BUILDING A BRIDGE TO SUCCESS: THE INCLUSION OF STUDENTS WITH EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL ISSUES IN SENIOR YEARS

By

George Corbett

A Thesis
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

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

ABSTRACT

A bridge, as defined by the Encarta World English Dictionary (Microsoft Corporation, 1998-2003) is, “something that provides a link, connection, or means of coming together.” For students with emotional and behavioural issues the bridge from middle years to senior years can be particularly challenging. This transition is especially problematic if the students are moving from self-contained or specialized programming supports in middle years to inclusive senior years environments. This qualitative research study examined the perspectives and experiences of four principals and three student services personnel regarding the transition of students from specialized middle years placements to inclusive senior years schools. Each participant took part in a semi-structured interview and was asked to respond to eight open ended questions specific to supporting students that experience emotional and behavioural issues as they transition into the senior years. They were asked their opinions on what strategies, structures, policies and supports assisted with the transition process as well as those that detracted from successful transitioning.

Qualitative analysis of the data suggested that students need to connect with a positive adult upon transitioning to senior years, and they need to perceive that their senior years school is a safe and positive place for them to attend. Further analysis revealed that communication and information sharing are critical components of successful planning, that students need adults with whom they are connected to work together in the planning process, and that the community needs to work together to move the students toward a successful school experience. Implications for these findings are discussed and recommendations for future practice in the area of transition are proposed.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank Dr. Zana Lutfiyya for all of her patience, guidance and support as she helped me navigate through the Masters program and to the development and conclusion of my thesis. Zana has been a true inspiration for me since we first met, and has been a mentor and role model for me in my work in advocating for the successful inclusion of children and youth with disabilities. In addition, I would like to thank my thesis committee, Dr. Charlotte Enns and Dr. Nancy Hansen, for their input and suggestions toward bringing this project to completion.

I am especially grateful for the four principals and three student services personnel who so generously shared with me their time and insights. Their level of professionalism and care for all students in their charge is nothing short of admirable, and I am truly lucky to be part of the same profession with them.

I would like to thank my wife, Margaret, and daughter, Ashley, for their patience and understanding as I have worked through the Masters program during the past four years. Their willingness to overlook my absence from many of the day-to-day responsibilities in our lives has meant the world to me. Thank you!

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my sister Kathy, who has shown me more about the importance of unconditional love and acceptance than anyone else I have met. You have taught me the importance of perseverance and of overcoming adversity which have both served me well in my work with other children and youth with exceptionalities.

I would also like to dedicate this work to the countless students I have worked with who have had emotional and behavioural issues. Your willingness to let me play a small part in your lives has been both an honour and a privilege. Thank you for being who you are, and for allowing me the opportunity to share a few moments of your journey with you.

.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

What will it take to ensure that all students experience success in school? What actually defines "success" for students? Fullan, Hill and Crevola (2006) indicate that in the 21st century, students need to attain proficient literacy and numeracy skills to be successful, as well as obtain skills to solve complex problems, work with others, become more adaptable to the changes in the world, and increase their knowledge about technology and technological advances. They also think that students must have a grasp on "learning to learn," and possess the ability to become independent thinkers in order to be successful in today's society (Fullan, Hill & Crevola, 2006). These principles are thought provoking. If Fullan, Hill and Crevola's beliefs are an accurate reflection of student success, it is vital that all students have the opportunity to achieve these critical life skills.

For students with disabilities, school success may be more complex in both identification and achievement. In this chapter, I will identify key issues that currently exist in service delivery to support students with disabilities, with a focus on supporting students with emotional and behavioural challenges, and formulate a research question and area of subsequent research.

The Philosophy of Inclusion

There has been a movement worldwide toward more inclusive practices in public education as a service delivery method to support all students, especially students with disabilities. The Salamanca Statement (UNESCO, 1994) asks governments to recognize

student diversity and "adopt as a matter of law or policy the principle of inclusive education" (p.ix).

In the province of Manitoba supporting and programming for students with disabilities in an inclusive manner is also at the forefront. In 1967 school divisions were able to provide the educational programming for students identified with disabilities in public schools (Manitoba Education, Citizenship & Youth, 2005). Subsequent legislation in 2005, "Appropriate Educational Programming Regulation" (Manitoba Education, Citizenship & Youth), indicates that "A school board must ensure that, as far as reasonably practicable, appropriate educational programming is available to a pupil in a regular class of his or her peers at (a) the school whose catchment area includes his or her residence…" (p.3) As a result, the expectation is for students with disabilities to be provided with the opportunity to achieve success in public schools, more specifically in their neighbourhood school.

Students identified as having "emotional and behavioural issues" is one population of students that is identified as having special needs, and for many of these students success appears to be more difficult to identify and therefore more challenging to attain. These students come to school each day with a myriad of issues and needs that appear to exceed the scope of understanding for their educators. Lack of guidance, neglect, abandonment, hunger and fear are common experiences that these students face (Littky, 2004; Wagner, Kutash, Duchnowski, Epstein, & Sumi, 2005) They want to be cared for, to feel connected with their peers and the adults who surround them. However, what they usually receive is rejection, fear and exclusion by peers and educators (Harrington-Lueker, 1995; Hayling, Cook, Gresham, State, & Kern, 2008). When the

research is analyzed, it becomes apparent that we need to reflect on our effectiveness in meeting the needs of this student population. In the world of education, no other group of students creates more confusion for our system regarding programming and placement issues; nor is there a group of students who experience more exclusionary practices as a result of our inability and unwillingness to help them resolve their issues and meet their basic learning and behaving needs (Kauffman, 2008).

EBD: Issues of Identification and Marginalization

Students with emotional and behavioural issues often are referred to as students who are emotionally and behaviourally disordered or disturbed (EBD). Currently, there is no diagnosis or consistent definition for EBD, as it does not exist in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th Edition* (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) as a legitimate disorder or disability, yet the term EBD often is used in educational circles as though it was a legitimate disorder. In the United States, The National Association of School Psychologists (2005) recently has re-defined EBD. However, this is a definition that has not been adopted by states or provinces as the definition to be used consistently when addressing this population of students. Further, it does not suggest appropriate practices to be utilized to help meet these students' needs. In my opinion the label of EBD appears to serve only as a means for acquiring funding support or to identify students for specialized placement. It appears only to legitimize a label that often pathologizes the students and suggests that problems lie within the students themselves. This suggestion may not be far from the truth. In my experience in working with hundreds of students identified with EBD as identified under the categorical funding guidelines in Manitoba, these students were not born with EBD. Rather, their life

circumstances brought about their problems and contributed to their "disorder." In other words, it is my perspective that these children were *made* this way, not *born* this way.

In high school, or senior years, as I will refer to it in my research, students with emotional and behavioural issues experience even greater struggles. An extensive body of research exists outlining a multitude of challenges that students with emotional and behavioural issues face. Hayling, Cook, Gresham, State, and Kern (2008) indicate, "the educational needs of students with EBD continue to be unmet. Findings demonstrate a stable trend of poor outcomes, indicating an urgent need for improvement" (p.27). Wagner, et al. (2006) point to the fact that students in senior years with emotional and behavioural issues are expelled 2.8 times more than students in early years with similar issues. They also point out that students with emotional and behavioural issues in the senior years are less likely to receive academic and/or behavioural support. Lane, Carter, Pierson and Glaeser (2006) concur with this observation, and also indicate that students with emotional and behavioural issues in the senior years "experience elevated dropout rates, diminished rates of participation in postsecondary education, higher levels of unemployment and underemployment, lower rates of civic and community participation, and higher rates of incarceration" (p.108). Wagner, et al. (2005) also are concerned with the high dropout rate experienced by senior years students with emotional and behavioural issues, as well as the overrepresentation of boys compared to girls. In addition, Kauffman (2008) adds,

> No one conversant with the literature on special education or other treatment of children and youth with emotional or behavioural disorders (EBD) can be satisfied with the results. Moreover, compared to the achievement of those

> without disabilities or even those with many other types of disability, the life course of most youngsters with EBD is grim (p. 128).

Service Delivery Options

One of the service delivery options for students with emotional and behavioural issues has to do with placement. Examination of research reveals that indeed, placement often becomes a key factor in the support provided to these students. Bradley, Doolittle and Bartolotta (2008) indicate that 25% of students with behavioural issues spend over 79% of their school day in general education classes. However, further analysis of the research indicates that students with emotional and behavioural issues are more likely to be excluded from general education class placements with their peers, and more likely to be placed in self-contained classrooms (Hayling, et al., 2005). Wagner, et al. (2006) indicate that this group of students typically participates much less often in general education classes than students with other disabilities. Students in senior years who have emotional and behavioural issues experience more obstacles and roadblocks when it comes to inclusion than their same-aged peers, as well as that of younger students with emotional and behavioural issues. Wagner, et al. (2006) also indicate that as students move into their senior years, they are less likely to receive service to assist them with academic and/or social emotional issues.

There is a body of research that suggests that students with emotional and behavioural issues are best served socially, behaviourally and academically in specialized, self-contained programs (Harrington-Lueker, 1995; Cheney & Muscott, 1996; Kauffman, Bantz & McCullough, 2002). In one significant study, less than one third of teachers believed that general education classrooms represented the most

appropriate placements for students with behavioural needs (Heflin & Bullock, 1999). Shapiro, Miller, Sawka, Gardill, and Handler (1999) surveyed administrators from 192 districts across the United States and discovered that more than 75% supported self-contained classrooms as the service delivery option to meet the needs of students with emotional and/or behaviour disorders (EBD). Simpson (2004) indicates that "rates of inclusion have historically been significantly lower for students with EBD than for pupils with learning disabilities, mild retardation, and other high incidence disabilities" (p. 20). Problem behaviour is the number one reason students are removed from general educational settings (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Students with emotional and behavioural issues are identified as the exception to the practice of inclusion, and are more likely to be educated in self-contained programs (Eber, Sugai, Smith & Scott, 2002; Kauffman & Lloyd, 1995).

There is also research that suggests that students with emotional and behavioural issues may not be receiving the quality of education self-contained programs claim to deliver. These students are more likely to receive supports and service from paraprofessionals or teacher assistants than qualified professionals (Bradley, Doolittle & Bartolotta, 2008). In a meta-analysis of students with EBD receiving support in general classroom settings, pull-out programming in school, self-contained programming, and special school settings, Reid, Gonzalez, Nordness, Trout, and Epstein (2004), discovered that students receiving educational support in self-contained or special school programs performed significantly lower academically than students with EBD in more inclusive environments. This model for service delivery may not be the best programming option for these students.

Mayer (1995, 2001, 2002; Mayer & Leone, 1999) suggests that educators need to turn their attention toward creating school environments where inappropriate behaviours are less likely to happen, including matching academic programming to the needs of the students. In other words, it is more about shifting adult attitudes, practices and behaviours than restructuring students' behaviours. This concept suggests that the issues lie within the educational system, and not within the students themselves.

The Gap in the Research

A significant gap in research for students who are in senior years who have emotional and behavioural issues has to do with successfully reintegrating these students into the general education system if they have been placed in self-contained programs. The research that does exist suggests that once students are placed in self-contained programs there is a reluctance to have them reintegrate (Harrington-Lueker, 1995; Muscott, 1995; Kauffman, et al., 2002). If this principle is indeed the case, what are the expectations on educators, as well as the students, to have these students reintegrate back into regular education, and what procedures and structures are necessary in order to facilitate their reintegration? Further, what prevents appropriate educational programming from occurring in a general education classroom where students' needs are met through inclusive strategies? Strategies such as cooperative learning and professional practices such as co-teaching, are teaching methods that meet the diverse needs of all students within a general education classroom (Kauffman, et al., 2002; Wagner, et al., 2006). It appears that placement in self-contained programs becomes a sentence for many of these students. It seems that once they are placed in a program, they rarely get out, and

it is unclear as to how these students are able to reintegrate into mainstream education, if at all.

Research Question

In this study I planned to examine the perceptions of school-based administrators and student services personnel who support students with emotional and behavioural issues as they transition into inclusive senior years schools. Specifically, according to these individuals, what policies, structures, attitudes and supports must be in place to assist these students to move from a self-contained middle years classroom for students with emotional and behavioural issues to an inclusive senior years school? The overall focus of the study was twofold. First, I wanted to gain an understanding of successful strategies, interventions and supports that were effective in assisting in the inclusion of senior years students who present with challenging behaviours. Second, I wanted to gain an understanding of the ongoing challenges and barriers that inhibited meeting the needs of these students, and therefore, were required to overcome in order to more effectively support this student population.

In the next chapter, I will provide an analysis of the research specific to supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues leading to issues of transitioning students into the senior years.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

There were several bodies of research that supported and informed this study and thus are reviewed. First, the philosophy of inclusion and the empirical research on students with special needs and the links to education reform is explored. This leads to the review of the research specific to the efficacy of segregated programming for students with emotional and behavioural issues. Next, I review the literature on the terminology used to identify students with emotional and behavioural issues. In the fourth focus of this review I address the attitudes and beliefs of educators in supporting this student population. A fifth focus analyzed research to support students from a school-wide perspective, with an additional focus on positive behaviour support (PBS). This led to a sixth area of focus, that of programming and transitioning of students with emotional and behavioural issues into senior years schools. Finally, the issues of limited research specific to supporting this student population in the senior years is reviewed.

The Philosophy of Inclusion and Support for Students with Emotional and Behavioural Issues

The research on inclusion offers a variety of perspectives on what the term means specifically, and who it is designed to support. As one delves deeper into the discourses of inclusion, inclusive practice and "special education" services, there are a variety of viewpoints on how and where this is achieved, and thus several philosophies prevail.

In the province of Manitoba, inclusion of students with disabilities has become the service delivery option for many school divisions. The provincial ministry, Manitoba Education (ME), defines inclusion as:

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

Research out of the U.K. presents a variety of opinions on the subject of the inclusion of children with disabilities. Goodley (2005) feels that, "Inclusion relates to much more than adapting education to the specific needs of particular students. It also highlights the extent to which educational policy, pedagogy and teaching practice are 'socially just' in kindergartens, schools, colleges, universities and the wider community." He believes that changes are required at:

- the macro level: government policies and initiatives promote the social and educational inclusion of people who have historically been marginalised;
- the meso level: educational institutions develop inclusive forms of organisation, curriculum and pedagogy which include diverse learners
- the micro level: teachers look critically at their practice in order to include learners within the classroom (Goodley, 2005).

Miles and Singal (2008) indicate that in many countries around the world that the responsibility for educating children with disabilities lies with those in the health care or social welfare departments as there is often a belief that these children are unable to be educated. "By implication, therefore, disabled children are not always considered to be part of humanity" (Miles and Singal, 2008).

Whittaker (2001) presents the argument that, "Segregated special schooling can be a very profitable business, [as] our local education authorities continue to invest large sums of money into segregated special services, which has more to do with progressing professional careers rather than meeting the support requirements of the disabled person." He further believes that in the U.K it is far less expensive to provide appropriate supports in the child's local school as opposed to sending him/her to a special segregated school (Whittaker, 2001).

Research in the area of inclusive education here in North America also offers a variety of perspectives. Gibb, Tunbridge, Chua and Frederickson (2007) propose that, "Inclusion…encompasses not only the physical placement of children in mainstream schools but also the curricular and teaching adaptations, which are necessary to enable children to make progress academically and to be socially included" (p.110).

Crockett and Kauffman (1998) indicate, "The term inclusion has become almost synonymous in the public mind with special education, threatening to place an overemphasis on the schools and classrooms that students should attend – rather than on the instruction they should receive" (p.77). They point out that special education instruction should be based on meeting the needs of students and not focusing on where the services are delivered.

Wang, Reynolds and Walberg (1986) suggest that educators and educational leaders need to examine their beliefs and practices for students identified for special education support, which includes students with emotional and behavioural issues. They question the practice of segregating students into separate programs that, in their opinion, function independently of other programs in the school system. Fuchs and Fuchs (1994)

think that "special education is an oxymoron: No meaningful transformation can occur unless and until special education and its continuum of placements are eliminated altogether" (p. 6). They also add, "Special education's very existence is responsible for general education's failure to accommodate the needs of many students, because it has served as a dumping ground that has made it easy for general education to rid itself of its undesirables and unteachables" (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1994, p. 304). Skrtic (1995) pushes the issue further arguing that special education is the result of general education's failure to support students with disabilities. He further outlines the following four flawed functionalist assumptions about special education:

> (a) "School failure is a…pathological condition that students have.", (b) "Differential diagnosis…is an objective and useful practice.", (c) "Special programming…is a rationally conceived and coordinated system of services that benefits diagnosed students.", (d) "Progress in education…is a rational-technical process of incremental improvements in conventional diagnosis and instructional practices" (p. 68-69).

Lipsky and Gartner (1996) are especially critical of current special education practices. It is their thinking that:

> Special education plays a sorting role, both for those consigned to it and for those students who remain in general education. It limits expectations of the former, and gnarls the attitudes of the latter…Thus, the system of special education, and the attitudes towards disability that undergird it, have harmful consequences for both those labelled "disabled" and those not. Among those labelled, their capacity is denied and, thus, expectations of them are limited. Those not labelled are

> encouraged to believe that people with disabilities are limited and, thus, they are encouraged to offer sympathy toward, but not to value the participation of, persons with disabilities (p.767-768).

