

STUDENT SERVICES TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF
COLLABORATION IN INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS

by

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A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of

The University of Manitoba

In partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology

University of Manitoba

Winnipeg

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank my husband Earl, who challenges my thinking and perspective and supports me in all I do. Thank you to our daughter, Rachael, our greatest gift, for just being you! Thank you both for all you love, support and patience in encouraging and supporting this work. My advisor, Dr. Rick Freeze has been an amazing support; I thank him for his clarity, direction and ongoing encouragement, along with the support of Dr. Grace Ukasoanya and Dr. Nancy Hansen. I am so fortunate to have many good friends and would like to thank my dear friend Sabena Singh, who has been a constant source of support and knowledge and a great role model for writing a thesis. Finally I thank my good friends Penny and Iain Riffel for their realistic approach to many things, their belief in me and their humor.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my Mom, Esther Sweeney, who has always been my greatest cheerleader, she will be so proud! I am forever grateful for the many gifts and endless sacrifices that supported me in this and all my achievements! Thank you for believing in me!

ABSTRACT

In the past decade, *Appropriate Education Programming* for students with disabilities was mandated in Manitoba. Consequently, there are now both legal and ethical reasons why educators must endeavor to provide inclusive school settings for all students, including students with special needs. Recent school reforms have been influenced by societal change, educational restructuring, and increasingly diverse students needs. These factors also affect the inclusion mandate and, to a worrisome extent, create confusion about practices related to the education of students with special needs. Many researchers strongly suggest that collaboration is a key to creating and maintaining successful inclusive schools. However, professional development in collaboration skills and collaborative service delivery models has been offered to education professionals, specifically resource teachers and counselors, with mixed results. This study is an examination of resource teachers' and counselors' perceptions of the barriers to and facilitators of collaboration in inclusive schools.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction and Rationale

Student services policy and collaboration. In the past decade, *Appropriate Education Programming* for students with disabilities has been mandated in Manitoba (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2006). Consequently, there are now both legal and ethical reasons why educators must endeavor to provide inclusive school settings for all students, including students with special needs. Many researchers strongly suggest that collaboration is a key to creating and maintaining successful inclusive schools. However, professional development in collaboration skills and collaborative service delivery models has been offered to education professionals, specifically resource teachers and counselors, with mixed results. This study is an examination of resource teachers' and counselors' perceptions of the barriers to and facilitators of collaboration in inclusive schools.

The Manitoba Public School Act mandates that every pupil has the right to appropriate educational programming (Manitoba Public Schools Amendment Act, 2004, p. 269). Subsequent provincial documents such as *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standard for Student Services*, state that "collaboration among home, school and community is imperative" (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2006, p. 4). That document also requires that, "Manitoba school divisions work collaboratively with government and nongovernment agencies to provide a range of supports and services for students" (p. 21). Finally, the Consultation Summary in the document adds that, *Appropriate Education Programming* is a collaborative school-family-community process where school communities create learning environments and provide resources and services that are responsive to the lifelong learning, social and emotional needs of all students" (p. 3). Policy makers at Manitoba Education and Citizenship and Youth (MECY) refer to the term "collaboration" numerous times

in the aforementioned document as well as in the *Philosophy of Inclusive Education* (2006). However, in these documents, there is no definition of the term “collaboration”. The fact that the provincial policy makers have used the word “collaboration” in documents related to inclusion without definition or thorough explanation is a glaring omission. This lack of attention to the concept of collaboration and consequent collaborative skills, along with what seems to be an expectation that all professionals know how to collaborate without definition, without substantial pre-service preparation, and without significant in-service professional development, are the basis for this study.

Manitoba’s philosophy of inclusion has been expressed as follows:

“Inclusion is a way of thinking and acting that allows every individual to feel accepted, valued, and safe. An inclusive community consciously evolves to meet the changing needs of its members. Through recognition and support, an inclusive community provides meaningful involvement and equal access to the benefits of citizenship. In Manitoba, we embrace inclusion as a means of enhancing the well-being of every member of the community. By working together, we strengthen our capacity to provide the foundation for a richer future for all of us.” (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2010a, p. 1).

This philosophical stance implies a highly collaborative approach. However, in schools today, the term *collaboration* is used in many ways, often contributing to confusion, rather than clarity, about ideas, programs, and services (Cook & Friend, 2010). Among educators, collaboration is a style professionals select to share work based on voluntary participation, parity, mutual goals, shared responsibility for key decisions, shared resources, cooperative

values, shared expertise, and shared accountability for outcomes (Block, 1981; Brown, Wyne, Blackburn, & Powell, 1979; Friend & Cook, 1992; Morsink, Thomas, & Correa, 1991). It is grounded in the conscious development of trust, respect, and a sense of community (Cook & Friend, 2010). Inclusion is a philosophy and collaboration is a style; one that, according to Cook & Friend (2010), only exists when applied to a particular endeavor.

Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth (2004) produced *Supporting Inclusive Schools*, a document intended to promote school planning and reporting and provide a framework for developing and implementing annual school plans and reports. Within the document, the term collaboration is used numerous times and the writers suggest that collaborative planning can provide educational benefits when done properly. The benefits identified include: (a) consensus among partners about purpose and direction, (b) improved communications among staff, (c) heightened staff and student morale, (d) effective relationships among school staff and parents and increased parental and community involvement, (e) greater teaching effectiveness, (f) greater overall acceptance of change, (g) effective approaches to discipline issues, (h) better coordination of programming and services between grades and across disciplines, (i) effective relationships with external agencies and organizations (e.g. social services, local businesses, seniors' groups, etc.), (j) greater awareness of a school community's strengths and weaknesses, and (k) effective and efficient use of resources, including time (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2004). Done properly, collaboration contributes to a shared clarity of thought, direction, and purpose; and it helps planners to learn from the past. This, in turn, enhances the identification and future accomplishment of new plans. In addition, collaboration encourages the sharing of knowledge from a variety of sources (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2004). With these variables in mind, the question of how

resource teachers and counselors perceive collaboration in inclusive schools is the focus of this study.

While it is the principal's responsibility to ensure that a school's inclusion mandate is met, a school-based support services team typically plays a central role in supporting students with special needs, their teachers and educational assistants, and their families. *The Manitoba Sourcebook for School Guidance and Counseling Services: A Comprehensive and Developmental Approach* indicates that the "school-based student services support team typically includes a school administrator, resource teacher(s), counselor(s), classroom teacher(s), and others who have responsibility for students with exceptional learning needs" (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2007). In Manitoba, as mentioned previously, collaboration is strongly suggested as the preferred method for the planning and implementation of appropriate educational programming in order to best meet students' and families' needs. Ultimately, it is school administrators who are responsible for ensuring positive and effective collaborative work among classroom teachers, resource teachers, counselors, educational assistants, parents, english as additional language teachers, and clinical staff (such as speech and language pathologists, psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, reading clinicians, curriculum consultants, behavior therapists, and other specialists including psychiatrists). Of all these team members, resource teachers and counselors are unique in that they are on site in the school and have the potential for daily contact with the entire team including the students with special needs, their classroom teachers, their educational assistants, and their parents.

Student needs and collaboration. Given the diverse and complex needs of students with disabilities and students with other special needs, the need for effective collaboration on behalf of students with disabilities has never been greater (Cook & Friend, 2010). In light of the diversity and complexity of today's learners and their ever-changing life contexts, collaboration with families, across disciplines, and among agencies is not optional (Villa, Thousand, Nevin, & Malgeri, 1996). Collaboration and consultation are interwoven in the day-to-day lives of educators in inclusive schools (Freeze, 1996). The Student Services Administrators' Association of Manitoba (SSAAM) (2008) and the *Manitoba Education Appropriate Educational Programming* (2006) document describe the spectrum of students who may be in need of inclusive special education programming as those with intellectual, learning, and developmental disabilities, as well as students with physical disabilities, visual disabilities, those who are deaf or hard of hearing, and those with language difficulties. Newcomers, especially students learning English as an additional language, students with social, emotional, or behavior problems, and students with psychiatric disorders or other mental health problems also may need inclusive programming (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2006, 2010b). The fact that mental health issues and psychiatric disorders are more likely to occur in people with developmental disabilities than in general population complicates this picture (National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, 2001). According to the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke (2001), individuals with intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities are estimated to be 3 to 4 times more likely than those in general population to experience an emotional, behavioral, or psychiatric disorder. Although many school divisions have divisional clinicians available for consultation with respect to these students' unique needs, the day-to-day collaborative guidance of individual interventions most

often is mediated almost fully by a school-based team. The complex academic, social, and emotional needs of students with disabilities are not likely to be met easily by just one school based professional, such as the classroom teacher. According to Freeze (1996), teachers are faced with classrooms in which students vary widely in their backgrounds, levels of preparation, learning styles, and abilities. The resource teacher and counselor often are the only school based educators with the unique qualifications needed to lead the student services team in the problem solving, creative planning, interventions provision, and the long term follow-up across grade levels necessary to meet students' needs effectively (Freeze, 1996). Ideally, these professionals work collaboratively to meet the challenge of complex student needs. Unfortunately, a collaborative ethic is not a defining characteristic of many schools, but rather a culture of isolation prevails (Villa et al., 1996). One outcome of professional isolation may be student segregation. As Erford (2007) notes:

“For too long, students with special needs have been identified and served through special programs without appropriate attention given to their developmental academic, career, and personal-social needs” (p. 318).

