students when the students were present. In addition, they spent substantially less time with students with disabilities than those without disabilities. Finally, less engaged general education teachers delegated communications with the parents of their students with disabilities to the paraeducators.

Impact of engagement. During a study of the academic engagement of five high school students with significant disabilities, Smith (1999) detected similar differences in teachers' instructional interactions with the students and the way they talked about them. Smith conducted 52 observations in three urban high schools over three semesters and discovered that some teachers interacted with these five students in substantively the same ways as they did with the students without disabilities. Consistent with the characteristics of engaged teachers, these teachers called on the students with disabilities during class, asked them questions, checked their work, and insisted that the students work in class using the same tone they used with students without disabilities. In addition, these teachers articulated academic goals for their students with disabilities and

gave positive descriptions of them with academic references. Smith determined that these teachers had a competence-oriented perspective.

Smith (1999) found that other teachers exhibited behaviours characteristic of less engaged teachers. They treated the students with disabilities as guests or welcome visitors or as people there to learn social skills. They did not treat them as students who could or should benefit from or be interested in the instructional content. These teachers were described as having a deficit-oriented perspective. They described the students with disabilities in deficit or nonacademically referenced terms and spoke of the students' deficits in their presence.

Since the Smith (1999) study focused on academic engagement, it is unknown whether these teachers shared any other characteristics of engaged and disengaged teachers such as their use of paraprofessional support or their relationship with special educators. Smith has asserted that this data validates previous findings that inaccurate preconceptions of included students' needs change when general education teachers get to know the students with disabilities on an individual basis.

Phenomena associated with teacher disengagement. Not surprisingly, in the Giangreco et al. (2001) study, lower levels of teacher engagement were associated with detrimental effects for students with disabilities; namely, isolation, insular relationships with their paraeducators, and stigmatization. Students with disabilities in classrooms with less engaged general education teachers often were isolated with the paraeducator. They spent most of their time doing different activities than the rest of class and they were physically located at the "fringe" of the group, on the side or at the back of the room,

with the paraeducator positioned nearby. These students followed a semi-independent schedule, usually determined and adjusted at the discretion of the paraeducator.

Through their extended time together, paraeducators often developed special relationships with and a strong commitment to students with disabilities. Although this bonding may be valuable, it was perceived as problematic when the relationship became so insular that a student with disabilities spent nearly all of his or her time with the paraeducator to the exclusion of the teacher and classmates. When such a relationship persisted over several years, the transition to a new student-paraeducator pairing was especially difficult for both the paraeducator and the student.

Being in close proximity to a paraeducator also was stigmatizing for some students with disabilities in the Giangreco et al (2001) study. Students felt embarrassed by being singled out and some students with disabilities were observed to react negatively to the unwanted proximity of the paraeducators. Other students described paraeducators as “spies” who constantly watched them, waited for them to do something wrong, and reported everything they did.

In addition, Smith (1999) found that the differences in teachers’ interactions reflected the availability of opportunities for students with disabilities to participate in class. Teachers who demonstrated and expressed competence-orientation created more opportunities for participation. On the other hand, teachers with a deficit-orientation prevented or obscured participation or interest. Smith found similar results in classes based on lecture and on discussion, as in classes with a higher proportion of small group and hands-on activities.

Given these findings, few could argue that teacher attitudes of responsibility for their students who have disabilities and their engagement with them in the classroom are most critical variables that can affect the appropriateness and quality of a general education placement. Unfortunately, while the importance of teacher involvement, responsibility, and engagement has been established, not enough is known about the internal and external factors that may influence a teacher's willingness to become involved with a student with disabilities or the conditions that encourage engagement of general education teachers with their students with disabilities.

Influencing Factors

There is evidence that a variety of factors might influence general education teachers' willingness to become involved with a student with significant disabilities and their level of engagement. These factors include: (a) personal characteristics of the teacher, (b) teacher attitudes toward inclusion, (c) teacher perceptions of their preparedness or ability to teach students with significant disabilities, (d) student characteristics, (e) class load, (f) the form of paraeducator service delivery, (g) type and level of support from special educators, and (h) the level of integration.

Personal characteristics of the teacher. The suggestion that teacher characteristics are critical to a teachers' willingness to become involved with a student with a disability has resulted from descriptions of teachers in the same school, with similar professional experiences who have extremely different experiences with the same student (Giangreco et al. 1993; Smith, 1999).

Olson et al. (1997) tried to identify the attitudes and personal attributes of general education teachers identified as effective inclusionists. The ten general educators in the

study described themselves as tolerant, reflective, and flexible and insisted that the primary inclusionary practice that contributed to their success was showing warmth and acceptance to students with disabilities. The authors characterized these teachers as having “humanistic attitudes” towards individuals with disabilities and recommended the selection of prospective teacher candidates who demonstrate such an attitude. Given this criterion, it would seem that the teachers in the Giangreco et al. (1993) study would not have been suitable teacher candidates even though by the end of the school year, their attitudes were far more humanistic. Of course, this was their first time including a student with a disability, whereas the teachers in the Olson et al. study seem to have had far more experience in this area. Their initial reactions to including students with disabilities are not known and it is possible that these teachers were simply further along in a transformation process. Interestingly, 9 of the 10 teachers felt that there were instances where inclusion was inappropriate, particularly in the case of students with severe and multiple disabilities – exactly the type of student included by the teachers in the Giangreco et al. (1993) study. This suggests that external factors such as child characteristics may influence a teachers’ willingness to become involved.

Teacher attitudes toward inclusion. Those who are sceptical of the feasibility of full inclusion have suggested that complete inclusion and acceptance of students with disabilities will only happen if there are long-term changes in the attitudes of educational professionals (Winzer, 1998). Although more recent investigations have found that teachers’ general attitudes toward the concept of inclusion are quite positive and that teachers are positive about having students with disabilities in their classes (Edmunds, 1999, 2003), these self-report surveys may not provide an accurate reflection of teachers

attitudes. As Long (1994) has noted, “To be against inclusion is like being against God, Country, Motherhood, and Elvis” (p.14). Furthermore, it has not been demonstrated empirically that teachers’ attitudes toward the concept of inclusion correspond with teacher-student interactions (Cook et al., 2000). In fact, while many of the teachers in the Giangreco et al. (1993) study voiced serious reservations about the placement of a student with significant disabilities in their class, this did not prevent them from becoming involved with the student. However, these reservations may have been a factor for the two teachers who did not become involved with their students.

Teacher perceptions of preparedness and ability to teach students with disabilities. Even though their general attitudes toward inclusion may be positive, general education teachers have repeatedly reported that they feel unprepared to effectively implement inclusion (Bunch et al., 1997; Edmunds, 1999; Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). Interestingly, teachers’ claims of insufficient skills and training has not changed over the past two decades (Edmunds, 2003; Pudlas, 2003), despite changes to preservice preparation of teacher candidates and the existence of numerous professional development opportunities. Unfortunately, information on the specific training received by those surveyed usually has not been collected, so it is difficult to determine whether these teachers did not receive training or if the training received was insufficient.

There is evidence that training can be beneficial. Teachers with extensive and specialized training are more apt to have positive beliefs concerning inclusive practices and feel better prepared to provide services for children with diverse disabilities in inclusive settings (Stolber, Gettinger, & Goetz, 1998). In addition, teachers’ beliefs in

their ability to include students with special needs in their class have increased as result of training (Bennett, Deluca, & Bruns, 1997).

Research involving teachers who have included students with disabilities in their classes has put less emphasis on the issue of training. For example, although the interview protocol in the Olson et al. (1997) study included space to record the highest degree obtained by the participants and their training in special education, the article presenting their study did not mention these factors. Similarly, there has been little discussion of the education or training of participants in studies investigating the experiences of teachers who have included students with disabilities in their class (Coots, Bishop, & Grenot-Scheyer, 1998; Janney & Snell, 1997; Snyder et al., 2001; York et al., 1992). Several researchers have suggested that training may be beneficial and some experienced teachers have recommended the provision of professional development activities (Janney et al., 1995).

It is also possible that lack of preparedness could be used as an excuse to mask teachers' unwillingness to include students with disabilities in their classrooms. Teachers may state that they are generally in favour of inclusion but play the "but I don't feel prepared" card to deflect attention onto the institutions responsible for preservice education and professional development. On the other hand, the training currently available may not be sufficient to meet the needs of general education teachers.

With respect to teacher responsibility and engagement, general education teachers who perceive themselves as less well prepared and less capable of teaching students with significant disabilities may be more likely to defer to others. For example, if a paraeducator or resource teacher has more experience with students with a particular

disability, general education teachers may relinquish their role as teacher to the paraeducator or special educator.

Student characteristics. Certainly, type and severity of disability have been shown to have an effect on teachers' attitudes towards inclusion and their willingness to include students in their classrooms (Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1996). However, its impact on teacher willingness to become involved with a student or the level of teacher engagement is less clear. All of the students in the Giangreco et al. (1993) and Smith (1999) studies had significant disabilities but not all of the teachers took action to become involved with them. On the other hand, all of the teachers in the Giangreco et al. (2001) study who exhibited low levels of teacher engagement had students with low incidence disabilities (e.g., autism, multiple disabilities, and severe or moderate intellectual disabilities) in their class and the teachers who had higher levels of engagement had classes with students with high incidence disabilities (e.g., learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder).

Of course, type and severity of disability are only two aspects of students' overall characteristics. Personality attributes such as pleasantness, along with social and interpersonal skills, have been identified as important predictors of teacher involvement (York et al., 1992) regardless of type or severity of disability. In fact, researchers have reported consistently that teacher-student interactions meaningfully differed as a function of the general educators holding attitudes of attachment, concern, indifference, or rejection toward specific students (Brophy & Good, 1974; Good & Brophy, 1972; Silberman, 1969, 1971). Students who are perceived as being a pleasure to teach are nominated by their teachers in the attitudinal category of attachment and receive more

praise, less criticism, and more process questions than their classmates (Good & Brophy, 1972; Silberman, 1969). Teachers' interactions with students nominated in the indifference category are typically brief, perfunctory, and infrequent (Good & Brophy, 1972; Silberman, 1969, 1971). Teachers become most intensely and personally involved with students nominated in the concern category because they feel that their concerted efforts were needed to make the difference between success and failure for these students (Silberman, 1971). Teachers seemed to have "given up" on the students they nominate in the rejection category, because of their behavioural, social, and attitudinal problems (Brophy & Good, 1974; Silberman, 1969, 1971).

In an investigation of 70 inclusive classroom teachers, Cook (2001) found that students with either severe or obvious disabilities were over represented among teachers' nominations in the indifference category. Whereas students without disabilities were usually nominated in this category because of negative social-personal attributes that made it hard to know or notice them, the teachers reported a lack of knowledge for their indifference towards their students with disabilities. Cook (personal communication, May 17, 2003) has speculated that this indifference towards students with significant disabilities may actually be because teachers do not feel responsible for them. If this is true, then a lack of teacher responsibility rather than student characteristics may be a root cause of indifference. Nevertheless, the known consequences of a teachers' indifference on a students' educational opportunities provides added emphasis to the importance of teacher responsibility and engagement.

Class load. Of course, students with disabilities are not in a class by themselves. Class load includes class size, the number of students with special needs, and the severity

and range of needs. Smith and Smith (2000) reported that teachers, who perceived themselves as successful with inclusion, generally had smaller classes and fewer students with special needs than did teachers who perceived themselves as unsuccessful. In addition, there were disparities among the classrooms in terms of the severity and range of the needs of the students. Among the successful teachers, one had a class with a student diagnosed with autism and another student with a language impairment whereas among teachers who perceived themselves as unsuccessful, one teacher's class contained four students with behavioural disorders, one student who was diagnosed with autism, and two students who required speech services.

Given the class composition, it isn't hard to imagine that the second teacher might have a more difficult time establishing a relationship with the student with autism, despite his or her best intentions. However, there is great diversity within each diagnostic category so more information on the specific students would be needed in order to determine the effect of class load on this teacher's willingness to become involved with a student.

Class load may be affected by a variety of other variables such as: (a) the architectural accessibility of the school, (b) divisional policies to concentrate students with disabilities in "full service" schools while other schools are excused from educating students with disabilities from their neighbourhood, (c) historical factors such as a prior merger between a public school and a private school for students with a particular category of disability, and (d) the socio-economic characteristics of school neighbourhoods that may be associated with higher rates of some disabilities.

Form of paraeducator service delivery. There is evidence that the form of paraeducator service delivery can affect a teacher's willingness to become involved with a student with disabilities and the level of teacher engagement. Several researchers have reported that the assignment of a paraeducator who functions one-on-one with a student with a disability can present both physical and symbolic barriers that interfere with teachers getting directly involved with the students with disabilities in their classes. Giangreco et al. (1997) reported that the assignment of paraprofessionals in close proximity to students with multiple disabilities interfered with general educators developing a sense of responsibility for educating these students. Marks et al. (1999) reported similar findings when paraprofessionals, rather than general education teachers, bore the primary responsibility for educating students with behavioural challenges who were placed in general education classes.

Others have noted the effect of the assignment of a paraeducator who functions one-on-one with a student with a disability on classroom teacher engagement. Young, Simpson, Myles, and Kamps (1997) reported that teacher initiated interactions with three students with autism were infrequent given the close proximity of a paraeducator. Similarly, Giangreco et al. (2001) noted more frequent exemplars of general teacher engagement with students who had disabilities when paraeducator support was program-based in general education classrooms. Conversely, lower levels of general education teacher engagement were observed and reported more frequently when paraeducators were assigned to students with disabilities in a one-on-one model of service delivery. On the other hand, all of the students of the teachers who had a transforming experience (Giangreco et al., 1993) had a one-to-one paraprofessional.

Special educator support. The role that the special education teacher fulfills also may affect a teacher's willingness to become involved with a student with significant disabilities. Sometimes the special education teacher retains responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of IEP goals, thereby relieving the classroom teacher of typical duties such as homework assignments, grades, discipline, and reinforcement (Wood, 1998). This can be motivated by a sense of territoriality and a concern for role distinction or it may be a school division's policy. Either way, it interferes with the classroom teacher taking responsibility for the student.

Level of inclusion. A final influencing factor could be the amount of time a student with significant disabilities spends in the regular classroom. The U. S. Department of Education considers a student with disabilities to be included when he spends more than 79% of a typical school day in a general education classroom (U.S. Department of Education, 1998). Unfortunately, researchers do not use this same criterion and what is considered "inclusion" varies widely. Students with disabilities who spend as little as one hour per day in the regular classroom have been described as "fully included" (Mamlin, 1999). Not only would it be difficult for a teacher to develop any kind of relationship with a student under those conditions, it makes it difficult to compare findings between studies.

It would appear that a variety of factors might influence the willingness of teachers to become involved with students with significant disabilities and affect the conditions that encourage the engagement of general education teachers with their students who have disabilities. The existing literature often offers conflicting evidence, so it is difficult to determine what, if any, impact these factors may have. Furthermore, it

seems unlikely that determination of the significance of these potentially influential variables and clarification of possible relationships between these factors will occur without specific study.

It has been said that the difference between involvement and commitment is like a ham and egg breakfast: the chicken was involved but the pig was committed. While no one is expecting general education teachers to demonstrate the pig's level of commitment, this analogy does help highlight the importance of commitment. Since the commitment of teachers to new innovations often emerges after they have gained mastery of the professional expertise needed to implement them, teachers who do not become involved with students with significant disabilities or who exhibit low levels of engagement with them, are unlikely to develop the necessary professional expertise. So, rather than developing a commitment to inclusion, they may continue to evaluate the successfulness of inclusion on a case-by-case basis, or reject it altogether.

Unfortunately, unsuccessful evaluations may have a greater impact on the widespread implementation of inclusion than successful evaluations. Just as a satisfied customer will share his experience with one or two others while a dissatisfied customer will tell eight to ten others (Waller, 2004), inclusion "horror stories" from teachers with unsuccessful experiences may spread faster than the success stories. Not only might this result in fewer teachers who are willing to try including a student with significant disabilities in their class, and therefore limit the number of students who will be included, it might also be the reason for the often heard comment, "Inclusion isn't right for every student."

Regardless of whether you concur with this belief, it certainly can be said that inclusion isn't happening for every student. Despite the progress made, full inclusion is not the norm. Examination of the data by disability category shows that, in the United States, the overwhelming majority of students considered to have significant disabilities (i.e., 63.4% of students with mental retardation, 77.9% of students with multiple disabilities, and 76.3% of students classified as deaf-blind) are educated in special classes or special schools (McLeskey, Henry, & Hodges, 1999). Although comparable Canadian statistics are unavailable, Diane Richler, executive vice-president of the Canadian Association for Community Living, recently noted that, although inclusion has become the policy in most Canadian provinces, children with disabilities, particularly those with developmental disabilities and behaviour problems, continue to be shut out of the general classroom (Picard, 2000).