Kauffman, Bantz and McCullough (2002) discuss two opposing views of special education. In one view special education is defective in concept and structure because it functions as a separate system that they suggest must be combined with general education in an effort to eliminate the separation that often occurs between students identified with disabilities and their peers without disabilities. Proponents of the other view suggest that special education needs no radical restructuring as special educators provide the specialized supports that students with disabilities require. Kauffman (2008) indicates that, "special education plays a sorting role, as otherwise it could not exist…" (p. 130).

Jones, Thorn, Chow, Thompson, and Wilde (2002) conducted a study on the attitudes towards the inclusion of students with special needs and their parents, and the attitudes of students without special needs and their parents. They found that students with special needs had more positive feelings toward inclusion than their parents, their peers, and peers' parents. They feel that students with special needs have, "broken out of the closet of segregation that has confined them for decades" (p.632). Jones et al. feel that students with special needs benefit from policies and guidelines that support student-centred approaches that enable them to receive the best educational services possible. In conclusion, they feel that, "It is time for us to dispose of the dichotomous inclusion/exclusion frame of thinking and view the issue of integration on a continuum upon which placement of students is based on the criterion of student-centred

equifinality" (Jones, et al., 2002, p.632). This research is further supported when students with emotional and behavioural issues are considered.

A major concern for the inclusion of students identified with emotional and behavioural issues centres on the consideration of placement. Many educators feel that students with behavioural needs are best served socially, behaviourally and academically in specialized, self-contained programs (Harrington-Lueker, 1995; Kauffman, et al., 2002; Cheney & Muscott, 1996). As was indicated earlier, Heflin and Bullock (1999), Shapiro, et al (1999) and Simpson (2004) all provided research to support this premise. Proponents of self-contained programming for students identified with emotional and behavioural issues argue that such programs provide the structure that the students require to better match academic instructional needs (Kauffman, et al., 2002; Kauffman & Lloyd, 1995; Harrington-Lueker, 1995). In addition, they indicate that these programs also provide necessary behaviour management support to control aggressive and disruptive behaviour, and more effectively utilize effective pro-social skills that are taught contextually (Kauffman, et al., 2002; Kauffman & Lloyd, 1995; Harrington-Lueker, 1995).

Some proponents of programming and placement in self-contained classrooms or schools ground this philosophy in their belief that students with behavioural issues who remain in general education classrooms receive little or no special help (Kauffman & Lloyd, 1995; Kauffman, et al., 2002). Yet, to this end, Billingsley, Fail and Williams (2006) indicate that there is a severe shortage of qualified teachers for students with emotional and behavioural issues, so much so that some teachers in the U.S. have only emergency certification and in many instances no certification at all. This problem leads

one to question: Just who is teaching these students? It appears that, in many cases, staff who lack skills and knowledge to deliver effective programming support are the ones who, indeed, are in charge of setting the educational guidelines for these students. If these students require intensive support, what is the justification for placing them with unqualified professionals? In a study comparing 60 students identified with emotional and behavioural issues in self-contained classrooms to 60 students with similar profiles placed in general education classrooms, Lane, Wehby, Little, and Cooley (2005) discovered no significant growth in behavioural, social or academic domains between the students in either placement. However, they did discover that the students in the self-contained programs received less academic instruction compared to their peers in general education placements.

Research on inclusion appears to indicate that indeed, we are becoming more successful in practice and beliefs to support students with severe and profound physical and intellectual disabilities when the students remain in general education settings (Heflin & Bullock, 1999). However, students with behavioural issues may be the exception to the practice of inclusion, and are more likely to be educated in self-contained programs (Eber, et al., 2002; Kauffman & Lloyd, 1995). Cheney and Muscott (1996) call for "responsible" inclusion to be the guiding philosophy in providing appropriate programming for students with emotional and behavioural issues. They see responsible inclusion as being based on four principles:

1. Decisions on placement are individualized according to the needs of the student as determined by a functional behaviour assessment.

2. A segregated placement may be the only environment where appropriate programming can occur.
3. Students with emotional and behavioural issues are to be included in general education placements only when sufficient supports are in place.
4. School personnel need to build their own skills in meeting the needs of all students before students with more complex needs, such as students with emotional and behavioural issues, can be fully included (Cheney & Muscott, 1996).

These four principles appear to make good programming sense for many students. In this instance, it appears that we come back to the option of segregated placement as the means for supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues. Do educators believe in inclusion, or is inclusion dependent on who you are and what type of issue or disability you have, or the kind of supports that are made available to you in your school?

For students with emotional and behavioural issues these philosophical perspectives are important. Educators need to be clear about the type of policies, guidelines and supports they want in place in order to provide students, and to be clear as to exactly how and why they are providing this support. These philosophical beliefs serve to remind us to ensure that our practices are in the best interest of the students we serve. If special education is a structure designed to meet the needs of students, are we fulfilling this mission? We need to ensure that our overall purpose is to meet the needs of students first and foremost, not in meeting the needs of the adults charged with supporting them.

Identification of Students with Behavioural Issues

Students who require support for emotional and behavioural issues are identified by many different terms throughout the research. Initially, these students were referred to

as socially maladjusted or juvenile delinquents (Scott, et al., 2002). Typically, however, students requiring behavioural support are referred to as students who are emotionally and behaviourally disordered or disturbed (EBD). As indicated earlier, currently, there is no diagnosis or consistent definition for EBD (Kauffman, Mock & Simpson, 2007). The National Association of School Psychologists (2005), in it's re-definition of EBD, indicates that EBD "refers to a condition in which behavioral or emotional responses of an individual in school are so different from his/her generally accepted, age appropriate, ethnic or cultural norms that they adversely affect performance in such areas as self care, social relationships, personal adjustment, academic progress, classroom behaviour, or work adjustment" (p.1). In addition, "The identification of EBD must be based on multiple sources of data about the individual's behavioral or emotional functioning. EBD must be exhibited in at least two different settings, at least one of which is school related" (p.2). Again, while the term EBD is defined, this definition has not been universally accepted (Kauffman, et al., 2007).

In the province of Manitoba, the term EBD is used as a label to assist school teams in accessing specialized categorical funding from the provincial ministry. Two levels of support are designated to assist school teams to address the needs of students who have severe to profound emotional and behavioural disorders requiring specialized and often individualized support in all of their living and learning environments (Manitoba Education, Citizenship & Youth, 2008). To acquire the funding support, a school team is required to complete an application to Manitoba Education for approval. Once approved, financial support is provided to the school team to be utilized for

appropriate programming for the student. This label is not a diagnosed disorder, but rather a means to acquire additional support.

Kauffman, Mock and Simpson (2007) agree that the lack of universal identification and assessment of the term EBD is problematic for educators. However, they point to the fact that even if a move toward a universally accepted definition and diagnosis was to occur, it would be many years before such acceptance was realized, resulting in many students going without support based on the identification structures currently in place.

Simply providing a label for label sake does not resolve the issues faced by this population of students. It appears that the philosophy of inclusion is not enough to shift people's views and values in including students viewed as having emotional and behavioural issues. When quoting individuals or policies, I respectfully will use the term EBD. However, for the purpose of this study, and to try to avoid further pathologizing the students, I have referred to these students as having emotional and behavioural issues.

Educator Beliefs in Supporting Students with Behavioural Issues

"School violence and disruption is a major concern of parents, students, educators, political leaders and others in the community. The public's understanding of school violence and disruption is a function of fact and perception" (Mayer & Leone, 1999, p. 333). These statements prove to be quite profound. The research specific to supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues highlights many commonly held values and beliefs of the adults who are charged with supporting these students. Abrams (2005) indicates that, "Schools should be a safe haven for them [students], but in many cases the school environments are not therapeutic. The behavioral and social

deficits of these students are often met with anger and punishment from teachers who react to their behavior rather than understanding the whole person" (40). This statement raises questions about the education systems' ability to support inclusive programming for students with emotional and behavioural issues.

Kortering, Braziel and Tompkins (2002) conclude that when students with behavioural challenges experience success it is largely due to the role that educators play in supporting these students. Abrams (2005) indicates that teachers who have positive relationships with students with emotional and behavioural issues are respectful with the students, apply preventative discipline practices, are effective communicators, and take time to get to know the students. McIntyre and Battle (1998) studied the traits of teachers working with students with emotional and behavioural issues, and identify personality traits, respectful treatment of students, consistent behaviour management practices, and good instructional practices as keys to supporting this population of students.

One study focused on the transition of 12 students from self contained middle years schools to senior years programs (Owens & Konkol, 2004). Students experienced the most success when they felt they had a connection with their teachers and when support for both academics and social needs were met.

A commonly held belief is that based on the needs of these students, they require the best trained and most qualified professionals to assist them in overcoming the myriad of issues they face (Harrington, 1995; Heflin & Bullock, 1999; Kauffman & Lloyd, 1995; Smith, 1997). However, research indicates that this belief is not always being fulfilled in practice. Billingsley, Fall and Williams (2006) discovered that teachers of students identified with EBD are often the least qualified special educators and that the majority

lack certification and training to implement programming and research based practice that match their students' needs. As a result of not being with the most skilled educators, students with behavioural issues are more likely to be expelled from school than any other group of students in the education system (Mayer, 1995; Mayer, 2002; Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Bradley, et al. (2008) report that, "Only one-fourth to one-third of teachers of students with EBD received at least 8 hours of inservice training on working with students with disabilities. Even fewer teachers received training specifically related to meeting the needs of students with EBD" (p.9). Bradley, et al. (2008) further stated that students with EBD are more likely to receive their education from paraprofessionals. In addition, a study by Shapiro, Miller, Sawka, Gardill, & Handler (1999) indicated that 89% of elementary educators felt that they required additional training when it came to supporting students with behavioural issues, and Heflin and Bullock (1999) indicate that general education teachers are reluctant to include students with behavioural issues because they fear they will impact of the learning of students without such issues. Similar research specific to senior years or high school educators was non-existent.

Even when effective, research-supported interventions and strategies are identified, many educators do not implement these practices largely due to a lack of training and understanding for the complexities of these students (Landrum, Tankersley & Kauffman, 2003). The Council for Exceptional Children has developed a handbook, *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Ethics, Standards* (2003), that contains a full chapter of suggested skills and qualifications necessary for professionals who support students with emotional and behavioural needs. However, this resource is neither referenced nor discussed in any of the literature I reviewed.

Research by Mayer (1995; 2002) offers many insights into the world of adolescents and youth who display antisocial behaviour. He indicates that school plays a significant role in supporting and even creating antisocial behaviours in children and youth, and he urges educators to examine their practices and philosophies and move toward more preventative approaches. By providing appropriate academics and structuring proactive behaviour support, Mayer feels that students who typically misbehave due to frustration with their academics will be less likely to do so, and that increased feelings of success will reduce their need to act out behaviourally. He urges educators to change their beliefs around discipline and move from the traditional practices of punishing inappropriate behaviour and move to a more proactive and supportive teaching focus (Mayer, 1995, 2002). Mayer's research (1995, 2002; Mayer & Leone, 1999), supported by Kern and Manz (2004) and Sugai and Horner (2002), indicates that harsh school discipline actually increases problem behaviours in students. In other words, he does not pathologize students by indicating that behavioural issue lie within them, but rather with what adults create through their treatment of these students, and in the school environments they construct.

Mayer's research suggests moving our profession to a systemic approach of managing student behaviour, such as that found in school-wide positive behaviour support. He recommends a school-wide approach where all school personnel need to create an environment that promotes pro-social behaviour by teaching, recognizing and reinforcing positive behaviour, where discipline policies are fair and clearly explained and enforced, including correction strategies for inappropriate behaviour, and where academics are delivered to address the individual needs of all students, especially those in

need of behaviour and academic support (Mayer, 1995). One of the cornerstones to guiding behaviour support is completing a functional behaviour assessment to appropriately match interventions to the needs of the student (Mayer, 1995). Above all, it is imperative that adults praise and recognize positive behaviour as much as possible (Mayer, 1995, 2001, 2002; Mayer & Leone, 1999).

Positive Behaviour Support

One of the outcomes of Mayer's research is an educational movement toward more school-wide systemic changes and approaches. School-wide positive behaviour support (PBS) is a philosophical approach to behaviour management with a focus on implementing proactive and preventative strategies by providing all students with behaviour support while building a positive school climate (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai & Horner, 2002). PBS is built on a three-tiered continuum: primary or universal prevention and intervention, secondary or targeted prevention and intervention, and tertiary or intensive prevention and intervention (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai & Horner, 2002; Scott, Nelson, Liaupsin, Jolivette, et al., 2002). Lewis and Sugai (1999) indicate that the foundation for good preventative structure in schools is through building a strong base of primary prevention strategies and supports. Primary or universal prevention forms the foundation of the school-wide support continuum and meets the needs of 80 to 90% of students (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai & Horner, 2002). The focus is on preventing inappropriate behaviours from occurring, and on structuring the school environment to reduce the likelihood of issues arising. Interventions at the primary level see the staff and students identify rules and expected behaviours in and around the school with the staff teaching and reinforcing the expected behaviours. A survey or scan of the

staff and using school behaviour data to look for physical areas and times inappropriate behaviours occur, assists the team in structuring the school environment to ward off problematic behaviour.

School staff play a major role in the effectiveness of PBS. Lewis and Sugai (1999) indicate that support from at least 80% of the staff is required for PBS to be implemented successfully. To this end, the staff also need to ensure that they are reminding and teaching students expected behaviours in all school environments, and need to recognize and reinforce students when they "catch" them using expected and appropriate behaviours. Visible and active staff supervision also lends to the reduction of student incidents. Mayer (1995; 2002) and Lewis and Sugai (1999) also highlight the need for educators to implement relevant and meaningful academic instruction that meets the needs of diverse learners.

Secondary or targeted prevention is directed at students who require additional behaviour support and meets the needs of 5 to 15% of students (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai & Horner, 2002). The focus remains on prevention of inappropriate behaviour, however, interventions at this level are geared toward providing students who have difficulty behaving consistently with additional support. Examples of support at this level include social skills training, additional group or individualized support by teaching rules individually and in context, and providing extra reinforcement for positive behaviour when displayed. When the school team struggles with the behaviour of a specific student, functional behavioural assessment is utilized to determine the purpose or function of the student's behaviour (Sugai, Horner, Dunlap, Hieneman, Lewis, Nelson, et al., 2000). Sugai, et al (2000) also stress the importance of matching academic instruction to learner

needs at the targeted level to reduce the likelihood of learning issues supporting inappropriate behaviour.

Tertiary or intensive prevention is implemented with 1 to 5% of students who experience the most difficulty managing their behaviour (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai & Horner, 2002). Students requiring this level of support have 24 hour needs that transfer into all of their living and learning environments. Eber (2003) and Eber, Sugai, Smith and Scott (2002) recommend a wraparound process for support that involves all of the significant stakeholders who may play a role in supporting the student including family members, social services providers, corrections personnel, school division personnel, and mental health providers. At the tertiary level, Lewis and Sugai (1999) encourage school teams to continue to look at primary and secondary prevention as interventions, however they highlight that the support becomes more individualized. Support from other service providers is crucial to providing stability to students at this level.

PBS is a continuum. Lewis and Sugai (1999) indicate that students who at first are identified as requiring secondary or tertiary interventions can move toward the primary level with the right supports and assistance. However, the opposite also holds true. If universal prevention is not in place, students can move up to the secondary or tertiary levels if intervention and support from staff breaks down. Therefore, it is important to ensure that the foundation of the continuum, primary prevention, is supported. The focus of PBS needs to be on preventing or minimizing the opportunities for inappropriate behaviours to occur.

The research to support school-wide PBS is very promising. Kern and Manz (2004) support PBS as not only a viable approach to behaviour management but one that

is sustainable as well. Lewis, Hudson, Richter, and Johnson (2004) provide sound data to show that PBS actually decreases the frequency and intensity of behaviour issues in schools. Bradley, et al. (2008) feel that a combination of PBS, response to intervention, and early intervening services form a dynamic trio of interventions that are effective in supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues. Warren, Bohanon-Edmonson, Turnbull, Sailor, Wickham, Griggs, et al (2006) feel that the implementation of PBS helps to support not only the behavioural needs of students but their learning needs, as well. Nelson, Sugai and Smith (2005) and Scott, et al. (2002) report impressive research to show how PBS has been used as a support structure in youth corrections facilities to provide proactive prevention and interventions to youth who are incarcerated. Wagner, Friend, Bursuck, Kutash, Duchnowski and Sumi (2006) also recognize PBS as an effective support system for all students.

Senior Years Programming and Transition for Students with Emotional and Behavioural Issues

While minimal research on approaches to service delivery for students in the senior years exists, two key bodies of work outline effective practices that should be recognized and acknowledged in this study.

DiMartino and Clarke (2008) conducted research identifying both problems and solutions to supporting high school students who were at risk of dropping out. They see six areas where educators are failing to meet the needs of their students, most notably depersonalized approaches in their teaching. Like Fullan, Hill and Crevola (2006), they call upon senior years teachers to make education more personalized to each of the students they are teaching (DiMartino & Clarke).