Teaming and collaboration. In special education, consultative and collaborative models of student services are based on the notion that using the expertise of many different specialists can result in the identification of effective new approaches that might never have been identified or developed by any one team member working on his or her own (Cramer, 2006). For example, the unique expertise and disciplinary backgrounds of resource teachers and counselors may be combined when they collaborate to create and sustain better supports for the classroom teacher and the students they serve. Together, they may bring richer resources and make true the euphuism, “two heads are better than one”. Creating a positive climate for team

assessment and decision making can be an asset in planning and implementing appropriate educational programs of students with special needs (Cramer, 2006). Since the critical planning of potentially life changing decisions for students and families can take a toll; the wellness, perseverance, and efficacy of the planners may be considerably better if the work is shared effectively.

In Manitoba, funding guidelines for level 2 (i.e., Emotional Behavioral Disorder (EBD): Psychotic (PSY), Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Multi-Handicapped (MH), Visually Impaired (VI), Hard of Hearing/Deaf(HOH), Other (OTH) and level 3 (i.e., Emotional Behavioral Disorder(EBD), Multi-Handicapped (MH), Autism Spectrum Disorder(ASD), Visually Impaired (VI), Hard of Hearing/Deaf (HOH) funded students with disabilities require a broad, multi-dimensional approach to the assessment of needs and the provision of resources (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2010b). The collaborative work of the school-based team can offer both social-emotional and academic frameworks for these efforts. Funding applications typically are written for students who are not managing well in school and consequently require more support than the classroom teacher and in-school support services team can provide without additional guidance and support. Often, the student and family have experienced many traumatic educational events and, as a result, the school has offered additional funding as a potential solution, promising intensified planning and support. However, a Canadian social worker has warned that the more difficult the situation, the less willing educators may be to pick up the phone and collaborate; leaving professionals working in isolation and potentially unable to provide adequate supports to their students (K. Cameron, personal communication, October, 2009). An increase in students' multi-dimensional needs, including complexities related to learning, behavior, attitude, social belonging, emotional health,

and the use of appropriate language have resulted in an increased need for more input into funding applications and subsequent program planning, and for richer interventions and supports in inclusive schools. In effect: greater collaboration, by more people, more often, and for more sustained periods of time.

Need for research. If collaboration is a key to successful inclusion, then what are the facilitators and barriers to successful collaboration within student support services teams? For example, do factors such as voluntary participation, parity, mutual goals, clear role definition, common resources, shared responsibilities, positive relationships, professional knowledge and skills, and interpersonal communications and process skills affect collaboration (Koskie & Freeze, 2000)? In addition, factors such as participation and leadership, development of goals, communication, decision making, conflict resolution, and personality have been suggested as reasons why collaboration may be as difficult to do, as it is necessary to achieve (Cramer, 2006). Freeze (1996), Cook and Friend (2010), and Cramer ((2006) speculate that these factors may be complicated or ameliorated by the nature and quality of collaborative practices, professional training, school structures, school culture, decision making practices, leadership skills, record keeping, role clarity and awareness, accountability, personnel assignment, resource allocation, time tabling options, disciplinary expertise, resources for collaborative problem solving, belief systems, research support, and clarity about ethical and legal issues. As we consider these potential obstacles, it becomes clear that collaboration, although desired by Manitoba Education, may be problematic for numerous reasons. In light of these concerns and in order to better meet the needs of students with disabilities and other special needs, it is crucial that we find ways to facilitate collaboration within school-based student support teams, with a special emphasis on the in-school resource teacher-counselor dyad. This dyad is important because, unlike classroom

teachers, educational assistants or administrators, resource teachers and counselors have professional development opportunities, relevant certification standards, and unique provincial and national professional organizations. In addition, unlike other trained professionals (such as psychologists, clinicians, therapists etc.), resource teachers and counselors are school-based.

Research question. Given the inclusion mandate of the province and the expectation that school personnel, specifically counselors and resource teachers, will work collaboratively to meet the needs of students, it is important to examine their understanding of collaboration. This research is guided by the following question: What are the perceptions of school-based student support services team teachers, specifically counselors and resource teachers, regarding collaboration within inclusive schools?

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Immanent critique. Thomas Skrtic describes inclusion as the emerging educational culture of the 21st century (Skrtic & Sailor, 1996). Inclusive schooling means that special education is no longer defined as a placement but rather as a system of supports provided to help address the needs of a subset of students in the regular classroom (Stainback & Stainback, 1992; Vandercook & York, 1989) . In successful inclusive schools, students with disabilities (no matter how severe) gain full membership in the regular classroom of their age mates at their neighborhood school and grow in valued, functional, and meaningful ways in the social and learning contexts of their nondisabled peers (Ferguson, Meyer, Jeanchild, Juniper, & Zingo, 1992; Gee, Alwell, Graham, & Goetz L., 1994; Giangreco, Cloninger, & Iverson, 1993). Unfortunately, the term “inclusion” may have lost some of its meaning due to overuse and misuse. Nilholm (2006) attempted to “disentangle different perspectives on special education and different notions of inclusion, and recognized the multitude of reasonable interpretations of inclusion and the role of special or inclusive education within schools” Nilholm, 2006, p. 432). Nilholm (2006) has suggested that the emergence of the inclusion concept can be seen as a reaction to the fate of its forerunners, ‘integration’ and ‘mainstreaming’. As a concept, inclusion has been recontextualized and a multitude of new meanings have been generated (Nilholm, 2006).

Inclusion is usually understood to mean that differences between children should be valued and that difference is a natural condition for schooling. Inclusion means that children of all kinds attend the same classes, that diversity is celebrated within the classroom, and that all

children have the right to participate, to learn, and to build social relationships (Skrtic & Sailor, 1996). For the purpose of this study, a successful inclusive learning community also fosters collaboration, problem solving, self-directed learning, and critical discourse (Skrtic & Sailor, 1996). School reform and the increasingly divergent and dynamic character of human problems (Collins, 1979; Scott, 1981) demand, at the very least, creative problem solving to meet students' needs in effective and innovative ways. Collaboration is essential because invention requires reflective problem solving through discourse in a social constructivist process in which the voice and collaboration of each team member contributes to the construction of new knowledge (meaning) within the organization (Gray, 1989). Consequently, professional perceptions of collaboration may impact on problem solving and the construction of new knowledge.

Merely saying a word is not necessarily the same as carrying out the action (Skrtic & Sailor, 1996). Collaboration requires commitment on the part of each individual to shared goals, demands careful attention to communication skills, and obliges participants to maintain parity throughout their interactions (Friend, 2000). Collaboration does not occur because of administrative mandate, peer pressure, or political correctness. Nor does it occur by proclamation. It must arise out of an understanding of its potential and pitfalls, and as a system-level standard it can be sustained only through professionals' deliberate use of appropriate knowledge and skills. These conditions simply are not present every time professionals meet, nor are they realistic expectations (Friend, 2000). The tension between collaboration as the desired or ideal style for professionals to use in inclusive schools and the current practice of collaboration being used in inclusive schools is the basis for this paper. I hope to use a modern method of critical social analysis, an immanent critique, to expose the contradictions between

provincial, divisional and school-based claims about inclusion and the real conditions, values and practices of school-based student services counselors and resource teachers.

Legal mandate for collaboration. Legal mandates such as the Appropriate Educational Programming (Manitoba Public Schools Amendment Act, 2004) in Manitoba and the American Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (United States Department of Education, 2004) set two requirements that build a presumption of collaboration between teachers and other professionals: (a) that students with disabilities access the general curriculum, and (b) that they do so in the least restrictive environment, increasingly determined to be the general education classroom. Other requirements of these laws, including those related to highly qualified teachers, team decision-making for students with disabilities, and classroom teacher and parent participation in most individualized education program (IEP) meetings, reinforce the expectation for collaboration (Cook & Friend, 2010). Cook and Friend, (2010) argue that the need for close and effective professional working relationships in the field of education has grown exponentially due to redefined inclusive education mandates, expanding case law, legislative reauthorizations, and social awareness. In addition, collaboration is strongly supported by researchers such as Cook and Friend (2010), Ashman (1994), Bergin & Bergin (2000), Brownlie & King (2000), Cramer (2006), Foley & Lewis (1999), Freeze (1996), Milsom and Goodnough (2007), Smith & Leonard (2005), and Tarver-Behring, Spanga & Sullivan (1998), who recognize the importance of collaboration in the successful schooling of students with disabilities and other special needs. In addition, Bergin and Bergin (2000), have identified the problem that successful inclusion presumes successful patterns of communication, coordination, and collaboration in schools; especially at the student support services team level.

The Bergins also point out that communication is the most important and least understood of the skills that underlie consultation and collaboration.

History of collaboration. Teaming and collaboration have become two of the key buzzwords in both general and special education. The literature on teaming in special education has existed since the early 1980s (Dunn, 1991; Rainforth, York, & MacDonald, 1992; Stainback S. and Stainback W., 1992; W. Stainback, Stainback, & Forest, 1989; Villa & Thousand, 1992). Other authors have stressed that schools become more effective when teachers and other professionals use collaboration to facilitate the design of learning communities (Giangreco et al., 1993; Rainforth et al., 1992; Thousand, 1994). The emphasis on partnerships among professionals, parents, and other service providers in special education began with efforts to emulate models of consultation that were emerging in the fields of mental health, school psychology, and counseling (Conoley & Conoley, 1988; Kurpius & Brubaker, 1976; Tharp, 1996; Tractman, 1961). However, according to Cook and Friend (2010), the effectiveness of consultation in special education was constrained by programmatic mandates and practical conditions that prevented educational consultants from implementing the proven models used in other fields. Particularly when first established, special education laws focused on ensuring that students received direct special education services from qualified special educators. These direct services were considered more important than any indirect services delivered through consultation. Further, special educators were prepared to be teachers and thus were peers to general educators, a relationship that made consultation an awkward responsibility. In addition, the original teacher consultants were rarely prepared to use clinical, mental health, or organizational models in their professional practice. Instead, they were prepared almost exclusively in behavioral interventions that they taught to general education teachers who were

then to implement them with students. From the very inception of consultation as a teacher role, exception, variations, and incomplete implementation were common, and the “fit” with the roles of other professionals using consultation was, at best, tenuous (Cook & Friend, 2010).