In the 2002-03 school year, 49% of students receiving special education services in Manitoba's most populous school division were enrolled in segregated programs (The Winnipeg School Division, 2003). While the diagnostic labels of students who were enrolled in integrated programs were not provided, 90% of the students in segregated placements could be categorized as having developmental disabilities or behaviour problems. Surprisingly, this represents a 1% increase in students in segregated placements over the previous year (The Winnipeg School Division, 2002). More interestingly, of the 150 additional students receiving special education services in 2003, more than two-thirds of them (102 students) were in segregated placements. Contrary to popular belief, only 30 of these placements were in the "Behaviour" category. Concern for the safety of other students could justify alternative placements for students with

serious behavioural problems but the factors limiting the full inclusion of students with significant disabilities are less obvious.

No information is provided in the Winnipeg School Division report regarding integrated programs and while the terms often are used interchangeably, integration does not mean inclusion. Undoubtedly, the most important factor that differentiates inclusion from integration is the concept that students are full and equal members of their classroom groups and school communities. As this review of the literature has illustrated, this is unlikely to occur unless general education teachers are willing to become involved with students with significant disabilities and exhibit high levels of teacher engagement.

Fortunately, this does happen. Some general education teachers are committed to inclusion and I have personally witnessed the high level of teacher engagement that is crucial to the successful education of students with significant disabilities in inclusive classrooms. Some of these teachers may have entered the profession with the belief that they are responsible for the education of *all* students and others may have acquired it. Although some teachers may never adopt this belief, ultimately, schools cannot function effectively or meet their public mission if teachers retain the right to choose the students they will or will not work with in their classrooms. The conditions that encourage general education teachers to become involved with their students with significant disabilities and that facilitate engagement need to be identified so that schools can increase their capacity to provide an appropriate education to all students and avoid the unintended detrimental effects associated with teacher indifference and lower levels of teacher engagement.

The Voice of Experience

A major criticism of the inclusion movement has been that most of the information in published literature has been from university special education personnel (Davis, 1989). Interestingly, the current critics who question the feasibility of inclusion for all students also are professors of special education (Kavale & Forness, 2000; Winzer, 1998). In order to truly understand the factors that encourage teacher involvement with a student with significant disabilities and the conditions that facilitate teacher engagement, it seems critical to explore the perspectives of the people on the “front lines” – classroom teachers.

There is a growing body of research that has listened to the voices of experience. Much of this research has focused on the voices of those considered to be uncommonly successful at including students with disabilities (Olson et al., 1997; York-Barr et al., 1996). While this has been beneficial, it hasn't provided a clear view of the whole picture. Glaser and Strauss (1967) have urged qualitative researchers to explore phenomena from multiple perspectives so that they can truly understand the phenomena studied. For example, in the York-Barr et al. study, it would have been interesting to have looked not only at the professionals "recognized as instrumental and/or highly effective in the inclusive schooling initiative," but also at those who were perceived as not so effective or not very supportive.

However, it may be necessary to focus our investigations on the perspectives of people in particular settings. Gelzheiser, Meyers, Slesinski, Douglas and Lewis (1997) found differences in the integration practices between teachers at the elementary and secondary levels and suggested that in future research and in discussions of inclusion it is

inaccurate, even misleading, to treat all general education teachers as the same. Given that teachers at the elementary level usually spend the majority of the school day with the same group of students, there are more opportunities for the teacher to become involved with the students than there are at the secondary level, which may influence engagement. The Giangreco et al. (2001) study included general education teachers from a range of school levels so differences between them may not have been readily apparent. By narrowing the focus to one level, subtle differences may become evident.

Furthermore, many of these studies have been conducted with those who have had limited experience with inclusion. In a survey of 640 school staff in Manitoba conducted during the 1997-98 school year (Proactive Information Services Inc., 1998), close to 90% believed that their school operates “always” or “most of the time” on a philosophy of inclusion. In addition, the overall percent of staff indicating that integration into class activities “rarely/never happens” was only 4%. This suggests that teachers in Manitoba likely have much more experience with inclusion than those reported in the literature and could provide a fuller range of perspectives.

Examining the experiences and perspectives of general education elementary teachers who have taught students with significant disabilities in their classes may provide insights into the internal and external factors that encourage involvement and engagement. Discovery of these factors may lead to the identification of teachers most likely to become engaged and committed, which could increase the likelihood that students with significant disabilities are provided with a suitable placement. It may also yield recommendations for policy changes as well as suggestions for the selection and education of teacher candidates and the professional development of in-service teachers.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the first hand experiences of classroom teachers who have included at least one student with significant disabilities in their classroom. Specifically I would like to find out:

- How do teachers characterize their inclusion experience?
- What effect does the experience of including a student with significant disabilities have on teacher's opinions about inclusion?
- What facilitates teacher involvement and/or engagement?
- What hinders teacher involvement and/or engagement?

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

In this chapter, I will provide an account of the methodological procedures that were used in this study to examine the experiences of classroom teachers educating students with significant disabilities in their general education classrooms. I chose qualitative research methods for this study because they allow and encourage the participants to express their own unique perspectives and responses.

Stance of the Researcher

The values and beliefs of the researcher are important variables and should be considered when conducting, reporting, or reviewing qualitative research. Therefore, I would like to briefly describe the past experiences that I bring to this study. I am an elementary teacher by profession and the parent of a child with autism. I was initially sceptical about the feasibility of inclusion for all students with disabilities and was concerned that my son would be “dumped” into the regular classroom. These concerns largely stemmed from some misunderstandings about inclusion as well as a previously unquestioned belief that “special” students required “special” teachers. The courses in my teacher preparation program did not address the issue of teaching students with disabilities because students with disabilities were not usually placed in regular classrooms at that time.

I returned to university to take graduate level courses in special education primarily to learn more about what the school system had to offer my son. Although not an instant convert, I became enough of a believer to seek a regular class placement when it was time to enrol him in school. Over the past seven years, I have become committed

to inclusion and particularly cognizant of the importance of a teacher's willingness to become involved and engaged with his or her students with significant disabilities. I have come to believe that the level of responsibility and engagement demonstrated by my son's teachers has been a critical variable differentiating his successful and unsuccessful experiences, which has fuelled my interest in this topic.

Recruitment of Participants

The participants in this study were general education teachers who have had students with significant disabilities in their elementary grade classrooms. Since more students are integrated in the elementary grades (Proactive Information Services Inc., 1998; The Winnipeg School Division, 2003), focusing on these grade levels made it more likely to encounter teachers who have had more than one student with significant disabilities in the classroom. Using purposive sampling procedures for participant selection provided an opportunity to gather information from a sample considered likely to yield the desired information (Gay, 1996).

I developed a questionnaire to identify and select potential participants. In this section, I will describe the questionnaire, explain how the questionnaire was distributed, and describe the schools where teachers who completed the questionnaire were employed.

Teacher and Inclusion Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire was to identify teachers whose attitude toward inclusion had or had not changed as a result of teaching students with significant disabilities and to gather information on the teacher's training and experience. The questionnaire (see Appendix A) was printed on both sides of ledger size paper and folded

like a newsletter. The front page had questions designed to gather background information about the teachers, specifically (a) gender, (b) years of full-time regular education teaching experience, (c) years including students with significant disabilities, (d) current grade level taught, (e) number of undergraduate special education courses completed, (f) number of graduate level special education courses completed, (g) number of in-service hours in inclusive practices, (h) certification in special education, and (i) personal experience with an individual with a disability outside school settings. The content chosen for these questions was based on factors identified in the literature review that might relate to educators' attitudes toward inclusion.

The centre two pages of the questionnaire contained questions relating to general attitudes toward inclusion, attitudes toward the feasibility of inclusion and confidence in ability to implement inclusion. For each statement, teachers used a 7-point Likert (1932) rating scale format (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) to indicate how they would have responded prior to having a student with significant disabilities in their classroom and how they would respond now that they have experience with a student with significant disabilities in their classroom. In addition, they were asked to list their concerns about having a student with significant disabilities in their class before and after their experience.

On the back page, teachers were asked if they would be willing to participate in voluntary, confidential interviews to share their experiences with teaching students with significant disabilities. If their response was "Yes," they were asked to list days and times that were convenient for them to be interviewed along with a preferred method and time to be contacted (e.g., work phone, home phone, e-mail).

The questionnaire packet was assembled that contained a cover letter (see Appendix B), the questionnaire, and a business reply envelope along with a package of tea or coffee in appreciation for taking the time to read and complete the material.

Access to Teachers

As differing opinions about the feasibility of inclusion for all students often are found within any group of teachers, I thought that approaching the whole teaching staff of a school would likely yield potential participants with divergent opinions. I sent a letter to the Superintendents (see Appendix C) of 4 metropolitan school divisions in Manitoba requesting permission to contact the principals of elementary schools in the division, to ask them to distribute questionnaire packets to the general education teachers at their schools. The letter included an explanation of the study and a copy of the questionnaire was enclosed. I received a response from three of the Superintendents however as the process for distributing the questionnaires was different for each division, I will describe them separately. The names of the school divisions are pseudonyms.

Bison School Division's 33 schools are situated within several suburban communities and serve almost 14 500 students in Kindergarten to Senior 4. The superintendent of Bison School Division replied by email granting permission to contact the principals in the division. Letters were then sent to 22 elementary school principals asking them to distribute questionnaire packets to the general education teachers in their schools (see Appendix D). I received inquiries from seven principals who agreed to approach their staff about completing the questionnaire. Questionnaire packets were delivered to two schools and five completed questionnaires were returned.

The 42 Kindergarten to Senior 4 schools in Clearview School Division serve a community of 19 000 students with diverse socio-economic and cultural backgrounds. The early years superintendent called me and offered to copy the questionnaire and raise it as an agenda item at the next early years administrator's meeting. Two administrators contacted me after they had distributed the questionnaire to their staff and I received six completed questionnaires.

Vista School Division serves 9 000 students in a diverse and culturally rich community. Vistas' twenty schools are organized as early years, middle years, kindergarten to grade eight and senior years schools. The assistant superintendent – curriculum provided me with the name of a school that was interested in participating in the study. The principal of the school informed me that the study had been discussed at a staff meeting and one teacher was interested in completing the questionnaire. A packet was delivered to the school and the completed questionnaire was returned.

All of the divisions have similar special education policies to provide programming for students with special needs, depending upon needs, through special instructional settings, special teaching strategies, support services, facilities and/or equipment. They also recommend that the following factors be considered in determining placement: (a) consistency with the student's chronological age, (b) proximity to the regular program stream, (c) accessibility to an appropriate peer group, and (d) possible future integration.

Selection of Participants

The questionnaire responses were analyzed to determine whether the teachers' prior and current opinions about inclusion were optimistic or sceptical. To do this I used

the first two statements on the questionnaire, which related to general opinions about inclusion and opinions about the feasibility of inclusion for all students. Strongly agreeing with the first statement and strongly disagreeing with the second would indicate optimistic opinions therefore the second statement was reverse scored in order to obtain a total score.

The highest possible total score was 14 and the lowest was 2 so total scores of 2-7 were considered sceptical and scores of 9-14 were considered optimistic. The prior and current total scores were then compared and teachers were assigned to one of the following categories: (a) those who were optimistic about inclusion prior to their experience of including a student with significant disabilities and who have remained optimistic, (b) those who were optimistic about inclusion prior to their experience but who have become sceptical as a result of their experience, (c) those who were initially sceptical about inclusion prior to their experience of including a student with significant disabilities but who have become optimistic as a result of their experience with inclusion, and (d) those who were initially sceptical about inclusion and who remain sceptical.

The questionnaire information of each teacher willing to be interviewed was then coded into a data display matrix (see Appendix E), using the following categories: opinions about inclusion, gender, years of experience, grade level taught, education and training, and personal experience with an individual with a disability outside school settings. Questionnaires were distributed over a three-month period so the first teacher willing to be interviewed was contacted and an interview was scheduled. The strategy of theoretical sampling was used as a guide to determine whether interviews would be

conducted with subsequent respondents. By consciously varying the type of teacher interviewed, I hoped to uncover a broad range of perspectives.

A total of 12 completed questionnaires were returned. Two respondents were not interested in being interviewed. Two held Special Education Certificates and were general education teachers so they did not qualify for the study. The remaining eight respondents were willing to be interviewed, represented a range of opinions about inclusion, and had had a variety of inclusionary experiences.

Description of the Participants

Several participants were currently employed at the same school. In the interests of confidentiality, the participants' prior and current opinions about inclusion are not reported. In addition the school settings are described generally and separately from the descriptions of the participants. This was done to preserve the anonymity of the teachers. Pseudonyms have been used for all participants and school divisions and any additional information that would tend to identify the participants has been removed or altered

Settings

The eight participants were employed at five schools. Three were K-6 schools, one was a K-5 school and the other was a K-S1 school. The K-S1 school was the largest with a population of approximately 630 students. The other schools had between 250 and 400 students. Two schools were located in Bison School Division, two were in Clearview School Division and one was part of Vista School Division.

All of the schools provided an English language program and had two classes per grade level. Two schools had self-contained special education classrooms and two schools were equipped with "special needs facilities" to accommodate students with

various special needs. All of the schools had resource teachers and paraeducators on staff. Three schools also had a guidance counsellor, two had enrichment facilitators, and one had a behaviour intervention teacher although no school had all of these staff members.

Teacher Participants

Of the eight respondents who were selected to participate in this study, two were assigned to each of the four opinion categories. One was male and seven were female. Half of the participants had been teaching for over 20 years and the remaining ranged from 5 to 15 years. The number of years including a student with significant disabilities ranged from 5 to 18. The participants were teaching in grades 2 through 6 but all have taught at several grade levels including Kindergarten and grade 1.

Only two participants had taken an undergraduate level course in special education and they were both in the same opinion category. No one had taken any graduate level courses in special education although two participants were taking courses for the administrator's certificate. Half of the participants had between 1 and 8 hours of in-service training, one had between 9 and 16 hours, one had between 17 and 24 hours and two had completed over 25 hours. All had personal experience with an individual with a disability outside the school setting.

Nora Crane had been teaching for 31 years and had spent the past 2 years in the same school. She was teaching grade 6 and had previously taught in grades K to 6. Nora estimated that she had about 20 students with significant disabilities in 15 of her years teaching.

Jessica Logan had been teaching for 24 years and had spent the past 18 years in the same school. Jessica had a student with significant disabilities every year that she had

been at this school and estimated that she had approximately 40 students with significant disabilities in her classes. She was teaching grade 3 and had previously taught in Kindergarten and grade 6.

Iris Martin was in her 15th year of teaching and had spent the past 4 years at the same school. She was once employed at a cluster school for students who are medically fragile so Iris had more than 20 students with significant disabilities in her classes. She was teaching grade 2 and had previously taught in grades K to 3.

Alice Price had been teaching for 28 years and had spent the past 14 years at the same school. In 12 of those years she had a student with significant disabilities in her class. She was teaching grade 3 and had previously taught in grades 1 to 3.

Ralph Rogers was in his 26th year of teaching and had spent the past 20 years at the same school. In five of those years he had a student with significant disabilities in his class for a total of 6 students. He was teaching grade 5 and had previously taught grades 3 to 6.

Tina Spencer was in her 5th year of teaching, all at the same school. She was teaching grade 5 and had previously taught in grades 4, 5 and 6. Tina had one or two students with significant disabilities every year that she had been teaching.

Gwen Watson had been teaching for 10 years, all at the same school. In eight of those years she had a student with significant disabilities in her class for a total of 10 to 16 students. She was teaching grade 4 and had previously taught Kindergarten.

Lucy Winters was in her 9th year of teaching and had spent the past 8 years in the same school. She had had 16 students with significant disabilities in her classes. Lucy was

teaching grade 6 and had previously taught in grades 4 and 5 in this school as well as grade 8 in another school.

Data Collection

The participants were interviewed individually about their experiences, practices, and opinions about inclusion. These interviews were semi-structured which gave the teachers a forum to share their experiences and provided me the opportunity to ask clarifying and extending questions. I was the only person collecting data. I have graduate level coursework in qualitative research methodology and previous experience using qualitative methods.

Interviews were conducted between October 2004 and March 2005 at a place and time convenient for the participants. Once an interview was scheduled, a consent form (see Appendix F) was sent to the teacher. This consent form outlined the purpose of the study, the expectations of the participants, the procedures for maintaining participant confidentiality, and the opportunities for feedback. Participants were also informed that all interviews would be audio taped and later transcribed. A copy of the consent form was given to the participants for their reference and record.

