Teachers' Perspectives of the Role of Nondisabled Peers in Developing the Social Competence of Students With Intellectual Disabilities

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Education

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TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES OF THE ROLE OF NONDISABLED PEERS IN DEVELOPING THE SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

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A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirement of the degree

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ABSTRACT

Educators often expect students with intellectual disabilities to develop social competence through peer interaction in inclusive elementary classrooms. This qualitative study used in-depth, semistructured interviews to investigate teachers' perspectives of social competence, the quality of peer interactions in their classrooms, their part in facilitating those interactions, the roles of the nondisabled peers, as well as the potential benefits to those peers of interacting with students with intellectual disabilities. Findings suggest that teachers are using many interaction interventions to facilitate peer interactions and a variety of nondisabled peer roles are described. The peer utilitarian support roles were caretaking, tutoring, providing information, and suggesting ideas or strategies. The peer social support roles were including, accepting, modeling, being friendly, clarifying, encouraging, provoking, and ignoring. Peer utilitarian support roles were described more frequently than the peer social support roles. The participants described several benefits and a few costs to the nondisabled peers from interacting with students with intellectual disabilities. Some educational dichotomies (i.e., social vs. academic emphasis, lesson planning vs. teachable moment, individual vs. group needs) seemed to permeate the interviews. Teachers need to be encouraged to capitalize on the "teachable moments" to meet social needs. Understanding the roles that the nondisabled peers could perform may lead to increased social and academic inclusion and the development of social competence of students with intellectual disabilities.

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DEDICATION

To all students with intellectual disabilities...

May you be truly included and develop socially

in the elementary classrooms of tomorrow!!

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Chapter 1

Introduction

I became interested in the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities because of my yearning to be a more effective integration resource teacher. In particular, I wanted to become better at developing realistic social goals for students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and to help them meet those goals within a regular classroom setting. I believe all students gain many social benefits when students with intellectual disabilities are included in the regular classroom. However, these social benefits seem to be very difficult to measure and, therefore, I have been hesitant about reporting individual student progress towards mastering their identified social goals. As I examined the literature on teaching and evaluating social skills and increasing social competence, I came to realize that focusing attention on individual students and their needs is not enough. A focus on the features of the environments in which student social interactions take place also is necessary. As I explored this concept further, I designed a schema to help organize my thinking about developing social competence in the school setting. This schema will be presented in Chapter 2 along with the relevant literature.

In my work as an integration resource teacher, I had recognized that some classroom environments were more conducive to the smooth and successful social integration of students with intellectual disabilities. I wondered what circumstances in these classrooms supported the development of social

competence. I wanted to explore the more "successful" teachers' perspectives of social competence, and learn how these teachers created a classroom environment that tended to promote growth in the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities.

Towards that end, I conducted a beginning study in the spring of 1998 (Challis Cozzuol, 1998). A copy of the Ethics Approval for this study can found in Appendix A. Six themes emerged from this small sample of five elementary teachers. These themes were concepts of social competence, viewpoints about students with intellectual disabilities, evaluation, roles of peers, classroom strategies, and school supports. I was surprised to find that, although I was interviewing teachers, many of their comments concerned the roles of nondisabled peers in developing the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities. A variety of roles were described. For instance, some peers acted as helpers and appropriate role models. Other peer roles were more surprising to me. For example, several of the teachers described peers who often explained the actions or needs of students with intellectual disabilities to teachers or who shared integration strategies that had worked before with new teachers and peers. I began to phrase this peer role as acting as "integration activists". The teachers also said that the social competence of students without disabilities seemed to be enhanced by having a student with an intellectual disability in their classroom. Patience, acceptance of differences, empathy, and leadership were specific social competencies that were reported in this context.

Purpose of the Study

In this study, I want to extend and refine my understanding of teachers' perspectives on the roles of the peers in developing the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities. I want to probe their perspectives on the quality and quantity of peer interactions in their classroom, their part in facilitating these peer interactions, and their thoughts about the potential benefits of tapping into this natural system of support.

Thesis Organization

A review of the pertinent literature is presented in the next chapter. My research methodology is described in Chapter Three. The findings of the research will be documented in Chapter Four. Chapter Five will provide a summarizing conclusion and propose limitations and implications.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

In this chapter, I provide some operational definitions of students with intellectual disabilities and social competence. I present a school house schema which organizes a review of the pertinent literature on developing social competence of students with intellectual disabilities within the school setting.

Intellectual Disabilities

Social competence is a fundamental notion associated with the definition and classification of exceptional children. The exceptional children included in this study were elementary grade (1-6) students with intellectual disabilities. The students with intellectual disabilities in this study included children with intellectual disabilities such as Down syndrome, autism, fetal alcohol syndrome, and other adverse neurological conditions that impair cognitive functioning. All had presented evidence of the disability prior to the age of 18 with the expectation that their disabilities would be long term (Kostelnik & Soderman, 1998). Gresham and MacMillan (1997) state that the modern criteria (since the early 60's) used to classify persons with intellectual disabilities have consistently emphasized and weighted the importance of cognitive and social competence equally. Both the American Association of Mental Retardation (1993) and the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (fourth edition) (1994) definitions of mental retardation require subaverage intellectual functioning of approximately 70-75 IQ points or below

and deficits in at least two of ten adaptive functioning areas. These adaptive functioning areas are communication, self-care, home living, social skills, community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics, leisure, and work and are a part of a multidimensional construct of social competence.

Social Competence

Gresham (1986) defines social competence as:

> ...an evaluative term based on judgments (given certain criteria) that a person has performed social tasks adequately. These judgments may be based on opinions of significant others (e.g., parents, teachers), comparisons to explicit criteria (e.g., number of social tasks correctly performed in relation to some criteria), or comparisons to some normative sample. (p. 14)

Consequently, students with intellectual disabilities have, by definition, already been evaluated to have a deficit in social competence. Therefore, social skills training has been viewed as an important component of the education of children with intellectual disabilities (Farmer, Pearl & Van Acker, 1996). Social skills are "those behaviours which, within a given situation, predict important social outcomes" (Gresham, 1986, p.5). He proposes that two basic social outcomes must be considered: (a) positive peer relations and interactions, and (b) favourable adult judgments about social skills. The former outcome acknowledges the importance of the influence of the child's or youth's peer group in shaping and changing his or her social behaviour and interactions. The

latter recognizes that adults (e.g., parents, teachers, administrators, psychologists, etc.) are the ultimate judges of whether a child or youth is using appropriate social skills, especially with respect to educational decisions (e.g., instructional provisions, behaviour management, etc.) (Sugai & Lewis, 1996). It was with this latter outcome in mind that I began to study how to judge the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities. I thought that if I could learn to assess this multidimensional construct more effectively, I could help to develop better social skills in students with intellectual disabilities. I designed a schema designed to help organize my thinking about social competence in school settings. This schema is presented in Figure 1.

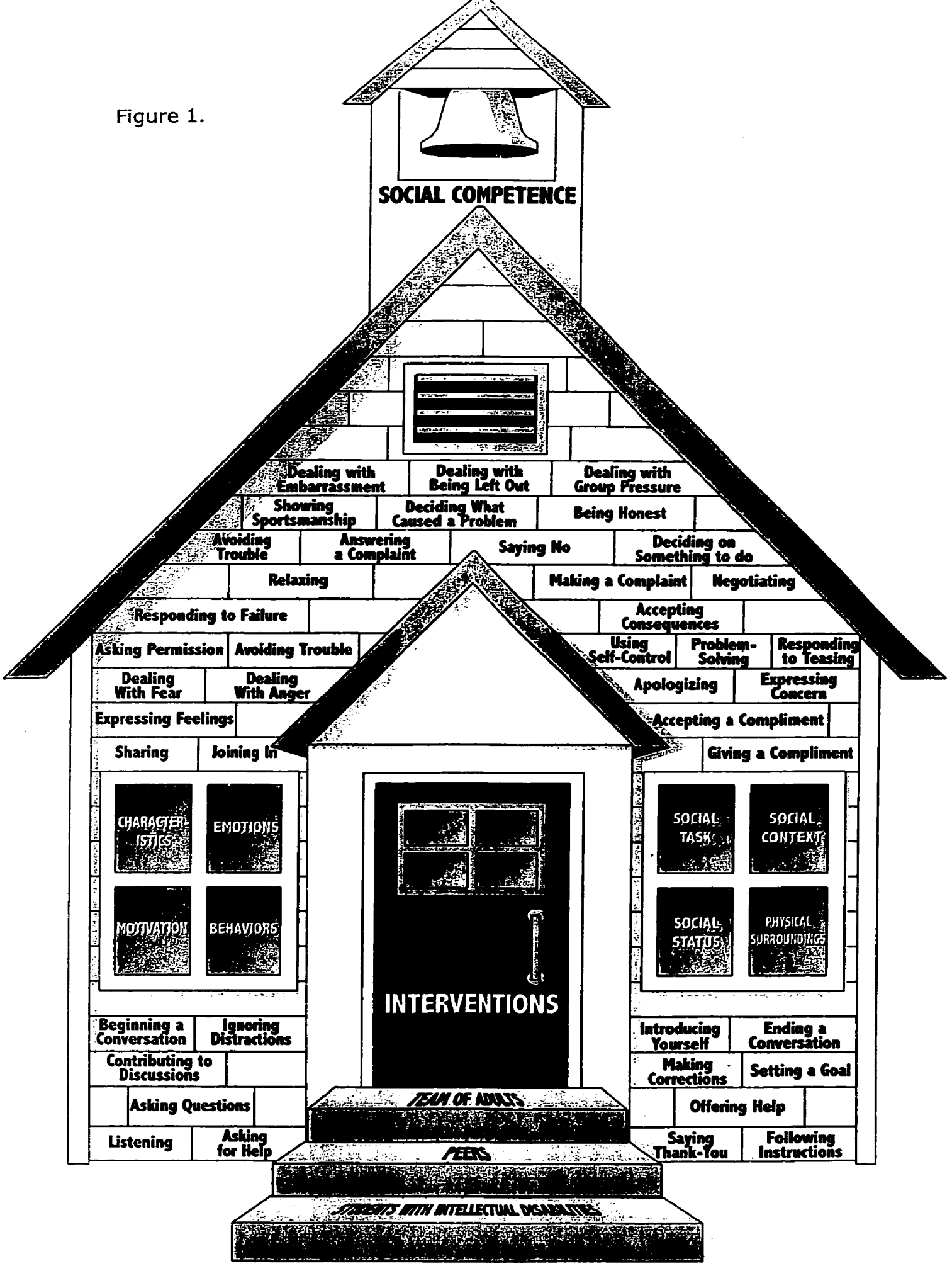
Schoolhouse Schema

A few prominent features of this "schoolhouse" schema include the overarching "roof" of social competence and the "bricks" of prosocial skills. The "steps" represent the people who enter through the "doors" of intervention. The two "windows" are divided into four panes that look at either individual or environmental factors that need to be considered when contemplating the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities.

Individual Window

Initially, let's look through the "windows" at some of the factors that influence social competence. The "window" on the left looks at social competence from an individual, student-centered perspective. The four "panes" explore personal characteristics, behaviours, emotions, and motivation.

Figure 1.


SOCIAL COMPETENCE
Dealing with Embarrassment
Dealing with Being Left Out
Dealing with Group Pressure
Showing Sportsmanship
Deciding What Caused a Problem
Being Honest
Avoiding Trouble
Answering a Complaint
Saying No
Deciding on Something to do
Relaxing
Making a Complaint
Negotiating
Responding to Failure
Accepting Consequences
Asking Permission
Avoiding Trouble
Using Self-Control
Problem-Solving
Responding to Teasing
Dealing With Fear
Dealing With Anger
Apologizing
Expressing Concern
Expressing Feelings
Accepting a Compliment
Sharing
Joining In
Giving a Compliment
CHARACTERISTICS
EMOTIONS
MOTIVATION
BEHAVIORS
SOCIAL TASK
SOCIAL CONTEXT
SOCIAL STATUS
PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS
INTERVENTIONS
Beginning a Conversation
Ignoring Distractions
Contributing to Discussions
Asking Questions
Listening
Asking for Help
Introducing Yourself
Ending a Conversation
Making Corrections
Setting a Goal
Offering Help
Saying Thank-You
Following Instructions
TEAM OF ADULTS
PEERS
STUDENTS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

Characteristics. First, all students have certain characteristics that they bring to every social situation. These characteristics include age, gender, race, physical attractiveness, and skills. Developmental theorists have asserted that individuals tend to associate with others who have characteristics similar to their own (Farmer, Pearl, & Acker, 1996). While inclusion has facilitated their association with peers of a similar chronological age, students with intellectual disabilities may have cognitive attributes that affect the quantity and quality of interactions with their peers. Another characteristic that influences social interactions is gender. Across all ages, students tend to form same-sex peer associations (Farmer et al., 1996). The race of a student will have varying social significance depending on their community's attitudes and beliefs. However, the available data suggests that racially homogeneous peer associations are evident in elementary school and tend to increase in prevalence as students grow older (Farmer et al., 1996). Physical attractiveness also affects the willingness of others to engage in interactions (Kostelnik & Soderman, 1998), indicating the need to attend to the self-care and fashion skills of students with intellectual disabilities. Additionally, Van Hook (1992) cites several researchers who found that people with skills that contribute to the social or task goals of the group are more likely to be accepted than those with characteristics that create social disruption. Even if a student with an intellectual disability lacks some of the skills necessary to contribute to group academic goals, consideration should be given to the skills they do possess that could contribute to group social cohesion.

Behaviours. A second "windowpane" permits us to look at a variety of individual behaviours that impact on social competence. Educators tend to look through this pane frequently in the hope that improving students' social behaviours will improve their social relations. Consequently, educators may try to assess the social skills of students with intellectual disabilities (e.g., greeting, sharing, turn-taking, handling frustration, etc.) and then set about teaching the "missing" skills. For example, McGinnis and Goldstein (1984) advocate teaching prosocial skills. I have placed these prosocial skills on the "bricks" of the school because these specific skills or behaviours are very important for building social competence. They are like the building blocks for positive social interactions, although I suggest that developing social competence of students with intellectual disabilities involves more than focusing on their overt behaviours.

Some behaviours may be associated with specific intellectual disabilities. For example, Castles (1996) asserts that children with Down Syndrome typically have a predominately positive mood, a low intensity of responses, and a high threshold for stimulation, while young people with Fragile X Syndrome are often impulsive, hyperactive, and distractible. Children with autism often exhibit repetitive, unusual or bizarre behaviours (Jordan & Powell, 1995). The behaviours typical of students with intellectual disabilities have implications for the development of their social competencies within school settings. Gresham (1997) suggests that peer rejection may be caused by high rates of externalizing behaviour (e.g., aggression, disruption, noncompliance, etc.) rather than

'reputational bias' (i.e., being labeled) or non-behavioural factors (e.g., intelligence, achievement, physical attractiveness, or prowess). In other words, overt negative behaviours may influence peer rejection more than being labeled or other personal characteristics.

Emotions. Another "windowpane" looks at individuals' emotions and their strategies for coping with their emotions. Physiologically, the body reacts similarly when different emotions are experienced (i.e., the heart beats faster and the breath comes faster for excitement, fear, and joy). We learn to label the emotions by the context of our experiences. People with intellectual disabilities are commonly viewed as being overly emotional (Castles, 1996). Research about children with Down Syndrome indicates that they have the capacity to experience a complete range of feelings and that they develop emotionally in the same stages, but at a slower pace, as normally developing children (Castles, 1996). Hobson (1993) reports that autistic children could not match facial expressions with appropriate vocalizations although they were quite adept at matching animals with their animal sounds. He believes that autism involves a specific and innate inability to understand emotion, which is independent of general intellectual ability. He sees the prime deficit as an emotional one in that the child with autism is not able to perceive the emotions of others and thus fails to develop a social sense based on a shared perspective of the world. In addition, many students with intellectual disabilities have difficulty communicating their emotions to other people (Castles, 1996). Atwood (1998)

claims that "in the last few years there has been increasing interest in one of the most important components of social behaviour, namely the communication of emotions or feelings" (p.57). Students with intellectual disabilities may have unexpressed emotions that need to be recognized within their social context. Children with intellectual disabilities may need to be provided with strategies to communicate or handle their emotions.

Motivation. The final individual "windowpane" looks at the concept of motivation. Motivation is an important element in all learning and needs to be considered when looking at a student's social competence. Castles (1996) claims that many people with intellectual disabilities have learned that acts of helplessness attract more attention than displays of competence and maturity because they may have been rewarded inadvertently (or purposefullly) for dependency and lack of initiative. In addition, individuals with intellectual disabilities often are motivated more strongly to avoid failure than to gain approval through achievement. Chronic experiences of failure may have caused them to have a low expectancy for success which, in turn, may be reinforced by teachers' expectations (Castles, 1996). Castles argues that one should not assume that overall deficiencies in social performance are due to a lack of learning the component behaviours. Another factor that should be considered is whether students' intrinsic motivation is influenced by highly controlled learning environments and the use of external rewards (e.g., tangible reinforcers, stickers, grades, attention, praise).

Environmental Window

The window on the right of the schoolhouse schema in Figure 1 represents four environmental factors that should be looked at when evaluating a student's social competence.

Social context. The first of these factors is the social context. The social context involves the "who", "where", and "when" of social behaviour. In recent years, there have been many debates about the most appropriate learning contexts and school environments for students with intellectual disabilities. Advocates of inclusion propose that social competence would benefit from increased peer acceptance, positive social interactions, and the modeling of appropriate social skills (Strully & Strully, 1996). Others advocate for the unique advantages, including small class size, specially trained teachers, auxiliary services, functional skills curricula, and individualized instruction of segregated special education classrooms (Sandler, 1999). Freeman (2000) reviewed 36 studies comparing students with intellectual disabilities in general education and special education settings and concluded that fully integrated children demonstrated better social behaviours with respect to social adjustment, interactions, maturity, and general social competence. The nature of the relationships between people is another important part of the social context. For example, what may be considered an appropriate greeting for a peer in the gymnasium may be quite inappropriate in greeting the principal in the school office. Haring (1992) explains that the meaning of an event is derived within an

environmental context. Matson (1990) notes that the outcomes of training efforts must be viewed in the context of the performance of functional skills across time, persons, places, and circumstances as students with intellectual disabilities have difficulties with generalization of functional skills. Educators need to be cognizant of the contexts in which skills are taught and ensure that they provide opportunities for generalization across many contexts.

Social tasks. Another environmental "windowpane" looks into social tasks. Social tasks could include such things as sharing learning materials or a workspace, helping with group functioning, or discussing a topic. Guralnick (1993) points out that in order to establish productive interactions with peers, young children must be able to contend with an array of social tasks such as gaining entry into peer groups, resolving conflicts, and maintaining play. However, most social tasks involve several behaviours such as nonverbal gestures, verbal communications, affective responses, and social cognitive skills such as interpersonal problem solving (Matson, 1990). Therefore, social learning tasks, like academic tasks, need to be structured carefully for students with intellectual disabilities. Also, social tasks need to occur in natural or authentic contexts that will help to promote generalization across tasks, settings, time, and people.

Social status. A third "windowpane" looks at social status. This aspect of social competence usually is measured using sociometrics. The sociometric literature on students with intellectual disabilities consistently reveals that these

students are less accepted and more frequently rejected than their peers (Gresham, 1997). Miller and Clarke (1991) caution that educators may risk blaming the victims of stereotyping for their rejection by others. Because of prevailing stereotypes, nondisabled children may behave in a relatively unfriendly or patronizing fashion toward their peers with disabilities (Miller & Clarke, 1991). Children with intellectual disabilities also may confirm negative expectations by behaving inappropriately. As well, their social status or self-image may discourage them from behaving in a socially appropriate manner, even when they have the skills to do so. For instance, the anticipation of rejection might inadvertently produce it (Miller & Clarke, 1991).

Farmer et al. (1996) discuss some additional issues in assessing social status. They note that students with low social acceptance are not necessarily socially isolated. They found that most mainstreamed elementary students were members of peer clusters which likely contributed to more favorable views of their own social acceptance. Classroom social networks refer to the social boundaries that emerge as students form, maintain, and modify peer groups (Farmer et al., 1996). These boundaries may be maintained by formal institutional processes such as pullout programs or informal processes of peer selection based on factors such as preferences and reputations. A child's social network promotes both continuity and change in behaviour and personality. As children develop, they tend to be selected into new social networks that are similar to their prior ones. A problem arises when children with intellectual

disabilities become embedded in a social network that promotes or complements their problematic behaviour (Farmer et al., 1996). Consequently, the social status of students with intellectual disabilities and their membership in peer clusters or social networks must be considered an aspect of social competence.

Physical Surroundings. A final factor in the environmental window is physical surroundings. These physical surroundings include the classroom, its furnishings, and other areas used for learning activities. Some aspects of the physical surroundings are lighting, temperature, spatial relations, colors, noise, and seating arrangements. These factors can affect attitudes and social behaviour in up to forty percent of all students (Dunn, Beaudy, & Klavas, 1989). Students with intellectual disabilities, as nondisabled peers, may have different tolerances for levels of noise, colours, lighting, movement, and personal space.

Personal Experiences

The windowpanes described above illustrate several considerations for looking into the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities. As an integration resource teacher, I have tried to assess students' repertoires of social behaviours, prioritize social behaviours that need to be learned or improved upon, include social behavioural goals in their IEPs, and discuss these goals with their support team including teachers, parents, and paraprofessionals. Sometimes, the goals also are discussed and negotiated with the child. Occasionally, applied behaviour analysis programs, social skill groups, or curriculum units targeting social concepts like friendship, personal safety, or

anger management are implemented. At the next reporting period, I typically have tried to collect more informal assessments and then tried to determine if any progress has been made. Unfortunately, I am usually disappointed and the same social goals continue to be identified (sometimes throughout the child's school career!). Even if the child has demonstrated a target behaviour, it often does not generalize across people, places, times, and situations. After exploring this construct of social competence further, I think I have discovered the source of our frustration. We have looking through just one window - the individual window!

Perhaps, the emphasis on developing IEPs and the tendency of educators to engage in task analysis have contributed to the development of interventions that focus on the individual's characteristics, behaviours, emotions, and motivation. In other words, interventions derived from a one-window construct of social competence. By relying only on the 'individual window', educators may have tended to develop individual interventions that fail to take social tasks, contexts, status, and physical surroundings into account. Farmer and Farmer (1996) support this hypothesis when they say:

> The inclusion of students with exceptionalities into mainstream classrooms requires that we look beyond the characteristics of the students with exceptionalities to examine the classrooms into which they are being placed. The social processes within classrooms and schools can not be ignored for students with exceptionalities. (p. 448)

Doors of Intervention

The 'doors' to the schoolhouse represent the interventions that have been or could be used to facilitate social competence in children with intellectual disabilities. A few illustrative interventions are briefly discussed in the next section.

Individual interventions. Typically, individual interventions are forms of social skills training that are highly structured and contrived. In general, these have been found to have limited effectiveness in terms of the stability and generalization of behavioural and social gains (Farmer et al., 1996).

Another type of intervention is the assignment of paraprofessionals to individual students with intellectual disabilities. However, the mere presence of an adult one-to-one aide creates another characteristic that dramatically differentiates these students with learning disabilities from their peers in social learning situations. It may be that paraprofessionals sometimes actually impede progress in developing social competence, increase "learned helplessness", and decrease motivation (Marks, Schrader, & Levine, 1999). Udvari-Solner (1996) proposes that consideration of a paraprofessional or other support personnel should come only after curricular, instructional, environmental, and other less intrusive interventions have been considered. If an assistant is assigned, it is important to find a balance between the positive influence of adult involvement and the potentially restrictive influence of adult presence on peer interactions (Hall & McGregor, 2000).

Thus, based on the "school house model" of social competence, interventions from an individual perspective that seem auspicious include: (a) developing language for expressing emotions, (b) facilitating belonging in same gender peer clusters to reinforce prosocial skills, (c) encouraging a high standard of personal hygiene and physical attractiveness, (d) increasing self-motivation, (e) reducing or eliminating reliance on paraprofessionals, and (f) intervening behaviourally primarily with respect to aggressive and disruptive behaviours because these seem to be the only two types of behaviour that reduce social acceptance significantly.