By the 1980s, the field was reacting to the fact that consultation operated differently for teacher-teacher interactions than for interactions between teachers, resource teachers, counselors and school psychologists, and other clinicians working in the special education support service delivery system. General education teachers began showing resistance to this sort of consultation and its primarily behavioral orientation, and the field came to recognize the need for greater collegiality and equitable collaboration (McClellan & Wheatley, 1985).

The phrase collaborative consultation (Idol, Nevin, & Paolucci-Whitcomb, 1986), appeared at about this time with the notion that this was a different type of consultation, more truly a partnership between peers with comparable professional preparation (i.e., teacher education) and comparable responsibilities such as the provision of day-to-day services for students. Although criticized for its lack of a unique theoretical base (Conoley & Conoley, 1988) and its continued reliance on behavioral consultation models, the introduction of collaborative consultation provided the first serious recognition of a new type of professional interaction on behalf of students with disabilities; one that was more clearly aligned with expected teacher roles. Over the subsequent decade, collaborative consultation as a concept gradually gave way to the more general term, collaboration, which came to be applied to the many types of professional partnerships that today are undertaken on behalf of students with disabilities (Cook & Friend, 2010). Collaboration became recognized as a style of interacting with others and it was identified as being separate from the process of consultation.

Skrtic describes professionals such as counselors and (special education) resource teachers as part of the professional bureaucracy that does client-centered work that is too uncertain to be rationalized and formalized. As such, it requires a division of labor based on specialization and, given the division of labor, the workers (i.e., counselors and resource teachers) are loosely coupled (Bidwell, 1965; Weick, 1976). In other words, the professionals in such organizations (including schools) are only minimally dependent on one another; they share common facilities and resources but, for the most part, do their work alone with their assigned clients (i.e., students) (Mintzberg, 1979). Collaboration gives rise to a confusing coupling arrangement, a form of interdependence premised on reflective problem solving through face-to-face communication (Burns & Stalker, 1966). Skrtic (1996) argues that inclusion and collaboration are grounded in social constructivism, and that they are essential to the process of knowledge construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction, needed to create schools that meet the physical, social, emotional, and academic needs of *all* students. Meeting the diverse needs of all students, including all students with special needs, involves constructing or inventing provisions through collaborative problem solving, thus creating successful inclusive schools.

Over the past several years, the contribution of collaboration to successful schooling for students with disabilities and other special needs has become increasingly apparent (Dallmer, 2004; Friend & Cook, 2010; McDuffie, Mastropieri, & Scruggs, 2009; Murray, 2004; Wallace, Anderson, & Bartholomay, 2002), even as it has grown in significance in other disciplines such as business and health care (Haythornthwaite, 2006; Wyles, 2007). At the same time, concern continues regarding the inconsistent attention paid to incorporating collaboration into school practices and culture (Barth, 2006; McLaughlin, 2002) and in school organizational structures (Peck & Scarpati, 2004; Pomson, 2005). Finally, according to Cook and Friend (2010), there is

clearly a strong need for continued dialogue concerning the theory of collaboration for school professionals, its translation into appropriate practices, and its impact on outcomes for students with disabilities.

Transdisciplinary team approach. Koskie and Freeze (2000) criticized the professional bureaucratic model that assumes professional discipline specialization and expertise. In the professional bureaucratic model, each discipline is seen to be focused on a predetermined knowledge base and a set of exclusive expert skills. Professionals in the professional bureaucratic model are trained separately, practice individually, and share (but do not synthesize) their advice. They ground their work in separate disciplines (psychology, medicine, social work, etc.), follow different theoretical models, use unrelated diagnostic tools, and speak a disciplinary language that often is not understood by others. Koskie and Freeze (2000) offered a possible solution involving new values, assumptions, models and practices in an effort to promote true collaboration among professionals who work with and for students with complex disabilities. The Transdisciplinary Team Approach supports team members working together and sharing their knowledge with other team members (Linder, 1993). This involves team members in shared assessment and program development activities, and in highly coordinated program implementation. This model was constructed to support the transdisciplinary approach to collaboration, disciplinary integration and interdependence. The model is grounded in general systems theory (Koskie & Freeze, 2000) and it promotes a conscious melding of disciplinary theory, language, and professional development, and provides consumer coordinated work, as well as assuming a greater interdependence of team members. Koskie and Freeze (2000) recommend that the assumptions of specialization, professionalization, and discipline

independence be replaced with new beliefs, theory and assumptions that assume the logic of role transition, consumer-coordinated work, and the greater interdependence of team members.

Skrtic and Sailor (1996) point to inclusion, which requires special education and general education reform, as a catalyst for change. Given Nilholm's (2006) comments regarding the multitude of reasonable interpretations of inclusion and the need to disentangle different perspectives on inclusive special education, a qualitative methodology is critical in this study in order to collect, analyze and understand the perceptions of school-based counselors and resource teachers. School restructuring and the inclusive education reform movement challenge how professionals do their work. The widely held beliefs that professionals both know and do what is best for their clients are being questioned on at least two points. The first point is whether professionals can always know or do what is best for their clients, given the convergent, bureaucratic nature of the professions and the increasingly divergent and dynamic character of human problems (Collins, 1979; Scott, 1981). The second and more unsettling point questions the objectivity of the scientific knowledge in which professional practices are grounded (Skrtic & Sailor, 1996). Increasingly, the objectivist or quantitative philosophy of science that relies heavily on a positivist, empirical scientific methodology to develop knowledge has been questioned (Skrtic & Sailor, 1999). Along with that challenge comes questions about how professional practitioners construct theory and knowledge. This study will use a qualitative methodology to understand the intersubjective "truth" of how school-based counselors and resource teachers have constructed the meanings of the policies and directives, related to inclusive education, since the enactment of Bill 13 (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2006), and how that knowledge has guided their practice. The potential for professional educators raises challenges, especially when we consider that disability, as a variable, may

present additional challenges, but also may create a context that promotes collaborative relationships (Cook & Friend, 2010). Working together to meet the needs of all students may facilitate the crucial interactions that promote collaborative relationships.

The Transdisciplinary Team Approach (Koskie & Freeze, 2000) may offer a solution to the challenge to the professions identified by Skrtic. If so, is this model or any other similar model being used by professionals such as counselors and resource teachers in their work with students with special needs? To what extent has this model, or any other, been adopted by professionals over the past decade? If legislation and research both recommend collaboration for successful inclusion of all students, then what is the perception of counselors and resource teachers in regard to the use of collaboration?

School administration and collaboration. Is collaboration innate or taught? Do school structures, culture or leadership play a role in how student services personnel collaborate to meet the needs of students? Researchers Smith and Leonard (2005) as well as Crockett (2002) point to school leadership as the key to effective collaboration. “Collaboration as a cornerstone of effective school inclusion is an idea that has high theoretical currency among many scholars in the areas of special education and educational leadership” (Smith & Leonard, 2005, p. 269). Smith and Leonard’s study revealed the critical and challenging role of the principal in establishing collaborative cultures for successful school inclusion. Crockett’s research noted that administrators within schools are faced with many challenges, none more challenging than the inclusion mandate as it is far reaching and affects the entire school community, including how staff, students, and parents interact and work together. In their research, Smith and Leonard (2005) noted that, “special education teachers and general education teachers experienced intrapersonal and interpersonal value conflicts in the pursuit of educational equity amidst a

climate of school accountability” (Smith & Leonard, 2005, p. 269). Accordingly, school leadership and philosophy are critical in creating collaborative working environments for teachers within student services. Those with power and authority can enhance the climate for collaboration and consultation by clarifying when parity, voluntary participation, mutual goals, common resources, shared responsibility, and positive relationships exist, minimizing the number of situations when they do not, and by playing by the rules (Freeze, 1996). If these factors are examples of how collaboration is enhanced in inclusive schools and how it can be influenced by school leaders, then there is a need to explore the perceptions of student services teachers, specifically counselors and resource teachers, to determine the importance of leadership in successful inclusive schools.

According to Cramer (2006), collaboration is problematic to implement because it requires redefining how professional adults work together. The involvement of the special educator in the team, combined with the organizational structures designed to provide consistent support for teacher collaboration, can enable energy and time to be devoted to the development of appropriate educational programming for students with special needs. Brownlee and King (2000), offer a number of organizational strategies to support teamwork specific to: (a) time management, (b) roles and relationships, (c) timetable structure, (d) common planning time, (e) minimizing the need to ‘cover’ all curriculums, and (f) recognizing the unique contributions of each team member. Furthermore, Halldorson and Bubnowicz (2009) provide other ingredients of teaming for effective collaboration, including: (a) flexibility, (b) organization, (c) commitment, (d) out of the box, extended thinking, (e) administrative support, (f) trust and sharing, (g) belief in a common goal, and (h) understanding others’ roles. The organizational strategies and other ingredients of teaming for effective collaboration listed above are influenced

by individual professionals and their leadership. Consequently, the perception of counselors and resource teachers, with respect to these factors, are important to determine in order to better understand the obstacles and facilitators of effective collaboration in inclusive schools.