Littky (2004) presents a very unique perspective on supporting high school students, particularly students with academic, social and behavioural issues. Together with his colleague, Washor, he founded The Metropolitan Regional Career and Technical Center (The Met), six small regional schools in the state of Rhode Island. Littky's purpose for founding The Met was to address the needs of a large and growing population of adolescents who were struggling to find success in high school. In Littky's (2004) words,

> It is clear from the research (and from our own hearts) that there is a relationship between dropping out of school and poverty, and between history of violence and acts of violence. Neglect plays a role in all of these problems, and, to me, one of the biggest perpetrators of neglect is the school system. Our kids are dying, and we don't even know who they are. So many of them don't think school, or adults in general, have anything to offer them. Too often they are right (p.19-20).

Over 98 percent of students who attended The Met went on to college careers. In Littky's estimation, it is relevant curriculum based on the students' interests and strengths coupled with caring and committed staff dedicated to meeting the individualized needs of every student that formed the recipe for success (Littky, 2004).

These two examples of supporting students in senior years, including those with emotional and behavioural issues, points to the importance of the role of the educator in not only providing relevant and meaningful academic experiences, but in the importance of making real and authentic personal connections with these students, as well.

Wagner and Davis (2006) feel that when staff establish meaningful relationships with their students and their families that the likelihood for students' success increases.

When connected to relevant and challenging curriculum, and a focus on "the whole child," students had a legitimate chance at experiencing personal and academic success (Wagner & Davis, 2006). While Wagner and Davis (2006) recommended that transition planning for students moving from middle years schools to senior years schools take place well before the students move on to their new school, they found that this is rarely the case, and thus, limits the chances for successful senior years experiences. Johnson, Stodden, Emanuel, Luecking, and Mack (2002) point out a lack of coordination and collaboration between the school teams involved in the transition process. They call for strategies to be developed to bridge this gap.

One strategy identified in the research that offer support to students in the senior years include check and connect, where a staff member is assigned to work with a student and his/her family to ensure the student attends school on a regular basis, and that his/her academic needs are supported (Sinclair, Christenson & Thurlow, 2005). However, the research continuously points to a lack of research and evidence-based strategies to support students in the senior years with emotional and behavioural issues (Lane, et al., 2006).

Issues of Limited Research

There is limited research on how best to support students entering senior years who have emotional and behavioural issues (Lane, et al. 2006). Several researchers point to poor outcomes and a bleak outlook for students with emotional and behaviour issues in general (Kortering, Braziel & Tompkins, 2002; Lane, et al., 2005; Lane & Carter, 2006; Lane, et al., 2006). When it comes to supporting students in the senior years, it is even bleaker, including high dropout rates and poor employment prospects (Johnson, et al.,

2002; Sinclair, et al., 2005; Lane & Carter, 2006; Lane, et al., 2006; Wagner & Davis, 2006). However, in spite of the fact that students with emotional and behavioural issues present such significant issues within our educational system, there is a dearth of research on how best to support these students, especially at the senior years and especially when it comes to transitioning from middle years to senior years. With the exception of one study (Owens & Konkol, 2004), there is also a void in the research to support students transitioning from self contained classrooms or schools from middle years to senior years.

School-wide positive behaviour support is a research based approach, yet, in spite of such positive outcomes, there is a lack of research supporting school-wide PBS in senior years schools. However, further qualitative methodology could provide evidence that PBS philosophy and approaches are indeed being implemented in senior years schools. In addition, qualitative research may also reveal the impacts of educator behaviours and attitudes in the inclusion of students with emotional and behavioural issues.

It is with these research gaps in mind that I undertook this study. It is my intent to gain the perspectives and insights of senior years educators, currently responsible for the inclusion of students with emotional and behavioural issues, through qualitative methods in order to reveal key elements to inform the practice of other educators in the field who may struggle, as the research indicates, to extend this support.

CHAPTER 3

Methods

In this chapter, I will outline the methods procedures I used in my study. I gained perspectives and insights from educators with senior years expertise who have been involved intensively in supporting senior years students with emotional and behavioural issues. I chose qualitative research methods for this study as I felt it would allow the participants a chance to express their unique views and perspectives in supporting this population of students, thus allowing me to systematically analyze their perspectives.

Role of the Researcher

Prior to indentifying the purpose of this study, I will provide some background information about myself and my experiences as they relate to this study.

My first experiences with an individual with exceptionalities came at 17 months of age when my sister was born. My parents noticed that by one year of age, she was not achieving typical developmental milestones and asked the family doctor for assistance in determining why this was so. After several months of investigation, she was diagnosed with an intellectual disability. By age 11, my sister was sent to live in a residential setting specially designed for individuals with intellectual and/or physical disabilities, 60 miles from our home. When she was 23 years old, she moved back to our city as she moved to the community residence she currently shares with two other women. As the first born child, I have always maintained a careful watch over my sister. I have felt, at many times in my life, that I was destined to work with people with special needs.

Currently, I am a consultant for student services in a large suburban school division in the province of Manitoba. My primary responsibility is to support inclusive

programming for students with special needs, including, but not limited to, ensuring that individual education plans (IEPs) are developed and implemented appropriately, providing professional learning opportunities to educators on a divisional and provincial level to foster their understanding of inclusive programming, and assisting school teams as they transition students with special needs. These transitions occur upon school entry, typically at kindergarten, from early years to middle years, middle years to senior years, and from senior years to community services. My primary responsibility is to ensure that appropriate supports are in place, which means coordinating services from within the school division and from outside service providers.

My role involves supporting a broad range of students with exceptionalities, from students requiring intensive support for intellectual and/or physical disabilities, to students who are gifted, to students with emotional and behavioural issues. It is with this latter population that my interests lie.

Prior to becoming a divisional consultant, I served as a divisional special education resource teacher assisting schools with planning to meet the needs of students with intensive behavioural issues better. That position built on the experiences I had from 13 years of working in a segregated middle years school for students identified as having EBD. I served as both a classroom teacher, then resource teacher, responsible for the academic, social and emotional growth for all of the students in the school.

While at this aforementioned school, I began to think about just how students with behavioural needs were being treated in the education system. Initially, I felt that it was in our students' best interests that they were educated in our school. We had caring adults who genuinely were interested in supporting them, and as a result, the students felt safe

and cared for on a daily basis. In addition, we were able to meet their academic needs, which in turn led to increased feelings of success; something many of them were unfamiliar with in their academic careers. However, when our students transitioned to the local senior years schools for high school, the outcomes were dismal for almost all of them. In many instances, the students either dropped out of school or were removed as their behaviours increased to the levels that had initially referred them to our school. It was upon further reflection that I saw a need to enhance the "systems'" understanding of these students and their various needs in both the referring process into our school, and the transition back to the "regular system" upon completion of their final year. What I once felt was a "safety net" for our students, was, in actuality, an "anchor."

As I brought these experiences into this research study, I was very aware of my feelings and desire to support these students. However, I was also aware that not all educators shared my viewpoints. Several of the participants in my study would know that I am very quick to justify and even defend the behaviours of students with emotional and behavioural issues. I feel that I have an understanding of the reasons and functions of why some students do what they do. Perhaps I can better accept their presenting behaviours and not personalize them. However, when I interviewed the participants I was careful to listen to and record what they had to say. My primary goal was to learn what their perspective was, to learn how they understood these students who they found to be so challenging to be with. In this study, I have done my best to let the words and thoughts of my participants remain at the heart of my work.

Purpose of the Study

I planned to study examples of successful transitions for students from specialized behaviour support in middle years into their senior years placement, as well as to explore situations where students have not been successful, and look for reasons and alternatives to support future transition practice.

While my original research question focused on the transition from self-contained schools, I adapted this throughout my interviews to include specialized supports in middle years. For example, some middle years schools offer alternative placements within their schools that are specially designed to support students with emotional and behavioural issues. In some instances, this is a classroom within the school, or the students may work with smaller numbers of students in the resource room, for example.

Participants

In schools today, the principal is looked upon as the leader who provides support to the staff and students in their buildings. In addition, school-based student services personnel (i.e., resource teachers and guidance counsellors) are often the individuals who provide the academic, social and emotional support for students as they transition to their senior years placement. In an effort to meet the purpose of this study, I interviewed three principals and three student services personnel from senior years schools in a suburban school division to gather their insights into what they felt were successful ways of including students who present with challenging behaviours, as well as some of the barriers they face in this process. I also interviewed a middle years administrator with extensive experience in transitioning students from a self-contained middle years school for students with emotional and behavioural issues. It was my belief that this interview

would provide voice from the sending school's perspective, which in turn, would provide valuable data by offering another perspective to this issue.

I have given each of the participants a pseudonym so as to protect their identity and maintain confidentiality. A brief description of each interviewee follows.

Pat works as a resource teacher at a very large senior years school that has a very diverse population of students. One border of the school's catchment area borders on the inner city while the opposite border would see students coming from a more middle class community. She has worked in a student services support role for several years, both at a school and divisional level. Pat has an extensive background in child psychology, and considered a career in that field prior to deciding to become a teacher. She has vast experience as a senior years teacher and as a classroom teacher, she was often the teacher that received the students who presented with significant behaviour challenges.

During our interview, Pat said several times that it was very important to support this population of students, and indicated that she enjoyed working to assist them. She, "went into resource work to work specifically with those kinds of kids."

Randy has had extensive experience supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues as a classroom teacher, student services teacher and now principal. Randy needed very little prompting to give his opinions as to what is needed to support students with emotional and behavioural issues. When asked to provide information about himself based on his experiences supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues, he responded by saying, "I've learned more from the students at this school than they've ever learned from me…" He added, "…when I first started it was, I

am successful. You guys do what I want you to do and you will be successful, too. When that didn't work that's when I started to learn and now today I get it."

Don has worked with students with a variety of disabilities as a classroom teacher, student services teacher, vice principal and principal at both middle and senior years schools. He is currently the principal of a medium sized senior years school that again has a very diverse student population. This school would support a sizeable population of students who experience poverty and challenging home situations, as well as students who come from more prosperous home environments.

During our interview, Don was very methodical and reflective on both his current school assignment as well as past assignments. His answers tended to be very positive and supportive toward students with emotional and behavioural issues. Don's first words in his interview were, "To me, supporting anyone is all about building relationships and just trying to find out as much as you possibly can about the other individual and then trying to walk a mile in their moccasins, to see it from their perspective and take into account where they're at in their social development as well as their intellectual development."

Karen has worked the majority of her career in the senior years. She is currently in a student services role in a medium sized senior years school, and is a leader in her senior years school in supporting the transition of students with emotional and behavioural issues into the school. Again, her school would support students who experience both severe poverty and very affluent living conditions. Karen is the case manager for many of these students. She said that she believes that it is part of her role to

advocate for students with emotional and behavioural issues and to foster an inclusive nature with the staff in her school.

Sandy has been in a student services role for most of her career. She is currently a resource teacher in a smaller-sized senior years school that would have a pretty homogenous student population from a socio-economic perspective. She had no difficulty speaking to each of the questions, and had many creative ideas on successfully transitioning these students to senior years.

Cory has had experience at the school and divisional level in supporting students with a variety of exceptional needs. She has been a classroom teacher, and has served in a variety of student services roles at a school and division level. She has administrative experience at the middle years and senior years levels. Currently, Cory is the principal of the same large senior years school that Pat works in. Again, this is a very diverse school from a socio-economic perspective.

Lynn is the only participant who has supported students at the early, middle and senior years levels. She has been a classroom teacher and administrator at all three levels. Lynn is currently the principal in one of the largest senior years schools in the province. She, too, is very positive about supporting these students and believes the best way to do so is to establish a relationship with the student. She, "…ensures that there's support in the main office. Often times I've had lunch with my students and I invite them for lunch and give them the opportunity to sit with me and do homework." Again, Lynn's answers tended to focus on the good in students with emotional and behavioural issues.

Recruiting Participants

I prepared two letters of invitation that outlined the purpose and parameters of this study and submitted it to the Assistant Superintendent who was responsible for ethics approval in the school division. She then distributed one of the letters of invitation to all senior years and middle years principals in the school division, and she distributed the second letter of invitation to the senior years student services personnel inviting their participation. Participation in the interviews was optional. Willing participants contacted me directly to express their intent, and they were informed that their names would remain anonymous and known only to the researcher. In my research analysis and discussion, they have all been provided with pseudonyms. At the time of first contact by each of the participants, I explained fully what was expected from them, obtained their written consent and arranged a convenient time and location for the interview.

The interviews were conducted at a time and location that was mutually convenient for the participants and me. All interviews took between forty-five minutes and one hour. Participants had the right to refuse to answer any questions and were free to withdraw from the interview at any time if they so chose. Each participant was given the opportunity to obtain feedback regarding the results of the study via a summary should they request it. They were all informed that this study would not involve any deception. As a point of clarification, I was not in a position of power or authority over anyone who was involved in the study.

Research Instrument

I used a semi-structured interview guide with open ended questions specific to supporting students that experience emotional and behavioural issues as they transition

into the senior years. The questions and statements that I posed to each participant were as follows:

1. Please describe your experience and background as it relates to supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues.
2. What ideas or thoughts come to your mind when you think of supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues in a senior years school?
3. Please describe some of the different strategies, interventions and supports you have implemented yourself, or have seen other educators use that have successfully met the needs of students with emotional and behavioural issues.
4. What do you feel are the necessary components of successful school planning that assists students with emotional and behavioural issues, especially as they transition into your school from specialized behavioural placements?
5. What challenges or barriers have you experienced in your role in supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues as they transition into your school, especially if they are transitioning from a specialized behaviour program?
6. What resources, supports or policies outside of those in your school are helpful in assisting you in your support of students with emotional and behavioural issues? What do you see as some of the gaps in service?
7. What structures and supports are missing, and therefore required to assist in the transition process, and ultimately, the inclusion of the students within their catchment senior years schools?
8. What are characteristics and/or behaviours of senior years' staff that support or deter the successful inclusion of these students?

Data Collection

The interviews were audiotaped and transcribed, and detailed written notes of the participants' responses were collected. These data was used to analyze themes in their perceptions and responses to providing effective behaviour support to students in their schools. The names of the participants are known to the researcher conducting the interviews, however, no names were used in any of the written notes, audiotaped interviews or transcripts of the interviews. This was done to maintain the participants' confidentiality throughout the data collection process.

Data Analysis

Once attained, the transcripts were analyzed, interpreted and coded. I wrote detailed field notes in the margins of each of the participants' transcripts. All notes were kept confidential and tape recorded information was destroyed immediately upon their being transcribed. Based on the perspectives of the participants, I looked for themes and suggestions that would inform effective practice in supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues as they transitioned to the senior years.

With the exception of question one, which was designed as a place to begin the interview and gather personal information, I looked through each participant's transcript and analyzed their respective answers. I then recorded each of the participants' answers on four inch by six inch coloured index cards. White cards contained positive strategies, interventions, ideas and supports, while blue cards contained answers that were roadblocks or deterrents to successful transitioning or working with students with emotional and behavioural issues. The answers on the cards then were clustered with answers that had similar relationships or ideas. Again, I did this for each question that

was asked each participant. I started with fifteen cards, chosen randomly. Then I added fifteen more until all the cards were clustered for that particular question. I used a yellow index card with a symbol on it for each category which allowed me to cluster the data relevant to the category without giving it a name. This allowed me to focus on the relationships between the ideas presented by the participants. Once all the cards were clustered for the question, I gave each group of cards a name that best described the information in that specific collection of answers. The names or titles replaced the symbols and were written on yellow index cards. I replicated this process for each question I asked each participant. In my analysis in chapter 4, I call these clusters categories or key points.

Next, I took the category names or titles from each of the interview questions, and cross analyzed them all together to look for broad-based themes that were representative for all of the data. This led to the development of five themes that epitomized the overall perspectives and viewpoints of the seven participants.

This sorting process in my analysis followed a categorization method from the Consensus Workshop process from ICA Associates (2003). While the Consensus Workshop is a group facilitation procedure, the sorting exercise is one element of the process, and is used to help participants work toward a common framework of understanding or goal development. It allowed me to work with a large quantity of data and develop meaningful and relevant themes that came out of the data. I will expand upon this process and analysis of the data in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

Thematic Analysis

In this chapter I will identify the specific themes and information that was obtained from the seven participants in my research study. First, I will discuss the development of five broad-based themes based on the participants' responses and perspectives as a result of their answers to each of the interview questions. For the remainder of the chapter, I will provide a detailed account of the answers the participants provided for each of the interview questions as a means of connecting back to the five broad-based themes.

Theme Development

As indicated earlier, I interviewed four principals and three student services personnel for this study. Each participant had experience supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues prior to their current role.

During the interviews, I noted that each of them linked their thoughts and opinions to their current school environments. Through my questioning, I tried to extend the conversation to past experiences as well. I opened each interview by asking the participants to, "Describe your experience and background as it relates to supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues." This served as an activating request to stimulate thinking about supporting this student population. Each of the seven participants chose to answer each question they were asked. What follows in the remainder of this chapter is an analysis of the data based on their perspectives, and how these perspectives led to the development of subsequent themes based on their answers from the questions.