Environmental interventions. As educators, we need to look through the environmental window more closely to better understand social tasks, status, context, and physical surroundings in order to 'open the doors' to more effective interventions. We need to assess the types of classroom social tasks that occur naturally and structure goals so students with intellectual disabilities can participate and contribute. For example, opening the 'door' of cooperative learning in the classroom creates opportunities for social inclusion. The five basic elements of cooperative learning are positive interdependence, individual accountability, face-to-face interaction, social skills, and group processing (Johnson & Johnson, 1986). If academic learning tasks are structured around these five elements, it is likely that specific social tasks will be identified. Research by Johnson and Johnson (1986) has confirmed this postulate and they have provided direction for including students with intellectual disabilities in

cooperative learning groups. "The impact on collaborative skills, friendships, appreciation of human diversity, perspective-taking ability and quality of life is considerable". (Johnson, Johnson, Holubec, & Roy, 1984, p.75).

Another intervention that has an impact on social tasks is differentiated instruction. Manitoba Education and Training (1996) provides teachers with strategies that promote flexibility in tasks and assessments. Special and regular educators may need to evaluate instructional practices before making decisions about how to include students with intellectual disabilities. We may need to collaborate more in classroom lesson planning in order to design group tasks to which all students can contribute.

Furthermore, we need to expand our use of social contexts to enhance generalization. Social behaviour occurs in a context, and as such, any intervention that does not take this context into account will encounter major difficulties in generalization (Gresham, 1997). Farmer et al. (1996) caution that once students become embedded in specific contexts (e.g., the resource room, segregated program, life skills class, etc.), the behaviours that they adopt and the expectations that others come to have of them tend to constrain their development and keep them in similar roles and contexts throughout their school careers. Farmer et al. (1996) state that:

> Students with disabilities are likely to meet many social challenges during their school careers. Although they can be assisted to meet those challenges through social skill training, the effectiveness of such training is

> likely to be dependent, in part, on the social context in which the student is embedded. The challenge that lies ahead for both special and regular educators is to determine how to use the social context to optimize the social growth of students with disabilities. (p. 256)

We need to examine how often we expect individual students to work in different contexts than their peers (e.g., resource room, library, hallway, community, etc.) and carefully weigh the pros and cons.

Thirdly, we need to look at the social status of the student relative to others within the group, classroom, and school community. Opening the "door" of peer assessments may be a useful way to measure patterns of interaction that remain relatively stable over time, especially in upper elementary classrooms (Campbell & Siperstein, 1994). For example, levels of rejection may warrant an intervention with the other students such as providing them with knowledge about the disability to reduce stereotyping, organizing a 'Circle of Friends' (Perske, 1988), or altering the cueing and reinforcement of a social network that may be supporting an undesirable behaviour. Farmer et al. (1996) suggest that placement in a regular education classroom does not necessarily enhance the social development of students with disabilities. Without proper attention and focus on classroom composition, the natural processes of selection and socialization may support and strengthen the problematic characteristics of the student. Although there is little research exploring the efficacy of social interventions that involve the direct manipulation of classroom social networks,

he suggests asking the following questions: Are there social network constraints that limit the student's social opportunities? What social events or roles can help the student develop new skills or characteristics? Is the student associating with others who promote or maintain his or her problematic behaviours? Are there individuals in the classroom who can positively elicit and support the student's new skills or characteristics without a social cost to themselves?

Finally, we need to look at the physical surroundings in the classroom. An environmental assessment of space, lighting, noise, temperature and air quality may be warranted, especially in older schools. An example of a physical environment checklist was created by Smith, Neisworth, and Greer (1978). Also the physical arrangement of furnishings can influence social interactions through traffic patterns and promoting communication. For example, Murdick and Petch–Hogan (1996) found that verbal communication tends to move across tables rather than around them. A classroom's physical organization should be developed around the type of grouping strategies used by the teachers. For some students (i.e., students with physical disabilities) standards for accessibility are also a consideration (Wood, 1998).

Developing balanced interventions. The preceding discussion of the need to look more closely through the environmental window does not mean to imply that looking through the individual window is somehow incorrect. Rather, we need to create new ways to look through both windows at the dynamic

interactions between the features of the individual and the features of the environment before we attempt to intervene. Bijou and Bayer (1978) noted that:

> The interaction between the child and the environment is continuous, reciprocal, and interdependent. We cannot analyze the child without reference to the environment, nor is it possible to analyze an environment without reference to a child. The two form an inseparable unit consisting of an interrelated set of variables. (p. 29)

Without carefully designed environmental interventions, these dynamic interactions are likely to cause any changes at the level of the individual to be short-lived (Farmer et al., 1996). In addition, Weissburg, Caplan and Harwood (1991) claim that school-based programs that focus solely on the child or exclusively on the environment are not as effective as those that simultaneously educate the child and make positive changes in the environment. Finally, Siperstein, Leffert, and Widaman (1996) note that recent programs to improve children's social competencies have emphasized not only the need to provide direct instruction to improve children's behaviour but also the need to create changes in the classroom environment in order to foster more positive perceptions and expectations among fellow students. Multiyear, classroom based prevention programs, such as Lion's Quest (Lion's Club International & Quest International, 1992), Second Step (Committee for Children, 1992), First Step to Success (Golly, Feil, Kavanagh, Severson, Stiller, & Walker, 1996), and Conflict Resolution (Sadalla, Holmberg, & Hallingan, 1990), may be promising options for

students with intellectual disabilities, as well as other students entangled in counterproductive social networks. These programs teach generic, broadly applicable personal and social competencies, such as self-control, stress-management, problem solving, decision-making, communication, peer resistance, and assertiveness (Weissberg et.al., 1991). Advocates for students with intellectual disabilities may need to lobby for such school-wide intervention programs that promote the social competencies of all students.

Steps of People Involved.

The "steps" in the school house schema symbolize the people involved in mediating the development of social competencies in students with intellectual disabilities. On the first "step", of course, there are the students with intellectual disabilities themselves. However, we have already looked at that 'individual window' and how students' characteristics, behaviours, emotions, and motivation may affect their social competence. The earlier argument of the need to look more closely at the features of the environment compels me to focus on the other people or "steps" that are found in the school setting and how they may influence the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities.

The Peers Step

On the next "step" are the nondisabled peers of students with intellectual disabilities. They are fundamental in developing social competence - they are whom we want the student with intellectual disabilities to be social with! Social understanding and social skills are learned and strengthened primarily through

interactive processes of peer play and work (Katz & McClellan, 1991). The immediate feedback received from peers is critical in helping children assess the effectiveness of their behaviours (Helper, 1997).

Nondisabled peers are a natural support found in elementary general education classrooms. Teachers are recognizing the significance of this largely untapped resource. York and Tundidor (1995) found that student discussions about inclusion were highly focused on social and interactive aspects of schooling. These student groups talked about how they could be involved in facilitating greater inclusion of their peers with disabilities. Compared with the adult groups, students were more open to greater degrees of inclusion. Furthermore, in a study by Salisbury, Evans, and Palombaro, (1997), teachers successfully taught elementary students to use a collaborative problem solving process to eliminate their fears with respect to various issues related to the inclusion of students with disabilities. Children successfully assumed the role of problem-solver, identifying solutions to address the physical, social, academic, and staffing problems associated with the inclusion of students with disabilities in their classrooms.

Meyer and her colleagues (1998) found substantial variations in the social relationships occurring between students with severe disabilities and their peers. They identified six distinct "frames" that characterized the relationships they saw. Some of the relationships observed illustrated undesirable social status (e.g., "ghosts and guests" described an invisible social status; "I'll help" described a

non-reciprocal relationship; " the inclusion kid" suggested differential treatment based on disability). Other relationships were more equitable and mutually rewarding, encompassed by the descriptors "just another kid", "regular friends", and "best friends forever". The purpose of this study is to explore these relationships or roles that the peers play in developing the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities in their classroom, at least from the perspective of the teacher.

Some researchers have investigated the outcomes of inclusion for nondisabled students. Staub (1996) summarizes this research and concludes that studies have shown no slowdown in nondisabled children's learning in inclusive classrooms and that the presence of students with severe disabilities has had no effect on levels of allocated or engaged time from their teachers. In fact, a growing body of research suggests that nondisabled students can gain a number of important benefits from opportunities to interact with their classmates with intellectual disabilities. Staub and Peck (1995) have identified five positive themes: (a) reduced fear of human differences accompanied by increased comfort and awareness, (b) growth in social cognition with such skills as tolerance, patience, communication, and support, (c) improvements in self-concept, (d) development of personal moral and ethical principles, and (e) warm and caring friendships. A study by Kishi and Meyer (1994) indicate that these benefits associated with relationships with peers with disabilities have been found to persist far beyond the time that students are actively involved with each

other. One of the purposes of this study is to further explore the perspectives of elementary teachers with respect to the potential benefits of nondisabled peer roles and interactions with students with intellectual disabilities.

Interventions to promote peer interactions. In reviewing contributions to social competence theory, Gresham (1997) describes the work of Strain and Shores during the 1970's. They began investigating peer social initiations, sociodramatic play activities, and social reciprocity, which laid the groundwork for the peer mediated social skills training literature. They maintain that nondisabled peers should be used to facilitate social interactions with children because: (a) nondisabled peers are natural discriminative stimuli for positive social interactions, (b) nondisabled peers, as opposed to teachers, are more effective in facilitating the generalization and maintenance of social behaviour because they are active participants in naturalistic settings, and (c) teachers' involvement in ongoing social interactions (via attention and praise) often disrupt or terminate ongoing peer interactions (Gresham, 1997). Interactions between students are essential as they provide students with intellectual disabilities opportunities to observe and model the behaviours of their socially competent peers, practice newly acquired social skills, and receive reinforcement from their nondisabled peers for exhibiting these skills (Maag, 1995).

In recent years, attention has been placed on creating a community of learners where children feel that they belong and can learn together. Frieberg (1996) uses the term "tourists" as compared to "citizens" to describe students in

classrooms. It may be that students are simply visiting the teacher's classroom for a year, rather than becoming citizens within their own community. This metaphor may be especially applicable to students with intellectual disabilities who may not even be physically present in the regular classroom at all times.

Some teachers use class meetings, sharing circles, or councils as tools for building this sense of community (Elias et al. 1997). These activities provide a structured opportunity for each student to share information about themselves, their feelings, their schoolwork, or other events. They may pass a "talking stick" or other object to designate the speaker and ensure turn-taking. Creating this sense of belonging or citizenship in the classroom may help to increase social competencies in all students, including students with intellectual disabilities. Manitoba Education and Training (1996) writes about helping teachers "to explore the often subtle attitudes and practices that turn a class into a community of learners, and to help them establish a classroom that includes all students."

A major key to successful integration is the development of informal peer supports and friendships for isolated students (Forest, 1987). Friends can be simply defined as people who know and like each other (DeGeorge, 1998), while peer support is the kind of help one student may give to another, sometimes via an adult's request. Friendship is a matter of individual choice and cannot be forced (Stainback, Stainback, & Wilkinson, 1992). However, friendship development is affected by how the environment is arranged to provide

opportunities for social interaction, by encouragement to interact with peers and to share common activities, and by the continuity of relationships across settings and time (Searcy, 1996).

Some teachers recruit peers to participate in a Circle of Friends (Perske, 1988). In a Circle of Friends, classmates volunteer to be a part of a small group of friends who support a child with disabilities. They meet on an ongoing basis to consider the needs of the participants, usually initially focusing on the needs of the student with an intellectual disability. These meetings can help to structure successful recess periods and social interactions at lunchtime.

Some teachers carefully arrange their physical environment to facilitate peer interaction and support. The proximity of a student with an intellectual disability to his or her peers will directly affect the opportunities for peer interactions (Stainback, 1992). Lewis and Doorlag (1999) report that verbal communication tends to move across tables rather than around them. Williams and Downing (1998) found that students favored a classroom structure where students were seated in groups of four. Learning centers, reading nooks, and games areas also impact on peer interaction.

Some teachers utilize peer-tutoring by pairing peers who can help each other with work and teaching them skills for helping and cooperating. Jenkins and Jenkins (1981) state that peer tutoring is a system of instruction in which pairs of students help one another and learn by teaching. It has been found to increase the number of interactions between students with disabilities and their

nondisabled peers and it also helps students who are not liked by classmates to become more socially accepted (Fulton, LeRoy, Pinchney, & Weekley, 1994). However, MacMahon, Wacker, Sasso, Berg, and Newton (1996) caution that those interventions that promote instructional or teaching interactions may inhibit the social behaviour of children with intellectual disabilities, rather than promote social support and friendship development.

Some teachers use group-oriented contingencies. In a dependent group-oriented contingency, reinforcement for the group depends upon the performance of an individual student (Maag, 1995). For example, a student with an intellectual disability can be taught a specific social skill and is required to demonstrate it during a group activity so that the group earns a point or reinforcer. It is hoped that the target student's nondisabled peers will provide additional reinforcers in the form of encouragement or appreciation for earning the "point" and, consequently facilitate positive social interactions. In an interdependent group-oriented contingency, all members of the group must meet the criterion of the contingency for anyone to receive reinforcement. Although group-oriented contingencies represent a powerful method for promoting entrapment, where nondisabled peers provide reinforcement for the student with a intellectual disability engaging in a social skill, it is important to monitor their use for the occurrence of negative peer pressure and scapegoating (Maag, 1995).

Some teachers attempt to counteract stereotypic ideas about disabilities through direct instruction aimed at increasing their knowledge about disabilities (Calloway, 1999). They may invite individuals with disabilities to visit the class, visit their job sites, and read books about individuals with disabilities who are successful, capable members of the community.

Some teachers provide activities at the beginning of the year, and periodically throughout the year, to ensure that children know each other (e.g., name games, getting acquainted activities such as graphing favorites or find a partner who also likes the same thing, etc.) (Jones & Jones, 1998).

Some teachers use literature with friendship themes as an effective tool to increase motivation and generalize friendship skills (DeGeorge, 1998). The books can be used as catalysts for discussions and problem solving as well as resources for language arts assignments. Literature that focuses on specific issues critical to students with intellectual disabilities allows educators to build disability awareness, increased self-awareness, and promote discussion (Orr et al., 1997).

Some teachers involve students in role-playing various friendship or social skills and scenarios (e.g., how to handle refusals or rejections). Variations have included using puppets, small figurines, videos, and adult demonstrations (Kostelnik & Soderman, 1998). Providing non verbal roles during drama activities is a possible educational activity that has been found to increase interactions between children with disabilities and nondisabled peers (Goldstein, Wickstrom, Hoyson, Jamieson, & Odom, 1988).

Some teachers choose to teach nondisabled peers about communication strategies that might encourage social exchanges with students with intellectual disabilities. These strategies may include information about their communication system, adaptive devices, conversation books, and interpreting communicative exchanges when necessary (Hunt, Davis, Wrenn, Hirose-Hatae, & Goetz, 1997). Hall and McGregor (2000) recommend that educators may need to assist nondisabled peers to become more sensitive to nonverbal initiations and behaviours in addition to assuring that communication systems are used on the playground.

The foregoing section outlines many of the ways that nondisabled peers may be interacting with students with intellectual disabilities in elementary classrooms. These interactions may help to develop the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities, as well as the social competence of their nondisabled peers.

The Adult Step

On the third "step" of the school house schema are the adults. These adults include parents, teachers, administrators, clinicians, paraprofessionals, volunteers, and others. Clearly, parents have a fundamental role in developing social competence in their children with intellectual disabilities. However, this study is limited to the development of social competence within the school setting. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, parents are considered as a part of the team of adults involved in developing the social competence of

students with intellectual disabilities. Many personnel involved in inclusive schools assert that collaboration is the key to their success in meeting the needs of all students (Tiegerma-Farber & Radziewiecz, 1998). Although a collaborative team effort is critical in facilitating the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities, this study will explore the classroom teachers' perceptions only. Therefore, I would like to now explore how elementary teachers' attitudes and perceptions may influence the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities.

Significance of the classroom teacher. Campbell and Siperstein (1994) state that teachers set the tone for what occurs in their classrooms. They do this most powerfully through their expectations of students and their teaching style. Expectations are the hopes and aspirations that people have for the behaviour of others and they may be based on previous experiences, observations, hearsay, and personal biases (Campbell & Siperstein, 1994). Students tend to accommodate themselves to teacher expectations. For example, if teachers expect that their students will treat one another with respect, respect is more likely to be demonstrated in their classroom. Thus, teacher expectations of students with intellectual disabilities and their peers may influence their level of social competence.

A teacher's style in the classroom determines how the environment is organized and how instruction is delivered. Teaching styles are the ways that teachers use authority: the degrees to which teachers share power, leadership,

and control with students. Their style determines the types of interaction students have with each other and with one another (Campbell & Siperstein, 1994). For example, some teachers may clearly state their classroom rules at the beginning of the year, while other teachers may involve the students in generating their classroom rules. It seems likely that the social competencies of students with intellectual disabilities benefit from a teaching style that values student interaction.

Additionally, teachers' attitudes towards individual students, groups of students, the subjects taught, and learning itself can have powerful effects on their students' thinking and behaviour. "The specific attitudes teachers provide for imitation can significantly influence the quality of life in classrooms and, in some cases, the future lives of students." (Parkay, Standford, & Gougeon, 1996, p.41). These attitudes are usually what guide their decision making, and accordingly, their behaviours. For example, the attitude that students with intellectual disabilities belong in their classroom affects their daily decisions about how and when to include them. Their decisions then guide the behaviour that they model of including students with intellectual disabilities. Naturally, their modeling influences the thinking and behaviour of all students.

A study by Olson, Chalmers, and Hoover (1997) identified several characteristics of successful inclusionists. They had tolerant, reflective, and flexible personalities and demonstrated interpersonal warmth and acceptance. They took responsibility for the education of all their students and

accommodated by adjusting expectations. They had developed positive relationships with special educators and expressed concerns about administrative arrangements regarding time.

Teachers' perceptions of peer interaction and inclusion. A survey of regular educators showed strong agreement that friendships between students with intellectual disabilities and their peers are possible, that adults can and should be helping to facilitate them, and that all students benefit (Hamre-Nietupski, Hendrickson, Nietupski, & Shokoohi-Yekta, 1994). This same survey identified strategies selected as most effective for facilitating friendships. These strategies were collaboration between regular and special educators, cooperative learning approaches, peer tutoring, facilitating social interactions among all students, with and without disabilities, and disability-related information presentations to all persons involved. The survey also indicated the willingness of educators to personally implement the strategies that they believed to be effective.

Salisbury, Gallucci, Palombaro, and Peck (1995) used observations and interviews to identify five strategies used by classroom teachers to promote social relations among elementary students, with and without severe disabilities. These strategies were: (a) active facilitation of social interactions through cooperative learning, collaborative problem-solving, peer tutoring and classroom roles, and structuring time and opportunity for students to "connect", (b) empowering children to use their knowledge and creativity, or "turning it over to

the kids" (c) building community in the classroom, (d) modeling acceptance, and (e) developing school organizational supports. I'd like to elaborate on these researchers' second theme as it echoes so strongly what piqued my interest in the role of peers as 'integration activists' in my initial study (Challis Cozzuol, 1998). The researchers write, "Teachers were particularly struck with the knowledge and creativity amassed by students without disabilities from their previous year(s) in classes with students with significant disabilities." The following comment is typical of those made by the teachers:

> "Learn from your children. Even though my kids were 8 or 9, they are still at a point where they are very accepting of other people. They can show you ways that you can get to someone that you never even thought of. [They are] very creative thinkers...love to solve problems." (Salisbury, Gallucci, Palombaro, & Peck, 1995, p.134).

In another study, Janney and Snell (1996) looked specifically at how teachers use peer interactions to include students with intellectual disabilities in elementary general education classes. They describe four themes that emerged: (a) new rules about helping, including who, when and how to help, (b) a "just another student" philosophy to confer membership status, (c) encouraging age-appropriate interactions, and (d) backing off to give peers time to mingle without adult interference. Interestingly, these teachers used whole-class strategies, rather than methods focused on the student with a disability, based on

cooperation and mutual assistance to create a setting in which all students could be supported.

A study by Gelzheiser, McLane, Meyers, and Pruzek (1998) found that general education teachers made greater use of cooperative activities and academic peer interactions than special education teachers. They found that special education teachers in segregated settings were least likely to use teaching activities that foster peer interactions. However, their data also suggested that general education classroom teachers do not systematically foster peer interactions for students with intellectual disabilities.

Summary

By focusing on teachers' perspectives of the quality of peer interactions in their classrooms and their part in facilitating these peer interactions, I will be able to identify practices and strategies to promote social competence that are already present in elementary general education classrooms. As Salisbury et al. (1995) conclude, "Building on those practices affirms and values the extant knowledge of practicing professionals and provides an efficient and naturally occurring context in which to develop future interventions" (p. 136). Understanding teachers' perspectives may help to enlighten us as to the dynamic interactions between individual students with intellectual disabilities and their classroom environments. Exploring teachers' thoughts about the potential benefits of tapping into this natural community of support may help to illustrate

the varied roles that peers may play in developing the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities in their classrooms.

In summary, a schoolhouse model for thinking about the complexity of developing the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities has been presented. I have indicated that we need to look through both the individual and environmental windows to develop balanced interventions to facilitate social interactions. This bigger picture should explore the dynamic interactions between individual factors and environmental factors. How do we go beyond the 'brick' level of social skills training in order to increase social competence? Do we need to change our current thinking that the primary responsibility of teachers is to "instruct" academic content and "control" social behaviour? How do we open the "doors" into classrooms as well as other social contexts that promote positive social interactions? Do we need to explore more "doors" we could open to support and promote social competence in children with intellectual disabilities? Can we provide educational experiences that foster both academic and social growth in all students? Are we collaborating "step" by "step"(including all personnel) and ringing the "school house bell" to celebrate frequently as we build social competence together? All of these questions are of value. However, in this study, I will focus on elementary classroom teachers and inquire into their perceptions of nondisabled peers' roles in developing the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities. What value do teachers place on increasing social competence and peer interactions? How are the

nondisabled peers interacting with students with the intellectual disabilities? How do teachers facilitate peer interaction? How and when do teachers intervene in peer interactions? What benefits do teachers perceive that nondisabled peers gain from having students with intellectual disabilities in their classrooms? How are teachers evaluating growth in social competence of students with intellectual disabilities?

Chapter 3

Method

Design of the Study

The purpose of this study was to learn about teachers' perspectives of the roles of peers in developing the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities. In this study, I found out about the teachers' understandings of social competence, the quality of peer interactions in their classrooms, their part in facilitating those interactions, as well as their thoughts about the potential benefits of nondisabled peers interacting with students with intellectual disabilities.

I elected to conduct a qualitative study in order to gain insight and understanding of the phenomena through intensive collection of narrative data (Gay, 1996). I believe that it was the best paradigm for this study because it provided a flexible design to approach a broad, holistic, value-laden conceptual construct of social competence within the naturalistic setting of elementary classrooms. Qualitative research methods begin with a broad outline and a direction of approach rather than a specified study design. The researcher does start with a question or questions to learn about, in this case, the teachers' perspective of the role of peers in developing the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities. The study itself structures the research, not preconceived ideas or any precise research design (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

An interview is a purposeful conversation, usually between two people that is directed by one in order to get information from the other (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Bogdan and Biklen further explain that qualitative interviews vary in the degree to which they are structured. Qualitative in depth, semistructured interviews of eight elementary teachers from different elementary schools in one suburban school division were used in this study. This focused, yet flexible, design allowed the researcher to obtain comparable data across the participants, as well as to explore topics of personal interest to the participants. A "Human Subject Research Ethics Protocol Submission Form" was submitted and approval granted before commencing this research (see Appendix B).

Recruiting the Participants

First, permission was obtained from the Superintendent's Department of the school division (see Appendix C). Second, purposive sampling was used to select six to nine participants who were believed to expedite the expansion of the developing theory (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992) or to be a rich source of the data of interest (Gay, 1996). Resource teachers were asked (see Appendix D) to recommend elementary teachers who had been 'successful' with integrating students with intellectual disabilities recently (within the previous two years). By 'successful', I meant that the teacher had developed a positive working relationship with the student with an intellectual disability and had included him or her in most of their classroom activities. Eighteen recommendations from the resource teachers were received. I selected 12 teachers, both male and female,

who represented a range of elementary grade levels. Twelve classroom teachers were approached by telephone because they had recently had a "successful" experience in integrating elementary students with intellectual disabilities. These classroom teachers were given a brief outline of the study and ten teachers were provided with a letter of consent (see Appendix E) to ascertain if they were interested in participating. Two of these twelve teachers claimed they did not meet the criteria and two teachers did not respond before spring break. Therefore I had recruited and subsequently interviewed eight participants. Three male and five female teachers were interviewed and these teachers represented each grade level (1-6), with two teachers at grade 3 and two at grade 4. Although I am employed as a resource teacher by the school division in which I carried out this research, I am not in a position of power with respect to any of the participants. I had met five of the selected participants professionally before this study. The other three participants were unfamiliar to me.