Each interview began with a review of the purpose of the research and assurances of confidentiality. Participants were also reminded that they could decline to answer any question, end the interview, or withdraw from the study at any time with no repercussions. Next, I reviewed and clarified information on the teacher's preparation and professional development related to inclusion as well as his or her teaching history. To insure coverage of topics, a topical interview guide developed from current literature pertaining to the inclusion of students with significant disabilities in general education

classrooms, was used flexibly as the basis for all interviews (see Appendix G). Initial interviews ranged in length from 45 to 90 minutes. Follow up interviews were held with five of the participants in order to clarify previous comments and to probe deeper into specific issues. These interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, it is difficult to separate the process of gathering and analyzing data (Gay, 1996). Most qualitative researchers emphasize the importance of ongoing analysis during the process of data collection. An interviewer's journal was used to record impressions, reactions, and other significant events that occurred during the data collection phase. In addition, analytic memos were written throughout the study. These memos summarized emerging themes and helped identify points needing clarification in follow-up interviews. I purposefully sought out themes pertaining to the two primary interests that had served as the impetus for the study: (a) the effect that including students with significant disabilities has on teachers' opinions about inclusion, and (b) the factors that facilitate or hinder teacher engagement.

The interview data, journal notes, and analytic memos were analyzed inductively using categorical coding (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). Transcripts and notes were read and marked by hand using 21 category codes that included words descriptive of the emerging themes, concepts, and propositions (e.g., paraeducator autonomy, teamwork, coping strategies, etc.). The coded data was assembled according to each category by cutting up an electronic copy and pasting data relating to each coding category in separate word processing files. Categories were revised, resorted, refined and clarified using the constant-comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to ensure the themes fit the data.

Member Checks

Lincoln and Guba (1985) explain the importance of testing the constructions of researchers for factual and interpretive accuracy to establish evidence of credibility and conformability. Several approaches were used to ensure the credibility and trustworthiness of the interview methodology and analysis of the data. First, a copy of the interview transcript was sent to each respective interviewee for validation. They were asked to read the transcript, check for accuracy, and return it within 2 weeks if there were errors. A letter accompanying the transcript explained that if the transcript were not returned, the assumption would be made that no errors or changes are needed. One teacher took this opportunity to clarify previous responses.

In addition, all participants were invited to a group discussion to both validate and reflect on the findings and to discuss implications of the research findings for practice, research and pre-service or professional development. Half of the participants attended this meeting during which themes that emerged during data analysis were shared. The teachers corroborated all of the themes that were reviewed and valuable insights were provided regarding implications of the findings.

The third level of validation and verification occurred after the group meeting. A report including the description of the study's participants and the results of the analysis was sent to all eight teachers. They were asked to read the report and answer the following questions:

- Are you satisfied that your anonymity was maintained so you are not personally identified?
- Do you find the content of the report accurate?

- Were quotes you gave in your interviews, if used, used accurately and appropriately?
- Do the themes represented in the report include the information you gave in your interviews?

A space was also available for the teachers to make additional comments that might help me more fully understand their perspective. Teachers returned their forms in a self-addressed stamped envelope. Teachers who did not return their forms within 2 weeks were contacted by phone to respond verbally. All eight teachers responded to the questions. Recommendations were limited to minor errors regarding teachers' characteristics (e.g., years of experience). All teachers responded affirmatively to the substantive aspects of Questions 1 – 4. Teacher responses were used to adjust the final presentation of the study.

The themes presented in the next chapter are based on the modal responses and perspectives revealed by the participants. Where there are distinctions among groups, or if any individual's responses clearly contradicted the modal response, these distinctions are discussed. All indented material and material within quotation marks are direct quotes from the interviews however the varying terms used to describe the uncertified staff hired to support students have been changed to paraeducator and all names used are pseudonyms. Quotations were chosen based on their clarity and representativeness, not on their uniqueness.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the first hand experiences of classroom teachers who have included at least one student with significant disabilities in their classroom. Of particular interest was the effect this experience may have had on their opinions about inclusion and the factors that facilitate or hinder teacher engagement. I hoped that examining these experiences and perspectives would provide insight into the factors that affect teacher commitment to inclusion. The findings that emerged from the analysis of the collected data are presented in this chapter.

Opinions and Engagement

The purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain information on teacher's opinions about inclusion both before and after they had included a student with significant disabilities in the classroom and to gather data on variables that could potentially influence a teacher's opinion about inclusion. The interview questions were designed to illicit descriptions of experiences and examples of practices in order to gain an understanding of how the teachers' opinions were impacted by their experiences as well as to gain insight into their level of involvement and engagement with their students with significant disabilities, which would hopefully lead to the identification of the factors that facilitate or hinder teacher engagement. By analyzing the themes that emerged from the data I discovered a relationship between opinions about inclusion and teacher engagement that lead to the development of a framework for understanding teacher commitment to inclusion.

In the following sections I will first share the findings from the questionnaire data and describe how I determined the teachers' level of engagement. Next I will identify the factors that did not affect engagement. Finally I will show how the factors that did affect teacher engagement and teachers' opinions are related and how this impacts teacher commitment to inclusion.

Questionnaire Data

Six of the eight teachers reported changes in their opinions about inclusion after they had a student with significant disabilities included in their classrooms. Since participants were specifically chosen to represent a variety of perspectives, it's not surprising that a comparison of the background data with the teachers' questionnaire responses revealed no discernable difference between those whose opinions were initially optimistic and those who were initially more sceptical. Similarly, no trends were evident that could account for the changes in the teachers' opinions.

Only two commonalities were identified and both were related to education and training: (a) the two teachers who were initially optimistic and reported that they became more optimistic as a result of their experience, reported having over 25 hours of in-service training in inclusive practices, and (b) the two teachers who initially reported that they were optimistic about inclusion but had become sceptical as a result of their experience, had taken an undergraduate course in special education. In both circumstances the teachers were unmatched on any of the other characteristics (e.g., years of teaching experience, number of students with significant disabilities).

There was a greater range of initial opinions about whether inclusion represented a positive change in our education system (scores ranged from 2 – 7) than there was

regarding whether teachers thought that meeting the needs of every child with disabilities in general education classrooms was feasible (scores ranged from 2 – 5). In general, the teachers were initially sceptical about the feasibility of inclusion for all students (average score = 3.1). However, those who were initially optimistic overall were slightly less sceptical in this area (average score = 3.5) than those who were initially sceptical overall (average score = 2.75).

Once the teachers had experienced including a student with significant disabilities, their opinions about whether inclusion represented a positive change became generally more optimistic (average score = 5.1) whereas their opinions concerning the feasibility of inclusion for all students were more polarized and reflected their overall opinions. The total change in opinion was also greater with respect to whether inclusion was feasible for all.

The third statement on the questionnaire related to confidence in ability to implement inclusion. Again, there was no clear relationship between confidence and opinion. Six of the teachers agreed with the statement, “Before I had a student with significant disabilities in my classroom, I thought I would need training before I could even begin to successfully include a student with significant disabilities in my classroom,” four were initially optimistic and two were sceptical. Of the two teachers who disagreed, one was initially optimistic and one was sceptical. Interestingly, there was little relationship between the teachers’ level of training and education and their perceptions of preparedness and ability to teach students with disabilities. Both of the teachers who had taken an undergraduate course in special education agreed with the

statement yet those who disagreed had not taken any undergraduate courses in special education.

Overall, the teachers reported less need for training after they had a student with significant disabilities in their class. Only the teachers who were initially optimistic and became more optimistic indicated no need for training. However, they both had over 25 hours of in-service training in inclusive practices. Of those who were initially optimistic and became sceptical, one reported less need for training and one reported a greater need.

I did not complete any statistical analyses of these data, so these differences may or may not be significant. Statistical analysis might show trends or differences that are not readily apparent through simple comparison, however the sample size was too small to yield any firm conclusions.

The questionnaire also asked teachers to identify their main concerns before they had experience with a student with significant disabilities and after they had experience with a student with significant disabilities. The identified concerns were generally more specific after the teachers had experience including a student with significant disabilities, but there were no notable differences between the types of concerns identified by those who were initially optimistic and those where initially sceptical or between those whose opinions became more optimistic and those whose opinions became more sceptical.

Although the questionnaire data confirmed my suspicions that the experience of including a student with significant disabilities could have either a positive or a negative effect on a teacher's opinions about inclusion, it did not provide any insight into what influenced these changes or why some opinions did not change.

Level of Teacher Engagement

A comparison of the participants' descriptions of their experiences and practices with the identified characteristics of teacher engagement provided a general guideline for inferring each teacher's level of engagement. I quickly realized that it was important to keep the definition of teacher engagement in mind, as it seems that is possible for a teacher to demonstrate a number of the identified characteristics of teacher engagement yet not have "direct contact with students with disabilities and an active involvement in planning and implementing instruction in the classroom" (Giangreco et al., 2001).

All of the teachers expressed feelings of responsibility for the education of students with significant disabilities. When asked, "What do you see your role with these students as being" most teachers replied, "I'm their teacher." All of the teachers also were knowledgeable about the functioning levels and learning outcomes of the students with significant disabilities. This is likely due to the fact that they were all actively involved in planning instruction. However, there is evidence that some teachers were more likely to plan instruction for paraeducators to implement. Several teachers commented, "We're ultimately responsible but we're not the ones who are interacting hour by hour with them." Another teacher was more explicit:

In many cases the paraeducators, under the direction of the teacher, but they run much of the program because they can see when a student can accelerate, they don't have to come back to the teacher in the middle of class and say 'he's done that'. Mr. Daniels in my class is just amazing. I don't know what I would do without him. He is so skilled that he's doing everything: the academics, the behaviour modification, and the counselling.

Not surprisingly, these teachers also seemed to have limited instructional interactions with the students with significant disabilities.

Conversely, other teachers made little or no mention of paraeducators implementing instruction and noted that the students “weren’t always singled out with the paraeducator.” These teachers described using peers to support students with significant disabilities and referred to themselves and the paraeducator “working together as team with the whole class.” In addition, these teachers seemed to have more substantial instructional interactions with the students. Therefore while all teachers had direct contact with students with significant disabilities, some teachers had an active involvement in planning and implementing instruction and other teachers had an active involvement in planning instruction but limited involvement in implementing instruction.

As I did not conduct any direct observations of the teachers, it was not possible to compare them to all of the identified characteristics of teacher engagement. For example, verification that teachers interacted with their students with significant disabilities in substantially the same ways as they did with their students without disabilities or that they spent approximately the same time with students with and without significant disabilities would require ongoing observation. Nevertheless, there was sufficient evidence to clearly infer that some teachers were more engaged than others.

It is important to note that although four of the teachers appeared to be less engaged than the other four, none of the teachers exhibited the identified characteristics of less engaged teachers. In this study, “less engaged” teachers could be described as being in the middle and would be more appropriately characterized as somewhat engaged. It is possible that a teacher’s level of engagement might vary from class to class and from student to student, however this was not apparent in the data collected.

Factors That Didn't Influence Level of Engagement

A variety of factors that possibly could have influenced the teachers' levels of engagement were considered to determine if any could account for the differences in the participants' levels of engagement. These factors included: personal characteristics of the teacher, teacher attitudes toward inclusion, teacher perceptions of their preparedness or ability to teach students with significant disabilities, student characteristics, class load, paraeducator service delivery, type and level of support from special educators, and level of integration. Surprisingly, none of these factors seemed to have an effect on the participant's level of engagement. There were no differences between the participants for the half of the factors and while there were differences for the other factors, there was no clear relationship with level of engagement.

Commonalities

In comparing the teachers' level of engagement with the factors that could possibly influence a teacher's level of engagement, it became clear that, in this study, several factors were common to all of the participants and therefore not defining influences. These included student characteristics, class load, level of inclusion, and form of paraeducator service delivery.

Naturally, all of the participants had students with significant disabilities in their classrooms. Many of these students had other diagnostic labels such as autism, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Down syndrome, and global learning delay. Although the participants did not describe every student with significant disabilities they'd had in their classes, all referred to several students during their interview. These descriptions revealed a range of characteristics – some students were verbal, others were not; some were

ambulatory, others used wheelchairs; some were medically fragile and some had challenging behaviours. All of the teachers had experience including students with a variety of characteristics and although some had more varied experiences than others, there was no obvious correlation between student characteristics and level of engagement.

Another factor that was common to all participants was class load. Class load includes class size, number of students with special needs, and the severity and range of needs of students. None of the teachers reported having a reduced class size when a student with significant disabilities was included in their class and all of the teachers noted that other students with special needs were also in the class. In addition, most of the teachers have had more than one student with significant disabilities in their class at the same time. The following description of a class was common, “There were two ADHD kids in the classroom that year that took up a lot of time and energy and I had a couple of FAS students plus that girl, so five out of the thirty needed major support.”

All of the teachers reported that their students with significant disabilities spent the majority of the school day in the regular classroom and paraeducators were always assigned to students in a one-to-one model of service delivery. This support was not always available for the entire school day nor were all students with significant disabilities provided with paraeducator support so all of the teachers had experienced times when no support was available. Regardless of level of engagement, when paraeducator support was available, teachers described using the paraeducator in ways characteristic of a program-based model. As one teacher explained:

A full-time paraeducator can help you with the other kids because the special needs child doesn't need the paraeducator every minute, so if you've got that

person in your room all the time she can be helping with some of the other kids who you don't always get to.

It is reasonable to assume that factors such as student characteristics, class load, level of inclusion, and form of paraeducator service delivery could affect a teacher's level of engagement, however in this study, differences were apparent in the participants' level of engagement despite the similarities in these factors.

Different But No Difference

There were differences between the participants for the remaining factors: personality characteristics of the teacher, teacher perception of preparedness and ability to teach students with disabilities, type and level of special education support, and teacher attitudes toward inclusion. These factors may have had some affect on engagement levels but the relationships are not clear.

Not surprisingly, the personal characteristics of the eight teachers varied. Yet, there was no obvious relationship between personality and level of engagement. Most of the teachers found it difficult to describe their personality and tended to describe their teaching style instead. Certainly, descriptors like accepting of difference, caring, and flexible could be used to describe many of the teachers who were more engaged but these terms also described some of the less engaged teachers as well. Teasing out the more subtle differences in personality would likely require lengthier interactions with the participants in a variety of settings over a longer period of time.

As described earlier, there was a difference in the teachers' perceptions of their preparedness and ability to teach students with disabilities according to their responses on the questionnaire. Most of the teachers agreed with the statement, "Before I had a student with significant disabilities in my classroom, I thought I would need training before I

could even begin to successfully include a student with significant disabilities in my classroom,” suggesting that they did not feel prepared. This sentiment also was reflected in their stated concerns. Although the two teachers who disagreed with this statement displayed higher levels of engagement, two of the teachers who agreed with the statement also displayed higher levels of engagement. However, both of these teachers had little teaching experience prior to having a student with significant disabilities in their classroom so it is possible that their response reflected a more general uncertainty about their teaching ability. Therefore, while feeling prepared might facilitate teacher engagement, feeling unprepared doesn’t necessarily hinder engagement.

The teachers’ initial and current opinions about inclusion also differed and while there was some agreement between initial opinion and level of engagement, this was not evident for all the teachers. Three of the four teachers who were initially optimistic were more engaged and three of the four teachers who were initially sceptical were less engaged however, one initially optimistic participant was less engaged and one who was initially sceptical was more engaged.

Furthermore, while there was a relationship between those whose opinions did not change and level of engagement, this wasn’t the case for those whose opinions did change. Those who were initially sceptical and stayed sceptical were less engaged but both teachers who were initially optimistic and became more optimistic were more engaged. In addition, one of the teachers who was initially optimistic and became sceptical was more engaged and the other was less engaged and one of the teachers who was initially sceptical but became optimistic was more engaged and the other was less engaged.

Finally, there were differences in the type and level of special education support the participants received. There were no situations where the resource teacher retained responsibility for implementing and monitoring IEP goals but some teachers received consultative support and others received collaborative support. By consultative support I mean that the teachers primarily considered the resource teacher to be the case manager. They were responsible for coordinating the development of the IEP and writing it, they monitored the implementation of the IEP through regular meetings where concerns were discussed, and they would often obtain materials upon request. These resource teachers provided little direct support to the student except through the occasional pullout for testing and some teaching, they did not contribute to daily planning and they did not work with the teacher in the classroom. Resource teachers providing collaborative support performed the same case management responsibilities but were more actively involved with planning and instruction through co-teaching (e.g., one teach/one support and alternate teaching) (Friend et al., 1998). Although the two teachers who received collaborative support were more engaged and all of the less engaged teachers received consultative support, two of the more engaged teachers also received consultative support. This suggests that while collaborative support might facilitate teacher engagement, consultative support doesn't necessarily hinder it.