Foley and Lewis (1999) recognize collaboration to be an expanding practice that is influencing the scope and nature of educational services to students with disabilities within schools. Their study asked principals to rate their level of competence to serve as leaders of collaborative programs. They make several suggestions for school administrators to review and proposed four key changes. First, they recommended that principals and educators should become collegial partners, rather than maintaining the current superior-subordinate relationship that exists between principals and faculty members (Maxson, 1990). This shift in authority allows the principal to be a team member in the pursuit of school goals and to find methods of supporting others in their leadership of educational activities (Seller, 1993; Uhl & Perez-Selles, 1995). Second, school leaders should encourage collaboration among faculty members by providing resources such as time, an effective decision-making process, and a clearly structured service delivery model, to engage in meaningful collaboration (Andrews, Basom, & Basom, 1991; Seller, 1993; Uhl & Perez-Selles, 1995). Administrators also can encourage collaboration by listening and gathering feedback from educators (Zemelman, Daniels, & Hyde, 1993) through dialogue and open communication, serving as an instructional resource to faculty members (Andrews et al., 1991; Zemelman et al., 1993), sharing expertise within schools, providing professional development and arranging for visiting scholars, and serving as liaisons between school and community (Seller, 1993; Uhl & Perez-Selles, 1995) through parent advisory councils and community meetings. Third, administrators engaged in educational restructuring activities should model continuous professional development (MacKinnon & Brown, 1994; Uhl & Perez-

Selles, 1995) by encouraging further training, professional learning opportunities, and providing professional library resources. Finally, school administrators need to develop a strong sense of self-efficacy to engage in the basic administrative tasks of leadership, innovation, decision-making, communication, and motivation (Hoy, 1998). Clearly, the administrator's role in leading collaboration in inclusive schools is critical. Yet, many school administrators have limited knowledge about the legal mandates or the educational needs of students with disabilities (Powell & Hyle, 1997). Nevertheless, in Manitoba, since the enactment of Bill 13 (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2006) school principals are responsible for ensuring the appropriate education of all students, including those with disabilities (Katsiyannis, 1994). It is effective leadership that enables individuals and teams to achieve extraordinary results, as individuals who work with effective leaders report feeling more committed, energized, and powerful at work (Cramer, 2006). One way to better understand this link between effective school leadership and collaboration, especially as it affects inclusive special education, is to explore the perceptions of student support services teachers.

School counselors and collaboration. Although legislation encourages greater school counselor involvement with students with disabilities, little research has been conducted to examine the actual roles that school counselors perform with those students (Milsom, 2002). In addition, few classroom and resource teachers come to the table trained to meet all the requirements of collaboration (Bergin & Bergin, 2000). By contrast, school counselors are thoroughly trained in these areas (Bergin & Bergin, 2000). By virtue of their training and their role on staff, counselors are in a unique position to lend perspective and facilitation to faculty consultation and collaboration efforts by utilizing their empathic listening skills, solution-focused therapy skills, and motivational interview skills. Professional school counselors are

well trained to provide counseling services to students with disabilities and their families, in part because professional school counselors have a strong tradition of training in developmental counseling (Erford, 2007). In addition, professional school counselors have traditionally focused on integrating social and academic skills, and prefer working collaboratively rather than in isolation. Increasingly, counselors are seeking additional training and taking on greater mental health and case management roles (Erford, 2007). Erford (2007) has stated that school reform is a catalyst for professional school counselors to move beyond their current roles as “helper-responders” and become proactive leaders and advocates for the success of all students. They can provide support to teachers who are frustrated in problem solving sessions or when difficulties arise as a result of inclusive practices (Bergin & Bergin, 2000). Counselors bring skills and abilities that have the potential to enhance education for all students, including students with special needs. Counselors can offer support to colleagues, students and parents in the often misunderstood area of collaboration. Professional school counselors have had increasingly important roles when working with students with disabilities (American School Counselor Association, 2009). However, Studer and Quigney (2003) found the amount of time, over the course of an academic year, that counselors provided services for students with disabilities (e.g., assist in inclusion of students in activities, participate in secondary transitional planning, facilitate communication among staff, consult with professionals outside the school) was, in fact, only 6-15 hours annually. In addition, school counselors spent only 11-15 hours annually providing consultation and support to parents and families (Scarborough & Gilbride, 2006). Nearly one third of high school counselors reported not being involved in postsecondary transition planning for students with disabilities (Milsom et al., 2007). This research suggests

that while trained, professional counselors can contribute to in-school collaboration, in reality they do not spend much time doing so.

Given the variety of activities that school counselors might perform to assist in the inclusion of students with disabilities, it is important to ensure that school counselors feel prepared to provide services to those students. It has been suggested that pre-service education and in-service professional development could help to increase school counselor competence in working with students with disabilities (Foster, 1977; Hosie, Patterson, & Hollingsworth, 1989 ; Isaacs, Greene, & Valesky, 1998; Margolis & Rungta, 1986; Tucker, Shepard, & Hurst, 1986). Despite the acknowledged need for education to increase school counselor competencies, most school counselor education programs in the early 1990s did not require either specific coursework related to student with disabilities or practical experiences with these students (Korinek & Prillaman, 1992). Graduate programs could take the lead in evaluating their current programs and adding or revising relevant courses and practical experiences. In addition, practicing school counselors could provide feedback to graduate programs and advocate for ongoing professional development opportunities through their school districts and professional organizations. Ultimately, however, school districts, professional organizations, counselor educators, and individual school counselors need to share in the responsibility to contribute to the initial and ongoing preparation of all school counselors in relation to working with students who have disabilities (Milsom, 2002).

The American School Counselor Association's ethical code states, "Each person has the right to receive the information and support needed to move toward self-direction, self-development, and affirmation within one's group identities, with special care being given to students who have historically not received adequate educational services: students of color, low

socioeconomic students, students with disabilities, and students with dominant language backgrounds” (American School Counselor Association, 2009, p. 1). The ethical commitment of school counselors to special-needs students and their parents is clear (American School Counselor Association, 2009). School counselors can help prepare educators to meet possible sources of resistance to full inclusion. For example, school counselors can acknowledge that there is disagreement in the field of education about whether all children, especially those with intensive educational, behavioral, and social needs, belong in general education classrooms (Tarver-Behring et al., 1998) and provide support and guidance to educators mandated to provide inclusive programming.

Resource teachers and collaboration. The role of special educators (resource teachers) has changed. Similar to general educators, resource teachers are more accountable, more specialized, and more collaborative (Turnbull, 2005; Yell, Katsiyannis, & Shriner, 2006). Resource teachers who are firm in their knowledge of students with disabilities, instructional design, and instructional modification and differentiated instruction strategies, as well as the legal issues related to special education, are better able to determine the specific roles required of them as collaborative teachers (Sayeski, 2009). Finding the intersections between the general education classroom and the needs of students with disabilities is at the heart of special education today (Sayeski, 2009). The competent knowledge base of the resource teacher should serve as a funnel to contextualize communication with general educators. Special education is no longer a preserve of experts supplying a special service to selected children; instead, it has become a way to provide the best education for all children. It has become an integral part of the evolution of an equitable, egalitarian, non-exclusionary, and professionally developed educational system (Freeze, Bravi, & Rampaul, 1989). A consultative-collaborative model developed at the

University of Manitoba is based on a non-categorical approach, an in-direct service bias, ecological assessment using data-based and curriculum-based measures, systemic (rather than solely child focused) interventions, a home-school partnership in problem solving, a pivotal role for the resource teacher, funding based on school (rather than solely on child) characteristics, and an emphasis on professional development (Freeze et al., 1989). A series of research studies on the effectiveness of the model in a Canadian school division report positive effects for students and high levels of support for the model from special educators, classroom teachers, school administrators, instructional assistants, clinicians, and parents (Bravi & Freeze, 1987b, 1988; Freeze, 1988; Freeze & Bravi, 1987a, 1987b, 1987c, 1988). This research and the subsequent provincial mandates in documents such as *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2006)* confirm that collaboration can bring a fundamental reform of teaching practices in the regular classroom. However, a contradiction may exist between the research based, desired state of collaborative practice, and the reality of its use.

Why are there inconsistent practices related to collaboration in inclusive schools? What are the perceptions of resource teachers and counselors in regard to their formal training and professional development in collaboration? This study will seek to understand the perceptions of resource teachers and counselors with regard to collaborative practices.

Disability and diversity. Although the concept of collaboration is not new, the need for a clear understanding of how to collaborate effectively may be intensified by the changing demands of students' needs in education. The many diverse and challenging educational issues and concerns of the last decade bring to the surface the need for collaboration to be an engrained, natural, and productive group interaction. One example of the changing diverse needs is the

arrival of new Canadian immigrants and refugees with potential needs for support in areas such as: (a) language acquisition, (b) acculturation, (c) dealing with the affects of war and conflict, (d) mental health, and (e) complex learning needs due to inadequate prior schooling in their countries of origin. In fact, according to *Manitoba Immigration Facts* (Manitoba Labour and Immigration, 2007), 2, 436 school age children immigrated to Manitoba in 2005, 2, 857 school age children arrived in 2006, and 3,039 school age children made Manitoba their new home in 2007. As Immigration Canada continues to actively recruit new Canadians, education professionals need to be prepared to meet their complex learning needs.