The Participants

All participants worked in the same suburban school division in a western Canadian urban center of nearly 700,000. This school division serves about 7000 students in seventeen schools, of which 8 are English elementary schools. The division includes a diverse population, both culturally and economically. At the elementary level, the division offers inclusion in the home school supported by an integration resource teacher (IRT), as well as two cluster programs for students with intellectual disabilities. The students with intellectual disabilities in

this study included children with intellectual disabilities such as Down syndrome, autism, fetal alcohol syndrome, and other adverse neurological conditions that impair cognitive functioning and create deficits in adaptive functioning.

All of my participants were elementary classroom teachers who had been 'successful' in integrating students with intellectual disabilities within the previous two years. By 'successful', I meant that the teacher had developed a positive working relationship with students with intellectual disabilities and had included them in most of their classroom activities. These students had been designated by the school division and assigned support from an integration resource teacher, as well as support from a teaching assistant (TA). I was familiar with a few of the students with intellectual disabilities whom the teachers referred to. However, I had not collaborated with these teachers in regards to these students. During the interviews, the participants occasionally referred to other students. To illustrate their points, they often referred to certain peers, as well as other special needs students (i.e., students with physical disabilities). All participants and any students whom they mentioned were given pseudonyms. A brief synopsis introducing each participant follows in alphabetical order according to their pseudonyms:

Brenda. Brenda has been teaching for 15 years. She has taught a variety of subjects, including Music and French. She has taught junior high for one year and is currently teaching grade four. Prior to teaching, she worked for 1½ years in the human resources industry. Brenda also shared that her mother was a

psychiatric nurse so that discussions about social issues were commonplace within her family. Although she was unsure that she could contribute much to the study, she willingly gave up her time and shared her perspective. Her first interview took place at a coffee shop and the second interview was in my home.

Donna. Donna has 22 years of teaching experience. She has taught grades 1, 2, and 5, as well as French. She had a short career in banking before becoming a teacher and she is currently teaching grade two. She was quite willing to participate in the study, as evidenced by returning the letter of consent the very next day. She seemed very relaxed and laughed a lot during her interviews. She and her classroom showed evidence of a lot of student activity. Her interviews took place at the end of what she described as "two eventful days".

Jillian. Jillian has been teaching for 10 years at the elementary level. She has also benefited from teaching on a Caribbean island and is currently teaching grade 6. She was eager to participate in the study and returned the consent form promptly. Unfortunately, she was not feeling well at the first interview. I offered to reschedule but she wanted to continue. She was actually collaborating with her teaching partner when I arrived and still had a few student stragglers in the room. Her classroom was organized with the desks grouped together. There were also 3 round tables for group use and two computer stations. The second interview continued to reveal her inclusive practices and her articulate, yet succinct, manner.

Keith. Keith has been teaching elementary school for 12 years. Most of his teaching has been at the primary level with some experience in a special classroom for students with behaviour disorders. He is currently teaching grade 3. His prior five-year career as a social worker was certainly reflected in his thoughtful, community-conscious responses during the interviews. Not surprisingly, Keith became a key informant in this study about social competence. Although he seemed pressured for time, he took the information when I approached him. He joked about winning the lottery. The next day, he did agree to participate on the condition that the interviews were at noon or after school. The interviews actually took place in my classroom because he had a student teacher at the time. He was relaxed, shared his experiences and insightful perspectives and made several more jokes in both interviews.

Kurt. Kurt has 25 years of teaching experience. He has taught for 21½ years at the elementary level and 3½ years at Junior High. He is currently teaching grade 4. When recommended by his IRT, Kurt had attached a note saying that he was interested in the study but that the interviews would have to take place after he had completed report cards. When I approached him, I reassured him that this was possible and he agreed to meet with me. He seemed very comfortable during the interviews, which took place in my home and he shared his perspectives at length. His transcripts are filled with thoughts, questions, and anecdotes. His transcript also reflected his thoroughness and caring attitude.

Pam. Pam has been teaching for about 20 years. She reported that she taught junior high school for two years and had a brief job in marketing before becoming a teacher. She discussed teaching grade four for several years, job sharing, doing enrichment, and is currently teaching grade one. I had the opportunity to be in her classroom and noted that her classroom appeared organized and cheerful. Teaching materials were strategically placed around the room. The students' desks were arranged in clusters and there were piles of student work at several 'centers'. There was a large picture window along one wall. She was not sure that she would have "enough to offer," but was willing to try.

Rob. Rob is a teacher with 20 years experience. He had taught for three years at the junior high level, been an integration resource teacher (IRT), taught a special education classroom, and is currently teaching grade 5. He was very agreeable when I approached him and wanted to set up the interview times immediately. He seemed quite confident sharing his perspectives during these interviews. Both of his interviews took place in my home.

Veronica. Veronica has been teaching elementary school for 25 years and is currently teaching grade 3. When I approached her about participating in this study, she seemed keen. She was very pleasant but became quite nervous a few minutes into the interview. The tape recorder seemed to bother her and she requested a few minutes to compose herself. She explained that that happens to her occasionally. After that, she seemed to relax and the interview proceeded. At

the conclusion of the interview, she showed me her classroom. It was a large area with desks grouped and two areas for meeting places. Teaching materials were strategically placed around the classroom and there was evidence of hands on learning activities. She was more relaxed during the second interview.

Data Collection

The data for this study were collected through in depth, semistructured interviews of eight elementary teachers from different elementary schools in one suburban school division. The teachers were asked to participate in two interviews of approximately one hour each. While a third interview could have been requested to clarify their comments or extend the theoretical propositions that were emerging, I did not request this third interview of any of the participants.

The interviews were conducted during the months of March, April, and May of the 2000-2001 school year. The participants chose the times and places that they were comfortable with. Most participants wanted the interviews to take place at their school, three participants chose to come to my home, and one participant chose to meet in a coffee shop. The duration of the first round of interviews ranged from 50 to 105 minutes, with the average length of approximately 70 minutes. The second round of interviews ranged from 35 to 75 minutes, with the average interview being approximately 50 minutes. I did not use deceptions of any kind during the course of this study and did not expect that any of the questions or subsequent discussion would cause the participants

to experience any anxiety, embarrassment, or distress. As previously mentioned, one participant did become momentarily distressed because of the tape recorder. No risks to the subjects or a third party were noted. The teachers may have benefited from the opportunity to reflect upon their attitudes and understandings of social competence and to articulate the strategies they use that promote the development of social competence and peer interaction. In fact, several teachers did mention that perhaps they should be paying more attention to the social aspects in their classroom. I reminded them that I would send them a summary of the findings at the conclusion of the study.

At the beginning of each interview, I thanked the participants for meeting with me and offered them a drink and/or a sweet treat (i.e., chocolate bar or baking). I approached these interviews systematically, with the same interview guide, but initially invited each participant to share anything that they felt was important. During the interviews, I asked the participants about the quality of peer interactions in their classroom, their part in facilitating these peer interactions, the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities, and their thoughts about the potential benefits of tapping into this natural system of support (i.e. the nondisabled peers). My probing questions (see Appendix F) seemed to stimulate relevant descriptions and details. After the last question, I again tried to solicit any additional thoughts. After some initial data analysis, I created about a dozen more individualized questions for each participant to guide their second interview (see Appendix G). These personalized queries asked

for clarification of descriptions from their first interview, expansion of specific ideas, and their thoughts on a few of the emerging themes. Although I followed my guide, the interviews were open ended in terms of the participants' responses and the nature of the dialogue between the participants and myself. The participants seemed to feel free to express their opinions and experiences from their own frames of reference. Efforts were made to develop rapport with each participant. I tried to maintain eye contact and to use my body language and occasional comments to encourage the participants to expand their responses. Good interviewers are those with whom the participants feel at ease and free to talk to without restrictions. Therefore good interviewers collect rich data filled with comments, details, and examples that reveal that teachers' perspectives more clearly (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992).

These interviews were audiotape recorded and then transcribed verbatim as soon as possible afterwards. I utilized the software of "Dragon Naturally Speaking Preferred" to assist with the transcribing process. A total of 310 pages of transcripts were collected from the 16 interviews. Pseudonyms were used for all teachers and support personnel and any specific students they may have described. Their confidentiality was respected at all times. The audiotapes and their transcriptions were kept in a secure place. At the conclusion of the study, I promised to send the participants a brief synopsis of my findings, an expression of my thanks for their participation, and a method of contacting me in case they have questions or concerns.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is an intuitive and inductive process in qualitative research (Bogdan & Taylor, 1998). The first step was my ongoing discovery throughout the in-depth interviews. My leads and hunches may have helped to direct my questioning. As I transcribed the interviews, I was able to notice changes in each participant's tone of voice, moments of silence, laughter, and other sounds made during interviews. I tried to include these and added observer comments into the transcriptions. I reread the transcriptions for accuracy and added more observer comments in parentheses. I reread them again, comparing and contrasting the participants' responses. I began to notice the similarities and some initial themes emerged. I identified these similarities as tentative themes and listed them on separate sheets of paper as headings. A theme is identified as a concept or idea that emerges from the data: "some signal trend, some master conception, or key distinction" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Once again, I reread the data and noted the quotes that fit under each heading. I began to construct a typology or classification scheme to help me make conceptual links between seemingly different phenomena (Bogdan & Taylor, 1998). Then, I grouped the quotes into categories within each heading and devised a coding system. I used words and color coloring to help me sort and organize the data. I used the "cut-up-and-put-in-folders-approach" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). As I reread and coded the data (both positive and negative examples), I collapsed and refined the categories. I remembered to make the codes fit the data and not vice versa (Bogdan & Taylor,

1998). I wrote several memos to myself, as well as scribbling several lists of headings/codes. I tried to create a visual device to present the relationships among the themes. I revisited my school house model and analyzed how my findings compared. I reconceptualized some of the school house model. I began to look for overarching themes that might become theoretical propositions. A theoretical proposition is a general statement grounded in the data (Bogdan & Taylor, 1998). I considered discounting the data, which means to interpret the data in the context in which it was collected (Bogdan & Taylor, 1998). For example, I considered whether the statements were solicited or unsolicited, direct or indirect data, or reflected my own perspective.

During the data analysis described above several themes and subthemes emerged. These findings are presented, along with supporting data, in the next chapter.

Chapter 4

Findings

Naturally, the questions that I chose to ask as a researcher influenced the perspectives shared by my participants. However, after extensive data analysis, the following themes emerged: (a) teachers' perspectives of social competence, (b) significance of the teacher, (c) interaction interventions, (d) diversity of the students with intellectual disabilities, (e) significance of nondisabled peers, (f) diversity of nondisabled peers, (g) peer utilitarian support roles, (h) peer social support roles, (i) benefits to peers and (j) costs to peers.

In this chapter, I will present each theme separately, along with the supporting data. Each theme will be supported by quotes to allow the teachers' voices to be shared. In general, I have quoted verbatim. Occasionally, I have omitted some parts of the quote and indicated this with "...." I have made a few minor changes for clarity, but only if the grammar compromised the clarity. When observer comments have been added, they are enclosed within square brackets as in this example, [she hesitated]. The frequency of similar responses from the eight participants are indicated with the following descriptors: "All" means that 8 participants responded equivalently. "Most" participants indicates that 5-7 participants answered in a similar mode. "Some" participants indicates that 3-5 participants described the same ideas. A "few" participants indicates that 2-3 participants had common perspectives. Occasionally, I have reported when only "one" participant shared an unusual or interesting perspective.

Teachers' Perspectives of Social Competence

Meaning of social competence. Most of the participants described a "fitting in" quality for their meaning of social competence. As Kurt said, "Social competence, from the child's perspective, would be feeling comfortable with your peer group and feeling that you were contributing to it." He goes on to say that, "Kids don't need to make a conscious effort to socialize well with their peers. It just comes naturally for them." Another participant, Pam, phrased it this way, "In relation to children, it would mean to me that students would know how to fit into the classroom, to know what the norms are within a classroom, and to know what is appropriate behaviour interactions." Rob extends this idea, "I guess you want him functioning so that he will not draw a lot of attention."

Some participants described specific skills for their meaning of social competence. The ability to "get along" was mentioned by half of the participants. Jillian's words extend this competency... "Social competence...would mean probably to me, things like acquiring the manners, the understandings, and the caring attitudes directed towards others." Pam described more specific skills, "They take turns; they will be polite to each other; they will talk through things using 'I messages' for problems. What else will they do? They will help somebody if they are in trouble, if someone has fallen; they care about one another; they use Second Step [Committee for Children, 1992] language and other things. They can discuss things as a group, like cooperatively and do some talking together as a group."

A third perspective of the meaning of social competence reflected the reciprocal nature of social interactions. Rob said, "So that they are not frightening people off and so I do not see it as just being the acceptance from society, but them also getting something from it. So that it is not just a one direction thing." Keith furthered this idea when he said, "If you want to throw in values that enable you to interact with people in a reasonably healthy manner, not self destructive or self defeating, but in some way self and other enhancing."

Value of social competence. All of the participants placed a great deal of value on developing the social competence of their students. Rob claimed that, "I think it is probably the most important thing to be able to do for all students." He explains, "Mainly because, I think in their future life, whether you are disabled or non-disabled person, how you get along, how you are able to manage with other people will be the most important determining factor in human life." Jillian declared, "It's probably one of my highest in relation to everything else because I think that developing the social values of the class develops social people and social beings for our society."

It is interesting to note that several teachers inadvertently compared it to academics. Perhaps this implied their personal struggle with finding the balance between the academic and social aspects of school life. This point was illustrated in the following quote by Kurt:

> I would say that developing social competence or skills, if you wish, at the elementary school level would have to be almost as important as the

> academic skills. I know that school places a fair amount of emphasis on that but...I'm almost thinking from my own personal perspective. That if children come to school and they feel happy with their presence in the school and the classroom; they feel comfortable in the environment of their peers and their teacher. Then that is almost a prerequisite for competent learning abilities. So to me I liken it to almost the foundation of learning. If the social is competent let me phrase it, is not there, then it becomes an obstacle for a child's learning. They become entangled in social dilemmas, poor self-concepts and those things just become hard for them to learn and carry into their other...outside of school life too. Then they become disgruntled children, not only disgruntled with their learning, but also disgruntled with life in general. If they have trouble socializing, I have like a huge amount of importance as far as that goes.

Another participant, Keith, eloquently stated, "It is probably as equal, if not the most important thing that I do with kids. Because the curriculum for me is a part of what I do but it is not the essence of what I do. The essence of what I do is work with kids in their totality." He continued, "I want them to be able to understand themselves, and how they relate to other people and to understand how they can create meaning for themselves. In dealing with other people and in finding meaning in life. So the curriculum is the vehicle that I have to use to address the issues that I've just mentioned. It is of utmost importance!"

Evaluation of social competence. Most of the participants seemed to rely heavily on their intuition and observations to evaluate the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities. Brenda suggested, "I guess a lot by observation." Pam reported, "I truly didn't try to evaluate their social competence per se, I just observed what they were doing." Rob pointed out that, "When behaviour's change, first of all, you always notice them when they change dramatically."

Most participants mentioned that they did not rely on written goals to evaluate or note improvements in social competence. Pam said, "To be very honest with you, the social part was not a written goal. There were just so many other things that we were working on at the time." Jillian claimed, "Well, it was never a written goal that we want to accept the student. But I think it was my personal goal." Social goals tend not to be identified, but rather are an inherent part of the social context of the classroom. Keith illustrated, "Some of them are individual goals, like in his IEP. We had identified ...I can't spit those out to you right now. It is also in the class culture and climate of that classroom." Rob furthered this idea when he said, "I find too that a lot of gains come, changes occur, and they weren't the changes that you were wanting changed and they may not have been the things that you were expecting to change. So they happen for reasons and the dynamics of the classroom." He continued, "I'm not sure if I'm answering your question but very often it seems that things happen naturally in the classroom and you haven't controlled it so much." (Rob)

Some of the participants emphasized that the improvements in the students with intellectual disabilities would be gradual and incremental. One participant, Veronica, indicated, "I think when you are dealing with the disabled student, I think it's very, very small steps...not huge strides." Keith added, "With Burt, I don't know if I can say it that there was a huge amount of progress. I think that he maintained a certain level of social ability. I don't know if it actually progressed from what I see." A few references were made to needing a longer period of time to be able to evaluate. Veronica asked, "Can I talk about a longer period of time? For the student that I have this year, she has made remarkable gains over the years. In grade one she would sit under her desk and cry. She has made tremendous progress over the years. I think some of that has to be attributed to the peers."

The improvements that were shared were things like: (a) work habits, like independence, -"...getting him to do things more independently"(Keith), (b) participating - "Participating, laughing, and being with friends and things like that. She's not being as cautious"(Pam), (c) increased verbal skills - "I'm finding with the group work she does talk more. She contributes more. I guess she's feeling more comfortable. She has learned a lot" (Pam) and "I know she has in her speech, she has a lot more words than she did before now" (Veronica) and, (d) better manners, like the ability to apologize, - "I mean he was able to apologize when asked to apologize, but there again sometimes he would have to be prompted" (Keith).

Significance of the Teacher

The participants certainly recognized the significance that they have as a classroom teacher. They felt that it was their attitudes, values and expectations that profoundly influenced their classroom community. Keith recognized his importance as he remarked:

> I think a large part of that is certainly the tone that I set in the classroom. I mean, certainly a part of that is that I foster that myself. We have a lot of discussion, and I will go to great lengths to just being myself with them. Who I am as a person is vital to who I am as a teacher. I don't disassociate those two things. The kind of teacher that I am is not because of my knowledge of the curriculum or even my instructional techniques that I use to deliver that curriculum. It is what I fill up in between that counts.

Donna said, "But I really feel that the teacher has a big responsibility. And that their behaviour, the teacher's behaviour influences the behaviour of the other students and their acceptance and whether or not they allow this person into their classroom that is not the same as the average to be a disruption to them."

Modeling. The participants realized that part of their significance is the modeling that they do on day-to-day basis. Kurt said simply, "The teacher provides a model for all types of actions in the school. If the teacher shows enthusiasm for, pride in what he or she is doing, that will likely be translated to your students. I think that the teacher is the leader in the classroom and the one

that will guide the ship, if you will. Kids will lead by their teacher's example." Later he added, "So again we can look at teachers as models and practicing what they preach. Chances are that they will practice what they preach also. Whether their goal is to be a better handwriter or to be more punctual for recess." Donna reflected, "My whole experience with these children that come into the class is the more accepting I am and the better I am in the way I respond to a child, the better everyone in the class is." Keith talked about the impact of this modeling, "All in the aim of developing a sense of community and a sense of respectfulness among the kids in the classroom. Starting with me and then to them of course. Hopefully that develops towards me and kids amongst each other."

Goals and expectations. The social goals that the teachers identified are goals that are sometimes predetermined by the school. For example, some schools set social goals of the month or school mottoes. Keith expressed, "I try and at least make a point of...our school has a monthly social goal so I always try at some level, at the beginning of the month to at least discuss that and refer to it throughout the month." Veronica shared, "Our motto in our school is C.A.R.E. ...cooperation, appreciation, respect, and effort. So those things we do talk about." Donna reported, "At this school we push kindness, safety, and respect. That's our school motto." Some individual goals are determined from specific social problems that arise throughout the year. "To the individual, yes. We will sit down together and I'll say 'This is really bothering me. I think it needs to change. What are we going to do about it'?" (Jillian). Keith explained, "With

individual kids, yes. I mean, these aren't formalized goals, I necessarily write behavioural objectives for but in terms of different kids have different needs. I'm dealing with someone right now who doesn't know how to use an indoor voice and constantly interrupts." One participant, Kurt, emphasized the importance of having the students involved in identifying personal goals. "I think that the focus lately though has been on having children identify their own goals. I think that that is really important."

Most other goals might be better described as teacher expectations within their classroom settings. These expectations are what set the climate or the culture for their classrooms. Keith noted, "That kids have to have the expectation that they can do something and that they have to do something. But once the expectation is there, then at least you have the climate in which kids begin to step into that." He continued, "And so I think there is an element of expectation, sort of communicating that reasonable expectation and the fact that I have that confidence that they can do that. I think you have to bring the student's self into the picture. 'I have a part into play in this. I need to do this. I can do this'." Kurt shared, "I make of a point of reviewing what the goals are as far as expectations, academically and behaviourally." Jillian commented, "From the beginning of the year that was my expectation, that everyone would be included. We are in grade six together." And "I think the kids have come to know that's how I expect them to work, cooperatively." Brenda referred to expectations for the student with intellectual disabilities, "There are still expectations for that

person...at a different level that they are still expectations. He is still required to be kind to others, still required to get along, still required to, you know, have social interactions. That he's not separate out there."

Perhaps goal setting is not as critical in social competence because it implies that you will set a goal and then work towards mastering it. However, as Keith suggests, "It's a developmental type of thing. As one layer, as he gains competence in one layer, then you have to have another layer so that there is a sequential [hesitation] sort of dynamic there. He is never going to, you know, he's learned to be a little more independent and that's the end of that [chuckles]." Perhaps developing social competence involves a spiraling set of expectations, rather than linear goal setting.

Willingness to collaborate. The willingness of the teachers to collaborate enhanced their knowledge of the social competence of the students with intellectual disabilities. It seems that the most frequent collaboration occurred with teaching assistants. Veronica expressed, "Oh, with her aide, it's daily, constantly." Pam shared, "But we meet in the mornings to discuss and she'll know what the plan is, what I'm looking for and she just goes from there. The TA [Teaching Assistant] really has a finger on her pulse, very much so. The TA contributes to so many areas verbally." Keith voiced, "So that the TA is absolutely indispensable, as far as I'm concerned. So much would miss me if I were left on my own. He would not have half of the experiences or interactions; He would have less than half, just a fraction." He proceeded, "There is no way

that I could respond to him, all the subtle little kinds of things. How he deals with kids, how he answers things, his manners or, just his social ability, and his ability to socialize on the small things. I couldn't respond to those. I wouldn't even be seeing the majority of them. How could I?" This TA collaboration involved feedback as well as direction. Rob described how he collaborates with the TA:

> Often we will just discuss informally what else we would like to do things that aren't part of the routine. So I think we have routine but we try to look for interactions. I think that to form interactions with the other students, there may be a lull at a certain time of the day. If there is a group of students that are working ahead and can really afford some time, we will often do it on the spot. Like "Maybe today we will do this." So we fit in interactions. We'll talk at the end of the day, 'Is there anything that we might do differently?' Where we will fit different things into like, for example, on a nicer day with this student who has a difficult time walking, went out with two other students who were ahead. They went out for a walk after recess for 20 minutes. So I like to do things that way. You tend to find the things that are more meaningful and more important that day."

Teachers have begun to collaborate with elementary school counsellors. These counsellors brought special skills and strategies to the regular classroom. Several allusions were made to the collaboration that occurred with the school

counsellors. Rob shared, "The particular school that I'm in now, the guidance counselor and I discuss certain social issues that are important in my particular classroom. So we go for specific topics that she will address and then I am constantly reinforcing them when she's not there. So I'm basically doing it most of the time although she's presenting the information to the students." Kurt remarked, "This situation that I have got right now is one that I feel really needs a lot of addressing and I'm trying to address it myself in collaborating with the parents and the counselor at our school." Brenda related, "So I had a meeting with all the other boys and the school counselor, as well. She came to talk about how this boy was feeling and why he was feeling that way, how they could come to some kind of resolution on how they could include him."

Some participants made reference to both informal meetings in the hallway with the resource teacher as well as scheduled meetings. Jillian reported, "The resource teacher and I meet once a cycle, but again daily if something great is going on, or if something is really happening we can share right away because we are so pleased with the outcome." Veronica said, "And with the Integration Resource Teacher (IRT) too. When she is here she will pop in and see how things are going and touch base. It's not just at the meeting, it can be ongoing anytime." Perhaps due to the social nature of my interviews, it was reported that the bulk of these meetings were about social issues. As Jillian explained, "My focus is integration so what she's doing in this area and that area and that's all an opportunity for social growth."