In general it appears that teacher perception of preparedness and ability to teach students with disabilities, collaborative special education support, and optimistic teacher attitudes toward inclusion might facilitate engagement but their presence does not guarantee engagement and their absence does not always hinder engagement. While this discussion has focused on these factors individually, there is no combination of factors

that accounts for the differences in the participant's level of engagement. Further analysis of the data did reveal one difference between the participants that appears to be the key factor in their level of engagement.

The Key Factor

In this study, determination of level engagement was primarily based on the teacher's ability to include the student with disabilities in classroom instruction. The less engaged teachers were more likely to plan lessons and activities for the paraeducators to implement, whereas the more engaged teachers were more likely to plan lessons and activities in which students of different ability levels could participate together. In essence, the more engaged teachers included their students with significant disabilities more often than the less engaged teachers. The less the teachers were able to include a student with significant disabilities, the more they would plan activities for the paraeducator to implement resulting in fewer instructional interactions with the student and less engagement. Therefore, the key factor influencing the teachers' level of engagement was their ability to include the student with significant disabilities in classroom instruction. These differences in ability will be examined in this section.

Types of Accommodations

Variations in the teachers' ability to include were reflected in the range and types of accommodations they described for their students with significant disabilities. All of the teachers were able to provide accommodations to allow students to gain access to or demonstrate mastery of the curriculum in alternative ways. Practices such as providing books on tape, a scribe for written work, access to computers and calculators, oral testing,

and peer help were frequently given as examples of accommodations the teachers had implemented.

These types of accommodations often are referred to as adaptations. All of the teachers seemed capable of providing adaptations across subject areas as this more innovative adaptation illustrates:

He could do math as long as I colour-coded the columns for him. He had been doing simple addition and subtraction but when he had two columns, he got confused - what do I do first? So I colour-coded: the green was the right side where he started and then I went yellow for the next one so he could go to three digits. So I went green to start, yellow, and then red so that the red one was his last column. We colour-coded all of his math pages when he was doing addition and subtraction.

Many teachers also described modifying learning goals by changing the difficulty of activities. As one teacher noted:

I always try to keep them in the room as much as possible and doing as much the same as the other kids as I can. Even if we're doing a poetry activity and the level of it is far too advanced for them, I'll try and find a way that they can do exactly the same thing in a simplified version.

Descriptions of modifications for Language Arts and Math activities were provided most often. Instructional practices such as a reading workshop, where students selected to books to read at their own level of challenge and individualized spelling lists commonly were used in Language Arts. In Math, the curriculum has the same four strands in every grade level so teachers were able to modify the difficulty by using activities from lower grade levels. "For example if we're doing measurement, they still work on measurement, but they're not working at a grade five level, they're working at a grade three level."

Teachers who seemed to utilize active approaches to teaching (e.g., group projects, activity based learning) were more likely to describe students with significant disabilities participating in Science and Social Studies. "We do a lot of hands-on kinds of

activities in Science which are great for those particular kids. For most of them, they have to see how something works rather than you telling them.” Mixed-ability grouping was another instructional format that was used to include students with significant disabilities in classroom activities. “I specifically place them with other students who are stronger so those students can help them along.” Sometimes these groupings were created spontaneously when an opportunity was identified. As one teacher explained:

When I’m working with groups of kids - just regular kids in the classroom – and I can see that another student in the class could do the same type of work with a calculator or something else, then boom, you just bring them in and make them part of the group.

Overall the teachers described a wide variety of accommodations designed to include students with significant disabilities in classroom instruction. Individual teachers use of these accommodations represented a continuum from mostly adaptations and a few modifications to adaptations and a variety of modifications. Teachers who rarely mentioned modifications described alternative approaches to managing diversity in their classrooms, which were not mentioned by teachers implementing a wide range of modifications. These and other differences between these two groups of teachers will be explored next.

Coping

One alternative practice that was mentioned by all of the teachers who described a limited range of accommodations was planning alternative activities for the paraeducator to implement or for the student to do independently if paraeducator support was not available. As one teacher explained:

I have to basically look at what are we doing in social studies, now how can I plan for her to have something that she can work on independently, if there is no paraeducator, or with the paraeducator because if I just had her plunked down in

class she's just going to day dream because she doesn't attend if she doesn't understand and in many cases she doesn't understand.

This practice was particularly evident when paraeducator support was not available.

Another teacher noted:

You know the part of the day that she didn't have a paraeducator - that was tough. It was tough for her cause sometimes she would have to sit at the back and play when I was giving a lesson or she'd be sitting there in a lesson that she didn't have a clue what was going on. So that's not right but you have to do something.

Other teachers commented, "In a lot of cases you have to give that child busy work just to kind of keep them quiet." It was also common for these teachers to describe situations where students were not involved in lessons: "He sat there and you'd try to refocus him but you could tell he was glazed."

Another alternative practice that was frequently described or recommended was the removal of the student with significant disabilities from the classroom for instruction in life skills. Cooking or baking activities facilitated by the paraeducator were usually mentioned and while these activities were seen as useful for the student, their primary purpose seems to be to provide "respite for the teacher." One teacher noted, "The paraeducator takes her shopping as part of her math program. They plan out what they're going to bake and it's part of her math to go and do the shopping. So that helps and it's a good experience for her too."

This group of teachers also noted that the students with significant disabilities often required a disproportionate amount of their time and voiced concern about the impact that this might have on the other students in the classroom. Teachers made comments such as:

Someone needs their diaper changed or someone's having a meltdown, all those interruptions too and I think sometimes we forget about the other students in the

class – how they’re feeling – cause they have a right to an education too. I think sometimes they kind of get forgotten.

My little guy this year, he’s not taking a lot of my time away from the other kids but I’ve had other years when it was significant. And that’s not fair to anybody. It’s not fair to the special needs child. It’s not fair to the other kids who are losing out.

Perhaps not surprisingly, these teachers sometimes questioned the placement of students with significant disabilities in the regular classroom. As one teacher said, “If them being there isn’t helping them and it’s certainly not helping anybody else, like what’s the point.” Other teachers reiterated this notion by saying, “It was kind of a waste of his time” and “What are they doing in the classroom? Are they learning? Are the other children learning?”

The unanimous solution to these difficulties was: “Give us more support so that the other children don’t have to suffer and so that classroom teachers are not burning out.” Support was usually described as providing a paraeducator for the whole day. As several teachers noted, “They don’t all of sudden become high level when the paraeducator leaves the room.”

I feel it’s important to note that these alternative practices did not seem to be used with all students with significant disabilities or all the time. Rather, their use varied and was roughly proportional to the variety of accommodations that were implemented. Furthermore, teachers did not use these alternative practices in order to reduce their workload. In fact, they noted that planning alternate activities “adds to your workload, a lot, because you have to find materials and activities that they can do.” Nor did they necessarily believe that was what they were supposed to do. These teachers often

acknowledged that these alternative practices were not necessarily the best for the student but it was the best they could do under the circumstances.

Succeeding

Teachers who implemented a variety of accommodations rarely mentioned planning lessons and activities for the paraeducator to implement. Of course, two of these teachers rarely had full-time paraeducator support because “unless you have a student who is academically weak and an extreme behaviour problem, then they don’t get funding,” so there were fewer opportunities for them to plan activities for the paraeducator to implement. Nevertheless, they did not plan alternative activities for the student to do independently when paraeducator support was not available rather their instruction was designed so that students of very different abilities could learn together and they implemented a variety of accommodations as needed. As one teacher commented, “I just find that it’s easier to adapt it to their strengths and weaknesses than to give them a completely different program.”

The other two teachers, who usually had full-time paraeducator support, used similar instructional approaches (e.g., cooperative groups, activity based instruction), which seemed to reduce the need for planning lessons for the paraeducators to implement. These two teachers also seemed adept at seeing opportunities to embed individual learning outcomes within the existing classroom activities and routines. One teacher commented:

Social and communication goals are worked on all day – saying “Hi” whenever you meet someone, a teacher or another student; waiting for your turn at the water fountain or when working in groups or they could be practicing using their communication device in that group – whenever it can happen.

When talking about how IEP meetings used to be conducted, the other teacher made these comments:

It used to be thought that the classroom teacher doesn't need to hear the physio piece or the OT piece. Well, they most certainly do. Practically every aspect of what a child does in the classroom would fit into physio or OT. If it's a communication goal or if it's a social goal, well, when we line up for recess, I could be encouraging that very thing and it could happen six times a day. Or maybe when we're sitting on the carpet for story time, this could happen. So the thought to include teachers in every aspect of those goals – it makes total sense.

These teachers viewed themselves and the paraeducators as a team working with all of the students in the class, "The paraeducator is not assigned to that student in isolation." While the teachers who had limited paraeducator support expressed a desire to have full-time support, they spoke about classroom support rather than one-to-one support for the student: "Our room would benefit from an extra person in the room in general, all day." In addition, this group of teachers preferred to work with the same paraeducator for several years rather than having the paraeducator follow the student.

One teacher noted:

I think every year when you throw three or four new people together, trying to get to know each other, trying to figure out what their skills are, you take away from the ability to really get to know individual students and that's energy lost.

Another teacher summed up the benefits by noting:

I think in most cases, if you build a team of people who are working like a well-oiled machine within a particular classroom, they can handle any students that come along with any challenges in any given year. And they're happy about it and challenged by it.

Overall, these teachers coped with the diversity in their classrooms in substantially different ways than the other teachers. The first group of teachers utilized more of a mainstreaming approach – including students with significant disabilities when it was possible and re-creating the equivalent of segregated special education within the

classroom when they were not able to include the student. On the other hand, the second group of teachers found it was usually possible to include students with significant disabilities because they designed their instruction for diverse learners. In other words, rather than trying to fit the student into the mould, they changed the mould to fit the students.

Therefore, regardless of gender, grade level taught, number of years experience, teacher personality, teacher attitudes toward inclusion, perceptions of preparedness or ability to teach students with significant disabilities, student characteristics, class load, form of paraeducator service delivery, type of support from special educators, or level of inclusion, the participants' level of engagement was primarily influenced by their ability to include students with significant disabilities. In fact, for every student with significant disabilities who was not included, there was a comparable student in another classroom who was and although there was not an obvious relationship between level of engagement and opinions about inclusion, there was a connection which will be explored in the next section.

Evolving Opinions

During the interviews, I got the sense that many of the teachers' current opinions about inclusion were more of a snapshot of their views at one point in time rather than a static reality and that they would have responded differently to the questionnaire depending on when they completed it. One teacher confirmed this impression by stating, "My opinion about inclusion has evolved and it changes as well." This realization helped to make sense of the seeming contradictions between some of the teachers' descriptions

of their experiences and their stated opinion as well as the fact that teachers who had seemingly similar experiences had different opinions about inclusion.

In essence, the teachers' current opinions are a reflection of their overall level of personal satisfaction with their inclusion experiences to date. Naturally, determination of personal satisfaction is, well, personal, so it is understandable that two teachers undergoing similar experiences may have different feelings about the experience. In addition, the teachers' initial expectations also affected their current opinions. In this section I will present a framework that aids in understanding a teacher's determination of personal satisfaction and I will explain how personal satisfaction and expectations can account for the teacher's current opinions about inclusion.

Personal Satisfaction Framework

A hundred years from now
it will not matter what my bank account was,
the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove . . .
but the world may be different
because I was important in the life of a child.

These few lines of inspiration are a surprisingly accurate reflection of the realities of teaching. There are few rewards in terms of money, power, or prestige and there is no guarantee that there will be any long term benefits either. Even if there are, it is unlikely that we will live to see them. Of course the possibility exists that you could change the world and while this lofty ideal might be an impetus for entering the profession, it will not be sufficient reason for returning to the classroom day after day, year after year. Rather, importance in the lives of children becomes our motivation and our reward. Therefore, teachers strive to make a difference and the sense of accomplishment that comes from feeling that you have reached a student is often cited as one of the joys of

teaching (Jackson, 1990; Lortie, 1975). Conversely, a diminished sense of accomplishment and feelings of meaninglessness, especially as this applies to one's ability to successfully reach students, contribute to teacher burnout (Wood & McCarthy, 2002).

Our level of personal satisfaction is a summary of our evaluation of the overall teaching experience. A central part of this evaluation is consideration of the balance between the amount of investment and the amount of return. For teachers, investment is their time and energy and return is their sense of accomplishment. In other words, those feelings of accomplishment may be sufficient compensation for the hours spent in front of the chalkboard and behind the desk or they may pale in comparison to the amount of time and energy that was required.

This determination of whether the balance between the amount of investment and the amount of return is or is not satisfactory is a personal one, so two teachers with similar experiences may have differing levels of personal satisfaction. Our expectations also will influence this evaluation. Teachers at risk for burnout see their work as inconsistent with the ideals or goals they had set as beginning teachers (Wood & McCarthy, 2002). Considering that a teacher's working conditions change yearly, fluctuations in our level of personal satisfaction can be expected and the expectations developed from previous years of experience are also an influence. Given the highly subjective nature of this evaluation, it would be impossible to predict a teacher's level of personal satisfaction. However, an understanding of the elements affecting personal satisfaction can provide an insight into why a teacher is feeling satisfied or why he or she is not and can aid in identifying circumstances that are likely to be satisfying or

unsatisfying. For example, if an extraordinary amount of time and energy was invested but only a very minimal sense of accomplishment was realized, the experience is likely to be judged as unsatisfactory by the majority of teachers. Other scenarios which would likely be deemed unsatisfactory can be imagined: when additional investment doesn't produce an additional return, when previously sufficient amounts of investment don't result in similar amounts of return, or when an increased amount of investment doesn't even result in the usual amount of return.

This is not to suggest that teachers are unwilling to invest their time and energy. Teachers are willing if students will benefit (Doyle & Ponder, 1977-78) and there is ample evidence that teachers will devote extra time to students when they feel that their concerted efforts will make the difference between these students' successes and failures (Silberman, 1971). In these situations, teachers are betting that the sense of accomplishment felt when the student succeeds will be sufficient compensation for the extra effort and while this gamble does not always pay off, the thrill of witnessing dramatic change in a student helps diminish the overall impact of unsatisfactory experiences. Of course, teachers often work for protracted periods without sure knowledge that they're having any positive effects on students. Therefore student enthusiasm and involvement are the yardstick teachers use to measure their day-to-day progress which provides a return on their daily investments.

What I have described so far is a reflection of the general societal belief that rewards should stand in relation to the amount of personal effort people put into their work. Consequently, when teachers put in an effort, they expect a return and not receiving one will likely affect their level of personal satisfaction. It also stands to reason

that it is unlikely that teachers would feel much sense of accomplishment if they had not put in any effort. For example, student achievement that is not the result of the teacher's efforts is unlikely to generate feelings of accomplishment since the teacher hasn't really accomplished anything. He or she may feel pleased that the student has progressed but a sense of accomplishment is the result of the teacher feeling that he or she reached the student. If there is no effort, there is no investment, so the lack of return would not have a negative impact on a teacher's level of personal satisfaction. While this may seem obvious, it is usually not a consideration since teachers are typically the ones putting in the effort. But teachers aren't always the ones who are putting in the effort and some investment may still be required. Therefore, if teachers plan but do not implement instruction it seems reasonable that they would feel a diminished sense of accomplishment which would affect their level of personal satisfaction.

This consideration is pivotal to understanding the experiences of teachers who have included students with significant disabilities. If the time spent planning for a student with significant disabilities is not balanced with a commensurate sense of accomplishment, the amount of investment automatically outweighs the amount of return. Whether this imbalance is sufficient to affect the teachers' level of personal satisfaction is dependent on a variety of factors including whether they were expecting to feel a sense of accomplishment and their individual acceptable ratio between amount of investment and amount of return. Additionally, this student is not in a classroom of one, so this imbalance will be considered within the total teaching experience. As noted earlier, this variation of factors and the personal nature of the evaluation make prediction of the teachers' level of personal satisfaction an impossible task but it is possible to identify

situations that are likely to be more or less satisfying, which could explain the reasons for a teacher's level of personal satisfaction.

Applying the Personal Satisfaction Framework

As described earlier, the teachers in this study coped with the diversity in their classrooms in substantially different ways. I will use the personal satisfaction framework to illustrate how each approach could affect teacher satisfaction and to clarify the differences in the teachers' actions and recommendations.