As outlined in the previous chapter, the answers the participants provided from each interview question was recorded on a four in by six inch index card. These cards were then clustered with other cards similar in relationship or idea. These formed categories or key points for each of the questions. After this process was competed for all of the questions and subsequent answers, I cross analyzed the title names for each category from all of the questions. This meant that I took the 44 category names, and followed the same clustering process where I grouped them into categories that had similar connections or relationships to each other. Based on my research and analysis of all of the data collected from their responses and from this cross analysis, I have determined that for my informants, the following five themes are imperative to assist students with emotional and behavioural issues as they transition from self-contained or specialized placements in middle years schools to an inclusive senior years school. These are:

1. Students need to connect with a positive adult upon transitioning to senior years
2. Students need to perceive that their senior years school is a safe and positive place
3. Communication and information sharing are critical to successful planning
4. Students need adults with whom they are connected to work together
5. The community needs to work together to move the students toward success

Imbedded into these five themes are the 44 category names that represent policies, structures, attitudes and supports required to support the transition from middle to senior years for students with emotional and behavioural issues. What follows below is the five key themes and the 44 category names that helped to inform the development of these themes.

1. Students need to connect with a positive adult

- Positive adult relationships are vital to student success
- Make frequent visits and connections to new SY school
- Welcoming and supportive staff
- Strive to build a positive adult connection
- Make positive connections with other students
- Personal attributes of staff are positive
- Personal attributes of staff can be negative
- Actions of staff are positive
- Connections and understanding from staff is missing
- Opportunity for MY staff to move with kids
- Caring adult from MY is unable to provide a bridge to SY
- Actions of staff are negative

2. Students need to perceive the SY school as a positive place

- Create a safe and nurturing environment
- Establish a feeling of safety
- Making school a positive place
- Creating predictability
- Divisional processes linked to evidence based practices
- Implementing positive behaviour support
- Recognizing and rewarding expected behaviour
- Structure of SY system impedes student progress
- Curricular expectations are too demanding
- Expectations at SY can be problematic

3. Communication and information sharing are critical to successful planning

- Must plan through understanding the student
- Profiling for understanding
- Consistency in sharing all information
- Gather/Collect meaningful information
- Communication between MY and SY breaks down
- Develop behaviour plans that match needs
- Develop a dynamic plan
- Make programming personalized and relevant
- Better teaming at SY level is needed

4. Students need all adults connected to them working together

- Build a supportive team
- Plan with all relevant stakeholders
- Divisional clinical and teaching staff
- Inconsistency in services from community stakeholders
- Community-based services
- Inconsistent family lifestyles
- Commitment to planning from all stakeholders

5. The community needs to work together to move toward success

- Provincial categorical funding
- Funding to support individual needs is missing
- Inconsistency in divisional procedures
- Community-based initiatives

The Five Themes

For theme number one, "Students need to connect with a positive adult upon transitioning to senior years," each of the seven participants identified this as the most important component of successfully transitioning students with emotional and behavioural issues to senior years, and this theme came up in several ways many times. They all felt that positive adult relationships were vital to the students' success. For instance, participants felt it was very important that the students have staff who were welcoming as they moved to their new school. They all provided several examples of how the personal attributes and actions of staff had either a positive or negative impact on the success of the students' transition to their senior years school. They also indicated that it was important that the staff be committed to making the students' senior years experience positive and that they worked toward assisting the students in becoming successful.

The second theme, "Students need to perceive that their senior years school is a safe and positive place," was another area where participants were unanimous in their beliefs needed to exist to ensure success for the students. They felt that divisional philosophies such as school-wide positive behaviour support (PBS) set up a structure in their schools that created a safe, nurturing and caring environment. They worried that some of the current structures in senior years, such as a strong curriculum focus versus a more personalized approach to educating the students, was still problematic. However, they all sensed that this was changing for the better, too.

For the third theme, "Communication and information sharing are critical to successful planning," the participants all agreed that having a coordinated plan that was

developed between the middle years school and the senior years school was imperative to student success. One of the most consistent comments was the need for the sending middle years school to be very clear about what strategies, supports and interventions assist the student in being successful, as well as painting a very clear picture of the students needs. They all felt that open communication was the key to helping the students experience immediate success in their senior years school placement.

In the fourth theme, "Students need the adults with whom they are connected to work together," the participants acknowledged that students with emotional and behavioural issues often had a support team that was larger than just the school teams from middle and senior years. Often this team included their parent or guardian, a mental health worker from the division or within the community, and often a social services worker, again either divisional or community-based. The interviewees felt that this large team needed to engage in proactive, collaborative and focused dialogue to provide the support that these students often require.

The last theme, "The community needs to work together to move the students toward success," addressed that old adage that it takes a community to raise a child. The participants felt that the school division, the provincial department of education and community-based service providers needed to collaborate on their initiatives and policies in order to provide effective supports to these students.

What follows in the next section is a more detailed description of the participant's answers to each of the interview questions. I will work through each interview question, and I will highlight pertinent perspectives and responses which helped in the development of the overall themes.

Participants' Responses and Perspectives

At the beginning of each interview, the participants were asked to answer the following question: "What ideas or thoughts come to your mind when you think of supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues in a senior years school?" This question was a broad, open-ended question designed to activate their thinking about supporting this unique population of students. As a result of their answers, the following four categories evolved:

1. Create a safe and nurturing environment for all students.
2. Important to plan through understanding the students' needs.
3. Positive adult relationships are vital to student success.
4. Expectations at senior years can be problematic.

The category with the most ideas and thoughts from the participants was, "Create a safe and nurturing environment for all students." Each of the seven participants provided at least one comment, several of which were significant. Pat was adamant that when it comes to their senior years students with emotional and behavioural issues the students, "…need at least one person that they can trust and that believes in them." She added that these students, "…deserve what everybody else has…" when it comes to their academic programming. Don added that it is important to, "…try to give them the same respect that you would give any other individual no matter what they're doing or what's going on at the time." Cory felt that it is very important to show these students that we genuinely care about them. She felt that, "…too often systems try to do things to kids as opposed to with kids."

Randy felt quite strongly that school cannot function as another stressor in these students' lives. He indicated that it was his experience that many of these students are dealing with many difficulties at home and/or within the community, and therefore it is up to schools to offer a safe and supportive environment. Sandy extended Randy's thoughts, by indicating that it is important to provide students with a supportive place within the school that they could access when they are experiencing difficulty or when they need a place to go that is outside of their regular classroom. At her school, the administrative team have created such an environment in a classroom that is staffed by a teacher/counsellor who provides students with academic or emotional support depending on their needs at the time. She indicated that this has been a highly effective support for students.

The category with the second most ideas and thoughts was, "Important to plan through understanding the students' needs." There were eight ideas or thought provided, however they were only provided by the principals. Cory felt that it is extremely important to understand where a student is at academically, socially and emotionally. She felt that once this has been determined staff are able to develop a more effective academic program that builds on a student's strengths in order to accommodate gaps in their learning. Both Don and Randy felt that it is important to find out the specific reasons why an individual student experiences behavioural challenges. They both felt that once the specific function has been determined then you can plan effectively to address the behaviour in a more meaningful manner.

"Positive adult relationships are vital to student success" was not the largest category for this question, but it was the one that the participants seemed to be most

adamant about in terms of its importance by the responses they provided. Six of the seven participants indicated that they felt a positive relationship with at least one adult in the school was the most important support for a student who experiences emotional and behavioural issues. One of Sandy's first comments in her interview was that, "Everybody has to think about what's best for kids." Randy supported this thought by adding the importance of adults who, "…get the kids." Cory felt that it was up to the adults within her school to make the students feel accepted and connected. Don extended this by adding that in his mind, it is, "…all about building relationships and just trying to find out as much as you possibly can about the other individual and then trying to walk a mile in their moccasins, see it from their perspective, take into account where they're at in their social and emotional development as well as their intellectual development."

The fourth and final category for this question was that, "Expectations at senior years can be problematic." There were seven thoughts or ideas in total to support this category, and Karen provided four of them. She expressed, "…frustration…" with several aspects of senior years schools. She felt that teachers, "…seem to separate the emotional side of the child from the academic side of the child…" She identified the semester system as one significant challenge for students with emotional and behavioural issues, as well as the commonly held belief that students need to finish their senior years program in four years. She felt that many of these students require extra time to complete their senior years program, and that if they don't they experience all kinds of stigma attached to the fact they may need more time.

Positive Strategies, Interventions and Supports

The second question each participant was asked to respond to was, "Describe some of the different strategies, interventions and supports you have implemented yourself, or have seen other educators use that have successfully met the needs of students with emotional and behavioural issues." This question was another activating statement designed to extend their thinking from the previous question. The participants responded with sixty-six strategies, interventions and supports that were categorized as follows:

1. Making school a positive place
2. Welcoming and supportive staff
3. Develop behaviour plans that matches needs
4. Implementing positive behaviour support (PBS)
5. Recognizing and rewarding expected behaviour
6. Build a supportive team
7. Establishing a feeling of safety
8. Creative predictability
9. Profiling for understanding

There were thirteen strategies identified in the first category, "Making school a positive place." All four principals and all three student services personnel provided ideas to support these key points. Cory felt it is important to create an environment where kids want to come to school everyday and to do so you need to create an academic program that centres on where and how students can be successful. Lynn furthered this point by saying that a goal of hers is to make kids feel important. She talked about a specific

student she connects with on a daily basis, and she indicated that she elevates his positive qualities and victories. This would support Don's thinking in that he wants his staff to create a school environment where kids are treated with dignity and made to feel like they belong. He also felt that personalizing the academic programming for a student with emotional and behavioural issues was key. Karen supported this concept by adding that differentiating the instruction and assessment was a way to bring this philosophy to fruition. Lynn added that it is critical for the students to know that you will not give up on them, that you will continue to help them find ways to experience success.

For the second category in question two, "Welcoming and supportive staff," the participants provided ten different ways that extended the key points from question one, "Positive adult relationships are vital to student success." Again, all seven participants offered at least one idea to support this category. All four principals and two of the student services personnel felt that each student with emotional and behavioural issues needs a positive connection with a key adult. Cory felt that matching students up with adults who have success working with this population is especially important to the success of the students.

The third category for question two, "Develop behaviour plans that matches needs," also received ten responses from two principals and from all three student services personnel. This category has two sets of key points within it. First, the participants identified that in order to develop effective behaviour plans it is important to determine the function of a student's behaviour. In Randy's words, "The behaviour is telling you something." Once the function has been determined you can then proceed toward identifying strategies that prevent inappropriate behaviour from occurring, and if there is

a problem you can match it with an intervention or consequence that makes sense to the student.

"Implementing positive behaviour support (PBS)," is a key concept and category or responses that provides a structure for behaviour support for all students within a senior years school, especially students with emotional and behavioural issues. Karen and Sandy both indicated that school-wide PBS is paying off, and that teaching expected behaviours in and around the school as well as providing corrective strategies when problems do occur is integral to effective behaviour support in their schools. Randy was adamant that implementing PBS, "…makes kids good citizens."

Another category for question two supports the PBS planning in that, "Recognizing and reinforcing expected behaviour" is important for all students in a senior years school. Again, the participants felt this is especially crucial in supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues. Randy felt that in order to change inappropriate behaviour for these students, they needed feedback for positive behaviour in a positive way, and so positive reinforcement is a necessary strategy to meet this end.

Cory, Sandy and Pat all indicated on two occasions that it is important to, "Build a supportive team," around students with emotional and behavioural issues. Each of them identified the need to implement the wraparound process in the students' behaviour plans, and that it is essential to include the parents in the process. In particular, Cory felt that supporting the parents was another function of this supportive team. Sandy and Cory indicated that social workers, divisional clinical personnel, and community mental health workers can be key members of the wraparound team.

Two other categories for question two, "Establishing a feeling of safety," and, "creating predictability," both build on the principles of school-wide PBS, but I saw them as distinct and separate thematic structures. Throughout their answers to question two, all participants indicated through various means that creating a safe school environment with positive adult connections was important to creating student success, especially for students with emotional and behavioural issues. In addition establishing routines and building consistent behavioural expectations across the entire school environment were identified by all three student services personnel as keys to effectively meeting the needs of this student population.

The last category, "Profiling for understanding," provides the staff working with students with emotional and behavioural issues with a framework to gather important learning and behaving information about individual students that can be shared with the staff that will work with them. Sandy, Karen and Lynn all felt that this was a vital initiative they have undertaken in their schools. It informs staff to more effectively include students with emotional and behavioural issues in their classrooms.

Transition Process for Students with Emotional and Behavioural Issues

The next two questions the participants answered were specific to the transition of students with emotional and behavioural issues from middle years to senior years. Question number three, "What do you feel are the necessary components of successful school planning that assists students with emotional and behavioural issues, especially as they transition into your school from specialized behavioural placements?," was the first question to draw the participants into the process for supporting students as they move from specialized supports in their middle years environments to a senior years school that

do not have such a specialized support structure. This question designed to push all the participants to identify ideas from their experiences that support students with emotional and behavioural issues in an inclusive senior years school setting. The participants responded with over fifty-three positive supports to assist the students as they transitioned into their new schools. These positive supports were clustered into the following seven categories of key points:

1. Strive to build a positive adult connection
2. Communicate effectively to enhance the collection of meaningful information
3. Make programming personalized and relevant
4. Develop a dynamic plan
5. Plan with all relevant stakeholders
6. Make frequent visits and connections to the new senior years school
7. Make positive connections with other students

Once again, the most common response was to, "Strive to build a positive adult connection," for the student as they transitioned to a new senior years school. There were thirteen responses that supported this category, and each of the seven participants identified this as an important strategy to support the students in their new learning environment. A significant concern expressed by each participant was the challenge that many of these students encounter due to the size difference between their new senior years placement, which could have over 1, 200 students, and their previous middle years placement, which tended to be considerably smaller. Sandy said, "They don't have a connection with anybody so I think with our behavioural kids, I think relationships is probably the key. They need to have somebody that they can connect to in this school

even before they get here." She repeated the importance of this need being met several times during her interview. Pat also felt that, "It's important to connect the student to one supportive adult to reduce anxiety for everybody, like the parents or the guardians and anxiety of the child." As a principal, Don indicated that he will, "…try and find a way to bond with them in whatever possible way I can, and find out about their programming and what they need and things like that."

Lynn extended the importance of a positive relationship with adults on her staff further by describing the importance of matching the learning styles of students with emotional and behavioural issues with the teaching styles of their teachers. She indicated that if there is a disconnect between the student's learning style and the teacher's teaching style that it is the adult who needs to make the changes to accommodate the needs of the student. "Some of the high school teachers are doing this now and so they are finding ways to engage [the students] and that is exciting!"

Randy suggested that he felt what is needed is for support staff from the middle years school, a paraprofessional for example, to actually spend time with the student in the new senior years environment until that student feels connected with their new staff.

While the need to build a positive connection with adults in their new senior years school was the most common response to question three, the answer that participants indicated was the most important component to a successful transition was the need to, "Communicate effectively to enhance the collection of meaningful information." Cory actually responded in a manner that connected the first category to this category in this question when she said, "I think the critical, critical piece there is the communication with the sending school so that…the kid is able to develop relationships with people."

When transitioning students with emotional and behavioural issues into her school, Sandy stressed the importance of having a transition meeting with the middle years school, "…where we get all the people that are involved and people are honest about what the needs of the student are."

With effective communication established, the participants all indicated that you then are better able to gather important information to begin both the physical transition into the senior years school for the student as well as addressing the programming needs for the student. Information that participants indicated is extremely helpful to know about students included, the students' strengths and gaps in learning, supportive components of their behaviour intervention plan, patterns and triggers for inappropriate behaviours, and relevant life history that may explain the function of the students' behaviours. Lynn explained that as a principal and key member of the receiving school's transition team, she felt the school division's form for information collecting and sharing was an important tool to help gather and share relevant information about the student.

Once effective communication has been established, the participants identified the need to, "Develop a dynamic plan." Though only Cory and Pat identified planning as an important element in the transition process, they were both adamant that all adults needed to be deliberate in their planning and needed to do so in an informed manner. This in turn led directly into another relevant theme in question three in that it is important to, "Plan with all relevant stakeholders." Sandy, Pat and Cory all felt that including parents and/or guardians in the planning was crucial to the success of the transition. Pat and Sandy also felt that, as student services personnel, it is important to have the support of the principal in the plan, as well.

Once a dynamic transition plan has been developed, the participants felt that the next step toward successful transitioning for students with emotional and behavioural issues is to, "Make programming personalized and relevant." Karen, Cory and Don all indicated that it may be necessary for these students to receive some of their coursework outside of their large, subject-specific classrooms and in a more intimate location such as the school's resource room. Lynn stressed the importance of teachers programming toward the student's strengths as a way to move the student toward experiencing more school success. Cory suggested that helping these kids find success in extracurricular activities in and around the school is a way for them to engage in the new environment. She indicated that many of the students she has supported, who have emotional and behavioural issues, struggle with academics but have strengths in athletics or the arts. In her school, there are dozens of opportunities for students to explore their talents and interests that are not directly tied to their academic classrooms. She felt that experiencing success in something that you have a gift in was sometimes the hook for these students and helped them to engage in their academics.