As Table 1 indicates, the number of new residents arriving in Canada has steadily increased through 2005 to 2007 inclusively. Table 1 reflects low admissions of new residents from countries most like Canada such as the United States and the United Kingdom, while there is a pattern of high admissions from countries least like Canada in terms of history, language, culture, religion, education and parenting, in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe. The implications for educators include an increased need for a greater understanding of diversity, cultural differences, languages, and improved communication skills across linguistic barriers, as well as knowledge of appropriate assessment methods. Diversity in terms of culture and language presents Canadian educators with many challenges in inclusive schools. The intersection of disability and diversity in the lives of individuals occurs in complex and often troubling patterns (Matanga, Freeze, Nyachoti, & Duchesne, 2008). A disability and diversity study in Canada in 2008, examining the problems and opportunities in creating accessible and inclusive learning and service delivery environments, found a theme related to the need for more inclusive education and social services provisions for individuals with disability and diversity characteristics (Matanga et al., 2008). Issues related to appropriate educational provisions

Table 1

Permanent Residents Admitted to Manitoba in 2005, 2006 and 2007, by Source Area

<i>Region</i>	<i>2005 Number</i>	<i>2006 Number</i>	<i>2007 Number</i>
Africa/Middle East	1,570	1,926	1,766
Asia/Pacific	3,808	5,090	5,871
Latin America, Greenland	555	433	811
United States	207	195	210
Europe	1,740	2,223	2,063
United Kingdom	217	184	231
Total	8,097	10,051	10,955

Source: Manitoba Immigration Fact-2007 Statistical Report

Note. In the 3 years, 2005 to 2007, the number of permanent residents who arrived in Canada has increased. Overall the total number of new residents increased by 26%.

raised during the study were cast in a complex pattern. The participants in this study, felt that existing educational programs failed to respond to the full range of circumstances experienced by individuals within the disability and diversity communities (Matanga et al., 2008).

Concurrent disorders. A second example of the changing diverse needs of Canadian students is the increase in diagnoses of concurrent disorders. According to Health Canada (Canada Mental Health Association, 2002), these concurrent disorders refer to the population of people who are experiencing a combination of mental, emotional, psychiatric or substance abuse problems. The prevalence of concurrent disorders is high in the general and treatment seeking populations. In Ontario, individuals with such concurrent disorders have been identified as a priority population by both the addictions and mental health service delivery systems (Canada Mental Health Association, 2002). When two or more disorders exist at the same time, a person is said to have a co-occurring disorder, also referred to as concurrent disorder, dual diagnosis, dual disorder, or as co-morbidity (Canada, 2002). According to the Canadian Council on Learning (Canadian Council on Learning, 2009), co-occurrence rates between learning disabilities and depression are very high. Depression and anxiety are often a response to the learning disability while psychiatric disorders can interfere with a child's ability to concentrate on cognitive tasks and, consequently, can interfere with his or her ability to learn. The significance of these two examples is that schools need counselors with knowledge and training in the social and emotional needs of students in order to work collaboratively with resource teachers to understand, support, and create learning opportunities for students with such complex needs.

Research question. This study will examine the perceptions of counselors and resource teachers in their professional roles as they relate to collaboration and the goal of successful inclusive schools. As Forbes (2003) recommends, “grappling with collaboration will require acceptance of research diversity and plurality and an expansion and opening up of research to include analyses that question and challenge assumptions in policy and practice.”(p. 154). Friend (2000) cautions that we still have our work cut out for us in terms of meaningful collaboration:

“The question is how to raise the standard of collaborative practice in schools to a new, higher level. Unfortunately, some professionals today are weary of the challenge of developing collaborative practices at the very time we are just ready in education to begin a second generation of attention to the topic. As education professionals, we must renew our commitment to being students of collaboration in order to prepare ourselves to face the complexities and uncertainties of the future of our field. No single one of us can do it alone.”(p. 134).

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to explore Counsellors and Resource Teachers perceptions of collaboration within student services teams as it relates to successful inclusive schools. In this study, I wanted to learn how Counsellors and Resource Teachers understood the facilitators of and barriers to collaboration in inclusive schools and interpreted appropriate and inclusive education programming for students with disabilities.

I elected to use qualitative research methods for this study because I believed that my study met the criteria for qualitative research as defined by Bogdan and Knopp Biklen, (2003):

“Qualitative research is an approach to social science research that emphasizes collecting descriptive data in natural settings, uses inductive thinking, and emphasizes understanding the subject point of view” (p. 261).

I wanted to “give voice” to the professionals who work within student services teams and to provide appropriate educational opportunities to students with disabilities. The phrase “giving voice” is associated with qualitative research and refers to empowering people who have not had a chance to speak out so as to bring about social change (Bogdan and Knopp Biklen, 2003). It is important to obtain the perspectives of the individuals involved in implementing the *Appropriate Education Document: Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standard for Student Services* (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2004) and the use of collaboration because these educators may suggest ideas to improve services to students. I wanted to hear the personal perspectives of Counsellor and Resource teams in terms of their understanding of collaboration in their inclusive school settings. Please refer to Appendix A for the interview protocol.

Once my University of Manitoba Committee members reviewed and critiqued the proposal, I submitted a protocol to Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB) for approval and the protocol was approved. (See Appendix A).

Recruiting participants. After obtaining ENREB approval, I sent a letter of proposal (See Appendix C) to the school division Superintendent.

With the approval from the Superintendent, I sent letters to Principals (Appendix C) in the division acknowledging the Superintendents' approval and asking for the privilege of recruiting (recruitment package) Resource Teachers and Counsellors from their respective schools. With the approval of the Principals, I forwarded the recruitment package (Appendix E) to Student Services Teachers.

Three Student Services teachers responded immediately. Our meetings took place in a coffee shop in the mall, a coffee shop and at a participant's school. Each was recorded and each interview took 60 – 70 minutes to complete. A fourth responded and that interview took place at her school before classes began in the morning.

During summer break I sent a second mailing to high school or senior years Principals, this time requesting e-mail addresses of Student Services teachers in order to contact them directly in September and October. One Principal responded with the contact information for seven Student Services teachers within his school. I sent the recruitment letter and package to all seven teachers. Five Student Services teachers responded. We met at their schools and interview lasted 60 – 90 minutes.

In December, I sent e-mails and recruitment package to middle years Principals, specifically requesting direct e-mails to Student Services teachers. With no reply, I contacted

two participants who completed the interview and asked for the names of Counsellors that I could recruit.

I contacted a Counsellor in a middle year's school by e-mail. She had received the recruitment package, but had not responded because she had just started in her role and felt she did not have enough insight or experience to share. She met with me at a coffee shop in a mall during the winter break. That interview was recorded and took 90 minutes. Upon completion of that interview I asked the participant for the name of a Counsellor in her school division. I sent the recruitment package to that Counsellor and we met at the University of Manitoba on two occasions to complete the written and recorded interview.

Eventually 12 participants responded positively and three declined. The final interview took place in a restaurant and was recorded over the 70 minute interview. At the interview, all participants signed the Letter of Consent and all participants participated were voluntary. The recruitment phase took a full year and due to limited participant response a pure stratified random sample was not utilized. The participants agreed to the interview being recorded and for notes to be taken during the meeting.

Participants. Seven of the 21 schools responded positively and are represented by the 12 participants in this study. The participants all work in Student Services in the division. Within Student Services, this division offers a number of positions including (a) Guidance Counsellor (Counsellor)-providing social and emotional support to students, (b) Resource Teacher-providing academic support to students, (c) Learning Support Teacher-providing academic support to students, (d) Blended Role-providing academic and social or emotional support. As participants signed their letter of consent and began the interview they identified their title – Support Services Teachers.

I used quotes from the participants. I quoted the participants verbatim. Participants remain anonymous through the use of pseudonyms. The pseudonym selected for each participant has significance in that the first letter of each pseudonym represents the participant's role. For example, participants who identified their role as 'Counsellor' have a pseudonym that begins with the letter 'C'. Participants who identified their role as 'Resource Teacher' have a pseudonym that begins with the letter 'R'. Participants who identified their role as 'Learning Support Teacher' have a pseudonym that begins with the letter 'L'. Participants who identified their role as 'Blended Role' have a pseudonym that begins with the letter 'B'.

Participant 1: Beth (pseudonym), 51-60 years of age has been working in full-time in early years Student Services less than 10 years and has been in her current blended role of Learning Support Teacher and Guidance Counsellor this year. Last year she was a Guidance Counsellor in the same K-6 school (where Belinda and Lori also work). Beth is working on her Masters in Inclusive Special Education. Beth and I met in the afternoon at a coffee shop in the mall for approximately 60 minutes. I wrote notes and recorded our conversation.

Participant 2: Lori (pseudonym), 41-50 years of age has been working in early years Student Services for 11 years as a Learning Support Teacher in three different schools, but currently works in the same school as Beth and Belinda. Lori is working on her Masters in Special Education and I met mid-day in a coffee shop for approximately 60 minutes. I wrote notes and recorded our conversation.