One group of teachers primarily planned instruction for the paraeducator to implement or for the student to do independently, which can upset the balance between amount of investment and amount of return. Given that a teacher's time and energy are limited resources, "there's only 24 hours in a day," time spent planning for one student naturally means that there will be less time available to plan for the remaining students in the class. This reduction in planning time might be perceived by the teacher as jeopardizing the progress of the other students resulting in feeling that students "lost out that year," affecting the expected sense of accomplishment. Time spent at "a lot of meetings" with "different specialists, the psychologist, the physiotherapist, OT, speech therapist or whoever else, before school, recess, lunch, after school or sometimes if it can be arranged, during class time" impinged on "the other students need for time to spend with the teacher" and required "a lot of energy." With such a large discrepancy between amount of investment and amount of return, teacher dissatisfaction is highly likely. Feeling that the other students benefited in non-academic ways, "the other students develop empathy and understanding and acceptance, myself included," may not be enough to offset this imbalance and it would make sense for the teacher to try to regain a

satisfactory balance by reducing the amount of investment, “Inclusion is wonderful but sometimes for some children it doesn’t work.”

The other group of teachers were able to include the student with significant disabilities within the planned classroom activities. This does not change the amount of investment and maintains the connection between effort and reward so the balance between amount of investment and amount of return are not adversely affected. Since planning time is not reduced, the additional time demands of extra meetings would not greatly add to the amount of investment. Furthermore, the progress of other students is not jeopardized and the expected sense of accomplishment is possible. Feeling that the other students benefited in non-academic ways would add to the teacher’s sense of accomplishment increasing the likelihood that the teacher will find the experience satisfying.

Naturally, neither of these outcomes is guaranteed. Given the number of factors involved, a variety of scenarios are possible. Trying to figure out how to include the student may increase planning time; the teacher may not feel that she reached the student with significant disabilities or may not feel that the progress of the other students was impeded. Nevertheless, the personal satisfaction framework does provide a means for understanding these experiences and the teachers’ subsequent level of personal satisfaction.

For most of the participants in this study, these two scenarios seem to accurately explain their experiences. Both groups of teachers had some satisfying and some unsatisfying experiences but their current level of personal satisfaction seemed to take into consideration their entire experience to date. The majority of the teachers who were

able to include students with significant disabilities seemed satisfied and the majority of the teachers who were unable to include students with significant disabilities seemed less satisfied. There were two notable exceptions that clearly illustrate how prior experience can influence personal satisfaction and how a teacher's level of personal satisfaction is not a static reality.

The first teacher was unable to include students with significant disabilities but seemed satisfied with the experience. Prior to having a student with significant disabilities in the classroom, this teacher's main concern was "how am I going to have enough energy to continue the class and still program and deal with children who have significant delays?" Previous experience with students with special needs was the source of these concerns. "Because when it began there wasn't the support, so it meant your workload went way up." As it turned out, the workload didn't substantially increase, "Generally I would say that with the support it's not a situation where you feel like you've got all this extra work to do." Although no benefits of inclusion were mentioned, the provision of "paraeducators who are skilled to work with those particular kinds of kids and who are there enough of the time" ensured that the amount of investment remained relatively stable. Therefore including a student with significant disabilities has not affected this teacher's level of personal satisfaction. However, this could change:

For the children that I've had, as long as you have the support then it's going to be okay. If you don't have the support, good luck, because there aren't enough hours in the day to get all the things done that you have to do with the other kids and then still try and interact with a child who's like Chris for instance. I don't know what we'd do if we didn't have a paraeducator with Chris.

This teacher's prior experiences had resulted in a reduction in the level of personal satisfaction creating the expectation that this would or could happen again. This

was not the case for the second teacher, who despite being able to include students with significant disabilities was not satisfied with the experience. This teacher had students with significant disabilities in the classroom since the first year of teaching and there was little reference to increased workload (of course, in the first ten years the workload is always high) or concern that the other students were losing out. Actually the source of dissatisfaction did not even seem to be the student with significant disabilities, “Its just some years are tougher than others and I got really spoiled so the last two have been a little bit of a challenge.” Considering the current class situation, challenge might be an understatement:

I have 25 students in my room. On the whole they’re weak academically. I have two students who have modified programs and three others who are on individual plans because they’re operating at least two grade levels below but they’re not considered M designations. I have five students who are operating really well at grade level, out of 25. And the rest are either struggling to meet grade level outcomes or are not meeting grade level outcomes. . . We have a lot of behaviour problems and that takes up a lot of time. So we’re further behind than I’ve ever been at this point in the year.

In addition, this teacher did not receive a lot of paraeducator support, “Grace is in my room, on average, an hour a day, but it depends on the day. Some days she’s only in there for 20 minutes at the end of the day.” Not surprisingly, this teacher felt that inclusion is “not as successful as it could be” but “if there was more time given to teachers for planning” it might be better. For this teacher it seems the only way to try to regain the previous amount of return is to increase the investment. “I don’t hesitate to say that I do my best to plan as much as I can but there’s only 24 hours in a day and I have to leave it behind at some point.” Had this teacher been interviewed two years earlier, a different level of personal satisfaction seems likely.

These two examples not only illustrate the effect prior experience has on level of personal satisfaction and how levels of personal satisfaction vary, they also highlight the fact that a teacher's level of personal satisfaction is not always an indication of effectiveness. The first teacher is satisfied, but is the student? The paraeducator might be skilled from years of experience but he still isn't a certified teacher. The second teacher, who is still relatively new to the profession, is already thinking about leaving the classroom, "I'd like to go back and do my counselling." If the current level of personal satisfaction is maintained, the first teacher is likely to continue on until retirement even though the ability to include is lacking but we are at risk of losing the second teacher who has the ability to include students with significant disabilities unless there are significant changes in the level of personal satisfaction.

Prior experiences create expectations regarding a teacher's level of personal satisfaction that can affect how the current experience is interpreted. Initial expectations about inclusion can also influence how the experience is evaluated.

Expectations and Realities

Analyzing and comparing the themes that emerged from the data revealed differences that accounted for the variations in the teachers' initial opinions that were not apparent in the questionnaire data. The teachers with the highest initial total scores entered the teaching profession with optimistic opinions about inclusion. One teacher noted, "I was very committed to the idea that these kids should all be integrated when I was in university and a young teacher before I ever had any special needs kids." These teachers also were the only ones to mention prior knowledge of the benefits of inclusion or the negative effects of segregation during the interviews, even though all of the

participants indicated that they had personal experience with an individual with a disability outside the school setting. “I had a brother with Down syndrome and he was in special ed his whole life and he picked up a lot of bad habits from other kids cause that’s all he had for role models.”

On the other hand, the teachers who were initially sceptical seem to lack this prior knowledge and their initial opinions reflected their uncertainty about the impact on their work and its benefits for students. As one teacher explained, “I guess I was little bit afraid because I hadn’t had kids with difficulties and I wondered how I was going to adapt my classroom to make it work for those kids.” For these teachers, including a student with significant disabilities was a change and given that teachers generally view proposed change with scepticism (Lortie, 1975), this finding is not unusual. However, it is a further reminder that scepticism should not be viewed as opposition since none of these teachers were opposed to including a student with significant disabilities, just “concerned about the unknowns.”

A comparison of the teachers’ perceived overall levels of personal satisfaction with their experiences and their initial expectations provide an explanation for their current opinions regarding inclusion. When a teacher’s overall level of personal satisfaction with the experiences matched expectations, opinions remained the same. The teachers who remained sceptical were initially undecided on whether inclusion represents a positive change in our education system and they were uncertain if inclusion was feasible for all students. They’ve discovered there are more benefits than they had imagined, “Sometimes I think it’s amazing and wonderful because it makes you more sensitive. And just the way, especially the way the other students will accept them.” But

there also was a lot more work than imagined, “It’s a huge demand in terms of time. I don’t think I realized what it requires of the classroom teacher.” So they’re still undecided if inclusion represents a positive change and still unsure if inclusion is feasible for all students.

When a teacher’s overall level of personal satisfaction with the experiences didn’t match their expectations, opinions changed. The direction of this change depended on whether the teacher’s overall level of personal satisfaction with the experience exceeded or fell short of their expectations. For some teachers the experience didn’t live up to their expectation resulting in a more sceptical viewpoint. The teachers who became sceptical were initially fairly certain that inclusion represents a positive change in our education change and that it was feasible for all students. They are now unsure if inclusion represents a positive change and are certain that it is not feasible for all students. “In some cases inclusion does not work. I mean it just does not work.” These teachers were clearly disappointed that their experiences had been less satisfying than expected. “I think I was more idealistic before I actually had them. I thought that this would be wonderful and it was more difficult than I thought it would be.” This disappointment was especially evident when the teacher had a particular goal that was not met:

I also try to get them friends. Cause that’s a big thing for most of these kids is that they don’t have friends and that’s a tough one. That’s probably the hardest is to help them get some friends – some real friends. There’s lots of little girls who are very happy to mother these kids but they’re not real friends – outside of school friends, that kind of thing. I’ve tried different things and I would say that’s the thing I feel least success with, is helping develop friends.

For other participants, the experience exceeded their expectations resulting in a more optimistic opinion. These teachers had initial opinions that ranged from being fairly certain that inclusion doesn’t represent a positive change in our education system and

isn't feasible for all students to being fairly certain inclusion does represent a positive change and is feasible for all students. They also had different experiences and although some have transformed it did not happen overnight and not all have become rabid inclusionists. Nevertheless, their experiences were better than each of them had expected.

I think it scared me at first. But after I had them, I think it was a great addition for the other kids. You know, we learned as much from them as they learned from us. And I did too. It was always a learning experience.

The Search for a Reason

Before I explain how all of this relates to teacher commitment to inclusion, I would like to share an unexpected finding. Early on in the study I found two emerging themes disturbing. The first was that teachers were quite willing to exclude students if they thought the student couldn't be included. This was often in reference to students with challenging behaviours and certain disabilities but it was also evident with certain ability levels, particularly students who would be eligible for individualized programming. I called this theme "all doesn't mean everyone." The second recurring theme was "blame the parents" because parents were often cited as one of the reasons why inclusion wasn't working, which was perplexing since parents are not usually in the classroom. These themes continued to emerge throughout the interview process (although not in every interview) but did not seem to connect with the focus of the study. No doubt they continued to be troublesome because my son is a student who is eligible for individualized programming and obviously, I'm a parent.

In developing the Personal Satisfaction Framework, the connection became clear. The balancing of the amount of investment and the amount of return is not an overtly conscious decision. Teachers do not sit down with a paper and pencil to calculate their

investment in terms of hours worked and energy spent. Nor do they quantify their sense of accomplishment and compare it to their investment to establish a level of personal satisfaction or rate of return. These are feelings, so determination of one's level of personal satisfaction is intuitive. However, teachers are aware of whether they feel satisfied and will search for a reason when they're not. In doing so it appears that they compare experiences that were satisfying with the ones that are not to find the difference – a rather logical approach. When they find a difference, be it the type of student, level of parent support, or presence of a paraeducator, then that becomes the reason.

So if the teacher was satisfied with including students with one type of disability but not another, the type of disability became the reason, as can be seen in this teacher's comments:

The FAS kids, sometimes they're just so impulsive that I didn't really feel that I ever got a really good handle on some of them because they were just so erratic. Something that I thought was going to set them off I would adapt for and then it would be something else that particular day that set them off instead.

This teacher had been able to include other students and seemed very satisfied with those experiences so it's not surprising that the type of disability would be the reason when another experience was not so satisfying. Of course the solution: "sometimes I think we do them a disservice in our division because we don't have a classroom for them."

When there was a difference in the level of personal satisfaction from one year to the next, parents were an easy scapegoat: "So the big difference between those kids and the kids I have this year, absolutely comes down to parents. The parents of those kids I had in grade 4 were involved in their kid's education." This teacher's definition of involvement was quite interesting: "The year I taught grade 4 I had nine parent volunteers and this year I have zero. So to go from nine to zero, I mean it shows you right there - the

parents just aren't involved." When asked why this difference might have occurred, there was no consideration that parents might not have time to volunteer or that volunteering had not been encouraged in earlier grades, rather the explanation was, "Unfortunately I find in this school we don't have the support of parents, in most cases." Also interesting since the parents who volunteered were from the same school.

This teacher had minimal paraeducator support but did not seem to realize that those parent volunteers had supplied the needed support, "Four came once a week, every single week. So there was only one day a week where I didn't have a parent volunteer, all day. They were here all day!" So while the real problem was a lack of paraeducator support, the parents were blamed. Nevertheless this teacher did have seemingly unrealistic expectations that parents would be available during the day to volunteer especially since this teacher is a parent and would be unable to volunteer during the day.

Unrealistic expectations of what parents are able to do seems to be another reason that parents were singled out as the cause of dissatisfaction: "Even with the support of all these wonderful people, in some classrooms still, inclusion breaks down. And it breaks down because you don't have the parent support; they don't follow-up at home with what the school is asking them to do." Of course, the question that needs to be posed is whether what the school is asking the parents to do is possible and reasonable. Not all parents are able to help with homework or therapy nor do all parents have the time. An understanding of the family system seems to be lacking among school personnel.

Parents can also be allies but that can be a double-edged sword for parents, as this teacher explained:

"I call them powerful parents, which is a good thing. If you have a special needs child, if you don't fight for your child – I mean we can fight but we don't have the

power - it's the parents. If parents are willing to be vocal and not care who they tick off, they get the help. So that makes a big difference. Cause there's a boy in our school who would not have full time funding but his mom fought and she got it. And that's good! Good for her!"

So really we have another unrealistic expectation that all parents of children with special needs need to be "fighters" but of course not all parents are. "It wasn't in their nature." Yet even with this realization, the expectation remained and parents become the reason students aren't getting the support they need. Unfortunately it begins to seem like a no-win situation for parents: if the student needs support but doesn't get it, it's the parent's fault; if the child has support but is not succeeding, it's the parents fault; and if the parents don't come to school to provide the needed support, it's because they don't care.

The crux of the problem, as teachers see it, is that all students with special needs, especially those with significant disabilities, need full-time paraeducator support. "You know the joke is, are they only Down syndrome for half a day? What happens to them the other half a day?" Again this determination seemed to be based on the fact that the experience was more satisfying when the student had full-time support, "It's very easy to work with a Level 3 child who has a paraeducator all day long." It's not just that it's easier for the teacher, it's better for the student as well, "Level 3 children are very, very fortunate in our school division and in most because they have one-on-one support and they can grow by leaps and bounds."

On the other hand, it's not so great for the teacher when full-time support isn't provided as this teacher explained: "Right now, we have three Level 2 kids with severe behavioural challenges and we're supporting those classroom teachers for 2 ½ hours a day. I'm sorry. It's not working. In three classrooms in this building it's not working." And it's no better for the student, especially when they receive no funding.

Sometimes they're not able to get a paraeducator but they're delayed in certain areas. Reading is usually one that they really suffer in and Math. So there's a lot of support that's needed but they don't qualify for paraeducator time. And especially since they've changed the way paraeducators are allocated, those kids sort of fall through the cracks cause they don't get the time."

Generally, these teachers wanted to see the students benefit and wanted inclusion to work and they knew it could work because they were satisfied before, if only there was enough funding:

If the Department doesn't give you enough money and if the school district doesn't give you enough help and support and extra funding and all the way down the line, it filters back to the classroom. That's the difference of making inclusion be successful or unsuccessful and it can be a disaster.

More funding is often seen as the ultimate solution. If there was more funding available then parents wouldn't have to fight for it, students would get the support they need, teachers wouldn't burnout, and no one would have to try to beg for more.

We cannot get anymore funding because to obtain Level 3 funding you have to have a 24-hour plan, which means that the parents need to be on board which means that they have to have CFS involved, you know, there's just so much involved and there's no point applying because the Department of Education will just throw it out. If you don't have it forget it.

However, most teachers realized that more funding was unlikely to be available any time soon, so the next best solution was to set up separate programs. "Sometimes, some children just don't fit and in some school districts they have resources to deal with that. They have programs, we don't." It was here that contradictions were most evident. The same teachers who pined for the segregated programs available in other divisions, chastised them for segregating students they had been successful with:

They should really and come and visit our schools, our classrooms and see how children who in Kindergarten come in screaming, kicking, doing everything that they can and not being able to be in the classroom, where those children are today in grade 6, they wouldn't believe it.

The realization that these teachers were attempting to maintain an acceptable overall level of personal satisfaction helped take the edge off their comments. One cannot really blame teachers for engaging in a little self-preservation. We spend a lot of time wondering if we're doing a good job. Papers are handed in and you wonder what you've done all week, it appears that you've taught them nothing. You wonder if it's your fault that the student is not succeeding – you should be able to find some way to appeal to him and make him want to do it. You never really know what students are thinking or how your teaching affects them now or in the future. And every now and then a frightening possibility creeps into your thoughts – maybe you're having no discernible effect on your students – maybe you're not important in the life of a child! But then you have some students who do get it and you begin to think that you are doing a good job, that you are a good teacher, that you are making a difference. And then you realize, well, it can't be *all* my fault.