A way to begin to personalize programming for these students and to get to know them better is for them to, "Make frequent visits and connections to the new senior years school." The three student services personnel all said on two occasions during their interview that they felt that frequent visits from the middle years environment to the senior years school was an essential component to a successful transition. All three participants indicated that multiple visits helped to reduce anxiety in the student, and helped them to begin making positive connections in their new learning environment.

Finally, Cory and Sandy felt it is important to help students with emotional and behavioural issues to, "Make positive connections with other students." Cory felt that helping students find an appropriate "social structure that helps them experience a true sense of belonging." Again, with the size disparity between their previous middle years placement and the large senior years schools, Sandy indicated that at her school they, "…have an AGM [Advisor Group Meeting] where older kids are connected with them [grade nines] so they feel safe…"

Up to this point in the interviews, I was struck by the positive and optimistic outlook that was provided by each participant. Question four looked at transition for students with emotional and behavioural issues from a different lens. Each participant was asked, "What challenges or barriers have you experienced in your role in supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues as they transition into your school, especially if they are transitioning from a specialized behaviour program?" Forty-one challenges or barriers were identified by the participants, and these were clustered into the following categories:

1. The structure of senior years system impedes student progress
2. Connection and understanding from staff is missing
3. Communication between middle years and senior years breaks down
4. Funding to support individual needs is often missing
5. Curricular expectations are too demanding
6. Caring adult from middle years is unable to provide a bridge to senior years

In spite of their best efforts to create safe and welcoming environments in senior years schools for students with emotional and behavioural issues to feel included and

connected, all seven participants identified, “The structure of the senior years system impedes student progress.”

First, Pat, Sandy and Lynn all thought that the size of senior years schools created issues for students with emotional and behavioural issues, in that senior years schools have a much larger student population than the middle years schools from which these students came. In Lynn’s words, “That’s a very, very tough transition for a couple of reasons. The first reason is that most senior years schools are so large and it’s easy to disappear.” She worried that students, “…disappear and become invisible…Because when you have thirty to thirty-five kids in a class you’re moving at a clip…and we don’t necessarily know maybe even until the middle of October that a child at-risk is even struggling.” Pat added, “The transition is huge because they are going from the supportive middle years environment to a totally different one with 1,300 kids, all different teachers, so I think just the two stories are different…”

A second key point to this category lies in the semester and credit system that is present in senior years schools but not in middle years schools. In the province of Manitoba, senior years begins in grade nine, and students must earn thirty credits of senior years courses before they reach the age of twenty-one. However, as Karen and Don indicated, society’s expectations are that students finish their thirty credits in four years and graduate at age eighteen. As Karen put it, “It absolutely is a barrier because these kids and the parents have these false expectations that they’ve made it all the way to grade eight, and that’s going to continue in grade nine because it is really important that they graduate with their friends in four years. They don’t get how hard it can be.” Lynn added, “I am not convinced a semester system helps at-risk kids. I’m not convinced these

short blocks lead them to do any real thinking or reflection, but rather it's an expedient way of working with them…" Also in senior years schools in Manitoba, there are typically two semesters where students can take up to five courses per term. Students usually take the full compliment of grade level courses each semester in order to "keep up" with the expectations of graduating in four years. Don so eloquently said, "You're trying to do what's right for these kids based upon their age level and their intellectual development or social well-being and so on, because of the perspective we're a factory. We've got to get them in at this age and get them out at that age. Society expects that." I sensed real frustration from him during this point in the interview, as he indicated he would be more comfortable with students progressing at a pace they can handle both academically and emotionally.

Another key point expressed by the participants around the issues of the senior years structure was identified by each of the three student services personnel. They were all concerned that the level of independence required at senior years is, "overwhelming," in Pat's words. They indicated that much of the problem lies in the fact they were in smaller classes or may not even have been in classes in their previous middle years school, often receiving individual or very small group programming either within their school, or at a specialized school setting for students with significant behavioural challenges. Karen said, "…that's one of the biggest challenges we're facing this year. We've had two students come in that are EBD level two and three that have been in very unrealistic settings, maybe fifteen minutes a day in class, and the rest of the time spent on an individualized program." From these comments it is apparent that there is a significant disconnect between the two systems.

The one area that all participants thought was a key component in transitioning these students to senior years was the connection to a caring adult. However, what they all identified as a challenge or barrier is that often a, "Connection and understanding from staff is missing." This was the second category of challenges or barriers for question four. Just as all the participants indicated that this positive connection is vital in supporting the transition of students with emotional and behavioural issues, they all agreed that it is a challenge or barrier with some staff in each of their schools who do not make the effort to establish such connections. Randy perhaps captured the group's feelings the best, when he said that he felt that for the teachers in many senior years classrooms, "They can't adjust to the dysfunction of these kids who can't find time to catch up unless the school helps support and find that time for you. It's just easier to quit and deal with the issues than it is to deal with the issues and keep up the school work." He continued by adding that sometimes staff adds to the student's, "conflict cycle," and are often unable to get out of such a cycle. Randy added, "People really do care and really do try at the high school. It's not having the skills or tools which really makes a great battle. That would be one challenge."

Communication between middle years and senior years transition teams was another key element that all participants identified as integral to supporting successful transitions. Yet, in the experience of all the student services personnel and one of the principals for some of these students, "Communication between middle years and senior years breaks down." The third category or barriers or challenges for this question found these four participants address the issue that key information is sometimes overlooked in the sharing of what is needed to support students' transitions. Sandy indicated, "…we're having to do

a better check when kids come in and if they come from a behaviour program we have to stop and have a multi-systems meeting to ensure we have all the information we need." From their comments this does not seem to be deliberate from the middle years school teams. Rather, it appears that there is just information that does not get relayed to the senior years school team during transition meetings.

The fourth category of challenges and barriers for transitioning is, "Funding to support individual needs is often missing." The funding that is identified by four participants as a challenge lies in the provincial department of education's resistance to provide additional funding support for some students with emotional and behavioural issues. Cory commented on this challenge at length, and her message was that many of these students require behaviour support at both early and middle years, and as they transition to senior years many of their emotional and behavioural issues follow them. However, this is often overlooked, or perhaps an assumption is made that the issues have been taken care of throughout the years. In her experience, however, this is often not the case. The students still have needs and issues and require the support. Karen added another layer to this issue saying that completing the application for funding is an arduous task for the school-based student services personnel and that denial for funding means that the time spent on the application could have been better spent providing direct service to the student.

Another key point for this question lies in the fact that, "Curricular expectations are too demanding." Karen identified poor numeracy and literacy skills with the students as a significant challenge to programming for them in senior years schools. Lynn mentioned earlier in her interview that when it comes to curriculum at the senior years

level, “There’s just too much and too fast and the assignments are coming fast and furiously.” In addition, courses such as vocational programs which were often viable options for students who struggled academically in senior years now contain academic content that is very complex. If you connect this issue with Karen’s comments about poor numeracy and/or literacy skills, you now have curriculum courses where success may be unattainable for students with emotional and behavioural issues.

The last key category for this question was only identified by Randy and Karen, but it was important to include it as a challenge or barrier. From their perspective a problem lies in the fact that the, “Caring adult from middle years is unable to provide a bridge to senior years.” Randy was extremely disappointed that divisional policies to support the contractual obligations for staff, namely paraprofessionals, interferes with the ability to have a key person connected to the student in their middle years move with the student to their senior years placement. “Even for a couple of weeks,” Randy said, would help make the transition process smoother for kids with emotional and behavioural issues. Karen was emphatic in her belief that, “There needs to be a transition between staffing, so even if you have one key person that can come and do a wean-off or something would be very helpful.”

Impact of Outside Resources, Supports and Policies

Question five was a two part question where the seven participants were asked, “What resources, supports or policies outside of those in your school are helpful in assisting you in your support of students with emotional and behavioural issues? What do you see as some of the gaps in service?” They had little difficulty providing responses to both questions. I addressed the key points for the two parts individually, and asked each

participant to respond to the helpful services first, then posed the second part of the question once they completed answering part one. Therefore, I clustered responses into different categories for each of the questions.

The categories for the responses from the participants around resources, supports or policies outside of those in their school that were helpful were as follows:

1. Divisional processes linked to evidence-based practices
2. Divisional teaching and clinical staff
3. Community-based service providers
4. Community-based initiatives
5. Provincial categorical funding

For the first category, "Divisional processes linked to evidence-based practices," Pat identified school-wide PBS as a key initiative in supporting all students, but especially students requiring support for emotional and behavioural issues. She liked the fact that the school-wide planning includes the needs of these students within the school's guidelines for behaviour support. Pat added, "…we're all going to make this better, and that's better for kids." She also identified linking the research and work of Dr. Randy Sprick and Dr. Robert Brooks as key to shaping the philosophy of staff members within her school as they continued their implementation of school-wide PBS.

Don and Karen each identified a divisional data collection tool, a Student Services Annual Summary Sheet (SSASS) as key to providing the senior years school team with vital information about all grade nine students entering their schools for the new school year. Karen indicated that this allowed her to begin to work with the middle years team

and her own school team in developing class profiles to ensure that classroom teachers were informed of students requiring additional learning and/or behaving supports.

The second category of answers, "Divisional teaching and clinical staff," refers to two units of personnel who provide support on a division-wide basis to school teams. The Student Services Support Unit (SSSU) is made up of divisional consultants, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and divisional behaviour teachers. The Student Services Clinical Unit (SSCU) is comprised of psychologist, social workers, reading clinicians, and speech and language pathologists. All three student services personnel identified these two units as being helpful in supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues. As their role would be to case-manage these students, they would be the school-based personnel who would initiate referrals to members of the SSSU or SSCU, and include them in the programming for the students.

Another category, "Community-based service providers," saw three key services identified as being helpful for students with emotional and behavioural issues. Lynn and Sandy both identified the workers and therapists from the Addictions Foundation of Manitoba as being especially helpful for students with drug and alcohol issues. Randy felt that some of the mental health therapists from the Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre were helpful for many of his students. Lynn felt that the Mobile Crisis Unit, a city wide support unit was helpful in some situations with her students.

A fourth category of resources, supports or policies helpful in supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues that was supported by comments from Sandy and Cory has to do with, "Provincial categorical funding." The provincial department of education provides categorical funding support for students identified with various

special needs. This is an application process where a school team may determine that they require additional supports to assist in programming for a specific student. The department in turn determines if the application meets criteria and they grant the school money to assist in the student-specific programming. What Cory and Sandy talked about is the fact that the department will allow the team to be flexible in how they spend the dollars should an application be successful. In many schools and school divisions the typical practice is to use the funding dollars to purchase paraprofessional support for students. However, schools are not limited to this practice. In the schools Cory and Sandy work in, they have used the funding dollars in different ways to support students with emotional and behavioural issues. They both discussed initiatives they have tried and have experienced success. In Sandy's school, they hired a teacher to provide additional math support for students who struggle with numeracy skills. Many of the students were funded for emotional and behavioural issues. Cory hired a professional staff member who provided culturally sensitive teachings to a large population in her school that have culturally diverse backgrounds. Again, many of these students required additional behaviour support.

Two community-based initiatives were identified again by Cory and Sandy. Sandy indicated that they have a lot of success providing support for students with emotional and behavioural issues when their school team is supported by a larger, multi-systems team comprised of family services workers and mental health professionals. She indicated that this wraparound style of support allows them to plan for the student's needs on a twenty-four hour basis. Cory discussed an initiative that supports an early years school and a middle years school that both are part of her senior years school's catchment

area. Family services and mental health providers have been working with the three schools to assist struggling families in their community, which leads to a reduction of issues their students deal with at home and in the community and leads to better performance at school. She indicated that they have had a great deal of success with this initiative over the past three years.

The participants provided twenty-two answers to the second part of question five, "What do you see as some of the gaps in service?" There were only two answers that were similar in wording and content. However, upon analysis of all the answers, the following three categories emerged:

1. Inconsistency in divisional procedures
2. Inconsistency in services from community stakeholders
3. Inconsistent family lifestyles

The participants provided twelve perceived gaps in resources, supports or policies outside of those in their school that would be helpful in assisting them in their support of students with emotional and behavioural issues. I avoided creating too many smaller categories due to a lack of specific connections to the participants' responses. However, the answers they gave were all connected to how their school division struggled to support students with emotional and behavioural issues. Cory and Lynn were the only participants who did not provide any answers for this question; however all other participants provided at least two responses. Limited or lack of time for the student services personnel to effectively work with these students was the only answer provided twice. Other answers were very similar to categories in question four relating to challenges and barriers in supporting the transition of students with emotional and

behavioural issues into senior years schools. Examples included, the need for more collaboration between the middle school and senior years school, poor information sharing and receiving of information about a specific student too late into the school year to effectively support them in the fall. Other answers included the issue of lack of understanding on the part of professionals regarding what happens at all the different levels, the independent functioning of all three levels from one another and a lack of support in the early years for students with emotional and behavioural issues. Poor identification of behaviour issues at all levels and a lack of expertise by divisional staff, psychology specifically, were also identified as gaps. Karen indicated a divisional gap in support occurred when the division announced that students in senior years were required to complete two Literacy with ICT courses for graduation. She felt this limited a school team's ability to program for students, especially for students with emotional and behavioural needs.

"Inconsistency in services from community stakeholders," was another gap in services for the second part of question five and seven different answers were provided. Cory indicated that there is a serious shortage of community based workers supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues. When pushed further to clarify her response, she indicated that social workers are the one support area that has been affected by provincial funding cuts and cuts due to structural and organizational changes. She also added that mental health services are difficult to access for students with emotional and behavioural needs. First, the students themselves must want to receive help and then it may take months to actually receive services. Cory indicated that students and/or their families often grow tired of waiting and thus deny the services once they are offered.

Lynn extended this issue even further when she indicated that often school replaces other community services. In her words, "…school has to be a school, a church, community club and a social network in many cases, but the one thing they have to be for everybody is that one safe place."

Don shared his frustration with the department of education. He said that their proclamation of Appropriate Education Programming Legislation was welcomed and great for children and youth with special needs, however, he felt that they have done little to support its implementation. "It helps to guide us. I don't think there's much support, I don't feel support. I don't feel it. If it's there I'm missing it. Maybe it's buried somewhere. I know we're expected to do that and that's the right thing to do, but I don't think that we're given anything to help manage that and make it work. That's how I feel."

The third gap in services relates to, "Inconsistent family lifestyles." While only three answers were provided, they are very telling gaps that greatly impact supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues. Sandy was very direct when she talked about the transient nature of many of the families of these students, and how much that impedes the services that many of the students require, but are unable to attain. Cory's view related to this issue in that she felt that many of the students' families have different values when it comes to attendance. In fact, as she pointed out, many of these students are responsible for getting younger siblings off to school and for supporting the "running of the household." In her experience, she has had students who were unable to attend school full time as they needed to go to work and help support the family financially. In Randy's experience, many of the students he has worked with have very poor literacy skills. Upon meeting parents, it is evident that they, too, struggle with reading and writing

skills. He has discovered that for many of these families they have been unable to provide even basic reading opportunities for their children. This issue then hampers their children's progress once they enter the school system.

Missing Structures and Supports in the Transition Process

The sixth question in the interview was asked in an attempt to extend each participant point of view from the previous question. They were asked, "What structures and supports are missing, and therefore required to assist in the transition process, and ultimately, the inclusion of the students within their catchment senior years schools?" They provided twenty-three answers, and their responses were able to be clustered into the following four categories:

1. Consistency in sharing all important information about the student
2. Commitment from educators to support these students in the process
3. Commitment from all staff to support these students
4. Commitment to planning from all stakeholders

The first category, "Consistency in sharing all important information about the student," mirrors a previous category in question four. All four principals and one of the student services personnel, Pat, indicated that they often do not get all of the information from the middle school that is transitioning the student to their school. In Pat's words, "…this is middle school, this is high school and this is what we do and this is what we've done and now they're yours so you need to deal with it." She added, "…a lot of times the middle school is going, 'Oh, it's not that bad,' and we look at the information about the student and it doesn't look that bad, but when you're sending this kid from class to class and they have to sit for 65 minutes instead of 35 minutes, it's going to be, well, there is

the potential for problems." Cory felt that all of these students should come with a clear academic and behaviour profile that includes current levels of performance and an idea of just what is the student's potential for growth academically and behaviourally. She extended this issue by saying that there is often a lack of clarity in the programming the student received in their middle school and how that transfers to what they need in senior years. Cory added that most of the students with emotional and behavioural issues that transition into her school come with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and always come with a behaviour intervention plan (BIP). However, if the IEP or BIP is written poorly, then it is unclear just what needs to be in place to support the student's programming, or what is needed to meet the student's emotional needs through having an understanding of the function of a student's behaviour. This fits with the issue that Lynn felt existed in her experience in that there is a lack of coordinated and consistent planning prior to entry to the senior years for students with emotional and behavioural issues.

The second category of perspectives saw the participants identify that, "Commitment from educators to support these students in the transition process," is often missing. What is interesting is that the three student services personnel were the ones to provide the issues for this category. Pat indicated that there may be over 400 students transitioning into her senior years school from one year to the next. Students with emotional and behavioural issues often get lost in this process. She felt that having someone, such as a paraprofessional, transition with the student for a period of time would help the students better adjust to their new environment. Sandy supported this notion adding that they often don't have enough personnel at her school to assist all of the students coming to her school that struggle with learning and behaving issues. Karen felt

that sometimes the middle schools do a poor job of preparing students with emotional and behavioural issues for the transition to the new senior years placement. She added that what also would be helpful was if the staff from the middle school did some teaching to the senior years staff about specific needs of the students and effective ways in addressing the needs.