Participant 3: Linda (pseudonym) is 41-50 years of age and has 11 – 20 years of experience with 7 years in her current position as a Learning Support Teacher in early years. Linda has a Post Baccalaureate in Special Education and a certificate in French language. I met Linda at her early year's school at the end of the work day. The power had gone off in her

school, but we used batteries to operate the tape recorder and I wrote notes as we worked through the interview. The interview was interrupted at times due to the power outage and the custodians interrupted, but we completed the interview in 70 minutes.

Upon completion of my third interview, I realized I had missed three questions with each participant. I contacted each participant by e-mail and after some discussion about availability and time, I forwarded the three questions and they e-mailed their responses to me.

Participant 4: Belinda (a pseudonym) is 41 – 50 years of age and did not provide her years of experience, but did offer that she has been in current blended role of Learning Support Teacher and Guidance Counsellor for one year in grades 1 to 3 and three years prior in grades 4 and 5 working .6 full-time equivalency. Belinda works with Beth and Lori in an early year's school. Belinda shared that she has a Post Baccalaureate in Psychology and Special Education. Belinda and I met at her school at 7:30 a.m., and again a custodian and another teacher interrupted us to check on equipment stored near Belinda's office. The interview was completed in 75 minutes and all questions were recorded and I took notes during the interview.

Participant 5: Lisa (a pseudonym) is 31 – 40 years of age with 12 years of teaching experience, but this is her first year as a Learning Support Teacher. Lisa works in a senior year's school with grade 9 students. Team members for Lisa include other participants; Lance, Tana and Lucy. Lisa has a Post Baccalaureate in Special Education. We met in Michelle's office at the beginning of the morning. Michelle commented on how little she felt she had to offer since she had only been in this position for on year. Our interview lasted 45 minutes.

Participant 6: Rachel (a pseudonym) is 41 – 50 years of age with 21 – 30 years of experience in education. Rachel has 11 – 20 years of experience as a Resource Teacher. Rachel works in a senior year's school and has completed a Masters in Curriculum, Teaching and

Learning with a focus on English as a Second Language. Rachel and I met at lunch time at her school. We used the board/meeting room in the main office area. Rachel walked me through the school on a tour following our 90 minute interview.

Participant 7: Lucy (a pseudonym) is 41 – 50 years old with 21 to 30 years of experience in Student Services (out of province). This is Lucy's first year as Learning Support Teacher in senior years' school where she works with Grade 9 students and students who have already graduated but stay in school until 21 years of age when they are eligible for Adult Services Supports. Lucy works in the same school as Lance, Lisa and Tana. Lucy has an out-of-province Special Education Level 3 certificate. Lucy and I met in her office for 2 hours.

Participant 8: Lance (a pseudonym) is the only male participant. Lance is 31 – 40 years old with 11 – 20 years of experience in education. This is Lance's second year as Learning Support Teacher in the senior year's school where he works with grade 12 students. Lance works with Lisa, Tana and Lucy. Our interview took place in the Vice-Principals office as Lance was the "Teacher in Charge" or designate for the day. Our interview was one hour long.

Participant 9: Lana (a pseudonym) is 31 – 40 years of age with 11 – 20 years of experience and 3 months in her current position. Lana works in a senior year's school as Learning Support Teacher and is close to completing a Post Baccalaureate in Counselling. She requires one more course. Lana works with Lance, Lisa and Lucy, our interview occurred in her office at the end of the school day and lasted one hour as I recorded and wrote notes on the interview.

Participant 10: Cindy (a pseudonym) is 31 – 40 years of age with 11 – 20 years of experience with less than 10 years in current position of Counsellor in this early year's school. Cindy has completed her Masters in Counselling. We met at a coffee shop/restaurant in the mall.

Cindy signed the Letter of Consent and I recorded the interview and took notes. Our interview lasted 90 minutes as there were some interruptions. The restaurant was busy.

Participant 11: Cathy (a pseudonym) is 20 – 30 years of age with less than 10 years of experience. This is Cathy's first year as Counsellor in this middle year's school. Cathy has a Masters in Counselling in progress. We met twice at the University of Manitoba. We began our first meeting later than planned as Cathy had to attend a course. Our second meeting occurred a week later at the University of Manitoba and we met for 75 minutes in total. Our interview was recorded and notes were taken.

Participant 12: Rhonda (a pseudonym) is 31 – 40 years of age with 11 – 20 years of experience. Rhonda has been in the current Senior Years Resource Teacher position for less than 10 years. Rhonda has completed her Post Baccalaureate in Special Education. We met at a restaurant where I recorded using battery power and wrote notes of our conversation. We talked for 75 minutes.

Member checking. Upon completion of the interviews I provided each participant with a full transcript in addition to a 1 – 2 page summary of the interview. I asked each participant to check for accuracy and provide comments to me.

All participants approved their summary. One participant, Lucy, asked for clarification on one point. When provided with more detail, Lucy was comfortable with the information. In addition, she asked for one term to be removed as she felt she shouldn't have said it. I removed that term.

Data collection. The data for this study was collected through in dept interviews of 12 individuals/participants who work in student services within the same public school division. The school division I choose to conduct my research in is an urban school division established in

1959 with 21 public schools. The division serves a community that is multi-cultural and socio-economically diverse.

Each participant had a role within Student Services and although I originally recruited Guidance Counsellors and Resource Teachers, the respondents had titles that included Learning Support Teachers as well as the blended role of Learning Support Teacher and Guidance Counsellor. Each participant was asked to participate in a one hour interview. After the interview, member checking was used. Each participant was sent a copy of the transcript to review. In addition, a one page summary was provided to each participant and they were asked if they felt the transcript accurately reflected what they had said. They were asked if there was anything they would like to add, clarify, or change.

The interviews were collected during the months of May, June, October, November, December, January and February. Four participants chose to have the interviews at a restaurant /coffee shop, seven chose to have the interviews at their school and one participant chose to have the interview at the University. The interview with participant #5 took 45 minutes. The interviews with participants #1, #2, #8, #9 took approximately 60 minutes, the interview with participant #3 took 70 minutes; and the interviews with participants #4, #11, and #12 took 75 minutes; while interviews with participant #6 and #10 took about 90 minutes. The interview with participant #7 took 120 minutes. During the interviews I tried to make each participant feel at ease. I maintained a relaxed posture, adopted encouraging body language, and made eye contact in order to invite open dialogue and information sharing. When the interview was held at a coffee shop or restaurant, I brought the participant a coffee or tea.

I began each interview by thanking the participant for their time and expertise. I reviewed the information provided in the recruitment letter including the title of the study. I

asked each participant to review the Letter of Consent and voluntarily sign the document. I provided each participant with a copy of the questions (Appendix A). Each participant was asked 9 questions with individualized probing questions.

The interviews were audio taped and transcribed by the researcher as soon as possible after the interviews. A total of 186 pages were transcribed from the 12 interviews. The audio tapes were stored in a locked secured location and the confidentiality of all participants was respected at all times.

At the conclusion of the interviews, the participants were reminded that they would receive a one page summary of the interview. Throughout the seven months of interviews, I made entries in my reflective journal where I wrote down things I was wondering about and things to consider.

Data analysis. Bogden and Knopp Biklen (2003) refer to data analysis as “the process of sorting, arranging, coding and in other ways looking for patterns in data for the purpose of coming up with findings” (p. 258). As I listened to each interviewee, made notes, listened to the audio tapes and reviewed transcripts, I had a valuable opportunity to actively engage with my research from the beginning of the data collection process. This afforded me the opportunity to look for themes. A theme can be defined as some concept or theory that emerges from the data (Bogden and Knopp Biklen, 2003 p. 187). I then analyzed the data by developing a coding system which involved searching the data for patterns and regularities of patterns and phrases that represented topics and patterns. Often, key words or phrases became coding categories. While I reviewed my data, I highlighted key words and phrases and categorized information. I identified coding categories and organized information into the categories.

Role of researcher. As an educator, who for many years has been directly involved in the implementation of the inclusion mandate and utilization of collaboration in Student Services/, I have a keen vested interest in this topic. My comfort level with this topic helped to build rapport with the participants during the interviews. I kept journal notes through the months of interviewing in an effect to record my thoughts and responses to the work/research.

I offered interviewees opportunities to read transcripts (member check) as well as review a one page summary of their own transcript. The research was conducted outside the school division that I work in, so that I would not be in a (perceived) position of power with the participants in this study.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of collaboration Guidance Counsellors and Resource Teachers of inschool-based Student Services teams. The following is a summary of the data collected through interviews with the 12 participants. After extensive analysis of the data, I found the following themes emerged:

- a) Perceptions of the understanding of collaboration
- b) Perceptions of the facilitators of collaboration
- c) Perceptions of the barriers of collaboration
- d) Perceptions of the influence of leadership on collaboration

In this chapter, I describe the themes and quote the participants to support the themes. In addition, I provide the quotes that relate to existing research in these thematic areas as well as add a section for new perceptions that existing research may not have addressed.

Perceptions of the understanding of collaboration. All the participants felt that collaboration was important in their work and when present it was helpful for student success. Seven of the participants described collaboration as ‘working as a team’. Further descriptions of collaboration included Linda saying “I would say it is harnessing the power of many minds”. This was similar to Lances comment “Everyone is looking for ideas to bounce off”. During the interviews, participants commented on their understanding of collaboration in regard to (a) the power of purpose in collaborating, (b) conditions for collaboration ,(c) the need for collaboration, (d) how the support model has changed, (e) society and collaboration, (f) parent voice and collaboration,(g) training in collaboration ,(h) their views on ‘2 heads are better than 1’, and (i) funding applications.