While this may be beneficial for the teacher, it's not always best for the students. Success with some may reinforce the notion that we don't need to improve and reduce our motivation for acquiring new skills. If I'm good enough for most, it's a lot easier to remove the students I'm not successful with than it is to acquire the skills needed to be successful with them. Besides, by the time I acquire those skills, if there even are any, the student will likely have moved on to the next grade. If the students can't be removed, then at least I should have a paraeducator to help out. Unfortunately, the addition of paraeducator can actually increase the likelihood that a teacher will be unsatisfied with the experience. Of course, if that happens, I can always blame the parents.

Commitment to Inclusion

Just what does cause a teacher to be committed to inclusion? That was the central purpose of this study. I knew that some teachers are committed, in theory and practice and I knew that some are committed in theory only. The commitment to practicing inclusion in the classroom everyday is the real difference between the “chickens” and the “pigs”. Some teachers are involved in inclusion, they have students with significant disabilities in their classroom and they believe that inclusion is the right thing to do, but they aren’t including the students. Other teachers are. They believe it is the right thing to do and they are doing it.

I hoped that by talking to teachers about their experiences, I would gain an understanding of their beliefs and their practices. Inquiring about teachers’ opinions about inclusion gave me an insight into their philosophical commitment and examining their level of engagement provided clues to their practical commitment. By analyzing these opinions and experiences, I’ve discovered possible reasons for their level of engagement, for their initial opinions, and for why their opinions have or have not changed as a result of their experiences. In the end it appears that the difference between those who practice what they preach and those who just preach is ability. Some teachers are able to include students with significant disabilities and some are not. In this section, I will show how the ability to include a student with significant disabilities can make the difference between whether a teacher is a “chicken” or a “pig”.

Ability to Include

When teachers are able to include a student with significant disabilities in their classrooms, they have both direct contact with the student and active involvement in

planning and implementing instruction - they are engaged. Because they are engaged, they are likely to feel a sense of accomplishment for the student's progress, which increases the likelihood that the teachers will find the experience satisfying. If this level of personal satisfaction is equivalent to what they were expecting, their opinion about inclusion won't change. If it was better than expected, their opinion will become more optimistic. In either case, they are likely to be willing to do it again.

Over time, if the experiences continue to be satisfying, the teachers' belief that this is the right thing to do and it can be done will strengthen thereby deepening their commitment to inclusion. When teachers are committed, they are more willing to invest extra time and energy to make it work which not only benefits the student, it also increases the chance that the teacher will be successful, feel satisfied, and want to keep doing it. Even if there are some less than satisfactory experiences along the way, the successful experiences will be greater in number or intensity and help maintain an acceptable overall level of personal satisfaction. In the end, these teachers become "pigs".

If this level of personal satisfaction does not meet their expectations, their opinion about inclusion will become less optimistic and they will likely begin to look for a reason for this disappointment. Possible reasons include unrealistic expectations, lack of training, limited parental or paraeducator support or the characteristics of the student. None of these are fixed in stone – expectations can become more realistic, training can be taken, more paraeducator support can be provided, and students and their parents change every year. For teachers, hope springs eternal that next year will be different.

The long-term outlook for this group is the most unpredictable as it largely depends on their skill level and their expectations, both of which could vary widely and

could change. If they are able to improve their level of personal satisfaction or lower their expectations so they meet, they will likely move in the same direction as the previous group. If their experiences continue to be unsatisfactory, they are more likely to follow the same path as the next group.

When teachers are unable to include a student with significant disabilities, they are less engaged. The teachers have to plan alternative activities for the student, increasing their workload; these activities are implemented by the paraeducator, decreasing the teachers' sense of accomplishment even if the student makes progress. This increases the likelihood that the teacher will find the experience unsatisfying. If this level of personal satisfaction is equivalent to what they were expecting, their opinion about inclusion won't change. If it was better than expected, their opinions will become less sceptical. If it was less than was expected, their opinion will become more sceptical. In any case, they are likely to be uncertain about doing it again.

However, they usually have no choice. So the teachers begin to look for ways to make the experience more satisfying. If they try to reduce their planning time by having the student participate in classroom lessons but are unable to include the student, the student's lack of interest, enthusiasm and progress will not provide any sense of accomplishment and the experience is likely to remain unsatisfactory for both the teacher and the student. Bored, uninvolved students can create management problems thereby increasing the teachers' dissatisfaction. They may also look for reasons and hope the situation improves. Overtime, if the experiences continue to be unsatisfying, these teachers will come to believe that this is probably the right thing to do but it can't always

be done at least not for all students. These teachers remain involved but not committed and in the end, they become “chickens”.

Alternatively, if the teachers try to reduce their planning time by giving more autonomy to the paraeducator, their level of satisfaction may increase but the student is denied the benefit of an appropriate education. However, since the experience is better than it used to be, their opinions about inclusion may become more optimistic and they appear to be more committed to inclusion yet really they’ve become chickens in pigs clothing.

If these teachers were fairly sceptical to begin with, their unsatisfying experiences may lead them to become opposed to inclusion. Not many teachers would be willing to admit this however, since not only is it considered politically incorrect, it might also arouse suspicion that they are not capable. While none of the participants reported that they have ever had a choice about whether a student would be placed in their classroom, most mentioned that teacher personality and teaching style were considered when placements were made. They noted that some teachers were thought to be better at teaching some students and acknowledged that these teachers received more than their fair share of challenging students. So “not being good at including some types of kids” could be a way for teachers to improve their level of personal satisfaction without openly opposing inclusion. Those who mentioned this situation appeared to view it as a ploy, which seemed to create resentment.

Naturally real life is not neat and tidy which is acknowledged by the continual use of the word likely in describing these paths. However, all of the teachers in this study appear to have followed one of them. Those who were able to include students with

significant disabilities were engaged, were generally satisfied with their experiences and became more optimistic about inclusion and more committed to it. As noted earlier there was one teacher who was able to include students and was engaged but whose current level of personal satisfaction declined from previous years. This teacher was optimistic about inclusion upon entering the teaching profession but found that the realities fell short of expectations. Although this teacher's opinion about inclusion became more sceptical, it was not quite as bad as it seemed on paper: "So I'm all for inclusion but I realized that it's not as simple as it sounds and there's not enough support for those kids who really need it." It seems that this teacher is in that volatile middle group and could become committed or might just be involved. This teacher has acknowledged the need for more training and if training in inclusive practices is received and appropriate support provided, there is a good chance this teacher will become a "pig".

Participants who were unable to include students with significant disabilities were less engaged, were generally less satisfied with their experiences and remained sceptical or became more sceptical about inclusion. One teacher took the fork in the road, gave the paraeducator more autonomy for some students and became more optimistic about inclusion.

There were variations in the strength of the teachers' commitment along both paths. This seems to be directly related to their current overall level of satisfaction with their experiences to date. Given the range of experiences within this group of teachers, this is understandable. Some have had many experiences within a few years, others have had fewer experiences over a number of years; some have had a wide variety of experiences, others have not. While these teachers may be at different points in their

journey it seems likely that if they continue on their current paths, they will arrive at the outlined destinations.

This is not to say that these teachers must continue on their current path, as it is possible to change paths. While they start out at different points, the two paths converge when teachers determine their level of personal satisfaction. At this point teachers can continue doing what they're doing or do something differently. Those who are satisfied will likely choose to basically continue what they're doing (if it ain't broke, why fix it). Those who are unsatisfied might continue doing what they're doing and hope that the situation will improve or they could abdicate responsibility to the paraeducator. They might also try including the student but, unless they have developed the skills, it is unlikely that this will be successful. Unfortunately, the inability to include students with significant disabilities was not given as the reason for unsatisfactory experiences. Certainly, several expressed a concern about being able to meet student's needs but this was more in the context that it may not be possible to meet these children's needs within the regular classroom rather than an admission that the teacher was unable to do it. It seems that these teachers don't know it's broke, so why would they fix it. As one teacher who was able to include students commented:

I really don't think people know what it might look like. It's not a miracle and sometimes it doesn't even look like exemplary teaching. All it is is people doing things together. It's not a new lesson plan for everybody in your classroom.

Given the complexities of the classroom and the seemingly increasing demands being placed upon teachers, it's not really surprising that the teachers weren't aware of the real source of their dissatisfaction. As one teacher noted: "We're being asked to do more and more with less and less and so sometimes you don't see the forest for the trees."

Even if these teachers were aware that the source of their dissatisfaction is the lack of a sense of accomplishment that is associated with being less engaged it doesn't necessarily mean that they would be able to fix it. It does not appear that these teachers have skills that they are choosing not to use but rather they don't have the skills to use. The variations and similarities in the participants' experiences provide some insight into the reasons for the differences in their ability to include students with significant disabilities.

Reasons for Differences in Ability

As noted earlier, there was little relationship between the teachers' level of training and education and their perceptions of preparedness and ability to teach students with significant disabilities nor between their perceptions of preparedness and ability to teach students with significant disabilities and their levels of engagement. There was also little relationship between their level of education and training and their actual ability to include students with significant disabilities. Although one of the teachers who had taken an undergraduate course in special education was able to include students, the other was not and three of the four teachers who were able to include students had not taken any undergraduate special education courses. There is a clearer relationship between the teachers' overall levels of personal satisfaction and current perceptions of preparedness and ability to teach students with significant disabilities than between the number of in-service hours in inclusive practices and perceptions of preparedness and ability. However, not all of the in-service training taken has been in inclusive practices. Only the teachers with more than 25 hours of training mentioned inclusive practices, the others referred to disability specific training. In any case, most of the in-service training was

received after the teachers first started including students with disabilities and some of the teachers with the least number of in-service training hours (1-8) were able to include students. There seems to be a combination of factors involved but education and training are not two of them. Perception of roles and responsibilities, teaching style, level of special education support, and prior experience are factors, and I will show how these affect a teacher's ability to include students and their feelings of satisfaction with the experience by comparing different situations.

The four teachers who were able to include students with significant disabilities "assumed that it was my role to adapt the materials and adapt instruction so that everyone could participate in some meaningful way." The assumption was based on their understanding of the role of the teacher. "I think part of it is that you're a teacher and that as a professional your responsibility is to teach all kids in your room." In fact one teacher felt quite indignant when others assumed otherwise:

I felt the role of the special ed person in my room was to walk in and say, "How can I help you?" because I was already, you know, there sort of was resentment that someone would think I was waiting for them before even doing any instruction or actually including students in my room.

All of these teachers described using instructional practices (hands-on activities, cooperative groups) that would have made it easier for them to accommodate a range of learners.

There were differences in type of special education support and prior experience that seemed to make the difference between how satisfied they felt about the experience. Two of the teachers seemed to have a high level of personal satisfaction. One had been teaching for six years before including students with significant disabilities and while the other had only one year of prior teaching experience, this teacher had worked for twelve

years as a paraeducator in inclusive classrooms. Both received collaborative support from the resource teacher, which seemed to provide the assistance needed to compensate for a lack of teaching or inclusion experience. They have been including students for a number of years and their confidence in their ability has grown. These teachers described the widest variety of accommodations and were able to include students with an extensive range of abilities. While they have some concerns such as how to do it better and the increasing number of students with mental health issues, they were more interested in talking about the benefits of inclusion. As one of them commented when asked if their experiences had changed their opinion:

I'm going to say right now, I have seen children in the classroom become more accepting of other people, more tolerant of other people. I have a little one right now who has some significant challenges and some very disruptive behaviours and the kids have learned to become patient, they've learned to ignore, they've learned to know when a situation could become explosive or they know when to try to redirect. I think it's just remarkable. It's been such a positive experience even when you have some challenging situations and you see these kids just rise. And it's everybody in the classroom. It's even other kids that have some special needs of some sort, they actually see somebody else having a struggling moment or two and they see that we're all kind of the same. They see me having struggling moments. You just see this warmth and generosity spreading out. Kids' wanting to help kids put shoes on or wipe drool or get someone because they know something's going to happen soon. They're just so more perceptive and receptive.

Of the other two teachers in this group, one had a moderate level of personal satisfaction and one, as I have mentioned previously, had a low level of personal satisfaction. The first teacher had a number of years teaching experience prior to including students with significant disabilities; the second teacher did not. Both received consultative support from the resource teacher. The first teacher was able to draw on her years of experience to compensate for a lack of assistance with planning and implementing instruction, "I just saw it as a new challenge but I see every child that way

cause every child learns a little bit differently and so you try to teach differently for different kids.” Most of the experiences had been satisfying and confidence in ability grew, “But on the whole, it was a good learning experience for everybody in the classroom. And probably because I did the adaptations for them, I found that I would try the same adaptation with some other kid who hadn’t been able to get it one way.” Yet this teacher believed the early experiences could have been better. “I spent so much time trying to figure it out on my own that there were times that I wished I had more help, but it wasn’t there so.”

The second teacher did not have those years of experience to draw on. Support in those first years of including students with significant disabilities as a beginning teacher may have raised this teacher’s confidence. However this teacher was somewhat reluctant to ask for help and not quite sure if it would be available:

I think if I asked for help I would certainly, you know probably find that I would get the help. Unfortunately I feel that she’s overloaded and if I have to go to a meeting or if I need to leave the building for some reason then I’ll use her for that support.

Of course asking for help is not easy, as some of the more experienced teachers pointed out: “I don’t know, took me decades to say, actually. Or can you help me?” Because there are risks: “I know when I was a younger teacher, I thought it would make me look unprofessional or it would make me look like I wasn’t doing my job or I wasn’t handling things.” So while the other teachers had prior experience or resource support to help them initially include students with significant disabilities, this teacher had neither and it shows:

I think that inclusion is a wonderful thing for all involved but I think often – in every case I’ve ever encountered – there’s not enough support to make it successful or as successful as it could be.

The four teachers who were unable to include students with significant disabilities had a different understanding of their own and others' roles and responsibilities. These teachers thought the paraeducator's role was "to implement what I have planned for *the student* to be working on." They did not assume that they should be adapting the classroom instruction so the student could participate. While these teachers had a varying number of years teaching experience prior to including a student with significant disabilities, they all seemed to have more traditional teaching styles (e.g., lecture and drill, ability grouping), which would make it more difficult to include students with significant disabilities. All received consultative support from the resource teacher but were looking for different types of support. Some just wanted help with writing IEP's, some hoped the resource teacher would "help me find materials and activities if I needed them," and others also wanted feedback:

She'll also pull him out occasionally to see how he's doing and assess him and to give extra feedback to me. Then she'll also meet with the paraeducator and the three of us just kind of work through how it's all going and check in all the time to make sure it's working.

Currently, these teachers found the level of support acceptable but "it varies, depending on who you get. We have a very good one right now." The resource teachers sometimes, "do a bit of direct work with them." It's not clear if these teachers would like this to happen more but realized it was unlikely since "they just don't have time because they have such big case loads" or if they actually would prefer more direct service. These teachers had an average amount of paraeducator support. Most mentioned "we're lucky in this school, we have good paraeducators for the most part" and some referred to them as "highly skilled" but they were generally not aware of hiring requirements for

paraeducators, “I’m surprised they don’t have to have any training when you consider the teacher has five years at a minimum and then someone else has none.”

All of the teachers in this group did adapt instruction and most provided some modifications. They only seemed to plan lessons and activities for the paraeducator to implement when these means were insufficient to enable the student’s participation. Whether they were more restricted by their teaching style or their limited knowledge of inclusive practices is not apparent but it is clear that the support needed to change either was not available. I also suspect that teachers in both groups had some misconceptions about inclusion.

Good Inclusion?

It is often considered a sign that “good inclusion” is happening if a visitor is not able to “pick out” the students with special needs in the classroom. The idea being that it would be easy to notice if the students with special needs are doing different things in different places from other students, and if they are, then it’s not likely that they are being included. Similarly, if a visitor can tell that a paraeducator or resource teacher is there for specific students, it’s likely there’s a problem. Unfortunately, some of the participants seem to have interpreted this to mean that inclusion is successful when the student doesn’t stand out as being different as this teacher noted:

When you see an autistic child in Kindergarten who cannot function and then you see the child in a grade 6 classroom and you walk in and you can’t tell that that child is there, that that child is any different than any of the other kids in the room. When he walks down the hallway with the rest of the class, he doesn’t have his paraeducator beside him; he’s walking down the hallway with the rest of the class.

These might be signs that a student's behaviour has improved but some children with autism will flap their hands and engage in other noticeable mannerisms as another teacher explained to her class:

But I was very honest with my kids that sometimes these particular students are going to do things that are going to seem very different from you – like the flapping and on the toes – and it's different because it's part of the illness that they have. It's not different in that they're trying to attract your attention or they're trying to be different than you.

So blending in is good but if you don't blend in, it's not because you're trying to be different - interesting messages to send to students. One teacher seemed quite confused about the 'its okay/its not okay to be different' dilemma when explaining why some students with significant disabilities should be in a special program. "They don't all fit in this little box that we're trying to make them fit into unfortunately or fortunately, because we are all different. We should be different, so why make them?"