A third category of structures and supports that is missing for students with emotional and behavioural issues had to do with the lack of, "Commitment from all staff to support these students." Key points and answers identified in questions two, three and four all supported these participants' beliefs that it is imperative for staff to make positive connections to students who have emotional and behavioural issues. Pat and Randy were extremely poignant about this issue with staff they have worked with in their schools. Pat indicated that with the high volume of students entering teachers' classrooms each term that many of them do not make the effort to connect with students with emotional and behavioural issues. Randy felt that it takes, "special people to work with these kids." He added, "It's easy to work with the good kids, but a little harder to do so with difficult kids and there is no intrinsic reward for me, the teacher, to do that. But I think that you need to have those that have that higher ethical and moral standard are the people who tend to do that."

The last category of missing supports or structures for question six relates to the lack of, "Commitment to planning from all stakeholders." Cory and Sandy provided several examples where this issue comes into play for students with emotional and behavioural issues. In Sandy's experience, there is often a lack of commitment from agency social workers or mental health workers to follow through to work with the

school team to address needs for the student, especially if the student is in foster care. Cory felt that for many students with emotional and behavioural issues who are in care that for some who find a good stable foster placement they are often uprooted during the school year. This then leads them to lose valuable learning and academic time, as well as interfering with their ability to make positive connections with both their peers and teachers in their senior years school.

Impact of Staff Characteristic

Question number seven was another two part question where the participants were asked, "What are characteristics and/or behaviours of senior years' staff that support or deter the successful inclusion of these students?" The participants responded with thirty-six characteristics or behaviours that supported the inclusion of students with emotional and behavioural issues. They also provided thirteen characteristics or behaviours that deterred the inclusion of this student population. In analyzing the responses provided by all the participants, it was evident that the following two broad categories existed in the characteristics of senior years staff that both supported and deterred the inclusion of students with emotional and behavioural issues:

1. Personal attributes
2. Actions

The participants identified fourteen "personal attributes" that they feel staff portray that supports the inclusion of students with emotional and behavioural issues, and each one offered at least one response. The two most common attributes were "genuine" and "caring," each garnering two responses, and being linked together as, "genuine caring," on another instance. Don indicated that, "perseverance," was a very good attribute, and

Cory offered that supportive staff believe in giving these students second and even third chances if they have significant behaviour issues in the school that interfere with the safety or the learning of others. “Accepting,” “calm,” “optimistic,” and “respectful,” were other attributes. However, Randy offered a terrific synopsis of this type of staff member when he indicated that, “…they get the complexities of these kids…”

The second category that is common to supportive staff lies in their, “actions,” or the things they do to create an inclusive environment for students with emotional and behavioural issues. Cory felt that this group of educators work on developing relationships with these students and they take a special interest in them. For instance, she described a situation where a staff member went out of their way to ask for a student with significant emotional and behavioural issues to change the oil in their car in their autotech class. She added, ‘I don’t know how many times teachers say to me, “That kid gets under my skin but I really like them, so here’s what I’m going to do…’ Don added that these staff believe, “There is some good in this child – we’ve just got to find it.” Pat supported these actions by indicating that she has come across several supportive staff who do personal inventories to get to know their students.

Randy felt a real key to being supportive of these students is for staff to, “…perform those random acts of kindness with no expectations in return…” Karen concurred adding, “…people that have that natural ability to work the kids that are challenges are very flexible.”

Another cluster of actions to support this category had to do with how staff structured their instructional environment and moved this school-wide. First, Sandy felt that differentiating the instruction and assessment for all students, but especially students with

emotional and behavioural issues is imperative, and supportive teachers understand this importance. She felt that these teachers, "…make a connection between learning and behaviour. I think a lot of kids have been frustrated academically and then it's easier to be a behaviour problem…sometimes we just see the behaviour and don't see that they don't want to be embarrassed…" A key action, however, was implementing and supporting school-wide PBS. This was identified in four responses. Sandy indicated that having increased staff presence in the hallways helped to minimize behaviour issues from occurring, but she added that when the staff interact with kids with emotional and behavioural issues that it had a huge impact on the relationship with that student. Randy's bottom line, "…is getting the kids connected so they really feel they're part of the school and school-wide positive behaviour supports connect students and make them feel they belong."

The personal attributes of staff members that the participants felt deterred the inclusion of students with emotional and behavioural issues centred on these staff members being too traditional and rigid in their approaches to their expectations in the classroom and their delivery of programming. These would be teachers who do not differentiate their programming, and as Randy indicated, they lack, "…what I would call higher level of maturity…" Don wondered if some of these staff members, "…get worn out from all the demands of the job." Karen on the other hand felt that these staff members, "…tend to just feel sorry for themselves. They're in it and they're not for the passion of their job but for their paycheck…" She sited an example of a student with emotional and behavioural issues asking for help, and a teacher replied, "What do I look like, a tutor?"

The staff actions that deter the inclusion of students with emotional and behavioural issues were primarily focused on their instructional practices. Sandy, Randy and Karen all indicated that not taking into account the individual programming needs and only focusing on curriculum implementation versus supporting social, emotional and behavioural needs is a significant issue for these staff members. Karen even cited how some of the teachers she has encountered in her career refuse to teach these students. However, Lynn indicated that in her experience she, "…truly believe(s) these teachers are lessening. I truly believe it." Pat also felt that many teachers in the senior years are becoming much more accepting of students with emotional and behaviour issues.

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, there were five major themes that emerged in this study based on my analysis of the perspectives of the participants. In the next chapter, I will discuss the implications of the themes as they relate to the research literature on supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

In this chapter, I will begin by discussing the implications of this study in supporting the transition process for students with emotional and behavioural issues including linking the five themes that highlight the participants' perspectives with the research reviewed in Chapter 2. Next, I will discuss the limitations of this study and make suggestions for future research. I will then provide recommendations for schools and school districts to consider when supporting this population of students as they move from middle years to senior years schools. Finally, I will provide concluding remarks.

Implications

The seven participants in this research study identified five themes or areas that for them must be considered in order for students with emotional and behavioural issues to experience a successful transition from their middle years schools to their senior years schools.

The passionate and unwavering perspectives shared by the participants in this study are important to consider when the appropriate time comes to transition students with emotional and behavioural issues from self contained or specialized programs into inclusive senior years schools. The five major themes that emerged can be acted upon by school teams at both the middle and senior years levels.

The first theme, "Students need to connect with a positive adult upon transitioning to senior years," all seven participants provided this answer on more than one occasion to more than one question. To me, the significance of this theme cannot be underestimated. Brooks (2000) indicated that, "…we must never lose sight of the power of the personal

relationship with a teacher to truly energize and motivate a student" (p. 2). In the words of a senior years classroom teacher, '"When I took the time to learn the names of my students, to greet them at the door, to think about the way I spoke with them, to smile more, to make myself more available when they were having difficulty, I actually had more time for teaching"' (Brooks, 2000, p. 2).

The participants in my study echoed this quote with similar responses. In fact, it was obvious from how quick each of them were in bringing this point forward that it was an indication of just how important they felt adult connections are to students with emotional and behavioural issues. Research highlighted in Chapter 2 by Kortering, Braziel and Tompkins (2002), Abrams (2005), McIntyre and Battle (1998), and Owens and Konkol (2004) all outlined the importance of positive adult connections when working with this student population.

What was encouraging from the four principals is that creating positive adult connections is a priority for them as the leaders in their schools. The three student services personnel also indicated that if they themselves are unable to be the positive connection for the students with emotional and behavioural issues, they look to facilitate this connection with another adult in the school who will come into contact with the students. All of the participants viewed this connection as important, and thus, they all are striving to make it a reality, too. What is hopeful and significant, as indicated by Karen, Lynn and Pat is that they feel that staff in their schools are changing their mindsets for the positive, and are making more attempts at building the positive connections which they feel are imperative for the success of these students.

The concern, however, is that this positive connection is not happening on a consistent basis. One reason for this may be the lack of understanding from staff concerning the function and reason for challenging behaviour. In addition, it could be that classroom teachers feel they lack the necessary skills to deal with challenging behaviour from these students. Research by Shapiro, et al. (1999), Heflin and Bullock (1999) and Lanrum, Tankersley and Kauffman (2003) would support this notion. Randy also indicated that it was his belief that teachers in the senior years may feel they do not have the experience or expertise to provide these students with the emotional and behaviour support they may need. Karen's comment in Chapter 4 about the teacher who said to a student with emotional and behavioural issues asking for help, "What do I look like, a tutor?" are neither supportive nor understanding of the student's needs. Such a comment alludes to the fact that this teacher may not truly believe it is their role to be of assistance to these students.

Obviously, there needs to be a shift by all senior years teachers to take more responsibility to make positive connections with all students in their classes, especially students with emotional and behavioural issues. As presented in Chapter 2, Wagner and Davis (2006) indicated that the likelihood of student success increases when they feel they have a meaningful relationship with the staff.

The second theme, "Students need to perceive that their senior years school is a safe and positive place," has a significant connection to the first theme in that feeling connected to an adult also leads to feeling positive about your school experience. However, creating a safe and positive environment for students is also a major cornerstone in the implementation of school-wide positive behaviour support. As

indicated in chapter two, PBS is an evidence-based approach to supporting behaviour management in schools. That said, there is a lack of research supporting the implementation of PBS in senior years schools.

In this study, all participants indicated that they felt PBS was indeed an effective behaviour management system to support students with emotional and behavioural issues in their specific schools on at least one occasion throughout the study. This statement is a significant one. Each participant was or currently is a member of their school-based learning and behaving support team so they all are knowledgeable about the nuances and principles behind PBS. For the purposes of this study, they were never cued nor prompted to offer PBS as a viable method of support for students with emotional and behavioural issues. They all indicated the effectiveness of the philosophy and structures of PBS based on their own experiences from working with students in their senior years placements, and in Randy's case, as an observer of it's effectiveness from the lens of a middle years educator. When asked in question number two to describe strategies, interventions or supports they have implemented or observed, four participants identified PBS itself as a support structure to assist in the programming for students with emotional and behavioural issues, while all seven participants provided several examples of strategies that would fall under the PBS umbrella. Strategies such as teaching expected behaviours, increasing adult supervision in areas such as hallways during unstructured times, and offering ideas to support the fifth theme for question two of recognizing positive behaviour when it is demonstrated, are all effective in preventing inappropriate behaviours from occurring for all students, but especially for students with emotional and behavioural issues (Lewis & Sugai, 1999; Sugai & Horner, 2008; Warren, et al, 2006).

While this is a small study, I strongly feel the integrity and experience of these seven participants is important evidence to support the efficacy and importance of implementing school-wide PBS in senior years schools, and is evidence that it truly can be implemented in a senior years school. Each of the three principals and their staff has made a choice to implement PBS in their schools. Each of the three student services personnel works in a senior years school where PBS is a cornerstone for behaviour support. For these professionals to indicate this is a positive support for students with emotional and behavioural issues is extremely noteworthy. First, it demonstrates that PBS can be an effective support for this student population. However, more importantly, it indicates it can be especially effective in senior years schools, an environment where a gap in the research exists.

As mentioned previously, there is a gap in the research for implementation of PBS in senior years schools, however, this study may be the catalyst for closing this gap and creating a movement toward the increased implementation of PBS in senior years schools.

The third major theme from this study, "Communication and information sharing are critical to successful planning," on the surface, seems like a process that should automatically occur when school teams look to transitioning students with emotional and behavioural issues. To say I was disappointed that all the participants indicated that this is a gap in planning would be an understatement. The three student services personnel all indicated that they have significant roles to play in supporting this transition process. They all indicated that they look for specific information about each student with emotional and behavioural issues so that in turn they can work with the classroom

teachers to build academic and behavioural programming that is tailored toward that student's learning strengths. Also, upon receiving relevant information, they start to look toward other supports that may be required for the student when they come to their school, such as paraprofessional support, specific accommodations to academic programming, or timetabling and scheduling considerations that may help ease the student into their new learning environment. In addition, they want to start to build a support team that includes significant adults within their school who will play key roles with that particular student. If this relevant information is not shared with the senior years team, successful transition for students with emotional and behavioural issues is blocked. Johnson, et al. (2002) shared this concern of poor communication in their research as they outlined issues in coordination and collaboration in the transition process for these students moving from middle to senior years.

I think the perspectives of the participants in this research suggests that while it is the professional responsibility of every significant adult in a child's life to share all pertinent and relevant information about that student as they move from grade to grade and level to level it is very inconsistent.

This study suggests that we need to assist all students in successful and healthy transitions in spite of their abilities or disabilities, and that, as educators, we owe this to the students. Sharing critical information should be a common sense practice, not something that educators should be reminded to do. If we truly value our students, and truly want to do what is best to assist them in challenging times, such as changes in their programming which result from transitioning to new levels and grades, then we owe it to

them to be the caring adults and help others understand exactly what they need to ensure success and share exactly how to do so.

Effective communication leads to effective academic and behavioural support from the students' new school teams. From the evidence provided by these participants about just how important good communication is in helping to support successful transition, and how key this information is, this study suggests that educators need to make a concerted effort to ensure this takes place. Structures and/or policies developed by school districts specific to transition processes need to be adhered to unconditionally. Further, if such processes are not identified, it is important that guidelines around pertinent information that needs to be shared, including current levels of performance in both academics and behavioural domains and other specialized programming requirements these students may require.

In my opinion, school teams may require assistance from an administrator at the divisional or district level. There may be a need to provide a "gatekeeper" to oversee the process for these students and ensure that collaborative methods are being followed including effective sharing of information. Again, there may even be a need for school districts to articulate clear procedures for transitioning students from level to level, especially students with emotional and behavioural issues.

When looking at the fourth theme from this study, "Students need adults with whom they are connected to work together," this extends the connections to adults, identified in the first theme, to include other significant adults in the students' lives who play key roles in supporting the social, emotional and behavioural needs of the students. In many instances, these students require assistance with emotional and behavioural

management twenty-four hours a day, and this assistance transfers into all of their living and learning environments. Eber (2003) and Eber, Sugai, Smith and Scott (2002) recommend the wraparound process involving all of the significant stakeholders who may play a role in supporting the student including family members, social services providers, corrections personnel, school division personnel, and therapists or other mental health providers. Lewis and Sugai (1999) encourage school teams to continue to look at primary and secondary prevention as interventions, however they highlight that the support becomes more individualized. Support from other service providers is crucial to providing stability to students at this level.

All participants in this study indicated the need for parents and/or guardians to play an active role in the transition process. They also indicated that it is necessary to include the caregivers early on in the process, recognizing that these transition points are often stress inducing for them, much like it is for their child. Cory talked about the need for the parents to function as partners in the transition process, and Pat extended this to include the academic programming for the students as well. They talked about the importance of the "Circle of Care" planning, a process implemented for students with intensive behavioural needs in the province of Manitoba. These students typically receive the highest level of categorical funding support, level III funding. A major condition upon approval for this funding is the development of a twenty-four hour plan that includes a coordinated team who share and integrate treatment goals in an effort to ensure that the students' social, emotional and behavioural needs are addressed and planned for in all of their living and learning environments.

All of the participants in this study indicated on more than two occasions the importance of working together and collaboration toward a common direction to ensure the best transition planning possible, thus leading to effective programming support for students with emotional and behavioural issues. In addition, they indicated that they not only believe that all adults connected to these students need to work together but they also need to ensure that it happens. As a result, it is important that this level of in-depth collaboration during the transition process materializes.

While the participants all say that it is necessary to have a collaborative effort between all adults connected to these students, this practice of wraparound or "Circle of Care" planning is inconsistent. Several participants said that they felt it was important to have a behaviour intervention plan in place for these students. They also indicated that when it was tied to understanding the function of the students' behaviour it was even more effective. This would be supported by the research. Lewis and Sugai (1999) feel that when it comes to addressing behaviour at an intensive level, functional behaviour assessment forms the cornerstone in identifying the reason or purpose for the behaviour so that a successful match in intervention can occur. Then using the information from the functional assessment a student-specific behaviour intervention plan can be developed and implemented (Lewis and Sugai, 1999). Perhaps this should be a requirement for students with emotional and behavioural issues who are transitioning to senior years needs. A coordinated behaviour intervention plan, developed by all the key personnel tied to that student would provide a guide for successful programming both academically and socially/emotionally. This would also enhance the communication and information sharing between the middle and senior years teams as they plan to transition the student.

For the final theme, "The community needs to work together to move the students toward success," the participants in this study looked beyond the walls of the school toward system needs. Government funding, well defined divisional transition guidelines and connections through community initiatives were key in the participants view for successfully supporting these students.

On a positive note, they acknowledged that their school division has implemented practices to enhance the transition process for students identified with special needs. However, when it came to supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues, they felt that the school division itself needed to be more consistent in both outlining and developing procedures to ensure that all necessary components of transitioning are in place.