Power of purpose. The participants believed in a purpose or focus for collaboration. Lucy commented on the purpose of her role. “I see my role as the case manager where I bring parties that are involved with the student and depending on whatever the issue is that we are getting together about.....and all those people are getting together to plan and support the student.” Lucy defined collaboration as a purpose much like Lisa who explained, “collaboration is working together communicating as a team – sharing whether it is information or insight. Finally, Rhonda described collaboration as, “a common goal or focus...making plans or problem solving.”

Conditions. When asked about their understanding of collaboration, many of the participants commented on the conditions of collaboration.

Rhonda believes that, “There’s some key pieces to collaboration, I think first of all that it has to be a team, two or more together to a common goal or focus....”

Teams also were mentioned by Cathy who commented on the, “Time needed for team meetings” and Cindy who stated, “Working together as a team –sharing – whether it is information or insight”. And finally Belinda, who believed, “Collaboration is working together as a team – that is it includes everyone not just the support team.”

The need for effective collaboration. The participants were asked to comment on the need for collaboration on behalf of students with disabilities – is it increasing or decreasing?

All participants stated the need for collaboration on behalf of students with disabilities is increasing and that increases were attributed to a number of reasons including student need, changes in support models, societal change and parent voice.

Student need. Student need was mentioned most frequently. As Lori explained, “Overall it is increasing, we need to do the right thing making sure we involve all the people that

are needed in order to provide the best service as possible for the kids. I would say Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Centre (MATC) is taking on more responsibility for kids with trauma and new things are being included so there is even more need for collaboration...”

Linda commented, “That [collaboration is] increasing because we have more students with disabilities and more challenges, in our school, in particular we have more EAL students so that poses a challenge.”

Rachel remarked that the increase resulted from, “More students with a diagnosed disability – I don’t know if we are just more aware of them, but the number of students even in this building since I started 5 years ago has over doubled – you know in the two years...”

Rachel and Lucy related the increased need for collaboration to more work being done with outside agencies. Rachel stated, “...with that I find there is more need to collaborate with outside agencies, the Doctors you know”. Lucy stated that there were, “...more diverse supports and services available for exceptional students outside the school community.”

Finally Lori added, “The increase in student need has caused an increase in the need for collaboration and as a result there is a need to ‘prioritize our needs’ ...like we had a team meeting just to prioritize our needs and we came out everybody had a priority of needs like we had social emotional, academic, language and the social emotional was the highest. We had a huge number of kids like that – so there is no way we can say that is all for you – you have to do it. We had to say the priority here is to work on the social emotional so we all shared it.”

Lori commented on student needs, “Like in our school, we all share it, like we have kids who have to go to the animal shelter, we all shared it, we cannot say this is just a Counsellor, we all share and drive these kids, we have kids going to therapy – horse back riding – when the kid comes back she had feedback – she can meet with me or the Vice-Principal – we all share all that

– I think for some kids we realize it is more than academics and there is no way one person can take it on.”

Rachel commented that, “The need for collaboration with Counsellors and Resource Teachers is greater due to more kids, because we are looking at the kids more as a whole, you know where guidance and resource if there are social emotional problems, there may be academic concerns that are causing them or these social emotional (problems) could be effecting the academic concern too.”

Lance shared that English as an Additional Language (EAL) has influenced the need for collaboration within student services. “For us, our biggest problem right now is inclusion of students from other countries, outside of Canada. It is just increasing exponentially each year.....we went from two Learning Support Teachers to four last year with the sole purpose of working with teachers to change practice.”

Support model changed. Belinda and Lucy noted that the increased need for collaboration related to the change in the support model that is being used in schools.

Belinda stated, “Need is increasing because of the change of the support model – the attached at the hip model is something that we are trying to get away from and because of that there is more need to collaborate as a teacher. Attached to the para or EA – when that happens it is almost as if the children is removed from the teachers responsibility. The teacher is taking a more and more active role.”

Linda said, “When I think about the meetings that I sort of had to be part of, or the funding – there was more pull out programming so the classroom teacher wasn’t involved as much – so you didn’t have to worry about him. That table is now pretty crowded with who has a role in this student’s life.”

A number of participants reflected on the increased need for Counsellors and Resource Teachers to collaborate due to changes in support services teachers' roles and the structure of service delivery.

For example, Belinda, in her blended role as Learning Support Teacher and Guidance Counsellor shared, "In our case, we are one and the same and since we started to combine our role(s) we are more collaborative than ever...."

Beth comments agreed with Belinda as she noted, "All I can say is that when there was a distinct Guidance Counsellor and distinct Learning Support People, they didn't collaborate on stuff and they didn't meet about kids and talk about them."

Belinda also added that full-time equivalence had an effect on collaboration. "Lots of crossover with us – there is no stepping on toes – and because she is part-time and I am part-time and our Vice-Principal does some resource, so there is lots of cross over there....so that structure alone of that many part-time people – forces collaboration."

Lisa noted in her new role as Learning Support Teacher she was experiencing increased collaboration with resource. "Now I feel that there is more need or greater experience for collaboration – I felt that but maybe that is being in the classroom where I didn't have that experience or communication or collaboration with resource."

Lucy related the increase need for collaboration to a change in delivery of services. "Greater – like I said before, I spent less time in meeting earlier in my career with all the stakeholders – than I do now – I'd say at least....today was 45% was planning or collaboration with teachers or parents in a week it almost feel like you could say almost 60% of the week is collaborating. I do almost zero direct service with students – except assessment – and even then it is shifting for teachers to do the assessment."

When asked what is influencing the model of collaboration specifically the questions/probe was where did it come from? Lucy replied, “Administration”.

Society. Three participants related the increased need for collaboration to society changing in regard to knowledge about students with special needs, acceptance of special needs, and the fact that special needs are more public, and that schools are the first place to offer the same opportunities for everyone.

Cindy commented on, “I think with society becoming more knowledgeable and I guess more accepting and more public about children with exception abilities that has resulted in an increased need for collaboration. Increasing need to assist students, society is changing, family is changing, support for students is changing. How they present at school is changing. Lots of students present with special needs. Students change frequently. Resources needed in every aspect.” Cathy added, “Increasing student needs, greater demands, the increase in diversity, disability, mental health needs and co-occurring disorders have definitely pointed out just how important collaboration and inclusion are. Schools are the headquarters for coordination of mental health services.”

Lance connected the increased need for collaboration to, “This division and province priority (and) by society in general, we no longer have segregated classroom and segregated work opportunities. An opportunity for everybody to do the same thing or do something in the same environment, school is the first place to start it.”

Parent voice. Lucy related the increased need for collaboration to parent voice. “Parent increasing voice in what happens to their child, actually that is a positive, parents involved and not left out of some sort of key planning decisions – they can’t be excluded. And that just wasn’t the case before – I remember making decisions about our student and informing parents and

that's just not the way it happens anymore – they are in on the planning process and come to sort of consensus or a decision about what happens next – so parents are there from the beginning. Parents have a stronger and stronger role and that is a good thing...”

Training with consultative or collaborative model. The participants exposure to consultative or collaborative model ranged from many (9) participants not having any training in the model to four participants having some training related to the collaborative model.

Rhonda, “I took two separate courses and don’t remember which names they were – Developmental Resource Program and Development of Support Services Team or something like that. Those two courses talked a lot about collaborative model – lately my resource team has picked up on some of the work of Faye Brownlee.”

Beth has, “some stuff I’ve done in University in some of my classes, but nothing at school”.

Rachel, “I did in my last division...I’ve been in this division, I think seven years now, and haven’t had a specific in-service or training on that.”

And finally Lori mentioned, “We’ve attended one – Faye Brownlee has the classroom profile – so we do the Faye Brownlee twice a year now.”

Euphuism ‘two heads are better than one’. When asked, what do you think of the euphuism “Two Heads are better than one”, the participants all concurred that this is true for them, but added some qualifiers.

Lana added, “It all depends on what heads or who heads are involved. I love bouncing ideas and sharing ideas, but not always the best it really depends on the heads.”

Rachel pointed out, “for sure two heads – even if they can challenge me on my thinking – really nice to spend five minutes bouncing around things.”

Linda commented on, “many heads are better than one, we have a real team approach....it’s not territorial at all.”

And finally Lance commented, “Great – if there is willing attitude on both and sufficient time to bang those two heads together.”

Funding applications. All participants were involved in writing funding applications and all noted the division had required only Level 3 funding applications, which has significantly reduced the work load in this area.

It may be worth noting some feelings related to funding applications as Lucy comments, “I dislike them strongly – worst part of my job”. Lucy further criticized funding applications on two counts. “First, they are written from a negative perspective and when we are collaborating with parents we are looking at strengths and building on those strengths and hoping, and secondly, funding applications are painful because in high school there is a lot of data to collect, because you also have to decide what is relevant because adolescents change so much – someone’s behavior in grade 9 may not be reflective of what happened in grade 12.”

In summary, with respect to the participants understanding of collaboration in inclusive schools, the most frequently mentioned topics were student needs and the support model within student services. Student needs were discussed in terms of the increasing needs driving the need for collaboration. The support model was discussed in terms of how the model is changing due to student needs. The training that the participants had received either in professional development or formal education in consultative or collaborative model was minimal. In fact 9 of the participants did not have any exposure to such a model.