The classroom teachers also collaborated with the parents of the students with intellectual disabilities. Some teachers used communication logs or books. For example, Rob said, "I have a communication book going home, back and forth daily with the student and I'll phone I guess if there are important issues that come up. I also have a parent that will come by from time to time and that works really well for me." A few teachers described regular reports, followed by parent – teacher conferences. Kurt experienced, "One of the comments from the parents was 'I've really enjoyed...I think that the program with his peers, among the other things, are really working.' So we are trying to keep the parents updated." A few teachers met informally with parents at the classroom door. Keith reported, "We talk informally every day. Grandma comes in everyday."

Interaction Interventions

Although I was primarily researching teachers' perspectives of the role of peers to develop social competence of students with intellectual disabilities, many strategies that the teachers used to facilitate interactions were described. I termed these strategies 'interaction interventions' and they will be described below. The first four interaction interventions describe class wide instructional strategies, such as classroom discussions, group work, differentiated instruction, and use of literature. The next five interventions describe class wide social interventions, such as programs, social skills, teachable moment, role playing, and special events. The final five interaction interventions describe strategies that are targeted for students with intellectual disabilities. They included using

practical situations, assignment of peers, stepping back, developing a positive presence, and recognition.

Class discussions. One of the classroom activities that most teachers described was finding the opportunity for class discussions. These class discussions helped to build the sense of community. Kurt described, "Hey we have worked hard enough today. Come on to the front, if you want and let's just talk'... I find it to be a stress reliever for myself and it's amazing what the kids will come and talk to you about. Some of them will come and just listen and want to be part of it." These discussions are not regularly scheduled and they happened because of a particular need. Keith said, "They are generally spontaneous and informal. We don't say at 2:00 its time for our...it is as the need arises." Rob explained, "It depends on the needs and I try to have it on a semi regular basis. When the issues come, I definitely bring it out more often then."

They often took place in a group area at the front of the classroom. Keith offered some insight into this idea of a special location, when he said:

> I think it has to do with the location in the room. It is a different spot and I look different because of how I'm sitting and they look different because they are on the floor and just those things alone can communicate something different. Almost more parental. That's actually almost kind of a good image. To communicate more at a parental level than [hesitation] a teacher/student relationship. I'm trying to diminish the gap, you know.

These discussions did not always have to lead to solutions. Kurt explains, "Sometimes the mediation of these problems simply can be just by everybody getting a chance to share their feelings in a Circle. Not really coming up with solutions...just so that everybody can listen to how everybody else is thinking around the Circle. The teacher doesn't have always have to make a decision or judgment."

Sometimes these discussions concerned the student with intellectual disabilities and their needs. Rob stated, "What I have done quite often too is, especially at the beginning of the year, if I have new students coming in, new special needs students coming into the classroom, I talk to the class first, explaining what they can expect the kid to do and to get their opinion early to find out what they might think it might be." He continued, "I explain the behaviours that they might see and discuss why that person is in the classroom, what we would like to see them do, and how we would like to see them getting involved with them." Veronica also shared, "Actually I have done that many times this year. When she is out for something else, I'll talk to them about our expectations for her and what we can do to help her without doing too much. .... I find that they are mature enough to understand and to handle it."

Group work. Another classroom activity that all participants emphasized was group work. Jillian asserted, "I guess through the group work because in my class they just don't work solo.... I always let them work in groups and pairs, except in testing situations. Other than that it's a constant focus." Keith

suggested, "Obviously in the course of the day how I structure activities for learning. I mean everyday there has to be multiple opportunities where the kids are interacting with each other with the work that they are doing. They are collaborating, they are sharing resources, they are checking one another's work." A few participants referred to specific cooperative learning strategies. For example, Pam said, "A lot of jigsaw [Johnson and Johnson,1986] and those kinds of things." A few participants referred to flexible groupings for different purposes. Keith explained, "That task-oriented grouping... It depends on what they are accomplishing. Yes, it would depend entirely on the task." A few participants described these flexible groupings alternating between homogeneous and heterogeneous groupings. Donna clarified, "So I have homogeneous groups working on literature projects and for the rest of the time it is heterogeneous but the same rules apply for both. I'm really, really strict about the rules for group work." Most participants articulated the need for carefully structuring the group's composition so that interaction will be successful. Rob said, "I'll form discussion groups and we do group projects. Sometimes I set up – very often I'll set up the groups and I take into consideration group dynamics [chuckles]." Pam considered, "I try to put strong reader and its strong speller in each group, so they actually help each other. They're actually forced to help each other, but it becomes fun except for the ones that are very, very reluctant."

Differentiated instruction. The participants' commitment to differentiated instruction also was illustrated. Seeing students as individuals and developing an awareness of their learning styles was described by some of the participants. Jillian said, "I often tell all of the kids that, 'My expectations are individual for each student.' I never do class averages; I never do who has the highest, who has the lowest. To me it is completely individual and I let them know that right off the bat. " She continued with an example, "When we are doing spelling, somebody might have a different list of spelling words because that is right for them and that's what we want to target. We want to encourage success so that everyone can succeed." Kurt noted, "The type of students that I have this year are a tremendous amount of visual learners." Donna commented, "I mean, it is not exactly a problem, but it's trying to accommodate for different learning styles."

Providing academic work on many levels was also described by some of the participants. Donna explained, "I have subtraction with regrouping and just two-column addition and then some just straight facts and that's the type of grouping that I would have." Jillian described, "So, you know, in literature circles, it is all differentiated between the novels. They might do the same questions, or pretty much the same questions targeting the same elements of fiction and what not, but it is all completely individualized."

This differentiated instruction seems to be important for social reasons so as not to create resentment towards students that have learning difficulties.

Donna suggested, "I like to provide enough activities in...I'm really conscious and really work hard at not letting them be a burden. Because I think that creates resentment and causes a problem for them. I try also to give the nondisabled students activities that challenge them at their level. Again I just want to do that so they don't resent having these kids in our classroom."

The students with intellectual disabilities also were a part of this differentiated instruction through what used to be called 'parallel work'. Veronica illustrated, "The special needs student will use exactly the same manipulatives and I'll make them up a worksheet that looks similar [emphasized]. Maybe has the same heading and that, you know I try to make it look the same, as much like the other kids as I can be, but they will be doing an activity that they can do with those manipulatives that is at their level." Kurt commented, "For example, story writing, the writing process, although his story might be totally different or the vocabulary would obviously be less structured and less complex, I think it is really important that when we share, he is a part of our process." Donna described, "I might have somebody reading a book about fish and coming up with an idea and making their own questions and doing research or whatever. I might have the CAP [Community Access Program] student working on art project where they have a large fish and they have to glue pieces onto this fish. So that they are working on their fine motor skills." She concluded, "I don't tell anybody that is what they're doing ...they are working on the same activity, they are

working on the same units but they are doing something that is appropriate to them."

Literature. Another interaction intervention that was mentioned frequently was the use of literature as a springboard for social discussions. Brenda expressed, "It also encourages discussion about the book that they're reading and it might bring in personal connections that they made to that book or to the theme of that book, so it encourages social interaction in that way." The teachers' selection of literature provided read alouds that could then be used throughout the year as a frame of reference. Keith explained, "So even the literature that I choose to read with them and how we choose to continue on. For example, the literature that I choose to read aloud has to do with characters and setting that I can then use to refer to throughout the school year, in terms of character development and in terms of using them as continued references." Jillian shared an example, "I do a lot of read alouds that will instigate a lot of conversation. At the beginning of the year I read a book to them called "Crazy Lady" which is a book about a woman who is trying to take care of her son...in fact they called him a retarded person in it and all the issues that a group of boys have with teasing this boy and everything else. They talk about how one boy becomes his friend and then we discussed how they might see themselves in the different roles in the book."

Related to this theme of using literature for social purposes and my earlier discussion about the use of social programs is the emphasis that the participants

placed on vocabulary. This idea was eloquently stated by Keith, "Providing them with the vocabulary skills that they can, vocabulary that helps them increase their ability to talk about things. Like if you don't have the vocabulary to describe a feeling or a process or something, then you are not able to take that thought and bring it out into the open." He went on, "It remains possibly confused or out of the realm of being able to be brought into understanding. So more language ...that allows you to talk about concerns, and talk about problems, talk about feelings and I think that is one way of empowering the kids." The importance of vocabulary is further illustrated while Brenda was referring to teaching the Second Step program. "So when you are doing it as they [social problems] arise, they think, 'Oh yeah. I have this vocabulary. I understand what she is talking about or what is going on here'." Finally, this point is made when Donna talks about "pushing" the school motto... "Because we have those three words, we try to refer to them as much as we can. We try to get the kids to come to an understanding. That's another thing that we do at the beginning of the year. We really look at those three words individually and read as many books as we can about that."

Programs. Although one of my probing questions was about social programs or social strategies, the only social program that most of my participants mentioned was Second Step, which is a conflict resolution program. Brenda remarked, "Well, in our grade four classroom, we use Second Step and..uh.. That starts with building empathy." Donna indicated, "We use the

Second Step program, where we actually work with the whole class and teach them what they need and we talk about different steps or things that they need in order to get along." Veronica also said, "Second Step. But now I didn't lead it. I was a part of it; the guidance counselor came in and did it with us." One participant mentioned 123 Magic (Charles, 1992), which targets a specific behaviour and uses warnings to the student. Another participant talked about how she tried "to isolate whatever the problem is and work on that specific thing with usually a reward system of some sort" (Donna). Two participants mentioned Circle of Friends (Perske, 1988) and described their modifications of that social program. Rob shared, "Circle of Friends, I've used in many different ways. I've used it on field trips and I've tried to set them up for certain students in the past for outside school activities. That was more difficult to do." Kurt voiced, "We also have the program currently, that is set up, that seems to be successful called a Circle of Friends. This is a program that is geared primarily for a special needs student in my class. It is and it isn't. It is really designed for the whole class because..."

Programs did not seem to play a large role in developing the social competence of students. More frequently participants described using conflict resolution strategies or problem solving as real life issues arise. For example, Brenda said, "It might be for example, if the child has a conflict with another child. I bring them together and if they come to agreement that they would like to resolve this problem and that they are each going to listen to the other

without interruptions. The whole conflict resolution type of thing." Veronica explained, "I'll ask the children if they have anything, a problem in interacting with others on the playground that they feel they need to discuss as a class. Lots of times nobody has anything. But if they do, then we discuss it and address it." Kurt pointed out, "If you don't give them the chance to work it out, how are they going to learn to mediate problems?"

Social skills. Interestingly, Rob, the participant who had taught a cluster of special ed. students shared his experiences about social skills programs. "We did do some very formal things that I thought sometimes weren't working really well [chuckles]. We did how to greet people and different things like that. Some of it revolved around street safety. We started off by, 'Who do you talk to?" Rob continued, "We would show them, how do you say hello to a particular individual, whether it was an adult or another student. We tried to make it practical. But often I felt like we were training them and I'm not sure that we were successful with that and it certainly seemed a little stilted."

Teachable moment. Some participants described how for social skills, the teachable moment happens all day long. Keith voiced, "It's not; today is day 2 so we do social skills. We do social skills all day long. We do interpersonal skills all day long and as the things arise, as moments arise that we need to address something, that's when we address it. If that is in the middle of science, then we stop in the middle of science and we look at those things." Rob furthered the idea, "Very often those things come down to talking about instances that take

place. And use them as examples, it is not things that are lecture setup [chuckles]. It can be that sometimes, but you're looking for things that really happen and discussing them."

Role-playing. Although role-playing is often mentioned in the literature as a strategy for social learning, only two participants made reference to it. One participant noted that role-playing may not be an authentic experience. Brenda thought, "I suppose when it wouldn't be legitimate is if you are doing some kind of role playing with this child to try to develop a skill. Then what you're trying to do is transfer that learning into a legitimate situation." The other participant was experimenting with drama as a motivating vehicle for inclusion. "Drama has worked tremendously in my class and has given a lot of pleasure too. The skills that we want to teach our kids, sometimes the ends, we can take different routes to get to the same means. With my students, drama has been a real spark plug for them. They are very confident kids and drama has been a way that we have gotten our disabled child to become involved" (Kurt).

Special events. A few participants characterized classroom social activities that take place around special events or holiday seasons throughout the year. Pam recounted, "Kindness is catching. For the whole month of February the children try to catch others doing nice things to them and they would come and tell me some time throughout the day when I'm not teaching a lesson." She continued, "I would write it down and then the next morning, well, we usually have about 10 [children] every morning, who would be presented with a sticker

and a certificate. They would be the stars of the day because they had shown kindness. But they couldn't tell me what they [emphasized] did nice for the person, the other person would have to." Brenda described, "Around four weeks ago, around Valentine's Day, we had a Secret Buddy Week where they each had a secret buddy and they were supposed to do secret things for that buddy during that week and not let them know who they were." She gave examples, "Maybe ask them to play, put a nice note in their box, or leave a cookie on their desk or something like that. At the end of the week we had a secret buddy social, where they were supposed to bring a snack for their secret buddy and then play games together and that kind of thing." Rob remarked, "I find that the best times are when we're going to have our so called 'party' just before Christmas, or different events or for Valentine's Day. One of the things that I do like to do is leave it very open-ended and just see what dynamics happen. A number of times I have just set out different games and things for the kids to do. They choose the game that they want to play with and very often they choose the people too."

Assignment of peers. Another interaction intervention that most of the participants described was assigning nondisabled peers to the student with intellectual disabilities. Some teachers did this for academic support. Kurt described, "We set up situations within the classroom where he will have a designated buddy. That buddy is with the teacher's aide as well as the child doing different types of academic things." Donna said, "I might need someone specifically to help that person." Some teachers did it for social support,

especially at recess. Kurt explained, "Of course at recess time, the sense of play is part of it. The child will always have somebody to be with; it can be to talk to, it can be to play games with; it can be a game of their own invention. We have a chart on our wall with the names of the members of the circle on it and different things that they can do. So the buddy changes every day." Donna clarified, "I have had to organize recess buddies a couple of times simply because a kid was unable to have anyone." Pam said, "I will designate someone. I'll just say, 'Would you like to spend some time with Bethel at recess'?"

Some participants emphasized the importance of taking turns with these peer assignments. Jillian reported, "I try to mix them up as much as possible and give everybody a chance to work with almost every kid in the room. I think everybody works together at some point in the time." Veronica presented the peers' perspective, "My experience has been that my kids all want a turn. They think it is not fair if they don't get a turn." Two participants mentioned that a good strategy is to allow the student with intellectual disabilities to choose the nondisabled peer. Pam explained, "I'll say, 'These are the people left. Who would you like to work with?' I'll let her choose." Jillian reflected, "I will have that student choose because that's something she really enjoys getting to choose who she gets to work with."

Practical situations. Some participants described trying to find authentic, practical situations in which to have peers interacting with the student with

intellectual disabilities. One participant described a need to find something interesting in order to interest others. Rob said:

> From that, whoever I'm teaching, I find they find the topic [magic] fascinating and so they might get to know each other better. They want to get to know me and if it's another student that's doing it, they want to get to know that student better. It has more to do with what's actually happening that moment but as they're doing it, they find that they are interested in the other person. I try to bring out that everybody is an interesting human being. You just have to find a way of doing it. Once they have that motivation, then I think there is a bit of a connection with each other. I find that in many different ways. When I call it a gimmicky thing, I'm just trying to find something interesting, because people are interesting.

Later Rob suggested, "You have to make the experience more real. The way that you do that I think is to find activities for kids that are legitimate and fun for them to do. So that the peers do not feel like they are 'just baby sitting' other kids, that they are actually relating to each other." Some of these "more interesting" activities include art, crafts, cooking, games, and field trips. Veronica shared, "Two years ago that peer interaction was a real issue. These kids weren't as accepted so we did do things that we set up. Like once a week, a craft where every child in the room went and had a turn to do a special craft with this child. We did a lot of cooking." She explained, "Just to set up those social situations

where they are doing something that the kids really [emphasized] wanted to be there to do it and that the child is the focus, kind of. Not the focus, but they knew they were doing that to interact and be with that person." Rob concurred, "Sometimes you can only develop those relationships by doing some legitimate things like a field trip or a task together at the school. Something that is a real job, not pretend, and then the relationship builds up."

Most participants described how they use games in a variety of ways. For example, Pam illustrated, "Math centers games. We do Seven Up and we do the Bingo as a whole group. But ...children will play the games in a small group if they are finished their work sometimes. They change day to day. Group games and partner games. Sometimes for math centers I just have game centers and that's all we'll do."

Stepping back. Most participants talked about the need to "step back." I interpreted this to mean that the adults need to back off to allow natural peer interactions to take place. Jillian said, "I didn't get involved, didn't get involved because I think there is a point that you have to step back." Donna shared, "You have to be really careful not to be too directive and allow the kids to try and sort things out." Rob described, "I prefer to have the adult sit back a little bit further and let the kids direct it and relax a little bit more." Later, he took this idea further, "But you only find things these things out when you let the other students lead it. I think that's why you have to step back so that they can take control. But they're also not afraid to try things that we think might fail." One

participant mentioned how difficult that 'stepping back" can be for teachers, perhaps because of their need to control the classroom dynamics. "I like to be in control [laughter] of the situation. It's a teacher type of thing, you know. You want to make sure everything is going well" (Veronica). Another participant, Keith, mentioned the structure of the school day doesn't allow much connection time. "A lot of the school day is pretty structured so there is not huge gaps. I mean, I see them relate that way when they're lining up to go to gym or music." A few participants mentioned that this 'stepping back' happened naturally because "You can't be at the students' sides at all times" (Brenda). These participants made specific reference to having at half-time TA. For example, Veronica commented, "She has a half-time aide in the morning. She's with me most of the time in the afternoon. Her work is very modified but she wants to be very much of a part of the class and very much doing what the other children are doing." Brenda said, "Then, too Tom only has a TA half-time so Cathy was only there basically half-time and the other half of the time he would be on his own and either function or do something different than the rest of the class, if he just couldn't do what the class was doing at that moment. It was easy for the teacher to step back because you had to."

Positive presence. Developing a "positive presence" for the student with intellectual disabilities was deemed to be important by some participants. A quote from Keith illustrated this concept:

> My purpose there was to keep his presence in the class as high as it can be and to make sure that the kids have the sense that he's making progress. I say that because, if those things are at least in place, at least you've got a chance that spontaneous interactions will take place. So the idea is not to force people -its sort of just celebrating his successes and keeping his profile as high as it can be in the classroom without overdoing it. It's not as if we do this all the time. Just if something meaningful happens and this was very meaningful. So let's make a deal of this and the notion of making sure that kids see that he is making progress and doing some very good work too. Of course, it's hopefully a positive image that they have of him. If they have a positive image, they tend to have more chance to interact with him. It's kind of a roundabout way of interacting."

Kurt concurred, "So when I get a chance, I will draw praise and positive attention to him. I think that is important." Jillian reflected, "How I always value those students that aren't as capable as another student. I always give them recognition and positive reinforcement and the rest of the kids feed off that. They realize that I am giving this person respect and they tend to do that too."

Recognition. The participants were very clear that their informal recognition, by thanking students, helped to encourage further interaction between students with intellectual disabilities and their classmates. Pam indicated, "I guess, [long pause] part of it would be to recognize the peer that is

helping. It encourages the other children and just to keep that positive environment. Then others seem to do it as well." Jillian remarked, "I just value that. Then again I always will take the time to say thank you and I think they appreciate that too, that I'm noticing." Keith added, "Well, I compliment kids, when they do. If I see them making the slightest sort of effort to..." He continued with an example, "Bob did something just the other day and I came by and said 'Bob, that was very nice of you', whatever was that he did. He helped Jim get something organized. 'I noticed that you just did that on your own. Good for you. I noticed that he really enjoyed working with you because you don't often get a chance to be with him'."

A few participants made reference to the nondisabled peers learning the intrinsic value of helping and contributing to community. Veronica suggested, "Also, although it is nice to be recognized, it is also important for children just to learn the intrinsic value of helping without getting a reward." Kurt explained:

> I think that all kids should know that there are more intrinsic rewards here than material rewards. And I explain that to them. I believe that kids at an elementary age, nine or ten years old, they can understand that. They are getting a sense of a good feeling by doing something that helps someone else. And if they actually get a piece of cake or some ice cream ...well that's just gravy and people do like to be recognized. I don't care if you are a kid or an adult. If somebody does something for you and they tell you that they appreciate you doing that, it makes a bit of a difference.

Only two participants made reference to positive reinforcement point systems. Donna reported, "I have this little treasure box and at the end of the week, the group that gets the most points gets to go in the treasure box." Kurt shared, "Yes, at the end of the month, we add up all our points and whichever cooperative team is a quote winner, then they get a small token or small candy or a pencil or something. I tell them that, 'if you cooperate you are all going to be winners'. But I know a lot of teachers do that too."

Diversity of the Students with Intellectual Disabilities

One of the main themes that came forth as I asked these questions about peers is that the quality and quantity of peer interaction is certainly influenced by the diversity of the students with intellectual disabilities themselves. Although these participants had been selected because they had recently taught students with intellectual disabilities, some participants made reference to the diversity within their disability or diagnosis. Veronica asked, "Do you want to me to talk about specific students because it varies depending on the specific disability?" Later, she said, "I had a student last year who was autistic/Pervasive Developmental Disorder and peer interaction was a lot less with him because he didn't want...didn't desire the interaction." A few participants described peer interactions with students with special needs that may not have had intellectual disabilities. For example, Pam described, "I think it... this year with this little girl that I have, she is fairly strong academically and her sight is really what holds her down."

Personality. Some participants talked about the different personalities of the students with intellectual disabilities whom they had taught. Keith commented, "But they are different personalities too. Jim who is a little more low key and has kind of a smile about him that is just pasted there. Whereas Burt can be a little more invasive and some kids just don't know how to respond to that." Brenda compared, "Anyway, Tom was more helpless [compared to George] to the other children. He wasn't afraid to say, 'I don't understand' to one of the other kids whereas this boy is less likely to say that. He just doesn't interact with the other children." Veronica said, "Now she is very affectionate, she gives a lot of positive feedback. Not all disabled kids do that. The one that I had last year couldn't care less if he was with the other kids. So he wasn't giving the same feedback. Therefore I do not think that the kids went to the same effort to approach him."

Verbal abilities. Some participants also reflected on whether the students' verbal abilities seem to influence peer interaction. Jillian noted, "I mean she is very social on her own and she has the verbal ability. But as far as with Ned it's quite different because he doesn't have that verbal ability. I think they find it more challenging because he doesn't have the verbal ability." Kurt observed, "I would have to say that that would be very, very difficult for him. Partly because of his speech...to tell you the truth, in this little boy's case, his speech is not very clear."

One participant summed up this idea of the diversity of the students with intellectual disabilities very well. Rob contributed, "I think that you really do have to look upon each and every situation as a unique situation. I'm thinking that if the student has a lot of particular needs and it does seem like you have a small group of students constantly working with him, maybe that's fine." He continued, "You have to analyze things and it's probably different with every type of student. I think it means different tactics for different kids and you have to experiment a great deal with them."

Significance of the Peers

All participants agreed that the peers were significant in developing the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities. Keith explained, "I want to make sure that they have that opportunity because otherwise you have a kid in your classroom that has these types of disabilities and who'll be having just a totally private learning experience." He clarified, "My thought is that the whole purpose is to integrate that person and them become a part of the community as much as possible. Otherwise there is no point. He would be there in body only." Rob commented, "I would talk to the rest of the class and I would be saying 'Well, you know, it's time to be quiet or whatever' and whenever they were quiet, she started to become quiet. So she learned that really well and I have a feeling we couldn't have taught her that without her being in the classroom." He pointed out, "That behaviour disappeared in the regular classroom and it really didn't feel it came from the adults. I feel it came from the

milieu of the classroom itself." Veronica summarized, "She has made tremendous progress over the years. I think some of that has to be attributed to the peers."

Some participants referred to how much the students with intellectual disabilities wanted to be interacting with their peers. Jillian said, "I think too some of it is wanting to belong and wanting to have friends and have that interaction. Like it is great working with the teacher or TA but to be able to work with a partner; have solo independence without a teacher or TA involved, is a neat experience." Keith gave examples, "In fact, he often refers to the kids in my classroom as 'his kids' or 'my kids', 'Do I get to work with my kids?', 'Can I go with my kids?' and that sort of thing. For him, I think that is of paramount importance."