The three senior years principals also talked about several community initiatives geared toward supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues. This is encouraging. They felt that, as indicated in theme four, the problems these students face are beyond what the school system may be able to support, and thus they would like to see more community-based initiatives implemented to assist these students. Success tends to create success, and therefore, positive procedures and/or structures that are underway can be built upon to further enhance the move toward a smoother transition process.

A concern was expressed in a number of responses specific to the need to enhance department of education funding. In particular, three areas of support were identified as required to support students with emotional and behavioural issues in inclusive senior years schools. It was unanimous that the province's department of education needed to provide even more financial support to schools and school divisions to support this

population of students. While increased funding would be a benefit, it also cannot be a roadblock toward enhancing the transition process and ultimately inclusion for senior years students with emotional and behavioural issues. Sure, increased funding can be used to purchase additional supports, be it adult or material supports, to improve behavioural and academic outcomes for these students. However, we cannot wait for this to happen, nor can we depend on this. Displaying kindness to these students by performing, as Randy called them, "random acts of kindness," showing genuine interest in their interests and personal lives, and meeting their academic needs, especially if they are struggling as learners, do not cost additional dollars. These are expectations that all parents and guardians have of teachers in our education system, and the solution points to the first four themes. Yes, the solution lies in building positive connections in positive environments where those around you understand the world you come from and are there to assist and support you without conditions.

In his research, Mayer (1995) indicates that lack of community involvement and support, in conjunction with inconsistent and reactionary discipline practices at home and at school, leads to what he calls antisocial behaviours in students. In his recommendations, he promotes a school-wide approach where all school personnel need to create an environment that promotes pro-social behaviour by teaching, recognizing and reinforcing positive behaviour, where discipline policies are fair and clearly explained and enforced, including correction strategies for inappropriate behaviour, and where academics are delivered to address the individual needs of all children, especially those in need of behaviour and academic support (Mayer, 1995). He is a proponent for this type of planning to be developed in conjunction with parents and/or significant caregivers and to

include other community members so that healthy social and emotional development can occur in all of the students living and learning environments.

This mirrors the philosophy of school-wide PBS. I think it also can form the foundation of enhanced collaboration between the school system and community partners. A cornerstone of PBS is proactive and preventative practices, which lead to positive learning and behaving outcomes for all students, including those with emotional and behavioural issues. In my opinion, this lends credibility to the development and implementation of PBS in senior years schools.

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study was very small in nature, focusing on the insights and perspectives of only seven participants. Perhaps having a larger sampling would have provided even more support or more diversity of strategies and structures to support students with emotional and behavioural issues as they transition into inclusive senior years schools. Also, a focus on only principals or only student services personnel may have done likewise. This study was also limited to one school district. Different information may have been attained from a more diverse divisional sampling.

Gathering information from a student perspective is missing from this study as well. In his research looking at the impact of inclusion on students, Miller (2008) discovered that, "Young people today consider it right and natural for students with learning and behavioural difficulties to be in their classes…" (p. 391). Through interviewing students about inclusion, '…they asserted each student's right to be there, "just like all the other kids"' (Miller, 2008, p. 391). Further improvements to successfully transitioning students with emotional and behaviour issues from middle years to senior

years would benefit from interviewing students with these issues themselves, especially those who have had intensive support at middle years. This concept would provide firsthand accounts from the lens of the student to assist educators in discovering more specific strategies and supports that were helpful or not helpful for the students as they transitioned to their senior years school. An alternative to interviewing students could be analyzing specific case studies of students with emotional and behavioural issues and the successes and challenges they experienced as they transitioned to a senior years school from their middle years placement. Qualitative methodology would allow them to have the same freedom to respond that this qualitative study provided. In turn, this type of information could point principals and student services personnel in a direction that improves the transition process they currently have in place.

Another limitation of this study lies in the fact that there were no specific or consistent measurements to indicate the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of adults working to support students with emotional and behavioural issues. The participants offered their perspectives only. Perhaps a mixed methods approach that includes observations of actual practices might help to strengthen these findings. In addition, it would be interesting to spend more time flushing out characteristics of staff that either assist or deter the transition process. Their belief regarding the core values that staff at the senior years need to possess in order to successfully integrate all students in a senior years environment would be good to know. What is it about their teaching practices that support/do not support the inclusion of students with emotional and behavioural issues? What guides their choices to provide inclusive versus non-inclusive environments for these students? Extending this further, it would be of value to gain the insights of

classroom teachers themselves, and what have they done specifically to assist students with emotional and behavioural issues be included in their senior years placement. Again, a qualitative study would provide them the opportunity to discuss the issue in a more open forum.

Recommendations

What follows, as a result of this study, are recommendations that middle and senior years schools and school districts might wish to consider and possibly implement to effectively include students with emotional and behavioural issues as they transition from specialized placements in middle years to their senior years schools.

First, it is imperative that school districts outline and develop a specific process to support the transition of this population of students. This process includes the development of timelines to begin and actually implement the transitioning, personnel who need to be involved in the transition planning, and a process for monitoring the students once they are attending their senior years school. I would recommend that whenever possible specific students be identified to their catchment senior years school a full year before they are to transition to that school. This would provide both the sending middle years school and the senior years school with enough time to develop and implement an appropriate transition plan.

A second recommendation that would develop as a result of the planning, would be for someone from the district or divisional leadership level to oversee the transition process for these students. This person could be a consultant, coordinator or manager of support services who would have the ability to not only assist in the development of the

actual plan but have the means to activate supports and services to support the students upon entry to their new school placements.

A third recommendation that would also evolve from an effective transition plan is the identification of at least one adult in the senior years school who would act as a mentor or would work at developing a positive connection with the student as they transition to that school for their senior years programming. This person would focus on developing positive relationships with the students, and assist them with their adjustment to their new school placement. For students transitioning from a self-contained middle years school, this would be especially valuable, as many of these students would be used to smaller student to adult ratios, as opposed to the larger ratios common to most senior years schools. The focus should be on what the students need. We as the adults need to remember that schools were developed to help students learn, and that our job is to teach students. Specifically, schools were made for students not just to provide employment for adults.

Another series of recommendations involve a deep look into the structures that are required to support these students. Therefore, I would strongly encourage senior years schools to embrace and implement the principles of school-wide positive behaviour support. PBS provides the framework to assist school personnel in the prevention of problematic behaviour before it occurs. It also provides school-based personnel with the opportunity to teach pro-social behaviours and to do so within the context of the students existing environment. The philosophy of PBS also encourages the wraparound process that is required to support these students and activate support from other service providers who are connected to the student in all of their living and learning

environments. As indicated, these students often require the help of family services personnel and/or mental health professionals, and the wraparound process ties their expertise into effective planning through work with both the student and their family.

Finally, in order to foster the implementation of PBS initiatives and the involvement of supportive service providers, it is important for the department of education to ensure that adequate funding dollars are available to assist with programming needs for this unique population of students. While categorical funding can be helpful in providing options for programming, such as adult support that may be required for the student to meet the daily academic tasks they encounter, it is important for school teams to have flexibility in how the dollars are utilized. Sometimes, the student may only require the support in meeting learning and behaviour outcomes in the school setting. However, extending the students positive learning experiences outside of the classroom is beneficial as well. Providing support through the development of partnerships via community outings and work experience opportunities tied to meeting curricular outcomes can be effective methods of extending students' learning opportunities. This often requires additional funding, and as a result it is helpful if additional funds exist to support these interventions.

Conclusion

Imagine the possibilities for students with emotional and behavioural issues, a highly marginalized and devalued population of students. Having spent their middle years in a segregated, self-contained program, they are ready to move to their neighbourhood senior years school. It's the end of January, and the resource teacher or principal from the middle years school calls the resource teacher or the principal from the senior years

school and indicates that “George” is ready to leave his current grade eight placement for grade nine programming at Happy Trails Collegiate. The senior years resource teacher asks a few questions about George’s needs, current level of performance in academic and behaviour domains, and supports that have been in place to assist him both in school and within the community. The middle years resource teacher provides her with a wealth of pertinent information. They agree to meet to begin the more detailed information sharing process. After their first meeting they agree to hold a team meeting consisting of the current middle years team, the receiving senior years team, George’s mom, his social worker, his therapist, and George.

At this first joint meeting, everyone focuses on moving toward a successful transition plan for George. Pertinent information is shared by all in attendance. At the end of the meeting, George’s current math teacher joins his math teacher for next year on a tour of the school. His grade nine math teacher takes it upon himself to set up a time when he can visit George in his middle years school, and sets up some times when they can visit in his new school. He also picks a time in the summer when George and his mom can come and visit and ensure things are ready for the fall.

The middle years and senior years resource teachers confirm that George is eligible to receive categorical funding and they look at how that support may be implemented for the fall. The middle years team agrees that George’s current paraprofessional will spend the first three weeks of the school year next year helping him adjust to his new senior years’ routine. The senior years counsellor indicates to George and the rest of his team that she will hand timetable for him, ensuring that he will have an

individualized timetable where his interests and strength-based courses will be in the first term of the school year.

When the meeting ends, another follow up meeting with this circle of care team is identified, and other specific dates, such as times for visiting and sharing information are also identified. George's future senior years math teacher shakes his hand, smiles and says how excited he is he is going to be in his classroom, and he knows he will have a great year next year. Is this a dream, or can it be a reality? What prevents this from becoming standard practice for all students with emotional and behavioural issues upon transition to senior years schools?

While this may be a small study, the participants who were interviewed identified components to successful transition planning with the components from this scenario being put into action. Each of them has been part of creating successful environments for students with emotional and behavioural issues as they have transitioned into inclusive senior years schools. They also reinforce the fact that many educators in senior years really want to include these students.

If we go back to the initial comments by Fullan, Hill and Crevola (2006) in chapter one, and define "school success" for students with emotional and behavioural issues as graduation from senior years, this study can provide a bridge for achievement of such success. In her interview, Cory spoke about the increased numbers of students who receive provincial categorical funding support under the category of EBD who have graduated in the past several years. This data is very encouraging. Randy provided an excellent example of one student from his school who he saw graduate from her neighbourhood senior years school. To do so, he indicated that she had a parent/foster

parent who was an on-going advocate for her, and acted as her positive caregiver or "charismatic adult" (Brooks, 2000).

Success is possible for these students. With effective planning, positive and safe learning environments and committed adults we can make a difference and create successful opportunities for students with emotional and behavioural issues. We can shift the perceptions of this student population from that of a marginalized and devalued one, to that of a population whose future is brighter, optimistic and highly successful.

References

Abrams, B. (2005). Becoming a therapeutic teacher for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Teaching Exceptional Children, 38 (2),* 40-45.

American Psyciatric Association. (1994). Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental health disorders, 4th edition. Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association.

Billingsley, B., Fall, A. & Williams, T. (2006). Who is teaching students with emotional and behavioral disorders? A profile and comparison to other special educators. *Behavioral Disorders, 31 (3),* 252-264.

Bradley, R., Doolittle, J. & Bartolotta, R. (2008). Building on the data and adding to the discussion: The experiences and outcomes of students with emotional disturbances. *Journal of Behavior Education, 17,* 4-23. Retrieved February 9, 2009 from EBSCOHost database.

Brooks, R. (2000). Education and the "charismatic" adults: To touch a student's heart and mind. *Monthly Newsletter, September, 2000,* 1-6. Retrieved March 21, 2010 from www.drrobertbrooks.com.

Cheney, D. & Muscott, H. (1996). Preventing school failure for students with emotional and behavioral disabilities through responsible inclusion. *Preventing School Failure, 40 (3),* 109-117. Retrieved March 2, 2007, from EBSCOhost database.

Crockett, J. & Kauffman, M. (!998). Taking inclusion back to its roots. *Educational Leadership, 56 (2),* 74-77. Retrieved February 9, 2009, from EBSCOHost database.

DiMartino, J. & Clarke, J. (2008). *Personalizing the high school experience for each student.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum

Development.

Eber, L., Sugai, G., Smith, C., & Scott, T. (2002). Wraparound and positive behavioral interventions and supports in the schools. *Journal of Emotional & Behavioral Disorders, 10 (30,* 171-181. Retrieved February 9, 2007, from EBSCOhost database.

Eber, L. (2003). *The art & science of wraparound: Completing the continuum of schoolwide behavioral support.* InCory: Elephant Rock Productions, Inc.

Fuch, D. & Fuchs, L. (1994). Inclusive schools movement and the radicalization of special education reform. *Exceptional Children, 60 (4),* 294-310. Retrieved October 11, 2006, from EBSCOhost database.

Fullan, M., Hill, P. & Crevola, C. (2006). *Breakthrough*. United States: Corwin Press.

Gibb, K., Tunbridge, D., Chua, A., & Frederickson, N. (2007). Pathways to inclusion: Moving from special school to mainstream. *Educational Psychology in Practice, 23 (2),* 109-127.

Goodley, D. (2005). For inclusion: Towards a critical pedagogy with marginalised learners. Retrieved from http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/goodley/inclusive%20pedagogy.pdf

Harrington-Lueker, D. (1995). Ideas for alternative schools for troubled kids. *Education Digest, 60 (8),* 18-23. Retrieved February 3, 2007, from EBSCOhost database.

Hayling, C., Cook, C., Gresham, F., State, T., & Kern, L. (2008). An analysis of the status of students with emotional and behavioral difficulties. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 17,* 24-42. Retrieved February 9, 2009 from EBSCOHost

database.

Heflin, L. & Bullock, L. (1999). Inclusion of students with emotional/behavioral disorders: A survey of teachers in general and special education. *Preventing School Failure, 43 (3),* 103-112. Retrieved March 2, 2007, from EBSCOhost database.

ICA Associates. (2003). Group facilitation: Powerful methods for facilitators. Toronto, ON: The Canadian Institute of Cultural Affairs.

Jones, M., Thorn, C., Chow, P., Thompson, I., & Wilde, C. (2002). Equifinality: Parents' and students' attitudes towards a student-centred approach to integration. *Education, 122 (3),* 624-635. Retrieved February 9, 2009, from EBSCOHost database.

Johnson, D., Stodden, R., Emanuel, E., Luecking, R., & Mack, M. (2002). Current challenges facing secondary education and transition services: What research tells us. *Exceptional Children, 68 (4),* 519-531.

Kauffman, J. & Lloyd, J. (1995). Inclusion of all students with emotional or behavioral disorders? Let's think again. *Phi Delta Kappan, 76 (7),* 542-547. Retrieved February 3, 2007, from EBSCOhost database.

Kauffman, J., Bantz, J. & McCullough, J. (2002). Separate and better: A special public school class for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. *Exceptionality, 10 (3),* 149-170. Retrieved March 2, 2007, from EBSCOhost database.

Kauffman, J., Mock, D. & Simpson, R. (2007). Problems related to underservice of students with emotional or behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 33 (1),* 43-57.

Kauffman, J. (2008). Would we recognize progress is we saw it? A commentary. *Journal of Behavior Education, 17,* 128-143. Retrieved December 16, 2008, from EBSCOHost database.

Kern, L. & Manz, P. (2004). A look at current validity issues of school-wide behavior support. *Behavioral Disorders, 30 (1),* 47-59.

Kortering, L., Braziel, L. & Tompkins, J. (2002). The challenge of school completion among youths with behavioral disorders: Another side of the story. *Behavioral Disorders, 27 (2),* 142-154.

Landrum, T., Tankersley, M. & Kauffman, J. (2003). What is special about special education for students with emotional or behavioral disorders? *The Journal of Special Education, 37 (3),* 148-156. Retreived February 3, 2007, from EBSCOHost database.

Lane, K., Wehby, J., Little, M., & Cooley, C. (2005). Students educated in self-contained classrooms and self-contained schools: Part II – How do they progress over time? *Behavioral Disorders, 30 (4),* 363-374.

Lane, K. & Carter, E. (2006). Supporting transition-age youth with and at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders at the secondary level: A need for further inquiry. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 14 (2),* 66-70. Retrieved August 1, 2008, from EBSCOHost Database.

Lane, K., Carter, E., Pierson, M., & Glaeser, B. (2006). Academic, social and behavioral characteristics of high school students with emotional disturbances or learning disabilities. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 14 (2),* 108-117. Retrieved August 1, 2008, from EBSCOHost Database.

Lewis, T., & Sugai, G. (1999). Effective behavior support: A systems approach to proactive schoolwide management. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 31 (6),* 1-24. Retrieved October 22, 2006, from EBSCOhost database.

Lewis, T., Hudson, S., Richter, M., & Johnson, N. (2004). Scientifically supported practices in emotional and behavioral disorders; A proposed approach and brief review of current practices. *Behavioral Disorders*, 29 (3), 247-259.

Lipsky, D. & Gartner, A. (1996). Inclusion, school restructuring, and the remaking of American society. *Harvard Educational Review, 66,* 762-796. Retrieved February 11, 2007, from EBSCOHost database.

Littky, D. (2004). *The big picture: education is everyone's business.* Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth. (2005). *Appropriate educational programming in Manitoba: Amendment to the public schools act*. Manitoba: The Queen's Printer.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, (2005). *Towards inclusion: planning for the future,* unpublished notes from the River East Transcona School Division workshop, Winnipeg.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth. (2006). *Appropriate educational programming in Manitoba: Standards for student services*. Manitoba: The Queen's Printer.

Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (2008). *Student services guidelines for level II and III support*. Retrieved December 7, 2008, from http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/specedu/funding/level2-3.html

Mayer, G. (1995). Preventing antisocial behavior in the schools. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 28,* 467-478. Retrieved October 22, 2006, from EBSCOhost database.

Mayer, G., & Leone, P. (1999). A structural analysis of school violence and disruption: Implications for creating safer schools. *Education and Treatment of Children, 22 (3),* 333-356. Retrieved February 3, 2008, from EBSCOHost database.

Mayer, G. (2001). Antisocial behavior: Its causes and prevention within our schools. *Education and Treatment of Children, 24 (4),* 414-429. Retrieved February 3, 2008, from EBSCOHost database.

Mayer, G. (2002). Behavioral strategies to reduce school violence. *Behavior Psychology in the Schools,* 83-100. Retrieved December 5, 2006, from EBSCOhost database.

McIntyre, T. & Battle, J. (1998). The traits of "good teachers" as identified by african-American and white students with emotional and/or behavioral disorders. *Behavioral Disorders, 23 (2),* 134-142.

Microsoft Corporation. (1998 – 2003). *Encarta world English dictionary (13.0.0.0531).* Redmond, Washington, USA.

Miles, S. & Singal, N. (2008). The education for all inclusive education debate: Conflict contraction or opportunity? Retrieved from http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/miles/IJIE_MilesandSingal_resubmission.pdf

Miller, M. (2008). What do students think about inclusion? *Phi Delta Kappan. 89 (5),* 389-391.

Muscott, H. (1995). A process for facilitating the appropriate inclusion of students with emotional/behavioral disorders. *Education & Treatment of Children, 18 (3),*

369-387. Retrieved February 3, 2007, from EBSCOhost database.

National Association of School Psychologists. (2005). *Position statement on students with emotional and behavioral disorders*: Bethesda, MD. Retrieved November 26, 2006, from www.nasponline.org.

Nelson, M., Sugai, G. & Smith, C. (2005) Positive behavior support offered in juvenile corrections. *Counterpoint, 1,* 1-7. Retrieved November February 3, 2007, from EBSCOhost database.

Owens, L. & Konkol, L. (2004). Transitioning from alternative to traditional school settings: a student perspective. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 13 (3),* 173-176.

Reid, R., Gonzalez, J., Nordness, R., Trout, A., & Epstein, M. (2004). A meta-analysis of the academic status of students with emotional/behavioral disturbances. *The Journal of Special Education, 38,* 130-143. Retrieved September 3, 2008, from EBSCOHost database.

Rylance, B. (1997). Predictors of high school graduation or dropping out for youths with severe emotional disturbances. *Behavioral Disorders, 23 (1),* 5-17.

Scott, T., Nelson, C., Liaupsin, C., Jolivette, K., Christie & Riney, M. (2002). Addressing the needs of at-risk and adjudicated youth through positive behavior support: effective prevention practices. *Education and Treatment of Children, 25 (4),* 532-551. Retrieved January 25, 2007, from EBSCOhost database.

Shapiro, E., Miller, D., Sawka, K., Gardill, M., & Handler, M. (1999). Facilitating the inclusion of students with EBD into general education classrooms. *Journal of Emotional & Behavioral Disorders, 7 (2),* 83-94. Retrieved September 3, 2008, from EBSCOHost database.

Simpson, L. (2004). Inclusion of students with behavior disorders in general education settings: Research and measurement issues. B*ehavioral Disorders, 30 (1),* 19-31.

Sinclair, M., Christenson, S. & Thurlow, M. (2005). Promoting school completion of urban secondary youth with emotional or behavioral disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 71 (4),* 465-482.

Skrtic, T.M. (1995). *Disability and democracy: reconstructing (special) education for postmodernity.* New York: Teachers College Press

Smith, C. (1997). Advocacy for students with emotional and behavioral disorders: One call for redirected efforts. *Behavioral Disorders, 22 (2),* 96-105. Retrieved October 16, 2006, from EBSCOhost database.

Suagi, G., Horner, R., Dunlap, G., Hieneman, M., Lewis, T., Nelson, C., et al. (2000). Applying positive behavioral support and functional behavioral assessment in schools. *Journal of Positive Behavioral Interventions, 1,* 131-143. Retrieved October 11, 2006, from EBSCOhost database.

Sugai, G. & Horner, R. (2002). The evolution of discipline practices: School-wide positive behavior supports. *Behavior Psychology in the Schools,* 23-50. Retrieved December 5, 2006, from EBSCOhost database.

Sugai, G. & Horner, R. (2008). What we know and need to know about preventing problem behaviour in schools. *Exceptionality, 16*; 67 – 77. Retrieved May 17, 2009, from EBSCOhost database.

The Council for Exceptional Children. (2003). *What every special educator must know: ethics, standards and guidelines for special educators* (5th Edition). Arlington, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

UNESCO. (1994). The Salamanca statement and framework for action on special needs education. Paris: UNESCO.

Wagner, M., Kutash, K., Duchnowski, A., Epstein, M., & Sumi, C. (2005). The children and youth we serve: A national picture of the characteristics of students with emotional disturbances receiving special education. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 13 (2),* 79-96. Retrieved September 3, 2008, from EBSCOHost database.

Wagner, M. & Davis, M. (2006). How are we preparing students with emotional disturbances for the transition to young adulthood? *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 14 (2),* 86-98. Retrieved September 3, 2008, from EBSCOHost database.

Wagner, M., Friend, M., Bursuck, W., Kutash, K., Duchnowski, A., Sumi, W., et al. (2006). Educating students with emotional disturbances: A national prespective on school programs and services. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 14 (1),* 12-30. Retrieved September 3, 2008, from EBSCOHost database.

Wang, M., Reynolds, M. & Walberg, H. (1986). Rethinking special education. *Educational Leadership, 44 (1),* 26-31. Retrieved January 23, 2007 from EBSCOhost database.

Warren, J., Bohanon-Edmonson, H., Turnbull, A., Sailor, W., Wickham, D., Griggs, P., et al. (2006). School-wide positive behaviour support: Addressing behaviour problems that impede student learning. *Educational Psychological Review, 18,* 187 – 198. Retrieved May 17, 2009 from EBSCOhost database.

Whittaker, J. (2001). Segregated special schools must close. Retrieved from http://www.leeds.ac.uk/disability-studies/archiveuk/whittaker/segregation%20special%20must%close.pdf

Appendix A

Interview Script

George: I would like to begin by thanking you for taking the time to talk with me today. I greatly appreciate your willingness to share your thoughts and feelings about supporting students in the senior years who struggle with emotional and behavioural issues. Again, it is important for you to know that your participation in the project is completely voluntary. No one in the school division will be informed about your involvement in this study. If you do not feel like answering a question, or you would like to stop at anytime, please feel free to let me know and I will honour your request. I will provide you with a summary of the results if you would like a copy. Do you have any questions or requests before we begin?

Opening Question:

1. I'd appreciate it if you told be a little about yourself. Please describe your experience and background as it relates to supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues.

Transition Question:

2. What ideas or thoughts come to your mind when you think of supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues in a senior years school?

Main Questions:

3. Please describe some of the different strategies, interventions and supports you have implemented yourself, or have seen other educators use that have successfully met the needs of students with emotional and behavioural issues.
4. What do you feel are the necessary components of successful school planning that assists students with emotional and behavioural issues, especially as they transition into your school from specialized behavioural placements?
5. What challenges or barriers have you experienced in your role in supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues as they transition into your school, especially if they are transitioning from a specialized behaviour program?
6. What resources, supports or policies outside of those in your school are helpful in assisting you in your support of students with emotional and behavioural issues? What do you see as some of the gaps in service?
7. What structures and supports are missing, and therefore required to assist in the transition process, and ultimately, the inclusion of the students within their catchment senior years schools?
8. What are characteristics and/or behaviours of senior years' staff that support or deter the successful inclusion of these students?

Closing Question:

Do you have anything else you would like to share or say?

Closing:

I want to thank you once again for sharing your insights with me today. It is my hope that we can gain a better understanding of what it takes to support this population of students. Your willingness to offer your opinions goes a long way to meeting this objective. Thank you again!

Appendix B

Letter to Assistant Superintendent Responsible for Ethics Approval

Date:

Dear Ms. Isaak:

I am conducting a study in order to complete my M.Ed thesis in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. My thesis advisor is Dr. Zana Lutfiyya (lutfiyy@ms.umanitoba.ca; zana@umanitoba.ca; 1-204-474-9009). In this study I plan to examine the perspectives of school-based principals and student services personnel who support students with emotional and behavioural issues as they transition into inclusive senior years schools. Specifically, according to these individuals, what policies, structures, attitudes and supports must be in place to assist these students to move from self-contained middle years classrooms for students with emotional and behavioural issues to inclusive senior years schools? The overall focus of the study is twofold. First, I want to gain an understanding of successful strategies, interventions and supports that are effective in assisting in the inclusion of senior years students who present with challenging behaviours. Second, I want to gain an understanding of the ongoing challenges and barriers that inhibit meeting the needs of these students, and therefore, are required to overcome in order to more effectively support this student population.

I am writing to you at this time to request your help in inviting principals and student services personnel from senior years schools in your division to participate in this study. If you agree, I am asking you to distribute invitation letters to all of your senior years principals and senior years student services personnel. In addition, I would appreciate it if you would send this letter to middle years principals who you think have high numbers of students with emotional and behavioural issues who transition to senior years schools. Interested individuals may contact me directly to make the arrangements. In this way their participation will be completely voluntary. I will obtain their written consent to participate prior to conducting any interviews. As you will note, their participation will involve being interviewed about their experiences in transitioning students with emotional and behavioural issues from middle years to senior years. The interview will require approximately one hour of their time. The interviews will be arranged at a convenient time and location for them and they will be free to disregard any questions or withdraw from the interview at any time. A second interview may be conducted to clarify information the participants presented and to provide them with another opportunity to provide information upon their reflection of the first interview.

Although I will know the identities of the participants at the time of the interviews, this information will be kept strictly confidential in any information that is disseminated. The interviews will audiotaped. The recoded information, transcripts and any written notes will not include the participants' names or identifying information about the school, and will be destroyed upon the completion of my required course work, before the end of May 2010. A summary of the results will be made available for the participants upon their request.

This should give you the basic idea of what the study entails and what your role in the recruitment of participants will involve. If you would like more information or clarification of any of these points, or if you are interested in helping with the recruitment of the principals, as outlined above, please contact me, George Corbett, at (204) 224-0793 or gcorbett@retsd.mb.ca.

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

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

George Corbett
University of Manitoba Masters Student

Appendix C

Information Letter for Participants (Principals)

Date

Dear (Principal's Name):

I am conducting a study in order to complete my M.Ed thesis in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. My thesis advisor is Dr. Zana Lutfiyya (lutfiyy@ms.umanitoba.ca; zana@umanitoba.ca; 1-204-474-9009). In this study I plan to examine the perspectives of school-based principals and student services personnel who support students with emotional and behavioural issues as they transition into inclusive senior years schools. Specifically, according to these individuals, what policies, structures, attitudes and supports must be in place to assist these students to move from self-contained middle years classrooms for students with emotional and behavioural issues to inclusive senior years schools? The overall focus of the study is twofold. First, I want to gain an understanding of successful strategies, interventions and supports that are effective in assisting in the inclusion of senior years students who present with challenging behaviours. Second, I want to gain an understanding of the ongoing challenges and barriers that inhibit meeting the needs of these students, and therefore, are required to overcome in order to more effectively support this student population.

If you would be willing to share your experience in providing effective behaviour support to students with emotional and behavioural issues as they transition into inclusive senior years schools, please contact me at (204) 224-0793, or gcorbett@retsd.mb.ca. If you agree to be involved, I will meet with you at a time and place that is convenient and interview you for about an hour. A second interview may take place as an opportunity for you to clarify or add to information you provided in the first interview. Everything you tell me will be kept strictly confidential and you do not need to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. You are free to stop the interview at any time.

It is important for you to know that your participation in the project is completely voluntary. No one in the school division will be informed about your involvement in this study. Your participation in this interview is voluntary. A summary of the results will be available to you upon request.

I hope you will consider being involved in this project – your feedback will be very helpful in learning effective ways in providing behaviour support to students who require such support. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or if you require further information.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

George Corbett
University of Manitoba Masters Student

Appendix D

Information Letter for Participants (Student Services Personnel)

Date

Dear (Student Services Personnel's Name):

I am conducting a study in order to complete my M.Ed thesis in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. My thesis advisor is Dr. Zana Lutfiyya (lutfiyy@ms.umanitoba.ca; zana@umanitoba.ca; 1-204-474-9009). In this study I plan to examine the perspectives of school-based principals and student services personnel who support students with emotional and behavioural issues as they transition into inclusive senior years schools. Specifically, according to these individuals, what policies, structures, attitudes and supports must be in place to assist these students to move from self-contained middle years classrooms for students with emotional and behavioural issues to inclusive senior years schools? The overall focus of the study is twofold. First, I want to gain an understanding of successful strategies, interventions and supports that are effective in assisting in the inclusion of senior years students who present with challenging behaviours. Second, I want to gain an understanding of the ongoing challenges and barriers that inhibit meeting the needs of these students, and therefore, are required to overcome in order to more effectively support this student population.

If you would be willing to share your experience in providing effective behaviour support to students with emotional and behavioural issues as they transition into inclusive senior years schools, please contact me at (204) 224-0793, or gcorbett@retsd.mb.ca. If you agree to be involved, I will meet with you at a time and place that is convenient and interview you for about an hour. A second interview may take place as an opportunity for you to clarify or add to information you provided in the first interview. Everything you tell me will be kept strictly confidential and you do not need to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. You are free to stop the interview at any time.

It is important for you to know that your participation in the project is completely voluntary. No one in the school division will be informed about your involvement in this study. Your participation in this interview is voluntary. A summary of the results will be available to you upon request.

I hope you will consider being involved in this project – your feedback will be very helpful in learning effective ways in providing behaviour support to students who require such support. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or if you require further information.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

George Corbett
University of Manitoba Masters Student

Appendix E

Consent Form for Participants

Date

Research Project Title: Building a Bridge to Success: The Inclusion of Students with Emotional and Behavioural Issues in Senior Years

Researcher: George Corbett

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.

I am conducting a study in order to complete my M.Ed thesis in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba. My thesis advisor is Dr. Zana Lutfiyya (lutfiyy@ms.umanitoba.ca; zana@umanitoba.ca; 1-204-474-9009). In this study I plan to examine the perceptions of school-based principals and student services personnel who support students with emotional and behavioural issues as they transition into inclusive senior years schools. Specifically, according to these individuals, what policies, structures, attitudes and supports must be in place to assist these students to move from self-contained middle years classrooms for students with emotional and behavioural issues to inclusive senior years schools? The overall focus of the study is twofold. First, I want to gain an understanding of successful strategies, interventions and supports that are effective in assisting in the inclusion of senior years students who present with challenging behaviours. Second, I want to gain an understanding of the ongoing challenges and barriers that inhibit meeting the needs of these students, and therefore, are required to overcome in order to more effectively support this student population.

I am writing to you at this time to request your participation in this study. This will require you to participate in an interview for approximately one hour. A second interview will take place as an opportunity for you to clarify or add to information you provided in the first interview. The questions you will be asked will be open-ended questions about your experience and ideas in supporting students with emotional and behavioural issues as they transition from middle years schools to senior years schools. The information you provide will be used to understand more about strategies, interventions and supports that make inclusion for these students a possibility. The interviews will be audiotaped using a tape recorder, and detailed written notes will be kept to record your ideas and responses. Only I will have access to the recording and the subsequent documents. The recording and written documents will not include your name or any identifying information about you or the school, and will be stored in a safe, locked location in my house, at all times to ensure confidentiality of the information. These written notes will inform my report necessary to fulfill the requirements for my thesis, but the audiotape, transcript and all notes will be destroyed (shredded) at the conclusion of the study, in May, 2010. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You will be free to disregard any questions during the interview

or withdraw from the interview at any time. If you would like to receive a written summary of the results of this study when it is completed, please indicate this on the form below.

Although the purpose of the study is not to question teaching personnel regarding child abuse, in any situation where people are dealing with children the disclosure of such information is a possibility. Should this arise in the interview, I will follow our divisional protocol and report the information to the appropriate authorities.

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 questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. If you would like more information or clarification of any of these points, please contact me, George Corbett, at (204) 224-0793, or gcorbett@retsd.mb.ca.

This study has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) at the University of Manitoba. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact Dr. Lutfiyya or me directly, or the Human Ethics Coordinator, CTC Building, 208 - 194 Dafoe Road, 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

_____ Please send me a written summary of the results of the study:

_____ (email or mailing address)

UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA | OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES
Office of the Vice-President (Research)

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

APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

August 27, 2009

TO: **George Corbett** (Advisor – Z. Lutfiyya)
Principal Investigator

FROM: **Lorna Guse, Chair**
Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)

Re: **Protocol #E2009:059**
"Building a Bridge to Success: The Inclusion of Students with Emotional and Behavioural Issues in the Senior Years"

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

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

Please note:

- **if you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to Eveline Saurette in the Office of Research Services, (e-mail eveline_saurette@umanitoba.ca, or fax 261-0325), including the Sponsor name, before your account can be opened.**

- **if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.**

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