Other teachers tried to ensure that the student didn't feel too different. One teacher explained why some activities were modified: "So that theirs looks like everybody else's. That's important to me that they have a sense that they're the same as the other kids in some ways." Other teachers provided a possible reason for this concern.

I think they're starting to realize, "Hey, I am different" and they start to become aware and then they start to feel kind of bad and the self-esteem goes down and the behaviour starts happening.

Not all of the participants shared these comments and some actually celebrated diversity but the fact that many seemed to have difficulty with the concept of difference suggests that a fundamental understanding of inclusion may be missing.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

When you just naturally want inclusion to happen, you look for places where it can happen smoothly and easily and when you see it not happening, you just kind of jump in there.

With respect to the inclusion of students with significant disabilities, I used to believe that when there's a will, there's a way. By examining the first hand experiences of classroom teachers who have included at least one student with significant disabilities I have come to realize that will is not always enough. In fact, it appears that when there's a will but no skill, there's no way. In this chapter, I will consider the findings of this study in light of existing research, comment briefly on the limitations of this study, and conclude with a summary of the implications for practice and for future research.

Experience and Expectations Effect Opinion

Teachers' opinions about inclusion may or may not change depending on how the experience of including a student with significant disabilities compared to their initial expectations. When their experience matched their expectations, there was no change in their opinion and when their experiences exceeded or fell short of their expectations there was a commensurate change in their opinions. Although most research has focused on changes in opinion, Snyder et al. (2001) also found that teachers who reported no attitudinal change indicated that their experience had confirmed their initial expectations. In all studies where teachers reported a positive change in opinion (Giangreco et al., 1993; Janney et al., 1995; Snyder et al., 2001) there also was clear evidence that the experience exceeded their expectations.

There are no reports of teachers who were initially optimistic about inclusion becoming sceptical as a result of their experience, however only a few qualitative studies have specifically asked general educators whether the experience of including students had led to changes in attitude. The participants who became more sceptical had entered the teaching profession with optimistic opinions about inclusion but no experience and it appears that they are following the same belief stages that Brantlinger (1996) observed in teacher candidates during their field experiences. The first stage was characterized by the idealistic belief that inclusion would happen easily because the teacher candidates wanted it to happen. In the second stage, the teacher candidates realized that good intentions and efforts are not enough and conveyed that individualistic instruction in separate settings might be better. While some teacher candidates remained at this stage, those who had good experiences with inclusion during their student teaching came to re-emphasize their goals for inclusion and began to recognize that making inclusion work is an uphill battle. The third participant who entered the teaching profession with optimistic opinions had prior experience with inclusion so these opinions were based on reality rather than ideals, which could explain why this teacher became more optimistic rather than more sceptical. Due to the limited research in this area, this proposition remains speculative and underscores the importance of providing teacher candidates with multiple field experiences with teachers who are successfully including students with disabilities.

Satisfaction

While realistic expectations may be an important consideration for teachers entering the profession, the teachers' overall level of personal satisfaction with their experiences was paramount regardless of their initial opinion or when it was acquired. In

determining their level of personal satisfaction, teachers considered the balance between the amount of investment in terms of their time and energy and the amount of return in terms of a sense of accomplishment. The extant research provides support for this supposition both for teachers in general (Jackson, 1990; Lortie, 1975) and with respect to teachers experiences with inclusion (Fox & Ysseldyke, 1997; Giangreco et al., 1993; Janney et al., 1995; Smith & Smith, 2000).

Smith and Smith (2000) found that teachers who rated themselves as unsuccessful with inclusion had a greater investment of teacher time and energy due to larger class loads and less support than teachers who considered themselves successful. In addition, the teachers who felt unsuccessful were more likely to plan alternative activities for students whereas the teachers who felt successful either had the paraeducator plan for the student or were able to accommodate the student easily, further adding to the disparity between the teachers. Janney and Snell (1997) also found that teachers were more likely to plan alternative activities for the paraeducator to implement when they unable to accommodate the student within the planned activity. In addition, Stodolsky (2000) found that when teachers were unable to adapt to new students, they were frustrated that their previously successful instructional approach appeared less effective.

Both Fox and Ysseldyke (1997) and Janney et al. (1995) found that teachers were willing to continue with inclusion initiatives and in some cases considered them successful because their workload had not increased. An increased amount of investment was not required because the teachers were not making significant curricular modifications, however these teachers did find it personally and professionally rewarding to work with the students, which enhanced the amount of return. Janney et al. speculated

that it was the teacher's involvement with the students that enabled them to detect student progress. This clearly did happen with the teachers who Giangreco et al. (1993) described as transformed. Not only did their involvement result in observation of student progress, the teachers definitely felt a sense of accomplishment. Since they were able to accommodate the students easily, the amount of investment did not substantially increase and outweigh the return.

Together, these studies suggest that the participants' experiences were not unique and provide support for the Personal Satisfaction Framework. When teachers are able to include students with significant disabilities within classroom instruction their level of involvement and engagement enhances the probability that they will feel a sense of accomplishment, but does not add substantially to their investment of time and energy thereby increasing the likelihood that they will find the experience satisfying. When they are unable to include the student, teachers plan alternative activities for the paraeducator to implement, which adds to their workload and limits their involvement and engagement with the student reducing the probability that they will feel a sense of accomplishment thereby increasing the likelihood that they will find the experience unsatisfying.

Inclusive Practices

Alternative explanations for these differences in experience have been suggested and include teacher attitudes toward inclusion, teacher perceptions of their preparedness or ability to teach students with significant disabilities, student characteristics, class load, the form of paraeducator service delivery, type and level of special education support, and the level of integration although these are not supported by the findings of this study. This may be due to the differences in the amount of experience. While not all of these

studies reported the amount of experience the teachers had with inclusion, the most was three years whereas the least the participants in this study had was six years. This increases the likelihood that teachers will have had similar experiences and reduces the number of possible alternative explanations.

When teacher difficulty with designing and implementing inclusive practices has been found, it is typically attributed to one of the alternative explanations noted above or difficulties with collaboration (Janney & Snell, 1997; Janney et al., 1995; Smith & Smith, 2000; Wood, 1998). Collaboration between general and special educators has been recognized as a critical feature for successful implementation of inclusion (Villa & Thousand, 2000) and every textbook on inclusion includes a chapter on collaboration (Friend et al., 1998). Teachers do require support from others when including students and although the participants attributed a lack of collaboration to the resource teacher's heavy caseloads, much of the literature and research is based on the assumption that general education teachers and special education teachers have specialized knowledge due to their different training and experience. General education teachers are expected to have knowledge of group instructional processes and curriculum and special education teachers have expertise in adapting instruction and intervention strategies (Wood, 1998). While this may be true in the United States where separate undergraduate teacher preparation programs for general and special education exist (Brantlinger, 1996), that is not the case in Manitoba as a degree in general education is a prerequisite for special education certification. However, certification in special education is not a requirement for employment as a special education or resource teacher and the policy of most school divisions is to hire personnel who have special education certificates insofar as possible.

Therefore, many resource and special education teachers have no additional training and do not bring expertise in adapting instruction and intervention strategies to their collaborations with classroom teachers. If the resource teacher is unable to provide new ideas, this could explain why some teachers seem to have a limited repertoire of strategies despite many years of experience. Since the onus to provide this information is on the special education teachers, this may also explain why other studies have not considered a teacher's ability to include students as a possible reason for their lack of satisfaction

The obvious implication is to change the department of education policy to require that special education and resource teachers be certified in special education so that school division's can only hire trained personnel. Of course, some teachers who obtain employment as resource or special education teachers do have a wealth of knowledge from their prior learning and experience and perhaps the university programs offering course work in special education should consider implementing Prior Learning and Assessment Recognition (Knapp, 1977). PLAR is a process in which learning that has been acquired through work experience, informal learning such as seminars, workshops, on-the-job-training or formal learning that cannot be easily credited through transfer of credit processes (i.e. foreign credentials) can be assessed for University credit. In 2002, The University of Manitoba started its three-year PLAR Project in the Certificate in Adult and Continuing Education Program and the tools and best practice models developed will allow PLAR to be integrated into other programs and faculties at the U of M. The Social Work and Nursing Programs have already indicated interest in developing "Recognition of Learning" processes within their degree and professional

programs. Research into whether this is a feasible option for the Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Education may be necessary however implementation of this process may enable experienced teachers and resource teachers to acquire the knowledge they need while acknowledging what they have acquired.

Udvari-Solner (1996) found that a lack of collaborative planning impacted on the ability of teachers to effectively include students with disabilities which had adverse effects on the participation of students with disabilities in general education classrooms. Detrimental consequences included: (a) continued use of traditional methods of lesson design and instruction without considering a student's need for alternative approaches, (b) overuse of alternative activities for students with disabilities rather than establishing a true vision of the student's participation, (c) reliance on paraeducators or specialists to provide one-on-one assistance or to adapt "on-the-spot" for the student with disabilities, and (d) dependence on one individual to bear the weight of modification design and implementation. Without support from special educators, teachers tend to plan the content and tasks for the general education students first and then plan how to accommodate the student with disabilities (Janney & Snell, 1997; Smith & Smith, 2000; Udvari-Solner, 1996) which is difficult to accomplish for students with significant disabilities, especially when traditional instructional approaches are used. Teachers frequently report using social participation strategies and alternative activities when there is a lack of planning time or a lack of staff coverage since both are easier to create and implement than academic adaptations (Janney et al., 1995; Smith & Smith, 2000). This can result in students being included but not educated (Coots et al., 1998). In addition to the detrimental consequences for students, this can also lead to reduced levels of personal

satisfaction for the teacher. Unfortunately this approach to accommodating exceptional students in the general education classroom is often recommended in undergraduate textbooks (Friend et al., 1998) and without trained resource teachers who are able to introduce alternative methods, teachers are unlikely to change.

Instructional approaches such as cooperative learning and activity-based lessons with multi-level instruction enable teachers to differentiate learning experiences without isolating learners from one another (Hunt & Goetz, 1997; Salisbury et al., 1993) and alternative approaches to lesson design such as designing for diversity (Peterson & Hittie, 2003) have been developed. Instruction in inclusive pedagogy (Kluth, 2003) for teacher candidates and practicing teachers would enhance their ability to meet the needs of all learners in diverse classrooms.

Classroom and resource teachers also need a clear understanding of a paraeducator's roles and responsibilities. Misconceptions regarding the roles and responsibilities of paraeducators and their appropriate use have received considerable attention (Giangreco & Doyle, 2002; Giangreco et al., 1997; Marks et al., 1999; Young et al., 1997) and while recommendations for better training of paraeducators are common, this may actually result in an increase in their use as the primary instructor for students with significant disabilities (Downing, Ryndak, & Clark, 2000). While the proper training and supervision of paraeducators is required, school teams should utilize decision-making processes (Mueller & Murphy, 2001) for determining when paraeducator supports are warranted and appropriate however this will require that the department of education provide clarification on the appropriate uses of special needs funding.

In addition to instruction in the “how’s” of inclusion, teacher candidates and practicing teachers need to have an understanding of the “why’s” of inclusion in order to prevent taking an assimilationist approach to diversity which has been found when teachers believe inclusion requires downplaying the differences between students with disabilities and their classmates (Janney & Snell, 1997). This may prove difficult since teachers and teacher candidates often react quite negatively to anything resembling theory. Kincheloe (1991) proposes a possible reason for a general disregard of theoretical notions that should not be overlooked. He states, “Theory, in the eyes of many teachers, represents their disenfranchisement in the educational workplace, it signifies power to the researchers to define what counts as valid knowledge” (p. 82). This may explain why teachers generally consider other teachers as a more trustworthy, useable, and accessible source of information than university coursework, professional journals (Landrum, Cook, Tankersley, & Fitzgerald, 2002) or workshops and in-service presentations where an imported expert delivers words of wisdom about a topic to an audience and then departs (Smith & Smith, 2000).

Trump and Hange (1996) found that the most valuable in-service training focused on teachers observing in successful inclusion classrooms and participants in the present study echoed this sentiment. Resource teachers could recruit classroom teachers in their schools who are successful and willing to have others observe in their classrooms and they could provide coverage to enable other teachers to go and visit. Student services administrators could maintain a current list of these “mentor” teachers within the division so that teachers would be able to select an observation site that is congruent with perceptions of their own situation and ensure that a few mentors are not overburdened by

numerous visitors. These lists could be used to identify possible student teaching placements. Successful inclusionists who may not be interested in opening their classrooms to other teachers could be recruited to provide professional development or accessed by teacher educators to provide to teacher candidates with the voice of experience.

Teacher Engagement

In their 1993 study, Giangreco et al. found that general education teachers were more engaged with their students with disabilities when the paraeducators supporting those students were program/classroom based and that general education teachers tended to be less engaged when the paraeducators were assigned one-on-one to a student with a disability. The authors cautioned that the differences in teacher engagement were not necessarily the result of the paraeducator service models alone, which is confirmed by the findings of this study. Differences in the participants' level of engagement were noted despite similarities in the form of paraeducator support. The current study further contributes to the understanding of teacher engagement by identifying teacher ability to include students with significant disabilities as a potential factor influencing a teacher's level of engagement and by highlighting the importance of teacher engagement in a teacher's evaluation of the experience.

In addition, this study has uncovered a potential difference in the characteristics of teacher engagement with respect to students with significant disabilities. The more engaged teachers in the Giangreco et al. study taught students with high incidence disabilities therefore it is likely that the lessons and activities they planned for paraeducators to implement were for reinforcement and review of previously taught skills

rather than alternative activities as was characteristic of the less engaged teachers in this study. Therefore, the type of lesson teachers plan for paraeducators to implement may be an important consideration in determining a teacher's level of engagement. Additional research is needed to confirm these findings.

While none of the teachers in this study were employed in "cluster" schools, almost all reported having had classes where 20% or more of the students had special needs. It seems that these variations in diversity were mostly due to naturally occurring differences in student enrolment but in some cases students were clustered in one classroom in order to access paraeducator support. Despite perceived administrative benefits, overloading one classroom with a disproportionate number of students with special needs can mean fewer opportunities for students to model learning thus creating overburdened, and highly stressed teachers (Blanksby, 1999). Further study of teachers who are able to include students with significant disabilities in classroom instruction may provide insight into the impact of class load on teachers' willingness to become involved and engaged. Interestingly, there was little mention of clinical supports (e.g., therapists, psychologists, etc.) or ancillary supports (e.g., counsellors, social workers, etc.) other than participants noting that they had worked with these support personnel. Whether these supports and their availability play a role is another area requiring further investigation.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. One is that the experiences of these teachers may not be reflective of other teachers working in inclusive settings particularly with respect to the length and range of their experiences. Methodologically, the study has

limitations due to my reliance on interview data only. Observations were not conducted which may have provided a better understanding of teacher engagement and the issues revolving around the implementation of inclusion for students with significant disabilities. In addition, differences in responses between the questionnaire and the interview may have been due to the interview process. The interaction between interviewer and interviewee is different from the interaction between the interviewee and the paper questionnaire in that the interviewer can ask both clarifying and extending questions. Moreover, teachers may be less likely to express opposition to what may be seen as a social norm during a taped interview than they would be with a written questionnaire.

Several of the school divisions where some of the teachers are employed are currently reviewing their special education policies. Since the questionnaire was distributed by the principal some of the participants may have suspected that this research was related to these reviews and used the interview as a “soapbox” to air their concerns regarding the direction they thought the division was heading. Therefore they have presented a more or less rosy picture than actually exists. Finally, findings of this study need to be viewed cautiously due to the limited number of participants. That said, the concerns expressed by the participants echo the “concerns about inclusion” themes that emerged from interviews with hundreds of teachers from three Canadian provinces (Bunch et al., 1997) namely professional adequacy, student progress, workload, and fear of insufficient support which suggests that these participants may not be that unique after all.

Implications

Several implications for practice have already been identified: (a) teacher candidates should have field experiences with teachers who are successfully including students, (b) the education of teacher candidates and the professional development of in-service teachers should provide information on inclusive practices including the roles and responsibilities of paraeducators and the reasons for inclusion, (c) teachers who are successfully including students with disabilities should be recruited by resource teachers to enable other teachers to observe in their classrooms and to provide professional development, and (d) Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth should provide clarification regarding the appropriate use of special needs funding and require special education certification for employment as a resource or special education teacher. Further research is recommended into: (a) the evolution of teacher beliefs about inclusion from pre-service onwards, (b) the feasibility of developing PLAR processes within the Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Education program, and (c) the factors influencing a teacher's level of engagement and possible variations in the characteristics of engagement.