Most participants indicated that sometimes the peers had more success with the students with intellectual disabilities than they did. Rob shared, "Sometimes she was hesitant to work for us but not for her peers. At the beginning we found out more when the kids would try a few things. This student probably just refused to work for us." Jillian said, "Well it is the peers who will have the most success working with these kids in school. Because an adult can only have so much and can only do so much, but it is what happens throughout the day, or when you are not there. It's what happens outside of school when you're not there, that is important." She went on, "In my class if I would like to sit down with the student and read, she can be way off focus and trying to watch what everyone else's doing. But if I have another student from the class read

with her, she is completely diligent and focused." Keith added, "If he can go play a game with one of his friends for a little while then what we saw for the last hour where he just doesn't want to focus, then suddenly with a peer he will focus right in." Veronica reported, "There have been a couple of times when she was sad about something and I had talked to her and really didn't get anywhere. It wasn't anything serious and then a child went over and got her to get up and got her laughing." Rob explained, "A lot of times the peers can get the child to do things that we can 't. I've seen a couple of times in the classroom; for example, I've had one student having a tantrum. Two adults are having a difficult time with the girl." He continued, "Then one of the girls, a very kind girl walked up and said, 'Would you get up? They're asking you to get up.' The student got up and walked right in the middle of the tantrum. I think kids react to their own peers very well."

A few participants projected more long-range significance when they acknowledged that it was the peers who the students with intellectual disabilities would be living and perhaps working with and interacting with in the future. "That's what life is going to be. Tom is not going to go and live with Mrs. Abrams [chuckles]. He is going to live with people who are going to be his own age and he's going to work with people that are his own age and interact with people his own age" (Brenda).

Diversity of the Nondisabled Peers

One theme that was consistently emphasized by all participants throughout the interviews was the diversity of peers. Jillian reported, "Depending on the student again. Some kids will still answer in short sentences when the student is trying to make conversation. They hesitate to become verbally engaged with the student. Others will take the time to say 'Hey great work' or 'What are you working on now?' They will give them that bit of reinforcement that they're looking for." Donna shared, "So basically we have certain students who do not want to be a part of that at all."

Personality of nondisabled peers. First of all, the teachers talked about the different personalities of the nondisabled peers. Pam observed, "You just have some they're just more that nurturing or kind of caregivers even though they're just tiny. That's the way they are. They have wonderful personalities. Maybe they're going to be a nurse or something like that." Keith reflected, "It wouldn't have anything to do with Jim. It would have to do with their own personality. So the quality of those interactions might vary." "With all the different personalities, some children will have temper tantrums; some children will throw things, say things. You get a lot of different things and you just have to work through those" (Pam). Kurt described, "There are some people who, individuals that have more of the caring desire to work with the student with intellectual disabilities. They have maybe more of the compassionate side?" Pam cautioned, "I think what you really have to do is just watch carefully because a lot of damage can be done, if you get the wrong personality helping the disabled. So you really have to

observe carefully. You have to be kind of 'with it'. I think that is very important and again depending on the mix in your classroom and what you have to work with."

Gender of nondisabled peers. Most participants indicated that the gender of the nondisabled peers makes a difference in the quantity and quality of social interaction that takes place. Veronica said, "The girls in my room are wonderful with Wanda, but she has 14 mothers." Keith confirmed, "There have always been a group of kids that rally around him and look after him and are his friends, sort of mother him, because a lot of them are girls." Rob explained, "What I tend to find, first of all, is the first students to interact with the disabled students would be the girls. That's the first thing that surprises--well it doesn't surprise me, it's the first thing that happens." He also said, "I think they are usually sympathetic [said with hesitation] and empathetic for the most part. They are... they still feel like they should be trying to do something. The girls, more than the boys, I think, it is a time when it is definitely changing." Kurt referred to some negative interactions, "They realize that they are different and do not want to be labeled the same. Again, that is only a few, I think. It tends to be the boys and it tends to be the ones that want to be the cool ones in the class. A little bit."

Age of nondisabled peers. Most participants also postulated that the age of the peers makes a difference. There was a concern that peer interaction and acceptance would decrease as the students got older. Brenda proposed, "I think as they get older too, other than these kids that simply are that kind of

empathetic kind of person, he's going to be left more and more behind because emotionally and socially he's just, at a different level as they get further and further into adolescence." Jillian remarked, "I'm not sure if this is going to go beyond this year. I think that they will know that this is Susie and they will look out for her. But as junior high and everything comes in and they go back to the egocentrism. I'm hoping but... she goes over with a strong support system." Veronica reported, "But I have to say, watching him as the years have gone on the kids have not ...they seem to not to be as accepting of him as much as they were when they were younger. He's having a lot of social problems this year. He's in grade five now. But I think back and those kids were really good with him when they were in grade 3." Keith suggested, "As he gets older, I won't be surprised if, you know, he will become less cute, to be blunt. He will probably meet a little more social ostracism for that very reason." He continued, "Some of the things that in grade 1 or 2 or 3 are kind of cute, by the time you're in grade 7 and 8, they are not cute in anyway. People will probably tend to just leave him by himself and there will have to be more of an artificial social group around him, whether that is the peers or adults." Keith also said, "So maybe that is a natural check on a twisty... I mean, that just can't go on. That's not a natural sort of thing. As kids go on in age, I think that just drops off. I doubt very much whether a kid in grade five is going to help Jim with his zipper." One participant offered some insight into this 'age phenomena'. Rob observed:

> I think its sort of the grade two/three age; they tend to think that everybody is their friend. But as they get into the upper elementary, they start wanting to separate themselves from certain people. They realize that they're different and they want some separation and sometimes they are not as keen to be grouped with other people. There definitely is more separation with kids as they get a little bit older." ...I think that they are looking for people who are the same as them, first of all. I think that is just the...I think that is just the conceptual leap that kids go through at a certain point. I think they start realizing that not everybody is the same. I think that if you looked there is the different rivalries that come up. Around grade 5/6 you start having little fractions about who is in the 'in group' and who is 'out'. And that's just part of...I think, they're looking for people too that are similar to themselves.

Rob goes on to explain that his experiences in junior high showed that, "The students were very eager to work with the disabled students...even though there was an even bigger difference in abilities by that point." He offered insight, "There are some who have become aware, it is a little more like that junior high type of thinking and it is probably more of the threat at this age, that it is as they get older. As they get older, they realize that they are different and they are not afraid of the differences. They realize that just by being beside them, they will not be considered the same." He further explains that they see their role as

different and so, "I think that it is different integrating students with older kids as compared to the younger kids for just that reason."

Social status of nondisabled peers. Some participants also suggested that the social status of the nondisabled peers may influence the acceptance of the student with intellectual disabilities. For example, if "cool or popular" students interact with students with intellectual disabilities, it may encourage other peers to interact as well. Rob explained, "The number of interactions and which interactions will increase, if the ring leader or the more cool person decides that it's all right thing to do. If she makes the effort and it's sort of says to the rest of the students that it's all right." He clarified, "There is still that bit of a pecking order. There are still the people that will follow. At the same time, it is usually the kind hearted, quiet ones that make the first gestures. It will work well if you can get certain students on board. I have to admit." Brenda gave an example, "Jeremy was the kind of boy who was very pivotal. Unfortunately he moved away, that he was very pivotal because he was a cool [with emphasis] kid in class. Partly because of his mother and because of his personal makeup, he was a very empathetic person." She continued, "He was more likely to try to be kind to Tom and include him in things... So when he left, I think that changed the some of the dynamics of the boys, not with some of the girls, but some of the boys." Donna commented, "Just someone who wears the right clothing, or says the right things, and the ones that the kids seem to admire. Sort of the popular kids, I suppose. I think those are the ones that have more influence on the other

kids." She utilized that, "So I would choose them to read with, like my little CAP guy who comes in, I would choose one of them to read first. You know, if they put up their hands, I go 'You're it.' Right away, it establishes that this is a good thing to do."

A few participants warned that some students are "cool" for the wrong reasons, but that, "Often some of the more popular kids who have a whole plate of personal skills that end up being the kids who want to do that anyway" (Keith). Kurt suggested, "First of all, I would take anybody, whether they were a cool kid or an uncool kid as a helper, if they showed that innate desire to help. That would be their first criteria."

One participant, Donna alluded to cultural diversity influencing the amount of socialization that occurs with the student with an intellectual disability. "There might be a cultural component in it as well. There are certain students who do not want to be a part... they do not want these students in their class and they really have to be encouraged and taught that they're okay, you know." She continued, "But I think may be in other countries, it is not as accepted to have the students working side-by-side."

Peer Utilitarian Support Roles

When participants characterized nondisabled peer interactions with the student with intellectual disabilities, the role that was most common was "helping" in a variety of ways. Rob was particularly forthright when he said:

> It will start because they feel that they have to lend some help most of the time. Most of the interaction comes down to the disabled student's needs. If he's crying out on the playground or is having difficulty putting something on. So it always tends to come down to where they are trying to help out with a need. It doesn't come as often just because they want to walk up and say hello. I think one of the things that we still have is this – they still see themselves as helpers, especially if you have developed that. They don't see themselves still as friends and someone whom they can interact with. I think those things...they don't happen spontaneously. There might be a 'hello' out on the playground but interaction doesn't often go beyond that.

As I examined the participants' explanations of these helping interactions, I began to notice that some of these helping roles may be helping the teacher or the classroom function more than helping the student with intellectual disabilities develop their social competence. I decided to group these roles and call them "peer utilitarian support roles."

Caretaking. The first of these roles that support classroom functioning was a caretaking role. Nondisabled peers were described as making sure that the student with intellectual disabilities was in the correct location. Pam explained, "So we had to have certain little helpers that would just keep an eye out to make sure that she was in the right place, that she is not right beside the bus." She later said, "We have to leave the room to go to music, or gym, or library. That's

when the real helpers come to help her or get ready so we can all leave together." Veronica added, "She'll get up and wander off. You have to watch her."

Nondisabled peers were described as making sure that the student with intellectual disabilities was dressed appropriately. Keith remarked, "They will help him with his clothing because getting his...the sleeves are always inside out and mittens and things are backwards, boots are upside down. He will try to jam his foot in the wrong boot. So, of course is zipping zippers is still a problem with him. That's another daily occurrence where the kids just automatically do it." Pam explained, "They make sure that she puts her shoes on and that she has her jacket or a sweater if it is cold out." Kurt shared, "Someone to help him change. This child has had some difficulty in the past, before the circle, of changing. Taking off his street clothes and getting into his gym clothes can be for some kids a little bit stressful. Yes it can. So that has been a big help."

Nondisabled peers were described as making sure that the student with intellectual disabilities was "okay" physically and emotionally. Donna commented, "But we have other students who really like to jump in and actually will even seek someone if something happened on the playground. They will come to me and report or they will be looking in the classroom to make sure that everyone else is kind to them and everything else." Veronica shared, "You know, if everything is going fine, they kind of leave her just to come back with the class. If there are problems, they will be there for her. If she is hurt or upset about

something, they will hang back and look out for her." Brenda indicated, "And if he's hurt on the playground, she will come and get her teacher, or she brings him in."

Jillian had the opportunity to describe interactions that occurred at camp and really emphasized this caretaking role. "Even at camp it was kind of neat too because they would take ownership and do the person's hair in the morning. And make sure that the teeth were brushed, hair combed, face washed."

Tutoring. Another utilitarian role of the nondisabled peers was tutoring the student with intellectual disabilities. Peers were described as tutoring in a number of academic areas. Brenda shared, "So...uh ...she's the one who likes to take on the role of the teacher. It gives her the opportunity then to teach someone who may be isn't quite as, you know, skilled as she is [chuckles]." Donna reported, "This one little girl and I said to her, 'You are a born teacher.' I just looked over and there she was getting him organized, getting him set up, showing him where to write and coming up to the board and pointing at the board." She continued, "It wasn't this assignment; this one was too hard for him. There was another thing that we were doing. She was showing him exactly where to write and I caught this out of the corner of my eye. It was just a delight, so wonderful to see that." Veronica noted, "Sometimes some of them will sit and help, like sit beside Wanda and help her with her work. Her work is very, very simple – just basic cutting and she does a few letters, a few numbers." Brenda remarked, "If he couldn't understand some thing on his paper,

and his paraprofessional was someplace else, then she would take it upon herself to read it to him, to work with him." Jillian commented, "They will read with her, help get her work done, or whenever this student comes up and wants to ask me a question for clarification, these kids will always ask, 'Is there something that we can help you with'?"

Some teachers perceived that the nondisabled peers were knowledgeable with respect to the academic level of the student with intellectual disabilities and strategies that might work with him or her. Jillian considered, "I guess they hear and see what they are doing and what goes on. Often ...so Susie's level, like in math, because they know exactly what she's working on. In spelling, they know her words because I do it at the same time and so they know what she is working on there as well. " She added, "They know a few strategies of their own to get Ned to perform. They know the jelly beans will work and 'Can I have a piece of paper to write this down'?"

Peers also were described as redirecting students with intellectual disabilities and reminding them of classroom expectations by most of the participants. Brenda explained, "Reminding him that, you know, of the classroom rules when he needed reminding. You can do that Tom. Remember that this is how we do things or that sort of thing." Pam observed, "Sometimes even if I ask her to do something and she really doesn't want to do it the way I want her to, she'll kind of her do it her own way. One of the kids in the group will often

redirect her to do it this way and then say, 'Here use my eraser'. She will take it and use it herself."

Some participants alluded to the challenges that may occur when you assign young students tutoring tasks. Kurt cautioned, "So, that is a danger too, especially if you working with nine or ten year olds. Because they don't know. 'When do I back off and let Jimmy do a question? Where do I ask Jimmy do you understand? Can you give me an example?' All of those things that a teacher would do naturally to test for understanding." Keith expressed, "They are not compromising or one is helping in a manner that is not helpful to the other student. That would be a typical kind of interaction. . We are dealing with 8 year old children, I'm dealing with eight year old kids so all of these [hesitation] helpful attempts may not always be helpful." Brenda remarked, "They haven't got that...they're still kids. So maybe they haven't learned the fine arts of just sort of giving him a clue or prompting him rather than helping him. They are more willing to just sort of step in and do it for him. You know."

A few participants indicated that the students with intellectual disabilities would prefer to be tutored by the nondisabled peers. Jillian made this point quite clearly when she said; "It's getting to the point in social studies and science, where she doesn't want my involvement. She prefers to work with the kids. She tells me straight-faced (chuckles) 'I can do it' or 'So and so is helping me'. Or she'll suggest, 'Can so and so come and work with me?'. She doesn't want me anymore [chuckles]."

Providing information. A third utilitarian role of the nondisabled peers was providing information to the teacher. They provided information about what was "normal" or how the student managed the previous year. For example, Keith noted, "I would ask them, 'Would Jim usually do this or be a part of this?' I would ask for the kids' advice. 'How many of you were with Jim last year? What would happen last year? Or what did you guys do? What would he normally do'?" He clarified, "That would be, if it wasn't going to put Jim on the spot. ...It wasn't a threatening type of issue and I needed to know fast. It was as much a sort of pragmatic issue for me as it was having them feel like they are participating in his presence in the classroom, or in his care, or that they have input." He added, "There was that part and, philosophically, I would ask a question like that because I want to have kids to have this sense that they do have input. The other part of it was purely pragmatic."

The peers provided evaluative information comparing students with intellectual disabilities current performance to their performance in previous years. Pam described, "She read... she has to focus on every single word and she is just reading word for word. She's not putting inflection but she's come a long way. The peers were commenting on that, the ones that had seen her last year and even some of the children that live on the same street as her." She added, "They have commented on things in the gym, things that she's doing now that she wasn't doing last year. It is positive." She also said, "They have commented on how she was getting dressed faster. They will say, 'Bethel, you're doing a lot

better than last year' and that kind of thing." Rob mentioned, "Sometimes they are surprised by what he has learnt even though the mathematics that he's doing. For example, numbers 1 to 10, I can tell by the cheer and they are surprised by his answers because he has worked so hard this year on them." Later, Rob reflected, "When students do see other students for a period of time, I have had students mention that they can do this now where they couldn't do it before. I have had students say to me ...I had peer helpers coming down to help me in my gym class...I remember having comments that he couldn't do this last year."

Suggesting ideas or strategies. A fourth utilitarian role that emerged was suggesting ideas or strategies that could be tried with the student with intellectual disabilities. Rob proposed, "Often a kid, in there as a helper, will suggest something that you think is totally impossible. Let them do it. Because very often it works and we can very often underestimate what kids can do? So maybe let them try those things." He gave an example, "But they went down and started rolling the ball and found that she would stay on her feet for a very long time and she was understanding the game a lot better than we thought. And so she could roll the ball and she knew whom she was supposed to roll it to after while and so she understood it as a game." Pam observed, "She will draw, sketch and then when she colours she cannot see the lines that she's gone over and really kind of ruins her beautiful drawing. Yet she wants to colour it and the peer will see the drawing and say, 'Why don't you go over the lines with a dark

crayon and then you would see it so that you could color the inside?' So they offered a strategy." Keith commented, "My first response would be ...there are lots of times that I say to kids, 'I've never thought of that. We should try that'. ...That's not uncommon thing for me to say in the classroom. 'That's an interesting idea. We should try that' or 'I never thought of it that way. Why don't you try it'?" Jillian voiced, "But I also let them know, at the beginning of the year that sometimes I can't explain it as well as some else can. 'I have exhausted my mode of possibilities of explaining something so, if someone else has a better way, please help me out' [chuckles]."

Peer Social Support Roles

Some peer interactions described by the most of the teachers detailed the social support roles that nondisabled peers played for students with intellectual disabilities.

Including. The first of these social support roles, including, was by far the most frequently described. The nondisabled peers of the students with intellectual disabilities helped to include them in a variety of ways. Keith eloquently described how peers try to ensure that everyone gets an equal experience, "If he is with them making sure that he is getting whatever they're getting, that he is doing whatever they're doing. Almost like a little 'Well Jim hasn't...it's Jim turn' making sure that he has the exact same experience as the others." Jillian described how the peers included a nonverbal student with intellectual disabilities, "When Ned comes to class and he might be staring at me

and trying to get my attention, the kids will tell me that he is staring me and make me cue in, 'He wants your attention'." Veronica reported, "They include her in a lot without me having to ask them, without me giving them little hints to include her. They just naturally include her and I think that speaks volumes of their personality." Jillian shared, "Even in art, there's always a certain group of girls that she will approach and they are more than welcoming. They ask her questions and try to include her in the conversation." Nondisabled peers often include the students with intellectual disabilities when they are forming groups. For example, Jillian commented, "Whenever we have been to make groups, one of the most popular girls in my class said on her own 'We'll take Ned. We've got him.' [in an enthusiastic, girlish voice] It was like, she is putting her stamp, and that was acceptable and he is going to be a part of their group."

Teachers most frequently described this role of including in conjunction with recess, especially indoor recess. The nondisabled peers included the students with intellectual disabilities by asking them to join their activities. Keith observed, "There are a number of kids, and even some of the boys who are just looking out for Jim. 'Jim do you want to come?' or 'We can't forget Jim' or statements like that. Even at indoor recess, several of them will always just grab him and 'Come on you're playing with us'." Veronica noted, "But I notice in the classroom, if it is indoor recess or things like that. But they will, not all the time, but often they will say, 'Wanda you can come and do this with us'." Jillian expressed, "There are also games and I noticed on the field too. Often the child

with challenges will be on the fringe. I've actually witnessed kids saying 'Well, no. Give so and so the ball so that they have a chance'." The following quote from Keith depicted the essence of this including role:

> They will be outside playing any number of games. Same thing with indoor recess. So during those unstructured times she is almost always one of them and there are probably at least four kids that regularly... they range from periodically do it, to occasionally, to regularly that choose him and invite him. 'Come on Jim. Would you like to do this? We're going to play this.' The kids will go through kind of a list 'Do you want to do this Jim? No. How about this? No. This? Yes'. A number of kids will, we're talking the unstructured time, they will initiate that and very often they will pick something that they are appointed to and they just drag him into it 'Come on Jim, you're playing with us.' or 'What would you like to do, Jim?' He would not initiate and say, 'Let's do this'.

Accepting. Another important social support role described by most of the teachers was accepting the student with intellectual disabilities. This accepting role was more of a prevalent attitude towards the students with intellectual disabilities. Donna reflected, "There are certain ones that go and make him feel as welcome as they can. He is really accepted here." Brenda shared, "Of course we encouraged that too, of course we encouraged acceptance of Tom in the classroom. He came that way so it was easy to sort of fit that...keep that going, that atmosphere going. Plus the type of class that he was in, was the kind of

class it was just accepting of special needs." She postulated, "Maybe because Tom had been there and he had Cathy [teaching assistant] that whole time and they really liked her so it was just like they were a part of the classroom. They were just an entity ...they belonged in the classroom. So that's how things were." Jillian concurred, "This year, it is a completely different child out there on the field, doing the grade six games and completely accepted." She also said, "Overall, I'm really, really pleased at the acceptance of the student."

One participant, Donna, mentioned how this acceptance by the peers made the student with intellectual disabilities want to develop their social competence. "But I think generally, if they feel...as long as the kids are feeling accepted in the group, they want to be part of the group and they seem to want to work harder to be a part of the group."

Modeling. A third social support role that all participants described was the modeling that the nondisabled peers did. Pam reported, "This year, other than that one person that I have, I see it very good or...I see excellent modeling, modeling academically, social modeling, like with academics, organizational; helping this person be organized within their desk; work habits. But I see very good modeling with the people that I have this year." Veronica remarked, "Even though she has mental delays, you can sometimes tell that she looks at other kids to see what they are doing and what's appropriate. I think she has learned a lot of appropriate behaviour from being with her nondisabled peers." She went on to consider, "Sometimes I question it, if the education she is getting is the

best one for her disability because trying to teach her to talk, getting her the things that she needs, I'm not sure that she's getting it all of those things sitting in a grade three classroom. But from the social perspective, definitely having nondisabled role models has been excellent for her." Rob reflected, "I think that what has happened over a period of time, the disabled students get to see, first of all, what is acceptable. For one of the students that I have this year; you would think that she is not very observant about what's going on. The one thing that has definitely happened is she fits in better because she does the more socially acceptable things now." He continued, "I think she has just learned that certain behaviours cannot happen in the classroom. I can honestly say that I have never seen any student's behaviour get worse because of the classroom that they are in. The disabled student's behaviour always has gotten better."

Rob continues and points out the reciprocal effect that the modeling has on the social competence of the student with intellectual disabilities, which then in turn, influences the level of acceptance that peers have. "It is benefiting their lives for a twofold reason. The other is that they are more willing to be accepted too."

Being friendly. The fourth social support role of the nondisabled peers was being friendly and kind. Brenda suggested, "I think they were trying to be nice to Tom because they did honestly like him." Donna expressed, "It's hard to sort of, you know, there is not an equal...it is very difficult for an actual friendship to develop where it is a not an equal kind of partnership. I think, but there have

been nice relationships happen. Where students have just genuinely liked each other." Two participants did describe the relationship between a student with intellectual disability and a nondisabled peer as being friends. Interestingly, both of these friendships occurred between a male student with intellectual disabilities and a female nondisabled peer. Keith reported, "With Jim. I'd say that with Kim, the two of them consider each other friends. In fact I have often heard her say 'Jim is my'...I've heard her use the phrase 'my friend.' At recess she goes to Jim first. That's her first choice of someone to play with." Rob observed, "It seems to take an excluded student to maybe bring that friendship about. There is quite a difference in their ability but the connection is there. It is for the emotional reasons though, and so I think they are providing something for each other." He pursued this idea, "Still they are not alone and she will help him out but it she may not realize that she is being helped too. She has this concern which is being looked after by she has this companion. Again that may be a more rare situation. I don't know but it's worked well for those two students."

Most of the participants in this study discriminated between being friendly and kind and having true friends. They are "friends" if there are things going on outside of school. Their perspective was quite distinct as illustrated in the comparisons embedded in the following quotes. "I guess it all depends on what you mean by friendships. I would say there's a [hesitation] certain degree of friendship and companionship between the nondisabled and the disabled child. I guess the true test would be if there was outside things going on" (Kurt). Brenda

agreed, "In school, yes friendships develop, but I can't say that these always translate to outside of school." Jillian clarified, "Yeah, like I think in science when she got picked, they are realizing that she is a fun person to be around. I know that some people have gone skating, gone over to her house, gone to Ice Capades, or wherever with her. So she is making the phone calls and kids are saying yes."

Some participants made reference to birthday parties when answering my question about friendships beginning to develop. Veronica remarked, "I think when you're talking about friendships, I think about friendships as calling that person outside of school and inviting them to your birthday party, things like that." Keith pointed out, "That is not to say that every recess...it's not like two best friends, where the recess bell goes and they just gravitate to each other, both running for the other. But occasionally Jim will look for Kim. Now with this whole friendship thing, it's interesting, that yesterday we just handed out...he's having his very first birthday party. He has never had his own birthday party before."

Parents influence outside friendships. A few participants referred to the difference that the parents of the student with intellectual disabilities made in allowing these friendships to occur and encouraging outside school activities and thereby increasing their child's social competence. Veronica reported, "You know what, the 2 kids that I think of that have special needs that do the best in social area have very actively involved parents getting them out there, doing things

outside of school. Whereas a lot of special needs kids don't do a lot and I think that the more or they get out and do things in the community, the better off they are." She also clarified that a true friendship between a student with intellectual disabilities and a nondisabled peer had grown because "I think their mothers were friends and that made a difference." Brenda contrasted that perspective with, "Plus I think Tom's parents, Mom in particular was very protective of him and she would often not allow him to do things even if we were... Like if we had a dance experience, she wouldn't want him to come. She didn't want him to be part of some of these social situations." She continued, "I think I was mentioning just, that one boy who really did try to include him and the Mom talked to the other Mom. She would allow him to come with him but they had to have him home in a certain hour and they made it very difficult for him to really be a friend to somebody else. Even when they did try to reach out to him."

Clarifying. Another social support role that was mentioned by a few participants was nondisabled peers clarifying expectations for students with intellectual disabilities, as well as the students' language and behaviour for others. Keith illustrated, "You see there was some confusion about who he was asking or was asking him and Jim was confused with something that I can't recall. What I do recall is that Kim spontaneously intervened and clarified or restated whatever the thing was from across the room 'Jim, it means this, Jim. Blah blah blah blah blah'." Veronica commented, "But I knew she wouldn't be

understood so she and another girl did hers [a poem] together. They did a really nice job and this little girl was so good with her." She continued, "I sent them off to practice and they came up with this, not Wanda, but the other girl came up with that they said it together. Then the words that Wanda said really clearly, she would just back off and not say them at all. But it was so wonderful; it was just wonderful. They did such a good job!" Jillian observed, "They know what level the person is working at and they just sort of...even I can tell just by the way they speak to her sometimes. It is not in order to be unkind or cruel. I think they realize that if they talk this way he or she will be able to understand me compared to using a different tone or set of vocabulary."

Encouraging. The nondisabled peers also took on the role of encouraging students with intellectual disabilities. Jillian expressed, "It is incredible to see the kids and just to see how happy both [with enthusiasm] become. Like when you witness them playing a game together, and automatically the kids will scale down the game, to make it easier for the challenged student. They can make it so they're playing at her level and encouraging her." Later she said, "In the one art activity, where the kids were working on mosaics and Susie was working with them and the girls just burst into song and started singing. Susie knew the words. And so she had started singing and the girls all said, 'Yes, Susie sing with us'. So she was right in there like a dirty shirt and singing with them and what not." Sometimes the peers encouraged through the use of praise. For example, Brenda explained, "Also encouraging him when he does things right. Saying

'That's really good Tom' or 'I really like your picture. You drew something other than a lollipop' or something like that." Jillian shared, "In art class, without my supervision they will say, 'Do you need this or Do you want that? That's really good. You're really trying'." Sometimes the peers encouraged the student with intellectual disabilities to cooperate. Rob reported, "The other kids now take on responsibility and go out into the hallway and can coax her back in a lot easier than I can. Because she is willing to listen to her friends." Veronica confirmed, "There have been a couple of times when she was sad about something and I had talked to her and really didn't get anywhere. It wasn't anything serious and then a child went over and got her to get up and got her laughing."

Ignoring. Two participants mentioned ignoring. This could be considered a role for the non-disabled peers because of the need to sometimes ignore inappropriate social behaviour. Keith reflected, "Well I think very often, they just sort of ignore it and they carry on with their tasks and they let them sort of play or if it got really bad they might come to me." Jillian said, "I always let her do it on her own because she's going to have to learn how to do this, to approach a group. At the beginning of the year, they would say, 'So and so is sitting here' or not even answer, just ignore her." She clarified, "So I can see that they are uncomfortable with it still. But in the same token, they are never rude. Like they still will take the time to answer the questions or what not. So she is never just being ignored."

Contrasted against this ignoring role would be the negative attention given by the peers. Some participants felt that it was important to ensure that peer interaction is happening to prevent the student with intellectual disabilities from seeking negative attention. Rob explained, "She did many inappropriate things. She was trying to get people's attention. I think what it was –she wanted the attention of the other students. The attention that she got was the negative attention." Jillian voiced, "Now it is much more appropriate because she is getting the daily socialization that she is craving and does not have to dig it out for herself."

Provoking. A final social support role of the nondisabled peers seemed to be provoking the student with intellectual disabilities. Dealing with provocation is a natural interaction within the elementary school setting. Nondisabled peers provided the opportunity to develop this social competence for the student with intellectual disabilities. Brenda reported, "Last year she was really leading him down the garden path. She would lead him out of the playground area, and she would run back into the playground and say, 'Tom is outside the playground' [chuckles]." Pam furthered this idea of provoking, "It just so happens that the little IRT [Integration Resource Teacher] student was with this boy who was having some social problems and she can see maybe two feet in front of her. He was actually playing cat and mouse with her. She could see the shadow and he was going around the table and she would kind of turn towards him and he would go back away." Some participants made reference to teasing and name

calling but stated that they are unaware of it happening to the student with intellectual disabilities. Rob offered some insight into this aspect, "Not too often will you find students that will be mean from the regular population. But sometimes too, when they're frightened or they don't understand it, or it's just a weaker link to tease. It happens fairly rarely, but it does happen. I think over all, what they tend to do, is they stay away from those students. So you really don't have to be as concerned about that." Brenda echoed this idea, "We weren't going to accept anybody, because there were a couple of new kids in the room that could easily have fallen into the role of harassing Tom or making him the brunt of all the jokes or that sort of thing. That just didn't happen because the other kids that were around him wouldn't accept it either."

Benefits to the Peers

When asked directly about benefits and throughout these interviews, the participants described several benefits to the nondisabled peers from interacting with students with intellectual disabilities. These benefits included their enjoyment of activities, learning about community membership, having more opportunities to experience giving, and increased opportunities to enhance their social competence.

Enjoyment. One role that benefited the nondisabled peers was the enjoyment that they get from interaction with the student with intellectual disability. Some participants described broad enjoyment, like smiling. "The kids just smile when they see him getting excited about doing something or what not.

I think it is just a great experience for everybody" (Jillian). Rob added, "At the same time they find out that it's fun to interact as a group. They get to know each other and they build a particular dynamic. I think they look forward to that interaction as their group."

Most participants mentioned the fun activities that the peers enjoyed because of the arrangements for peer interaction. Kurt explained, "They get something that the non-circle kids in the class don't get. They get the special time when they go make cookies or play Twister or some of the other fun things that might be involved. I think they like that." Brenda shared, "Oh they loved it [referring to cooking in the staffroom]. They absolutely loved it and of course, um... it wasn't just that they got to go and cook with Tom and they got out of some work, but they got to eat [chuckles] What more do you want? [more laughter]." Veronica reported, "Like once a week, a craft where every child in the room went and had a turn to do a special craft with this child. We did a lot of cooking. Just to set up those social situations where they are doing something that the kids really [emphasized] wanted to be there to do it and that that child is the focus, kind of."

Some participants referred to the enjoyment that peers derive from getting out of academic work. Rob commented, "You see it first of all as a fun thing to do, 'I'm getting out of class work'." Donna shared, "So I have some students in my room, actually just about all of them, because for them it's also a little bit of a break [a little chuckle]." Veronica voiced, "They are all very willing

and very keen to take a break and go on the computer or the listening station with Wanda or read with Wanda."

Becoming community members. Having a student with intellectual disabilities in the classroom provided more opportunities for the nondisabled peers to learn about their role as a community member. Jillian remarked, "I appreciate to see them all working together and being kind to each other and helping each other learn and so it is not just directed at the students who have special needs. I think the most important thing that I do is build a community in the classroom." Veronica said, "Just building that a sense of being part of a community. As you get older, it branches out into volunteerism and things like that."

Some participants drew comparisons to the larger community. Keith explained, "To me, it can't help but instill understanding for kids, exposure, and acceptance. You know, that's not to say that it just happens automatically. But over a space in time when those kids are just a part of what is happening in the regular classroom, there is more opportunity for just normalization and the fact that this is the fabric of society all over the place...is that way." Rob expressed, "So I think they're really huge benefits and society in the classroom is like the society that they're going to live in after a while. For that reason, it is a worthwhile situation, to learn to accept all people."

The nondisabled peers also become more aware of diversity within their classroom community, with the assumption that they would correlate to the

larger community. Donna shared, "I think the biggest one is to realize that there are other people in the world...that we are not all the same and also I think it helps people to be less fearful of things and other people that are different." She continued, "I think that people who have not been exposed to children like that are fearful. If they are fearful, they will not be encouraged to interact in any way. But when you realize that they are people as well and they can play and do a lot of things with them and you know...." Brenda's perspective was, "I think that, to realize that there are differences and that differences can be positive. I mean, maybe Tom isn't going to have a...he might have to be a sheltered environment or in a group home or I don't know. That remains to be seen." She summarized, "Just to understand that, there are people like that and they are valuable. And that they do the best that they can do." Keith reflected, "I think that ... even having them experience that diversity comes in many forms. I know our culture seems to promote the diversity of ethnics but there is that whole intellectual diversity as well." He added, "I think you know, although this is slightly different, but in some respects, as social acceptance kind of moves out which... fewer barriers between ethnicity that one of the areas that still has maintained sort of the social ostracism is issues related to mental health."

Along with this increased awareness of diversity, the nondisabled peers also benefited from observing the ways in which students with intellectual disabilities are similar to themselves. Rob said, "Sometimes I think they are surprised also to find out that these people are not that different from

themselves. They like some of the same kinds of things, like they might like a certain kind of candy, a certain cartoon, or something else." He finished with, "So they might find differences but they also find that they are similar. I think that sometimes surprises them even more." Jillian commented, "They were realizing that the challenges were basically academic and that person is just like us in so many, many ways." Keith described, "I think that having kids experience the notion that, you know, having to be with those kids and finding out that they get the giggles and they have fun and they like some of the same things that they do." He pointed out, "It is helping to at least give them the chance to see that they can look at somebody who is intellectually different on similar grounds as to someone who is ethnically different or religiously different or whatever. It is not something that is to be devalued more because they are intellectually disabled."

Experiencing giving. Some teachers reported that the nondisabled peers have more opportunities to give of themselves when students with intellectual disabilities are present. Keith suggested, "I think they benefit from his presence in that they experience the opportunity of giving to him. By doing so they are getting something that they probably don't even realize and it will only be in years to come, maybe they'll never remember that, but I can't help but think that is weaving something very kind and you know, empathetic, sensitivity, awareness that's being developed by his presence." Jillian reflected, "I think it just makes them aware of that and it takes them sort of out of that egocentric

sort of state and 'it's just me' and 'everything is great'. I think it's really powerful, because it makes them aware that we are lucky that we are able to do this, but that they also have to help with those who aren't as fortunate." Donna shared, "I think also, there is a certain amount of satisfaction that they get it from working with the children, feeling that you have done something good and that you have done something that is kind." Keith contributed, "I think that in experiences like that kids are having kind of the warm fuzzy. 'I did something good' or 'he's my friend'. I think there's a chance to feel kind of the sense of...what you call it? Some sort of self-satisfaction, not in a proud sort of way, but I'm doing something good."

Enhancing social competence. Most participants suggested that the nondisabled peers have more opportunities to enhance their social competence when students with intellectual disabilities are classmates. Most frequently, the participants mentioned the areas of tolerance, compassion, and empathy. Jillian reported, "I think it gives them the experience to grow in tolerance and compassion, respect." Pam said, "I guess just the learning, the tolerance and the compassion. Just the caring that they learn." Veronica remarked, "I think for the nondisabled children, it also develops an awareness of different disabilities and an empathy and understanding." Kurt shared his perspective of this benefit in the following lengthy quote:

> It's not something that gives you an awful lot of reward, like tangible rewards but I think when your day is done and you have spent some of

> your day working with someone, maybe at a recess. They see some of the problems that the child might encounter, maybe with his own thought processes or things that we may take for granted if we are not intellectually disabled. It may cause a child, who does work with the person, one-on-one to do some internalizing and say, 'I never thought about it. I would never have any problem thinking about going up the stairs on the play structure. That would never cross my mind' and they can see that Johnny, let's call him found that he was scared to go up three stairs. Still by internalizing that might give a person a sense of wanting to do more because they can see that what they are doing is actually helpful for the student. Making a difference, I guess."

A further example of increased social competence for the nondisabled students is found in the following example. Brenda says, "but I think just basically having a more rounded outlook on life. Watching a child who obviously doesn't have the 'wherewithall' continue to work to try every day and there are still expectations for that person...at a different level but they're still expectations."

Some participants also reflected that the nondisabled peers have more opportunities to develop a sense of responsibility. Pam noted, "They really do feel responsible. I think showing that they can be helpers. It's not always just the strong ones. It is also the weaker ones that like to help out." Veronica expressed, "I think they get a sense of responsibility, of being responsible for helping someone." Jillian suggested, "It's almost like they are assuming

responsibility for her." Kurt reflected, "I think that, as we said earlier, when you do something like the Circle of Friends, most people on the outside would think that the focus is for the disabled child. After going through doing the Circle of Friends, I've done this about four times with different kids over the years. I know that the spin-off of the emotional or the level of developing of responsibility is just as much for the students who are nondisabled." He explained, "It develops a maturity level. When you're being throwing into the role of the model, you have to think twice about acting silly or running away yourself, running away with someone who depends on you or acting inappropriately. When you want to be a model for appropriate behaviour, not inappropriate behaviour which unfortunately sometimes this boy has done." He concluded, "OK so it gives them...you thrust them into the role of responsibility and I think a lot of students perform that because if they didn't, they would really be letting someone down. I think they develop a greater sense of responsibility because they have been put in a situation where they have been given responsibility."

Costs to the Peers

Although the participants were not asked a direct question about costs, they described a few costs to the nondisabled peers from interacting with students with intellectual disabilities. These costs were too much helping, developing resentment, and worrying about the students intellectual disabilities.

Too much helping. Overwhelmingly, the teachers were concerned about the amount of helping that the peers do. In particular, they were concerned that

the academic work of the nondisabled peers would suffer because of the need to help the student with intellectual disabilities. Donna voiced, "Yeah, because I think one of the problems is.... Because I also don't want them to be the teacher all the time too. Like I don't want those kids that are bright to always feel that they have to teach." She continued, "It is okay to have them in a group and play with them and meet them as an equal, sort of thing. But I like them to do their own work as well." Pam stated, "But I'm finding it takes away from their own work. It really does. It tends to be a strong student that is helping the disabled students and then they tend to rush through their own work after." She also said, "I think that it is positive, as long as it doesn't infringe upon the peers' academic performance. I think that would be the only thing, that they don't spend too much time. Sometimes you have the kids, that all they want to do is be helpers. They are that kind, the compassionate ones but then their work lacks." Rob reflected, "They're not getting the same amount of academics, but they are getting something else. I never find that it is a waste of time. You have to be cautious because some kids may want to use it, just to get out of class or not do their work. But that's something that you are usually aware of. I don't ever see it as a waste of time."

Some participants relied on turn taking to compensate for this concern about nondisabled students' academic work. Pam reported, "We go through the attendance so we do it fairly and everyone gets a turn to just help her with that and other jobs in the classroom— on the counters, calendar, weather. So she'll

always have somebody." Rob shared, "But I tend to keep with pairs. I do think it is really important to get around to all of the students because they learn something from it. But in no time, it seems like you have gone through the whole class. I will certainly repeat a little more with the kids who are ...that I know who are honest and open about it." Pam mentioned, "But it does affect their own work. That's one of the reasons I switch my groups so that it's a different person."

When prodded, most of the teachers also recognized that too much help may create some "learned helplessness" in the student with intellectual disabilities themselves. Keith commented, "But to the extent that people will very quickly step in and help him. That begs the question, is he really needing to learn that? So that is a drawback when you have people who will always willing to help you with things, it doesn't increase your own probability to learn certain skills." Veronica reported, "Sometimes they do too much for her or other students and they baby her, you know. So sometimes you have to kind of talk to them about letting this child do the most that they can possibly do. Not do too much for them and not just letting them get their way because they have a special need, because they have a disability." Brenda remarked, "I guess...one drawback would be that he doesn't learn to be independent. If someone is always coming to his rescue as soon as he puts on that helpless expression. Then yes, he is going to be helped immediately or someone is going to come to his rescue. So I guess that would be one drawback to his peers always running

to help him." Rob stated, "Only if you let the other students do everything for them. But I think, in that sense, what you have to do is make them aware of how much they can help and what they can expect. You probably have to do it quietly, just to allow the disabled student to do it for themselves." He continued, "Because you don't want to have all of these people doting on him or her. So there is always that fine line. But I think that they gain a lot from the social interaction and, just so long as there isn't the learned helplessness evolving from all of this [chuckles] which could happen."

Resentment. A few teachers described how nondisabled peers can sometimes resent the student with intellectual disabilities or the situation in which they may be placed. These teachers were talking in the context of the proactive strategies that they used in order to avoid this resentment. Donna said, "I like to provide enough activities in...I'm really conscious and really work hard at not letting them be a burden. Because I think that creates resentment and causes a problem for them." She added, "I try also to give the nondisabled students activities that challenge them at their level. Again, I just want to do that so they don't resent having these kids in our classroom. I think if you can do that, you can show them to appreciate them." Brenda remarked, "You can't force kids to be friends. You can try to set up systems that might encourage it, you can try to give them strategies for it, but if you have a child that just simply won't be accepting up that other child, there's no way that you can force that to happen." She went on, "They are going to be resentful, if you try to force the

relationship. It's going to backfire and not be worthwhile for the student that you're really trying to help."

Worry. Another cost to the nondisabled peers is that they seem to worry about the student with intellectual disabilities. Donna clarified, "One thing that I do know that does happen... they seem to be... they do worry about these kids. They do think about them, they do watch and they do notice what people do for them. Some of them do. Seem to care about them and worry about them a lot. Not all of them..." Keith explained, "Yes because I'm tuned in enough to be helpful. I'm sure I miss things but regularly I offer little, not suggestions, but footnotes, this might be what's really taking place right now. Nothing to worry about. "This is his way of" ...something or other to try and sort of ease the sense of confusion." Rob added, "They will very often wonder what happened... 'Was she hurt? Why was she upset?' Intellectually I think that they are opening up their minds to a lot of things. You can really tell they don't understand it." Keith observed, "They are used to it, it's not as though they are shocked by it, but I don't think they understand that. "Why is Jim doing that? Why is he behaving in a particular way?" So I think it part of their feelings is that they are perplexed."

Concluding Thoughts

To conclude this chapter of findings, I'd like to offer a few meaningful quotes from my participants. The first quote highlighted the importance of developing the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities within classroom settings. Rob said:

> I think that the greatest things that any student with or without disabilities can take with them from the school system are the interpersonal relationships that they've had. If they haven't got that, it's a pretty hollow existence at school. A lot of the things, especially for the students that can't learn a lot of academics, they are not going to take as much out of school if they can't take some fun out of it, some kind of a relationship with another student.

The second quote reflected the essence of tapping into a natural system support in the elementary classrooms, the peers, that this study researched. Keith said:

> Creating a context where as much natural development and peer interaction can happen. There is always going to be artificial stuff that has to be brokered; that has to be adult driven. But having said that, not to minimize, or just forget about the fact that some of this can happen spontaneously. We need to do whatever we can to make sure that he's got whatever skills he can to at least put him in the ring.

Finally, a concluding quote from my interview with Veronica confirmed the need for sharing teachers' perspectives of how the peers can be involved in developing social competence. I felt it was an insightful conclusion before commencing the discussion of these findings, presented in the next chapter. Veronica concluded:

> I keep saying, "Somebody tell me what to do." I'm more than willing to do it. I just don't always know what to do. I think the hardest part though is the social skills. For me that is the hardest part to do, to modify. The academics are easy. I can do that no problem – it's the social skills. And you know that's true in general for all children. You know, if we had the key to that.

Chapter 5

Conclusions

In this study, I examined teachers' perspectives of the role of nondisabled peers in developing the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities. In this chapter, I briefly summarize the major findings from this study, discuss some educational dichotomies that affect the development of social competence in elementary classrooms, revise the school house model (initially represented in Figure 1), present the limitations of the study, and explore implications for professional practice, teacher education and future research.

Summary of Findings

This brief summary highlights the major findings from this study, as well as the literature from previous studies that support these findings.

Teachers' perspectives. Teachers' perspectives of social competence and the interaction interventions that they are using certainly have an impact on the development of social competence of students with intellectual disabilities. In this study, teachers placed a great deal of value on social competence and described it as a "fitting in" quality, named some specific skills, such as "getting along", and a few participants alluded to the reciprocal nature of social interactions. As "fitting in" was not a common aspect of the theoretical constructs of social competence reviewed in the literature, perhaps education researchers and scholars need to rethink how they conceptualize social competence for this

population. The teachers recognized the significance that they possess in the social dynamics of their classroom through their modeling, their goals and expectations, and their willingness to collaborate.

Interaction interventions. Many interaction interventions that the teachers used to facilitate peer interactions were described. Four interaction interventions described class wide instructional strategies, such as classroom discussions, group work, differentiated instruction, and use of literature. Classroom discussions are similar to using class meetings and sharing circles to build a sense of community (Elias et al., 1997). Group work (Johnson and Johnson, 1986) and differentiated instruction (Thomas, 1996) are common interaction interventions that have been well documented. Using literature that focuses on specific issues critical to students with intellectual disabilities is an intervention supported by Orr et al. (1997). Another five interventions described class wide social interventions, such as programs, social skills, utilizing the 'teachable moment', role-playing, and special events. Although Siperstein, Leffert, and Widaman (1996) advocate for social programs that provide direct instruction, as well as foster more positive perceptions and expectations among fellow students, such social programs were not significant to these teachers. Role-playing is often referred to in the literature as an effective intervention (Kostelnik and Suderman, 1998), yet only two of these participants referred to this strategy. Capitalizing on special events, such as Valentine's Day, Christmas, and special promotions like the "kindness month" described by Pam was an interaction intervention that

might be promising. Five more interaction interventions described strategies that were targeted for students with intellectual disabilities. They included using practical situations, assigning peers, stepping back, developing a positive presence, and providing recognition. Using practical situations is supported in a study by Pavri and Monda-Amaya (2001) who found that the social strategy most frequently mentioned by educators was encouraging interaction among students by creating activities or games in which they could participate. Janney and Snell (1996) supported the intervention of "stepping back" as one of four themes that emerged in their study of how elementary teachers facilitated peer interactions. They referred to this idea as "backing off to give peers time to mingle without adult interference." Maag and Weber (1995) supported the practice of providing recognition through the use of attention and praise for socially appropriate behaviour as a simple yet effective technique for promoting children's social development. They claim that teachers are themselves reinforced for providing praise when they see how beneficial it is to their students.

Significance of the nondisabled peers. However, more central to this study is the role of peers. The participants were certainly aware of the significance of the peers. They recognized the importance of the "sense of belonging" to a community of learners. Keith said, "My thought is that the whole purpose is to integrate that person and them become a part of the community as much as possible. Otherwise there is no point. He would be there in body only." They recognized how much the students with intellectual disabilities wanted to be

interacting with their peers and they affirmed that sometimes peers had more success with students with intellectual disabilities that they did. A few participants also acknowledged that it was the peers who the students with intellectual disabilities would be living with, perhaps working with and interacting with in the future.

Roles of the nondisabled peers. The teachers described a variety of roles of peers in interacting with students with intellectual disabilities. The peer utilitarian support roles described were caretaking, tutoring, providing information, and suggesting ideas or strategies. The peer social support roles were including, accepting, modeling, being friendly, clarifying, encouraging, provoking, and ignoring. The teachers talked about the peer utilitarian support roles much more than the peer social support roles. They had tendency to describe everything as "helping." This finding is supported in a study by Kishi and Meyer (1994) who found that relationships with peers with severe disabilities were remembered as teaching and care giving. In that study, students mentioned "helping" much more frequently when talking about their friends with severe disabilities than when speaking of their typical friends. Kishi and Meyer suggested that assigning classmates without disabilities responsibilities such as tutoring, helping, problem solving, and other nontraditional peer interrelationships may further reinforce this message of helping interactions and interfere with the evolution of more natural peer relationships.