In addition, research into inclusion ability skills – how teachers come to have them, what they are, how they might best be taught (e.g., pre-service or in-service; workshop or courses or on-the-job training; individually or teams or school wide; consultative or collaborative coaching/mentoring; etc.) is needed.

Finally, research into the implementation of the following practices is also recommended. These practices address the perennial concerns expressed by teachers regarding the inclusion of students with disabilities and are based on comments and

suggestions made by teachers participating in this study. These practices are adjusting school schedules, looping, and the creation of teacher-paraeducator teams.

Adjusting school schedules. Finding time to plan and collaborate is a concern frequently voiced by teachers particularly when they are including students with significant disabilities in their classroom. Effective inclusive schools have developed strategies that allow teachers time for collaboration and planning (Agnew, Van Cleaf, Camblin, & Shaffer, 1994). Some schools schedule “specials” (art, music, gym) at the same time so that teams of teachers can meet together or block specials for all primary elementary teachers in the morning, intermediate teachers in the afternoon to allow for collaborative planning time.

Other schools have redesigned the school schedule in order to create a daily block of “sacred time” during which there are absolutely no interruptions. During sacred time the grade-level classrooms have 100 percent of their students for 100 percent of the time. No music, art, physical education, or computer classes are scheduled. Sacred time is for grade-level teaching teams to go full speed ahead in teaching the core subject material without interruption. Due to the creation of the block schedule, each grade-level team has ninety minutes of planning time each week, in addition to the designated amount of preparation time each teacher receives as specified in his or her teaching contract.

Looping. The term looping refers to a teacher’s moving from one grade to another along with his or her students. In other words, a third grade teacher who is looping with her students will continue to be their teacher in the fourth grade. The following year she will drop back to third grade and start the process with another group of students. The effect of looping is that, as in multi-age classes, a teacher spends two or more years with

the same group of students. This allows the teacher to build a strong relationship with students and parents and to start off each new year more seamlessly. Students and teachers alike find this practice emotionally supportive as well as beneficial to learning (Gaustad, 1998). It provides the benefits of multi-age teaching without the stress of juggling learning outcomes from multiple grades.

Teacher-paraeducator teams. The implementation of looping would likely result in the development of teacher-paraeducator teams although this suggestion could be implemented even if looping was not. Matching paraeducators with teachers rather than with students as is more common and creating teams that remain together for several years would increase the likelihood that both would share responsibility for all students within the class. In addition, this may reduce the inadvertent detrimental effects that result when paraeducators are frequently in close proximity to the student and develop an insular relationship with the student (Giangreco et al., 1997; Young et al., 1997).

All of these suggested practices are currently used in schools implementing inclusion and although reports of their use are primarily from schools in the United States, there does not appear to be any reason why they could not be implemented elsewhere. It would be interesting to see if these practices could be implemented in Manitoba within existing policies and to find out if their implementation would alleviate the concerns of teachers and enhance the education of students with significant disabilities.

Conclusions

The levels of professional functioning described by Purkey and Stanley (1991) can be adapted to the findings of this study to categorize teachers based on their inclusive

teaching. There are four types: intentionally uninclusive, unintentionally uninclusive, unintentionally inclusive, and intentionally inclusive.

Intentionally uninclusive teachers are unwilling to have students with significant disabilities in their class. They do not understand why the students should be included or how to include them. They will abdicate responsibility to the paraeducator or special education teacher if possible. The experience will not be satisfying for the teacher or the students. Although none of the teachers in this study fit this category, these teachers were described and do exist.

Unintentionally uninclusive teachers are open to having students with significant disabilities in their class but are sceptical. While they are pretty certain that inclusion represents a positive change in our education system, they are less certain that it is feasible for all students. They know how to include the students sometimes but often plan lessons and activities for the paraeducator to implement or for the student to do independently so they have a lower level of engagement. Although they see some benefits to inclusion, the experience is not always satisfying and they come to the conclusion that some students would be better off in a separate program.

Unintentionally inclusive teachers are willing to have students with significant disabilities in their class because they believe that inclusion is the right thing to do and they suspect it is feasible for all students. They are able to include the students a lot of the time but not always so their level of engagement varies. They don't understand why they aren't always satisfied with the experience and look for alternative reasons. Although their optimism declines, they believe inclusion could work if the source of the problem was ameliorated so they remain involved.

Intentionally inclusive teachers welcome students with significant disabilities into their class. They realize that there may be some challenges but in the end it will be worth it. They understand why the students should be included and they know how to include them but they continue to look for ways to do it better. They are engaged and so are the students. They value the students' presence in their class and believe that inclusion benefits everyone. They become committed to inclusion.

Although student outcomes were not addressed in this study, the likelihood that a student with significant disabilities will receive an appropriate education seems far greater with an intentionally inclusive teacher. If nothing changes, it is likely that we will continue to have pockets of greatness and some students will suffer. Some teachers will continue to become disillusioned and the demands for additional funding will continue. This could lead to a public backlash against inclusion and an increase in segregated programs may be seen as the solution. And in the end, students will suffer.

Change is possible though and the fact that all of these teachers are adapting instruction and many are also implementing modifications is encouraging. While it may be difficult to teach an old dog new tricks, it can be done, so it may also be possible to turn "chickens" into "pigs".

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Appendix A

Teachers and Inclusion Questionnaire

The purpose of this questionnaire is to see how the opinions of elementary teachers toward the inclusion movement change as a result of experience and to gather information about the types of training and experience that teachers have. There are no right or wrong answers so please address the questions to the best of your knowledge.

Students with significant disabilities are those who are eligible for modified or individualized programming. In Manitoba, modification applies to students who have significant cognitive disabilities and require alteration to over 50% of the learning outcomes in a subject area. Individualized programming recognizes that some students with significant cognitive disabilities will not benefit from provincial curricula. Students with significant cognitive disabilities have significant below-average general intellectual functioning with deficits in adaptive behaviour.

SECTION I- Training and Experience

- 1. Gender: Male Female

- 2. How many years have you been teaching?
 0 1-6 7-12 13-18 19 or more

- 3. How many of those years have you had a student with **significant disabilities** in your class?
 0 1-6 7-12 13-18 19 or more

- 4. At what grade level do you currently teach? _____

- 5. How many **undergraduate** special education courses have you completed?
 0 1 2 3 4 or more

- 6. How many **graduate level** special education courses have you completed?
 0 1-2 3-4 5-6 7 or more

- 7. Approximately how many **hours** of inservice training in inclusive practices have you had?
 0 1-8 9-16 17-24 25 or more

- 8. Do you have a Special Education Teacher Certificate? No Yes

- 9. Do you have personal experience with (an) individual(s) with a disability outside the school setting, i.e. family member, friend, etc.?
 No Yes

If yes, please indicate relationship to you.

- Self Immediate family member
- Extended family member Friend Neighbor
- Other: _____

SECTION II- Opinions About Inclusion

THINKING BACK TO BEFORE you had a student with significant disabilities in your classroom, how would you have responded to the following statements?

Before I had a student with significant disabilities in my classroom, I thought Inclusion represented a positive change in our education system.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree						Strongly agree

Before I had a student with significant disabilities in my classroom, I thought meeting the needs of every child with disabilities in general education classrooms often was not feasible.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree						Strongly agree

Before I had a student with significant disabilities in my classroom, I thought I needed training before I could even begin to successfully include a student with significant disabilities in my classroom.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree						Strongly agree

Before you had experience with a student with significant disabilities in your class, what were your main concerns?

Now that you have had a student with significant disabilities in your classroom, how would you respond to these statements?

Now that I have had a student with significant disabilities in my classroom, I think inclusion represents a positive change in our education system.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree						Strongly agree

Now that I have had a student with significant disabilities in my classroom, I think meeting the needs of every child with disabilities in general education classrooms is often not feasible.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree						Strongly agree

Now that I have had a student with significant disabilities in my classroom, I think I need training before I can even begin to successfully include a student with significant disabilities in my classroom.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly disagree						Strongly agree

Now that you have had experience with a student with significant disabilities in your class, what are your main concerns?

SECTION III- Future Interest

Would you be willing to participate in one or two, voluntary, confidential interviews to share your experiences with teaching students with significant disabilities?

These interviews will take approximately one hour and will be arranged for a time and location convenient to you. If you are interviewed, you will be invited to participate in a group discussion with other interviewees to validate and reflect on the findings of the study and a report including a description of the study's participants and results of the analysis will be sent to you to determine its validity and to confirm that your anonymity was maintained.

No

Yes

If yes, please list the days and times that are most convenient for you:

How would you prefer to be contacted?

Work phone number _____

Home phone number _____

Email address _____

Thank you for taking the time to answer all of the questions on this survey. I appreciate your assistance with this study!

Appendix B

Cover Letter

Dear Teacher:

My name is Mary-Ann Updike, and I am a Master's student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. For my thesis, I would like to study the first hand experiences of classroom teachers who have included at least one student with a significant disability in their classrooms. I am particularly interested in how this experience affects a teacher's opinions about inclusion.

Enclosed in a short questionnaire for you to complete. The purpose of the questionnaire is to see how the opinions of elementary teachers toward the inclusion movement change as a result of experience and to gather information about the types of training and experience that teachers have.

There is also space on the questionnaire to indicate your interest in participating in confidential interviews to share your experiences with teaching students with significant disabilities. Interviews will be arranged at a time and location convenient to you.

This study will provide an opportunity for your voice to be heard and I encourage you to consider participating. Please complete the questionnaire and return it in the enclosed envelope by *date*.

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact me. In addition, you may contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Rick Freeze at 474-6904.

Sincerely,

Mary-Ann Updike

Appendix C

Superintendent's Letter

Dear Superintendent:

My name is Mary-Ann Updike, and I am a Master's student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. For my thesis, I would like to study the first hand experiences of classroom teachers who have included at least one student with a significant disability in their classrooms. I am particularly interested in how this experience affects a teacher's opinions about inclusion.

I would like permission to contact the principals of elementary schools in your division that include students with significant disabilities in the regular classroom, to ask them to distribute questionnaire packets to the general education teachers at their schools. The packets contain a cover letter, a questionnaire, and a business reply envelope along with a package of tea in appreciation for taking the time to read and complete the material. The purpose of the questionnaire is to identify those teachers whose attitude toward inclusion has or has not changed as a result of teaching students with significant disabilities and to gather information on the teacher's training and experience. There is space on the questionnaire for teachers to indicate whether they would be willing to participate in voluntary, confidential interviews to share their experiences with teaching students with significant disabilities. A copy of the questionnaire is enclosed.

Teachers who are willing to be interviewed will be asked to participate in one or two, one-hour interviews to be conducted at a location and time they find convenient. All interviews will be audio taped and a copy of the transcript will be sent to each respective interviewee for validation. All participants will be invited to a group discussion to review the research findings and a report including a description of the study's participants and results of the analysis will be sent to each participant to confirm that their anonymity was maintained.

The Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board has approved this research. If you have any questions or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact me. In addition, you may contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Rick Freeze at 474-6904.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Mary-Ann Updike

Appendix D

Principal's Letter

Dear Principal:

My name is Mary-Ann Updike, and I am a Master's student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. For my thesis, I would like to study the first hand experiences of classroom teachers who have included at least one student with a significant disability in their elementary grade-level classrooms. I am particularly interested in how this experience affects a teacher's opinions about inclusion.

Superintendent has given me permission to contact you, to ask if you would be willing to distribute questionnaire packets to the general education teachers at your school. The packets contain a cover letter, a questionnaire, and a business reply envelope along with a package of tea in appreciation for taking the time to read and complete the material. The purpose of the questionnaire is to identify those teachers whose attitude toward inclusion has or has not changed as a result of teaching students with significant disabilities and to gather information on the teacher's training and experience. There is space on the questionnaire for teachers to indicate whether they would be willing to participate in voluntary, confidential interviews to share their experiences with teaching students with significant disabilities. A copy of the questionnaire is enclosed.

Teachers who are willing to be interviewed will be asked to participate in one or two, one-hour interviews to be conducted at a location and time they find convenient. All interviews will be audio taped and a copy of the transcript will be sent to each respective interviewee for validation. All participants will be invited to a group discussion to review the research findings and a report including a description of the study's participants and results of the analysis will be sent to each participant to confirm that their anonymity was maintained.

The Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board has approved this research. If you have any questions or would like more information, please do not hesitate to contact me. In addition, you may contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Rick Freeze at 474-6904.

Thank you for your time. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Mary-Ann Updike

Appendix E

Data Matrix

	O → O	O → S	S → O	S → S
Gender				
Years teaching				
Years of inclusion				
Grade level taught				
Number of undergrad courses				
Number of grad courses				
In-service hours				
Special ed certificate				
Personal experience				

Appendix F

Consent Form

Research Project Title: Teacher Commitment to Inclusion
Researcher: Mary-Ann Updike

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only 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 detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of this study is to examine the first hand experiences of classroom teachers who have included at least one student with a significant disability in their classroom. Participating in this study will provide you an opportunity to share your experiences, opinions and concerns. Examination of these experiences and perspectives may provide insights into the factors that affect teacher commitment to inclusion. Discovery of these factors may yield recommendations for policy changes as well as suggestions for the selection and education of teacher candidates and the professional development of in-service teachers.

You will be asked to participate in a one-hour interview at a time and location convenient to you. A second follow-up interview, lasting approximately one hour, may be required in order to clarify the information. If you participate in the first interview, you are not obligated to participate in the second. Interviews will be tape recorded, and all audiotapes and interview notes will be kept in a secure location. All audio recordings will be destroyed upon successful defence of my thesis.

To ensure your confidentiality, you will be assigned a pseudonym that will be used in all written documents. The names of school divisions or schools that you have taught in, names of fellow teachers or other staff members, and names of students will also be given

pseudonyms. Any additional information that would tend to identify you will be removed or altered.

A copy of the interview transcript will be sent to you and you will be asked to read the transcript, check for accuracy, and return it within 2 weeks if there are errors. You will also be invited to participate in a group discussion with the other interviewees to both validate and reflect on the findings of the study and to discuss implications of the research findings for practice, research, and pre-service or professional development. During this meeting, themes that have emerged from the data analysis will be shared. In addition, a report including a description of the study's participants and results of the analysis will be sent to you to determine its validity and clarity and to confirm that your anonymity was maintained.

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 researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any question 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.

Mary-Ann Updike	Researcher	510-0953	maupdike@shaw.ca
Dr. Rick Freeze	Faculty Advisor	474-6904	rfreeze@ms.umanitoba.ca

This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Secretariat at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.

 Participant's Signature

 Date

 Researcher's Signature

 Date

Appendix G

Interview Guideline

Background Information

Name _____ Age _____ Gender _____

Current position (grade level) _____

Total years teaching _____

Years in current position _____

Previous positions (grade level/years in each)

Years including students with significant disabilities _____

Total number of students with significant disabilities _____

Describe a student with significant disabilities who has been in your classroom.

How much of the day has the student typically spent in your classroom? _____

Typical class size/composition _____

Type of paraeducator support _____

Degrees held _____

Training in special education _____

1. How did a student with significant disabilities get initially placed in your classroom?
 - How did you feel about this placement?
 - What were your concerns?
2. What do you see your role with these students as being?
 - What goals and expectations do you have for them?
 - What information do you get about the student (from whom and where; when)?
 - Has this information been useful?
3. With whom have you worked (e.g., special education teacher, therapist, paraeducator, parents, others)?
4. How have you worked with support staff?
 - Do you attend meetings about the students?
 - How often do you meet?

- How have goals and objectives been selected?
 - How has information about the students been shared and coordinated?
 - Who is on the team?
5. Have you done anything special to accommodate these students (e.g., organize the class differently, adapt or modify instruction)?
 6. What methods do you use for evaluating and monitoring the students' progress?
 - How often do you evaluate progress?
 - How do you judge your success?
 7. What methods/techniques have you found successful with students with significant disabilities?
 - For establishing a relationship with these students?
 8. Has the inclusion of a student with significant disabilities in your classroom changed your opinions about inclusion?
 - How have they changed?
 9. Why do you think this change did/did not occur?
 - What/who encouraged your efforts?
 - What/who hindered your efforts?
 - Why have you continued your efforts?
 10. What advice would you offer to others who are attempting to include students with significant disabilities in general education classrooms?
 11. Is there anything else that you want to tell me that would increase my understanding about your experiences including a student with significant disabilities?



RESEARCH SERVICES &
PROGRAMS
Office of the Vice-President (Research)

244 Engineering Bldg.
Winnipeg, MB R3T 5V6
Telephone: (204) 474-8418
Fax: (204) 261-0325
www.umanitoba.ca/research

APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

31 August 2004

TO: **Mary-Ann Updike** (Advisor R. Freeze)
Principal Investigator

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

Re: **Protocol #E2004:077**
"Teacher Commitment to Inclusion"

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 that, 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.