Becoming more aware of the peer social support roles of including, accepting, modeling, being friendly, clarifying, encouraging, provoking, and ignoring may lead educators towards interventions aimed more directly at developing social competence of students with intellectual disabilities. For example, it may be a natural and desirable outcome to have nondisabled peers in the roles of provoking and ignoring students with intellectual disabilities so that they may experience of full range of interaction experiences. In this study, teachers mentioned the ignoring role and stated that perhaps it was more common for the students to be ignored than to be provoked with teasing and name calling. Kurt reflected this notion, "I can't think of a bad comment that has been directed towards him. There has not been any name-calling, teasing, mimicking and of course that could happen easily. When you have someone making fun of the way the person talked or acted, making faces, I can't think of anything." This finding is supported in a study by Evans, Salisbury, Palombaro, Berryman, and Hollowood (1992) who suggested that students with intellectual disabilities may be somehow categorized differently by nondisabled children. That is to say, they are not judged in the same way as other peers. For example, even children who reported not playing with them identified them as "friends". Also, they suggested that children may perceive it as particularly socially unacceptable to interact negatively with peers who are severely disabled.

Peer benefits and costs. The teachers mentioned several benefits and costs to the nondisabled peers from interacting with students with intellectual

disabilities. The teachers felt that the nondisabled peers enjoyed interacting with students with intellectual disabilities through the fun, practical activities (i.e., cooking, crafts) and the fact that they might "get out" of academic work. For example, Brenda shared, "It wasn't just that they got to go and cook with Tom and they got out of some work, but they got to eat. [chuckles] What more do you want?" The presence of students with intellectual disabilities created opportunities for peers to serve in various social roles and to assume responsibilities. Because of these opportunities, the nondisabled peers learned more about their roles as community members. Rob commented, "So I think they're really huge benefits and society in that the classroom is like the society that they're going to live in after a while. For that reason, it is a worthwhile situation, to learn to accept all people." The nondisabled peers became more aware of diversity within their classroom community, as well as the similarities among themselves. Consequently, they may enhance their social competence when students with intellectual disabilities are classmates. Most frequently, the teachers mentioned improvements in areas of tolerance, compassion, empathy, and responsibility. Kishi and Meyer (1994) pointed out that, "It may well be that many of our existing models to promote peer relationships are instead reinforcing traditional notions of charity, volunteerism, and even early identification of future professionals in human services." Pam illustrated this notion when she said, "Maybe they're going to be a nurse or something like that."

The teachers felt that there were a few costs to the nondisabled peers as well. Overwhelmingly, the teachers were concerned about the amount of helping that the peers do. In particular, they were concerned that the academic work of the nondisabled peers would suffer because of the need to help the students with intellectual disabilities. Some participants relied on turn taking to compensate for this concern about nondisabled students' academic work. When prodded, most of the teachers also recognized that too much help may create some "learned helplessness" in students with intellectual disabilities. Resentment and worry were two additional costs to the nondisabled peers that were described by the teachers.

Diversity. Diversity of students impacts on peer interaction. Teachers stressed the diversity of both the students with intellectual disabilities and the nondisabled peers. They described a wide range of personalities, verbal skills, empathy, and social status. The participants felt that gender and age were also significant to peer interaction and developing social competence. One participant mentioned the diversity of culture. This perspective is notable because much of the movements in multicultural education parallel movements in special education. Logan and Malone (1998) also found that teachers consistently discussed how one year's class was different from another year's. Teachers consistently described differences in the dynamics of their caseloads year by year based on individual student differences.

A related study supports this perspective of diversity. Many teachers believe that social interactions and friendships tend to develop among students who understand and respect each other's differences and similarities (Stainback et al., 1992). One way is to infuse information about individual differences and similarities into classroom activities. Some teachers have students provide information about their families, pets, summer plans, etc. In the process of recognizing differences and similarities, teachers can point out the strengths and talents of each student in the class. In this study, Kurt described his "Class All-Star. We highlight the importance of everybody. Everybody has got a life outside of school, including teachers...Everybody has an opportunity, a certain time, where they can do a little presentation in front of the class."

Dichotomy Discussions

Relevant to this study are four dichotomies that seemed to permeate throughout the elementary teachers' perspectives. These dichotomies appeared to reflect the teachers' struggle to find balance in their interventions and justify their perspectives about peer interactions and social competence. I feel they warrant some discussion in order to put the development of social competence of students with intellectual disabilities into the broader scope of education in elementary classrooms today.

Social vs. academic emphasis. The first dichotomy that seemed to permeate throughout the interviews was the participants' struggle between the value they placed on developing social competence and the emphasis placed on

developing academic skills by the curriculum. This dissonance is implied in the following quote from Kurt. "I would say that developing social competence or skills, if you wish at the elementary school level would have to be almost as important as the academic skills. I know that school places a fair amount of emphasis on that but...I'm almost thinking from my own personal perspective." Keith also illustrated this dichotomy when he said, "It [social competence] is probably as equal, if not the most important thing that I do with kids. Because the curriculum for me is a part of what I do, but it is not the essence of what I do."

Research by Howell, Fox and Morehead (1993) proposed that "the distinction between academic and social behaviour, regardless of how capricious it may be, is partially responsible for the prevailing view that the primary responsibility of teachers is to 'instruct' academic content, whereas they are expected to 'control' social behaviour." However, everything about schooling – curriculum, teaching methods, discipline, and interpersonal relationships – teaches children about human qualities that we value. Lewis, Schaps, and Watson (1996) discuss the synergy of academic and social goals. They said "It is common to think of academic and social goals of schooling as a hydraulic – to imagine that fostering one undermines the other, but schools can create environments where children care about one another and about learning." They reported that warm, supportive relationships also enabled students to risk the new ideas and mistakes so critical to intellectual growth.

Social inclusion seems to arise out of academic inclusion. The opportunity to share academic work and play may increase social interactions. Perhaps we need to examine the instructional interventions that classroom teachers are employing. These interventions, such as classroom discussions, group work, differentiated instruction, and use of literature may impact on the social inclusion and the ability of the teacher to develop a community of learners. A study by Pavri and Monda-Amaya (2001) found similar strategies were favored by groups of teachers and all fit well with the academic goals of the classroom. These strategies included grouping, peer tutoring, cooperative learning, and using behaviour management and classroom organization strategies.

According to Grenot-Scheyer, Harry, Park, Schwartz, and Meyer (1998) , the "hidden curriculum" in education is socialization, and many critical, naturalistic trials to learn the valued social patterns of people, places and context exist in school. Teachers and other adults play an especially critical role in the development of socialization. Perhaps the 'system' needs to openly acknowledge, appreciate, and facilitate the development of social competence. Veronica expressed her frustration, "I keep saying, 'Somebody tell me what to do.' I'm more than willing to do it. I just don't always know what to do. I think the hardest part though is the social skills. For me that is the hardest part to do, to modify. The academics are easy. I can do that no problem – it's the social skills. And you know that's true in general for all children. You know, if we had the key to that."

Lesson planning vs. teachable moments. All of my participants had several years of teaching experience. Therefore, it can be assumed that their teacher training placed emphasis on effective lesson planning. Some examples of this effective lesson planning include developing clear behavioural objectives, sequencing learning activities, and writing the lesson plans. Yet, the participants in this study emphasized the need to capture that "teachable moment" to attend to the social dynamics in their classrooms. Keith explained, "It's not; today is day 2, so we do social skills. We do social skills all day long. We do interpersonal skills all day long and as the things arise, as moments arise that we need to address something, that's when we address it. If that is in the middle of science, then we stop in the middle of science and we look at those things." Rob furthered the idea, "Very often those things come down to talking about instances that take place. And use them as examples, it is not things that are lecture setup [chuckles]. It can be that sometimes, but you're looking for things that really happen and discussing them." Social goals were not written down, programs were not used significantly, and social growth, although difficult to evaluate, seemed to occur despite the teaching sequences. As Rob stated, "That behaviour disappeared in the regular classroom and it really didn't feel it came from the adults. I feel it came from the milieu of the classroom itself."

As Grenot-Scheyer, Harry, Park, Schwartz, and Meyer (1998) point out, developing social competence goes beyond having friends or using the correct social interaction patterns in a particular context. They maintain that naturally

occurring learning opportunities, "teachable moments" need to be presented to children throughout the developmental period in schools to learn social values. When designing interventions, they suggest a focus on naturalistic ones, rather than continuing to advocate and validate strategies that are not used by real teachers in the real world because they simply cannot be done in the natural flow of how those environments work. They recommend acknowledging the reality of today's diverse classrooms and looking for directions and strategies that build on what is actually happening in the child's context or world.

Developing social competence seems to be an informal process with expectations, not goals. Perhaps this has significant implications for social goal setting on the IEP's of students with intellectual disabilities. Social outcomes seem unpredictable, making evaluation difficult. Developing social competence does not appear to follow prescriptive teaching methods, but is rather authentic and spontaneous. Perhaps educators need to move away from prescriptive lesson planning in order to capitalize more on the "teachable moment." Perhaps teachers need to be helped to see emerging opportunities for social belonging and learning, then nurture, allow, promote, and support those opportunities. Also, teachers may need to refrain from interrupting any natural interactions that may occur. Perhaps teachers need more of a problem solving, creative approach to developing social competence with "real life" extensions.

Individual vs. group needs. A third dichotomy that appeared to permeate the interviews was balancing the individual needs of students with intellectual

disabilities with the needs of the nondisabled peers. The participants recognized the individual needs of students, yet mentioned several barriers that may be present. Some of these barriers were academic expectations, time, and group dynamics. Pam commented, "There is one other girl who is really helping her but she really needs to attend to her own work because she works so slowly. She has just got that caring in her and wants to be a helper. So I think in some ways it makes the individual not complete their tasks. But is that the most important thing?" Keith shared, "Whenever we are working in flexible groups, everything that we do, I'm always thinking, how will Jim fit into this? Or if he can't, then it's a matter of, he's got his own stuff that he is working on." Kurt referred to the Circle of Friends he had arranged and said, "I'm trying not to burden myself down with this program. If you let it, it could take you over and take away from the other things you have to do." Keith expressed the time constraints that teachers may feel when trying to meet individual needs. He noted, "You can't always allow him the unlimited time to allow kids to learn and do what they can because there are other factors [referring to meetings and class schedules]."

McDonnell (1998) argues that "we must begin to view student learning as the combined effects of instructional methods used for all students in the class and those used to meet the unique needs of each student." This will require promotion of the development of an instructional foundation in the classroom that supports individualization for all students so teachers can accommodate the needs of diverse learners, including children with intellectual disabilities. He

proposed a model for inclusive classrooms that balanced the foundational strategies of effective teaching behaviours, heterogeneous student groups, cooperative learning, and peer tutoring with the student specific strategies of parallel instruction, naturalistic teaching procedures, and embedded instruction. These strategies would lead to opportunities to respond which leads to student achievement.

It seems that the group learning activities occurring for all students may be the most important thing for the student with intellectual disabilities to have the opportunities to interact with peers and thereby allowing the peers to have a role in developing their social competence. Perhaps our focus needs to shift from individual social needs to developing social support strategies for all learners within diverse elementary classrooms. Perhaps teachers need to employ strategies to infuse opportunities for students to receive instruction on targeted routines, activities and skills within the ongoing operations of the group or classroom. Good interventions may have to be looked at from at least three perspectives – the perspective of the teacher, the perspective of the nondisabled peers, and the perspective of the student with intellectual disabilities.

Male vs. female. The final dichotomy that I wish to discuss is slightly different than the three foregoing educational issues. It is the effect of gender. As noted in the findings section, the gender of the nondisabled peers influenced the quantity and quality of peer interactions. The teachers observed and reported that it was the girls who tended to interact with the students with

intellectual disabilities. Rob explained, "What I tend to find, first of all, is the first students to interact with the disabled students would be the girls. That's the first thing that surprises--well it doesn't surprise me, it's the first thing that happens." Keith confirmed, "There have always been a group of kids that rally around him and look after him and are his friends, sort of mother him, because a lot of them are girls."

Kishi and Meyer (1994) also found that nonreciprocal, helping social interactions between children with and without severe disabilities appear to run the risk of attracting primarily girls, some of whom may be motivated primarily by adult attention. Traustadottir (1990) reviewed the literature on friendships between people with and without disabilities and concluded that there tends to be overrepresentation of women within the social networks of people with disabilities. From childhood on, women tend to be more accepting of people with disabilities and more likely to become their friends. Traustadottir further suggests that the literature reveals language and images that construct friendship between people with and without disabilities as a "womenly" relationship.

It was also interesting to note that gender differences appeared to exist among the small sample of participants. There were five female teachers and three male teachers. The female teachers seemed to be more concerned about covering curriculum, work habits, school mottoes, kindness and doing the "right thing." For example, Donna remarked, "They are more accepting and then they do not let it disrupt their school work. So you really have to work at that,

teaching them those skills [cooperating] as well." Veronica explained, "Our motto in our school is C.A.R.E. cooperation, appreciation, respect and effort. So those things we do talk about." Brenda mentioned, "He was more likely to try to be kind to Tom and include him in things."

In contrast, the male teachers seemed more open and self-assured in discussing the social dynamics of their classrooms, alluded to the reciprocal nature of social competence and described activities in terms of being "authentic" or "legitimate." Some examples include; "I'm the social program. I am. I say that in all seriousness. That may sound trite but on the other hand...(Keith). Rob said, "Sometimes you can only develop those relationships by doing some legitimate things like a field trip or a task together at the school. Something that is a real job, not pretend, and then the relationship builds up." Kurt shared, "At the beginning of the year I do the first one. I bring in a videotape of my family and certain things in my life that are important to me. I model that. You can't preach it; you have to practice it. That applies in a lot of cases."

In the second interviews, when female teachers were asked about authentic activities, they tended to view all classroom activities as authentic. This point is illustrated when Jillian remarked, "I think if they are just in the classroom that is an authentic experience. You are not fabricating [chuckles] anything when it is happening in the room." Pam confirmed, "They are just a part of the class and that's an authentic setting, right?"

Perhaps these gender differences correlate to the socialization processes that took place during the participants' childhood. Perhaps the differences can be attributed to the male teachers who chose to teach in elementary schools. Perhaps there is a genetic difference between the genders that affects empathetic, nurturing or compassionate behaviour.

School House Model Revisions

After completing this study of elementary teachers' perspectives of the role of peers in developing the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities, I am more convinced that it is the classroom environment that is significant to the successful social development of students with intellectual disabilities. As an integration resource teacher, my emphasis should be on developing social support within the classroom environment rather than identifying individual social goals on IEP's.

The following revisions to the schoolhouse model presented in Chapter 2 may be appropriate. The windowpane of "social status" would be moved to the individual window on the left side and would replace the windowpane of "motivation." This individual window would now represent the individual diversity of the students with intellectual disabilities, as well as the individual diversity of the nondisabled peers. I would replace the former windowpane on the right side of "social status" with "expectations." The label on the door would be "interaction interventions" and I might try to place a list of the instructional strategies, social

strategies, and those targeted at students with intellectual disabilities inside the house, perhaps with an open door.

On the dormer overarching the door of interventions, I would place the words "Community of learners." This designation would emphasize the need to build a sense of community so that all students feel that sense of belonging and adults engage in lifelong learning. I would also create a railing down the steps of the people involved. On this railing I would place the word "collaboration" to symbolize the need for collaborative relationships in order to increase the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities.

Limitations

One limitation of this study is that the data collected reflect perceptions. As with any data concerning perceptions, it is not known if teacher perceptions match their actual behaviours in their classrooms. Classroom observations could have facilitated understanding of the interactions between students with intellectual disabilities and their nondisabled peers, including those that teachers may not have described. In addition, the interaction interventions described by the teachers could have been documented. Another limitation is that this study did not explore the frequency with which the teachers used the interventions or that the peers were engaged in the roles described. Therefore, it is difficult to draw any conclusions as to how the interaction interventions mentioned affected peer interactions or the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities.

Another limitation is the small and selective sample of participants from a single school division. These participants were not selected randomly. This small, select sample makes it difficult to draw generalizable conclusions. Although some demographic information concerning the quantity and quality of teaching experiences and other careers was collected, the teachers were not asked to indicate how many students with intellectual disabilities had been included in their classrooms.

Furthermore, this study was limited by having only one researcher to read, code, and evaluate the transcripts. An independent evaluator might have helped to identify categories and teams in a more unbiased manner. This researcher's attitudes and characteristics may have biased some of the participants' responses as well as the data analysis. However, my thesis advisor did read the transcripts of the interviews and confirmed the themes that were extrapolated from the interviews.

Due to these limitations, the findings described should be considered carefully in the context of these limitations and conclusions based on this study should be made cautiously and not generalized to other situations.

Implications

Future researchers should scrutinize teachers who are succeeding with inclusion to ascertain the features of their classroom environments and the interventions they are using to facilitate inclusion. Researchers should consider going into elementary, inclusive classrooms and observing, firsthand, how

teachers facilitate peer interactions and the various roles that peers play within those interactions with students with intellectual disabilities. Future research might investigate the perceptions of integration resource teachers and whether they match those of classroom teachers with respect to social competency development in inclusive classrooms. Researchers might investigate what the parents feel is the role of peers in developing the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities. Researchers might ask the children themselves for their opinions and perspectives. There is a need to continue to investigate the characteristics and skills of the nondisabled peers to develop interaction interventions that will promote reciprocal interactions. In particular, we need more study directed at the structuring of interactions and relationships that are equally and mutually beneficial, and socially normalized – resembling friendships rather than caregiving (Kishi and Meyer, 1994). Research that is longitudinal in design may be needed to assess the long-term impact of educating students with intellectual disabilities in classrooms. Such research efforts might contribute to our existing understanding of best practice in educating diverse students together.

There are several implications for future practices of educators in developing the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities. First, the educational "system" may need to openly acknowledge, appreciate, and facilitate the development of social competence (Grenot-Scheyer, Harry, Park,

Schwartz, and Meyer, 1998). If the "hidden curriculum" in education is socialization, conceivably it needs to be made more conspicuous.

Second, social inclusion seems to arise out of academic inclusion. The opportunity to share academic work and play increases social interactions. Perhaps the instructional interventions that classroom teachers are employing need to be examined. Interventions, such as classroom discussions, group work, differentiated instruction, and use of literature may impact positively on the social inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities. In addition, developing social competence does not appear to follow prescriptive teaching methods, but is rather authentic and spontaneous. Educators may need to move away from prescriptive lesson planning in order to capitalize more on the "teachable moment." Perhaps teachers need to be helped to see emerging opportunities for social belonging and learning, and then trained how to nurture, allow, promote, and support those interactions. This has significant implications for social goal setting on the IEP's of students with intellectual disabilities. Social outcomes seem unpredictable, making evaluation even more challenging. Given that the teachers in this study typically had little pre- or in-service training and few formal or informal tools to incorporate social competency objectives into classroom instruction or to evaluate social competency skill levels or progress in their students, perhaps teacher educators need to revisit provisions in this area.

Educators may need to be encouraged to more willingly accept the diversity within their classrooms, and in doing so, embrace whole school reform,

rather than continue to rely on fragmented special services, such as special education, multicultural education, and social work. One dimension of this school reform likely is an increased emphasis on collaboration. Teachers need to continue to engage in collaborative dialogue about social competence. This dialogue takes place between classroom teachers, resource teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, parents, and students.

The group learning activities occurring for all students may be critical for students with intellectual disabilities to have the opportunities to interact with peers and thereby allowing the peers to have a role in developing their social competence. Perhaps our focus needs to shift from individual social needs to developing social support strategies for all learners. Perhaps more training is needed in the adult mediation of social competency development. This adult mediation involves both the teachers and any teaching assistants that have been assigned to students with intellectual disabilities. According to this study, five such mediation techniques are stepping back, assigning peers, creating a positive presence, recognition of positive support, and creating practical, authentic interactions. Educators need to become more aware of the variety of roles that peers can perform in inclusive elementary classrooms. With this greater awareness, teachers may emphasize more of the peer social support roles, rather than peer utilitarian support roles. In this study, the peer social support roles were including, accepting, modeling, being friendly, clarifying, encouraging, provoking, and ignoring. Emphasis on these roles may help educators to promote

more reciprocal social interactions for students with intellectual disabilities with their nondisabled peers.

Educators may need to reflect on the benefits to the nondisabled peers from social interactions with students with intellectual disabilities. Understanding these benefits and the roles that the nondisabled peers could perform may lead to increased social and academic inclusion and the development of social competence of students with intellectual disabilities.

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THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Education
Research and Ethics Committee

Winnipeg, Manitoba
CANADA R3T 2N2
Telephone: (204) 474-9481
Fax: (204) 474-7551

8 February, 1999

Marilyn Challis Cozzuol

Winnipeg, MB R3Y 1S3

Dear Ms. Cozzuol,

Thank you for the revisions to your ethics application regarding your study, "Elementary Educators' Perspectives on the Social Competence of Students with Developmental Disabilities." I am pleased to inform you that your proposal conforms to the ethics policies and procedures of the Faculty. Accordingly, I have attached a copy of the signed ethics approval form.

On behalf of the Committee, I wish you well in the successful completion of your research endeavors.

Yours truly,

Roy Graham, Ph.D.
Chair

/kc

Faculty of Education
ETHICS APPROVAL FORM

To be completed by the applicant:

Title of Study:

Elementary educators' perspectives on the social competence of students with developmental disabilities.

I/We, the undersigned, agree to abide by the University of Manitoba's ethical standards and guidelines for research involving human subjects, and agree to carry out the study named above as described in the Ethics Review Application.

Marilyn Challis Cozzuol
Name of Principal Investigator (s)(**please print**)

Name of Principal Investigator (s)(**please print**)

Signature(s) of Principal Investigator(s)

Signature(s) of Principal Investigator(s)

To be completed by Thesis/Dissertation Advisor or Course Instructor (if Principal Investigator is a student):

Please note that by signing this form, you are acknowledging that you have read the completed Ethics Approval Form of the above named student and are satisfied that it is ready for submission to the Research and Ethics Committee.

Signature

Name (please print)

To be completed by Research and Ethics Committee:

This is to certify that the Faculty of Education Research and Ethics Committee has reviewed the proposed study named above and has concluded that it conforms with the University of Manitoba's ethical standards and guidelines for research involving human subjects.

Dr. Roy Graham
Name of Research and Ethics Committee Chairperson

Feb. 8, 1999
Date

Roy Graham
Signature of Research and Ethics Committee Chairperson

Revised 22 September 1997

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
Office of Research Services

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Canada R3T 5V6

Tel: (204) 474-8418
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APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

07 February 2001

TO: **Marilyn Cozzuol**
Principal Investigator

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

Re: **Protocol #E2001:005**
"Teacher Perspectives of Peer Roles in Developing the Social Competence of Elementary Schools with Cognitive Impairments"

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.

HES Fax No. 261-0325

Protocol # _____
(Assigned by HES Admin.)

Human Subject Research
Ethics Protocol Submission Form (Ft. Garry Campus)

Psychology/Sociology REB ☐ **Education/Nursing REB** ☑ **Joint-Faculty REB** ☐

Check the appropriate REB for the Faculty or Department of the Principal Investigator. This form (3 pages), attached research protocol (see Page 4), and all supporting documents, must be submitted **in quadruplicate** (original plus 3 copies), to the Office of Research Services, Human Ethics Secretariat, 244 Engineering Building, 474-7122.

If the research involves biomedical intervention, check the box below to facilitate referral to the BREB

Requires Referral to Biomedical REB ☐

Project Information:

Principal Investigator(s): Marilyn Challis Cozzuol

Status of Principal Investigator(s): please check

Faculty ☐ Post-Doc ☐ Student: Graduate ☑ Undergraduate ☐ Other ☐ Specify: _____

Campus address: _____ Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email address: mcozzuol@fgsd.winnipeg.mb.ca Quickest Means of contact: _____

Project Title: Teacher Perspectives of Peer Roles in Developing the Social Competence of Elementary Students with Cognitive Impairments

Start date Jan, 2000 Planned period of research (if less than one year): Jan-July, 2001

Type of research (Please check):

Faculty Research:
Self-funded ☐ Sponsored ☐ _____ (Agency) Other ☐

Student Research:
Thesis ☑ Course Number: _____ Class Project ☐

Signature of Principal Investigator: M. Challis Cozzuol

Name of Thesis Advisor Dr. R. Freeze (Required if student research) **Signature** [signature]

Name of Course Instructor: _____ **Signature** _____

Persons signing assure responsibility that all procedures performed under the protocol will be conducted by individuals responsibly entitled to do so, and that any deviation from the protocol will be submitted to the REB for its approval prior to implementation. **Signature of the thesis advisor/course instructor** indicates that student researchers have been instructed on the principles of ethics policy, on the importance of adherence to the ethical conduct of the research according to the submitted protocol, and of the necessity to report any deviations from the protocol to their advisor/instructor.

N.B. Dr. Zana Lutfiyya is a member of my thesis committee.

Ethics Protocol Submission Form (Basic Questions about the Project)

The questions on this form are of a general nature, designed to collect pertinent information about potential problems of an ethical nature that could arise with the proposed research project. In addition to answering the questions below, the researcher is expected to append pages (and any other necessary documents) to a submission detailing the required information about the research protocol (see page 4).

1. Will the subjects in your study be unaware that they are subjects? ____ Yes ✓ No

2. Will information about the subjects be obtained from sources other than the subjects themselves? ____ Yes ✓ No

3. Are you and/or your associate(s) in a position of power vis-a-vis the subjects? ____ Yes ✓ No

4. Is any inducement or coercion used to obtain the subject's participation? ____ Yes ✓ No

5. Do subjects identify themselves by name directly, or by other means that allows you to identify data with specific subjects? If yes, indicate how confidentiality will be maintained and what precautions are to be undertaken in storing data and in its eventual destruction. ✓ Yes ____ No

6. If subjects are identifiable by name, do you intend to recruit them for future sessions? If yes, indicate how subjects will be recruited for future sessions, and whether they are fully informed about the use to which their data may be put in the future. ____ Yes ✓ No

7. Is there a possibility that a subject's identity can be determined by someone other than the researcher (e.g., is non-coded information to be given to third parties? would dissemination of findings interfere with confidentiality?) ____ Yes ✓ No

8. Does the study involve physical or emotional stress, or the subject's expectation thereof, such as might result from conditions in the study design? ____ Yes ✓ No

9. Is there any threat to the personal safety of subjects? ____ Yes ✓ No

10. Does the study involve subjects who are not legally or practically able to give their valid consent to participate (e.g., children, prison inmates, or persons with psychological and/or intellectual disabilities)? ____ Yes ✓ No

11. Is deception involved (i.e., are subjects intentionally being misled about the purpose of the study, their own performance, or other feature of the study)? ____ Yes ✓ No

12. In the matter of research into violence, the current laws require that certain offenses against children be reported to legal authorities. Have provisions been made in circumstances where abuse of children has been discovered in the course of data collection? Similarly, have provisions been made for the handling of sensitive matters related to abuse and/or violence against vulnerable persons? ____ Yes ✓ No

Provide additional details pertaining to any of the questions above for which you responded "yes." Attach additional pages, if necessary.

In my judgment this project involves:

☑ **minimal risk**
☐ **more than minimal risk**

(Policy #1406 defines "minimal risk" as follows: ". . . that the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater nor more likely, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in life, including those encountered during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.")

04 / 01 / 2001
dd mm yr

M. Challis Conwell
Signature of Principal Inyestigator

Ethics Protocol Submission Form
Required Information about the Research Protocol

Each application for ethics approval should include the following information and be presented in the following order, using these headings:

1. **Summary of Project:** Attach a detailed but concise (one typed page) outline of the **purpose** and **methodology** of the study describing **precisely** the procedures in which subjects will be asked to participate.

2, **Research Instruments:** Attach copies of **all** materials (e.g., questionnaires, tests, interview schedules, etc.) to be given to subjects and/or third parties.

3. **Study Subjects:** Describe the number of subjects, and how they will be recruited for this study. Are there any special characteristics of the subjects that make them especially vulnerable or require extra measures?

4. **Informed Consent:** Will consent **in writing** be obtained? If so, attach a copy of the consent form. (see guidelines on informed consent). If written consent is not to be obtained, indicate why not and the manner by which subjects' consent (verbally) or assent to participate in the study will be obtained. How will the nature of the study and subjects' participation in the study be explained to them before they agree to participate. How will consent be obtained from guardians of subjects from vulnerable populations? If confidential records will be consulted, indicate the nature of the records, and how subjects' consent is to be obtained. If it is essential to the research, indicate why subjects are not to be made aware of their records being consulted.

5. **Deception:** Deception refers to the deliberate withholding of essential information or the provision of deliberately misleading information about the research or its purposes. If the research involves deception, the researcher must provide detailed information on the extent and nature of deception and why the research could not be conducted without it. This description must be sufficient to justify a waiver of informed consent.

6. **Feedback/Debriefing:** Describe the feedback that will be given to subjects about the research after they have completed their participation. How will the feedback be provided and by whom? If feedback will not be given, please explain why feedback is not planned. If deception is employed, debriefing is mandatory. Describe in detail the nature of the post-deception feedback, and when and how it will be given.

7. **Risks and Benefits:** Is there any risk to the subjects, or to a third party? If yes, provide a description of the risks and the counterbalancing benefits of the proposed study. Indicate the precautions taken by the researcher under these circumstances.

8. **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Describe the procedures for preserving anonymity and confidentiality. If confidentiality is not an issue in this research, please explain why. Will confidential records be consulted? If yes, indicate what precautions will be taken to ensure subjects' confidentiality. How will the data be stored to ensure confidentiality? When will the data be destroyed?

9. **Compensation:** Will subjects be compensated for their participation? Compensation may reasonably provide subjects with assistance to defray the costs associated with study participation.

Ethics Protocol Submission Form

Review Your submission according to this:

Checklist

Principal Investigator: Marilyn Challis Cozzuol

✓	Item from the Ethics Protocol Submission Form
✓	All information requested on the first page completed in legible format (typed or printed).
✓	Signatures of the principal researcher (and faculty advisor, or course instructor if student research).
✓	Answers to all 12 questions on pages 2-3 of Ethics Protocol Submission form.
✓	Detailed information requested on page 4 of the Ethics Protocol Submission Form in the numbered order and with the headings indicated.
✓	Ethics Protocol Submission Form in quadruplicate (Original plus 3 copies).
✓	Research instruments: 4 copies of all instruments and other supplementary material to be given to subjects.
✓	Copy of this checklist.

Ethics Protocol Submission Form

1. Summary of Project:

In this study, I want to extend and refine my understanding of teachers' perspectives on the roles of nondisabled peers in developing the social competence of elementary students with cognitive impairments. I want to probe their perspectives on the quality and quantity of peer interactions in their classroom, their part in facilitating these peer interactions, and their thoughts about the potential benefits of tapping into this natural system of support. This qualitative study will use in depth, semi-structured interviews of six to nine elementary teachers from different elementary schools in one suburban school division. The first interview will explore the teachers' perspectives on the questions in the interview guide. The second interview, and perhaps third, will clarify their comments or extend the developing theoretical propositions. These interviews will be conducted throughout the winter term of the 2000-2001 school year and their duration will be approximately one hour each. The participants will chose a time and place that they are comfortable with. These interviews will be audiotape recorded and then transcribed verbatim. I will develop and describe themes based on the data, compare and contrast these themes to relevant literature, and present the ensuing implications for educators, students with cognitive impairments, their peers and future research about developing social competence in elementary schools.

2. Research Instruments:

I have attached a copy of my interview guide.

3. Study Subjects:

First, permission will be obtained from the Superintendent's Department of the particular school division. Second, purposeful sampling will be used to select participants who are believed to expedite the expansion of the developing theory. Based on the recommendation of resource teachers at their respective schools, several classroom teachers will be approached because they will have recently had a fairly positive experience in integrating elementary students with cognitive impairments. These classroom teachers will be given a brief outline of the study and provided with a letter of consent, if they are interested in participating. Both male and female teachers will be interviewed and I will attempt to select participants that are representative of the elementary grades (1-6).

4. Informed consent:

Yes, consent in writing will be obtained and a copy of the letter of consent is attached.

5. Deception:

I will not use deceptions of any kind during the course of this study and do not expect that any of the questions or subsequent discussion should cause the participants to experience any anxiety, embarrassment or distress.

6. Feedback/Debriefing:

At the conclusion of the study, I will send all participants a brief synopsis of my findings, an expression of thanks for participating and a method of contacting me if they have questions or concerns.

7. Risks and Benefits:

There should be no risk to the teachers or the students they may describe. The teachers may benefit from the opportunity to reflect upon their attitudes and understandings of social competence and to articulate their strategies that promote the development of social competence.

8. Anonymity and Confidentiality:

Pseudonyms will be used for all teachers and support personnel and any specific students who may be described. Their confidentiality will be respected at all times. The audiotapes and their transcriptions will be kept in a secure place.

9. Compensation:

I do not expect to compensate the subjects for their participation. However, I may purchase their cup of coffee or tea during the interview.

ADDITIONAL DETAILS

No. 3.

I am employed as a resource teacher by the school division in which I intend to carry out this research. I am not in a position of power over any of the subjects who may participate in my study. Some participants may be colleagues that I have worked with in the past. I anticipate that other participants will be unfamiliar to me.

No. 5

The subjects will identify themselves directly and because I will be an interviewing them, I will be able to identify data with specific subjects. The teachers will have the right to withdraw at any time and their confidentiality will be respected. The participants will chose the time and place that they are comfortable with being interviewed. Pseudonyms will be used for them, the students they might describe and their particular school. The audio tapes and their transcriptions will be kept under lock and key in my home. After five years, they will be destroyed.

February, 2001

Dear Superintendent,

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba, completing my Master's program in Special Education. I am requesting permission to conduct qualitative research in your division in order to complete my thesis. The purpose of this research is to extend and refine my understanding of teachers' perspectives on the roles of nondisabled peers in developing the social competence of elementary students with cognitive impairments. I would like to interview six to nine elementary classroom teachers in your division who have recently taught students with cognitive impairments. I will be asking about the quality and quantity of peer interactions in their classroom, their part in facilitating these peer interactions, the social competence of students with cognitive impairments, and their thoughts about the potential benefits of tapping into this natural system of support.

I intend to ask resource teachers to recommend teachers who have been 'successful' with integrating a student with a cognitive impairment recently (within the previous two years). I will then approach the recommended teachers with a brief synopsis of the study. If they are interested in participating, they will be provided with the attached letter of consent. They will be interviewed twice, and perhaps a third time, depending on the need for further clarification. Each interview will take approximately one hour and will be arranged at a mutually convenient time and place. These interviews will be audio taped to assist with accurate and thorough transcription. These audio tapes and their transcriptions will be kept under lock and key in my home. The teachers will have the right to withdraw at any time and their confidentiality will be respected. Pseudonyms will be used for them, the students they might describe and their particular school. The teachers may request to be sent a brief summary of my findings at the conclusion of my study.

For further information regarding the nature of this study, please contact me @ [illegible], my advisor, Dr. Rick Freeze @ 474-6904, or the Human Ethic Secretariat @ 474-7122. Thank you for considering this request and I anticipate the opportunity to complete this research. I will contact you soon to ascertain if permission is granted.

Sincerely,

M Challis Cozzuol

Marilyn Challis Cozzuol

Appendix D: Letter to Resource Teachers

January, 2001

Dear Resource Teachers,

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba, completing my Master's program in Special Education. I have been granted permission to conduct qualitative research in your division in order to complete my thesis. The purpose of this research is to extend and refine my understanding of teachers' perspectives on the roles of nondisabled peers in developing the social competence of elementary students with cognitive impairments. I will be interviewing several elementary classroom teachers in your division who have recently taught students with cognitive impairments. I will be asking about the quality and quantity of peer interactions in their classroom, their part in facilitating these peer interactions, the social competence of students with cognitive impairments, and their thoughts about the potential benefits of tapping into this natural system of support.

I am asking resource teachers to recommend elementary teachers who have been 'successful' with integrating a student with a cognitive impairment recently (within the previous two years). By 'successful', I mean that the teacher has developed a positive working relationship with the student with a cognitive disability, and has included them in most of their classroom activities. Please consider the teachers in your school who may be eligible to participate and list their name(s) and grade levels on the attached form. Because of the limited number of elementary male teachers, if you are aware of a 'successful' male teacher, please give special consideration to recommending him.

Once recommended, I will contact the teachers and provide them with a brief synopsis of the study and ask if they are interested in participating. If interested, the teachers will receive details about the process, time commitment, confidentiality, and a letter of consent.

Thank you for your cooperation in recommending 'successful' teachers!

Sincerely,

M. Challis Cozzuol

Marilyn Challis Cozzuol

Recommendation Form

Please complete and return this form to Marilyn Cozzuol at [redacted] school by February 21, 2001. If you have any questions or concerns, please call me at 261-[redacted] (home) or [redacted] (school).

School _____

Name of Teacher	Grade Level

***Please don't hesitate about recommending someone. They will be simply be asked if they are interested in being interviewed.

Thank-you for your time!

Marilyn Challis Cozzuol

January, 2001

Dear Participant,

I am a graduate student at the University of Manitoba, completing my Master's Thesis. The purpose of this research is to extend and refine my understanding of teachers' perspectives on the roles of nondisabled peers in developing the social competence of elementary students with cognitive impairments. I would like to interview six to nine elementary classroom teachers in your division who have recently taught students with cognitive impairments. I will be asking about the quality and quantity of peer interactions in your classroom, your part in facilitating these peer interactions, the social competence of students with cognitive impairments, and your thoughts about the potential benefits of tapping into this natural system of support.

If you are interested in participating, you will be interviewed twice, and perhaps a third time, depending on the need for further clarification. Each interview will take approximately one hour and will be arranged at a mutually convenient time and place. These interviews will be audio taped to assist with accurate and thorough transcription. These audio tapes and their transcriptions will be kept under lock and key in my home. They will be destroyed five years after the completion of my thesis. You will have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty. Your right to confidentiality will be respected and pseudonyms will be used for you, the students you might describe and your particular school. For further information regarding the nature of this study, please contact me @ , my advisor, Dr. Rick Freeze @ 474-6904 or the Human Ethics Secretariat @474-7122.

Sincerely,

M Challis Cozzuol

Marilyn Challis Cozzuol

LETTER OF CONSENT

I, _____ agree to take part in the study as described above. I will share my perspectives on the role of peers in developing the social competence of students with cognitive impairments during two, perhaps three interviews. I understand that the interviews will be audio tape recorded and that my confidentiality will be respected and pseudonyms will be used for me, the students I might describe and my particular school. I will attempt to protect students' identities while responding to the questions. I understand that I have the right to withdraw at any time without penalty.

At the conclusion of this research, I _____ like a brief
(would, would not)
summary of the findings sent to me at my school.

Participant's signature _____

Researcher's signature_____

Date _____

Interview Guide

As you know, I am interested in elementary teachers' perspectives of the role of nondisabled peers in developing the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities. May I interview you?

The broad categories that I will be exploring are listed below, along with some probe questions in each area.

A. What value do you place on developing the social competence of your students?

1) How do you try to create a sense of belonging or community of learners?

2) Have you used any social programs or strategies? Of those, which would you say have been the most effective?

3) Do you identify specific social goals for individuals or the class?

B. Describe typical peer interactions in your classroom.

1) How do you encourage peer interaction in your classroom?

2) Are peers given time to "connect" without adult interference?

3) Is there anything about your class composition or physical environment that you feel might be significant?

C. Describe some nondisabled peer interactions with students with intellectual disabilities.

1) What types of interactions have you observed?

2) Do you perceive some interactions to be better than others?

3) How have you tried to facilitate peer interactions between nondisabled students and students with intellectual disabilities?

4) What are your thoughts about nondisabled peers helping students with intellectual disabilities?

5) Have your students ever suggested a new way of trying something with a student with a intellectual disability?

6) Have your students explained how students with intellectual disabilities have participated in activities in previous years?

7) How do you see peers supporting students with intellectual disabilities during unstructured times of the day (e.g. recess, lunch, transitions)?

8) How do you perceive paraprofessionals facilitating peer interactions?

9) Have you observed students with intellectual disabilities respond better to their peers than to adults?

D. What benefits do you think that nondisabled peers gain from having students with intellectual disabilities in their classroom?

1) What is your perspective of how the nondisabled peers feel about interacting with students with intellectual disabilities?

2) Have you seen any friendships begin to develop?

E. How has the social competence of students with intellectual disabilities improved throughout the year that they were in your classroom?

1) Describe some initial interactions with nondisabled peers and how they changed over time.

2) How do you try to evaluate or measure that improvement?

2) Were these social gains identified as individual objectives or overall class goals or neither?

3) How were these gains shared with other members of the team?

Brenda (2nd interview)

1. First of all, what does social competence mean to you?
2. You mentioned that you do a lot of problem solving. How do you do that?
3. Do you have class meetings?
4. When Tom was included in cooperative groups, what role did he play?
5. You talked about the students including him at a different level; more to be kind, what did you mean?
6. You talked about carrying on the acceptance that had been built in the primary grades. How did you do that?
7. You talked about the difference between the type of group or class you had last year compared to this year. Any thoughts on why they might be different?
8. You talked about how Tom exuded helplessness. What might be some of the drawbacks to his peers helping him?
9. What ways did you see the peers modeling for students with intellectual disabilities?
10. Several of my participants talked about the need for the adult to "step back" or "back off" to allow the peers to step in and so that kids can work it out. What are your thoughts on that?
11. Several participants mentioned legitimate, real, authentic situations for the peers to interact. Any thoughts on that?
12. Anything further to our first interview or your perceptions of the role of peers in developing the social competence of the students with intellectual disabilities in your classroom?

Pam (2nd interview)

1. First of all, what does social competence mean to you?
2. You mentioned circle time; how does that work in your classroom?
3. You mentioned that group or partner recognition; not individual recognition was the most effective. Would you expand on that?
4. You talked about putting a strong leader in each group. How does that work?
5. We talked about a lot of the helping that peers do. Would there be any drawbacks to that helping?
6. What ways did you see the peers modeling for students with intellectual disabilities?
7. How do you use games in your classroom?
8. Were there any other benefits to the nondisabled peers that you thought of?
9. Several of my participants talked about the need for the adult to "step back" or "back off" to allow the peers to step in and so that kids can work it out. What are your thoughts on that?
8. Several participants mentioned legitimate, real, authentic situations for the peers to interact. Any thoughts on that?
9. Some participants described how they try to involve certain students, the cool-kids in order to have more of an influence. What you think?
10. Anything further to our first interview or your perceptions of the role of peers in developing the social competence of the students with intellectual disabilities in your classroom?

Veronica (2nd interview)

1. First of all, what does social competence mean to you?
2. You talked about a problem solving session at the end of sharing time. Can you tell me any more about that?
3. You talked about girls helping too much in the changing room. Any other drawbacks to the peers helping the student with intellectual disabilities?
4. You mentioned that the role models were excellent for her. Can you expand on that idea?
5. You talked about her specialized program being distracting. Any thoughts about changing that program so that she could stay in the classroom?
6. Have the peers ever suggested a new way of trying something with the student with intellectual disabilities?
7. Were there any other benefits to the nondisabled peers that you thought of?
8. What do you think about peers being recognized for the social support that they give to the student with intellectual disabilities?
9. Several of my participants talked about the need for the adult to "step back" or "back off" to allow the peers to step in and so that kids can work it out. What are your thoughts on that?
10. Several participants mentioned legitimate, real, authentic situations for the peers to interact. Any thoughts on that?
11. Some participants described how they try to involve certain students, the cool-kids in order to have more of an influence. What you think?
12. Anything further to our first interview or your perceptions of the role of peers in developing the social competence of the students with intellectual disabilities in your classroom?

Rob (2nd Interview)

1. First of all, what does social competence mean to you?
2. You talked about using circle of friends. Any other social programs or strategies that you've used?
3. Do you use a class needing format?
4. You talked about younger kids playing together and thinking that "everybody is my friend. As they get older they don't consider it that way". How do they consider it?
5. You talked about how some of your students prefer to be in rows than groups. Was there anything else about your physical environment that you feel might be significant to social interaction?
6. You talked about the importance of setting up routines for the TA for day-to-day interactions. Can you expand on that?
7. You described a friendship in your classroom. I wondering if it carries outside of school hours?
8. Can you tell me more about what you think the feelings of the nondisabled peers are towards the student with intellectual disabilities?
9. How do you select students to interact with this student with intellectual disabilities or help?
10. We talked about a lot of the helping that peers do. Would there be any drawbacks to that helping?
11. Anything further to our first interview or your perceptions of the role of peers in developing the social competence of the students with intellectual disabilities in your classroom?

Jillian (2nd interview)

1. First of all, what does social competence mean to you?
2. You talked about "proper human being etiquette", please clarify what you meant?
3. How did you encourage peer interaction on the playground, in the hallways, during art?
4. You talked about saying formal thank you for helping; did that include helping others students?
5. You mentioned games; where do they fit in?
6. At camp they were realizing that the challenges were academic and that this student is just like them in many ways. Has that realization continued and how do you know?
7. You talked about openly discussing the challenges that that student faces; what does that look like and how do the peers responds?
8. You mentioned that it's natural that they know the level that the student is working at. Can you elaborate on that?
9. We talked about a lot of the helping that peers do. Would there be any drawbacks to that helping?
10. Several participants mentioned legitimate, real, authentic situations for the peers to interact. Any thoughts on that?
11. Some participants described how they try to involve certain students, the cool-kids in order to have more of an influence. What you think?
12. Anything further to our first interview or your perceptions of the role of peers in developing the social competence of the students with intellectual disabilities in your classroom?

Keith (2nd interview)

1. First of all, what does social competence mean to you?
2. You talked about letting the kids work it out and telling them "you have the skills to do this". Any other ways you try to empower the kids?
3. Did you think of some more ways that you facilitate peer interaction?
4. You mentioned intimate conversations near the big old comfy chair. Would these follow a class meeting format or be spontaneous and informal?
5. You also mentioned authentic vs. fabricated or artificial interactions. Could you elaborate on that?
6. How did Jim's birthday party go?
7. Did you think of the suggestion from the kids for a new way of trying things with the student with intellectual disabilities?
8. You mentioned about looking after the weaker members in the community. Are there any drawbacks to helping the student with intellectual disabilities?
9. We talked about going for the bigger ideas that would put Jim "in the ring" like conversational skills, independence. Any more thoughts on that?
10. Some participants described how they try to involve certain students, the cool-kids in order to have more of an influence. What you think?
11. Anything further to our first interview or your perceptions of the role of peers in developing the social competence of the students with intellectual disabilities in your classroom?

Kurt (2nd interview)

1. First of all, what does social competence mean to you?
2. How is the circle of friends going now?
3. Are the other peers still showing more of an interest to work with him?
4. You mentioned that the circle develops a lot of networking and qualities that you would expect. Can you expand on them?
5. You talked about genuine praise and that the applause was not fabricated or artificial in any way. What did you mean by that?
6. To you talked about the student having to work on his individual program in some cases. How you feel about that?
7. When I asked you about peers helping the students with intellectual disabilities, you mentioned the benefit of gaining responsibility. With their be any drawbacks to them helping?
8. Some participants described how they try to involve certain students, the cool-kids in order to have more of an influence. What you think?
9. What do you think about peers being recognized for the social support that they give to the student with intellectual disabilities?
10. Several of my participants talked about the need for the adult to "step back" or "back off" to allow the peers to step in and so that kids can work it out. What are your thoughts on that?
11. Anything further to our first interview or your perceptions of the role of peers in developing the social competence of the students with intellectual disabilities in your classroom?

Donna (2nd interview)

1. First of all, what does social competence mean to you?
2. I was asking about social strategies and you said you'd probably think about 50 when you're working with the kids. Did you think of any more you use that you'd like to share?
3. You mentioned that you like to isolate the behavior and reward positives with stickers , etc.. would you say you use behavior mod strategy is a lot?
4. We ended up talking a lot about the CAP students. Perhaps you can think of one of those students that you'd like to get IRT support for and describe some interactions between him or her and their peers.
5. Could you expand on how the paraprofessionals encourage peer interactions between the student with intellectual disabilities and their peers?
6. How has the social competence of the student with intellectual disabilities improved throughout the year that they were in your classroom?
7. We talked about a lot of the helping that peers do. Would there be any drawbacks to that helping?
8. Some participants described how they try to involve certain students, the cool-kids in order to have more of an influence. What you think?
9. What do you think about peers being recognized for the social support that they give to the student with intellectual disabilities?
10. Several of my participants talked about the need for the adult to "step back" or "back off" to allow the peers to step in and so that kids can work it out. What are your thoughts on that?
11. Anything further to our first interview or your perceptions of the role of peers in developing the social competence of the students with intellectual disabilities in your classroom?