Perspectives on the Facilitators of Collaboration. The interviewees’ perceptions of what facilitates collaboration was common, in that the interviewees confirmed the importance of

all the probes provided by the researcher including, (a) parity, (b) voluntary participation, (c) mutual goals, (d) common resources, (e) shared responsibility, (f) common relationships, (g) professional skills, (h) interpersonal skills, and (i) process skills, as identified by Koskie and Freeze, 2000). In addition, (a) role confusion, (b) accountability, and (c) leadership, as identified by Cramer (2006) were validated by the interviewees. The following is a summary of the participants' comments regarding their perspectives on what facilitates collaboration. Immediately following this summary, is a list of new topics that the participants identified regarding their perspectives on what facilitates collaboration.

Parity. Rhonda commented on the value of parity by saying, "People feel they are heard and their opinion is accepted and respected on the level of being a professional and coming from a thoughtful spot." Lana said that parity is important in that, "Everyone's voice is valuable!"

Belinda believed that, "Individuals need to be equal, otherwise you are just telling people what to do, I mean if – administration – yes – but when it comes to collaboration, we all have to be on equal footing."

Voluntary participation. Some participants believed that voluntary participation is important.

Belinda stated, "It can't be something that is forced, or there will be resentment."

Lori noted that voluntary participation was important and when I asked, "What to do when someone is not really a team player?" Lori offered the suggestion to, "Try to have influence so they see the benefits."

Belinda and Beth, in their blended role(s) as Counsellor and Learning Support Teacher believed that voluntary participation is better; but at the same time, saw it as a school division goal, "They are encouraging, not forcing, the blended role."

Mutual goals. Mutual goals were also important to the participants. Linda felt strongly that there is a need to, “Talk about what we believe – what we believe as teachers – what we believe about how to support kids best. I think you need to establish that quite early on – what makes good teaching and good support?”

Beth, in her blended role, noted that, “There is no issue (of mutual goals) when the role of Guidance Counsellor and Learning Support Teacher are blended.” Belinda, in her blended role offered a broad perspective, “We are all there for the students and as long as that is our goal.”

Lori noted that, “Otherwise everyone will be doing their own little thing.” Lance and Cindy agreed that mutual goals are very important and that everyone needs to be on the same page. Cindy clarified that within her Support Team of two Guidance Counsellors, three Learning Support Teachers and two Administrators, “It helps to have mutual goals”.

Common resources. Having common resources was an agreed upon facilitator of collaboration. Co-teaching was viewed as a method/strategy that utilized common resources, indicating that staff such as student services teachers were common resources. Cathy offered, “Emphasis in our school or co-teaching (message is) get involved in classroom, so staff see Support Team as resource.”

Lori observed that common resources, “Help especially if you say you are going into the classroom – Guidance teachers are not taking kids often into their office, unless the need is really – you know – we are working in the classroom – we have common resources.”

Shared responsibility. In reflecting on their understanding of shared responsibility, participants felt strongly that it facilitated collaboration. Lori went on to say, “Shared responsibility in the classroom and it would be the classroom teacher could be the best person to take the child out – you (as support) can stay in the classroom.”

Linda thought, “We don’t have territory where this person always does this or when we have team meetings we are talking about all students within the big picture and we all take a role.” Cathy concurred by adding, “It would make collaboration necessary when you see yourself responsible for the whole child. We share the responsibility for the success of the whole child.”

Lance also agreed, “Pseudo teaming 100% facilitates collaboration – we are finding that we are doing a lot of things and getting halfway through it and finding it is along the lines of counselling role and not bad or otherwise – it is just about differentiation, what should be done (in my other school – I was doing the Counselling role). I have the background I can do Counselling, that helps me to build relationships.” Finally, Belinda offered that, “We may have different responsibilities, but it is all shared and agreed upon.”

Common relationships. The topic of common relationships was interpreted by the participants as counselors and resource teachers being viewed as having similar roles and providing similar services. The participants commented on the usefulness of students, staff or parents seeing the roles as similar or complimentary.

Linda felt that she, “Tried to look at the student holistically – o.k. which piece of that is – it is really hard to separate guidance and learning support – they just got hand in hand. It is hard to find a child who is experiencing a hard time academically and are not experiencing a hard time behaviorally.”

Lori observed that, “This is really huge now in our division and building. It is building relationships – that is the most important thing right now with the kids, if we have an understanding that the kid has to trust us – you know trust that we all carry the same message to that child.”

Belinda spoke to the relationship with parents and offered, “When I call a parent with permission to talk to a specialist – I need to know who I am talking to or it is a stranger out of the blue so I go to the student led meetings, the orientation and I am seen as part of the classroom.”

Professional skills. Some participants felt that professional skills facilitate collaboration. Cathy observed that, “I didn’t realize the degree that student services worked together. Meetings are a big part of the week. Not so much about professional development – just experience. Navigating the different systems [referral, etc.], if it weren’t for collaboration I would be lost. Even when I am not attached to the case we sit in – leadership believes that is valuable.”

Belinda believed that, “ professional skills vary and that is what makes collaboration work because we all have different things [to offer].”

Lori offered that, “If people know their skills and feel valued in their skill – we respect each others skills and I may be working with some kids on academics, but I hear something else that is social emotional, I can go to the Guidance Counsellor and say ‘What do you think?’”

Finally, Linda acknowledged that it is, “Nice to have people with professional skills, but I don’t think it is most important thing – interpersonal skills are more important.”

Interpersonal skills. Many participants felt strongly about how interpersonal skills facilitate collaboration. In fact, Lana viewed interpersonal skills as, “Essential key! – Without it, good luck!”

Lori believed interpersonal skills are, “Huge! – should be the top of everything – positive – open minded to work collaboratively.” Linda makes a distinction that, “The interpersonal skills and the way you work with other people needs to be first and foremost in collaboration. (On the other hand) there are some highly skilled people as far as credentials are, but if they are

not able to work with other people towards a common goal, that they are not really that effective.”

Process skills. Some participants believed that process skills can definitely facilitate collaboration. Linda offered, “They are kind of learned if you have the right person – if you have an open person you can learn these.”

Belinda commented on Individual Educational Plans, “If it gets used that is big thing – it doesn’t sit in a file cabinet and get pulled out three times a year.”

Lance added that, “Many players are involved – collaboration is very important coming up with those things to truly get the best product – you need collaboration.”

Lana offered, “Really really important – because it gives participants time to analyze lots of steps from beginning to end, with process, hasty decisions avoided – not every aspect considered.”

Role confusion. Some participants had varying opinions on how this might affect collaboration. Role confusion as a topic seemed similar to ‘common relationships’ that was mentioned earlier. Linda believed that you need to, “Sit down and specifically plan – here is where these are needs in our building and this is how we are going to address those needs within the team and have people not be confused – it really is an interesting process to get through.”

Belinda in her blended role of Guidance Counsellor and Learning Support Teacher noted that, “I don’t think that really happens because I have skills that somebody else doesn’t and skills they have that I don’t, so I don’t think that will be a problem. Classroom teachers told the kids specifically what I have done – because in the past, we have been confused with paras.(paraprofessionals)”

Lisa noted that role confusion can both facilitate or hinder collaboration, “I think that does happen – there are times when I am working with a student and I think they feel that I am a Counsellor – when they should be going to a Counsellor but at the same time I feel I take on that role and know how to do it. It is because I am interested in that area and would love to help, counselling is not just an easy fix.”

Accountability. The participants felt strongly that accountability facilitated collaboration. Rachel spoke strongly about accountability, she said, “What hinders collaboration is when nothing happens - if we all sit in this meeting and then nothing changes – I think there needs to be something going on and the communication you need to follow up after and see is this changing. Is this what we discussed? Is this happening? Where are we going? So that’s what I think hinders it.”

Linda clarified, “As long as people say o.k. – I’m going to take this on and as long as you can count on those people to get that piece of the job done, then you are going to have effective collaboration in the end.”

Belinda did not see accountability as an issue, “We use graphic organizers to know who is doing what – it is dated – we bring them to support team meeting – we also use Faye Brownlee’s (work).”

Lana concurred that accountability is, “Vital – essential to collaborative process – you can’t make decisions without follow through and someone to check in with. Make decisions without collaboration and (it) can come back to bite me – taking ownership is intertwined somehow.”

Leadership. Many participants felt strongly that leadership influenced effective collaboration. Leadership facilitated effective collaboration, according to Rachel, “I think it is

administration, if they support and if they feel it is important that we do collaborate and give you time to – it helps. What I also think too is you need somebody to take charge – someone to be the caseleader – consult with everybody and pull everybody together. You have a head person to start the ball rolling.”

Lori believed, “You need those people to monitor, carry on, and review so leadership is huge – co-ordinator or case manager on the school team – so whatever is going on in this case comes back to the case manager.”

Cathy commented, “A former administrator has such a way – never telling people how or what to do, but provided much guidance – safe to make mistakes – safe to say no.”

Belinda noted that, “We take turns – but there is a member of our team that is a natural leader, but with that she is also very good at letting us lead.”

Lucy has observed that (as a leader), “Part of the leadership role is sharing with my colleagues, my philosophies of how we support student and encourage processes that sort of facilitate that. So especially with a couple of brand new people in the department they want to problem solve. I will say indirectly you are coming to the wrong person – we need to be talking to the teacher, to the parent, we need to be talking to the student and if you need to be getting them all together. It is easier and faster to give the right answer, but it is not encouraging the new people on staff to go back and talk to everybody involved and if you need to bring them together because their ideas are so diverse – then bring them together. Very rarely is something happening is isolation.”

And finally Lucy commented, “We have new leadership here so in my experience – for me if the leadership supports the mode which is the collaborative model – they facilitate that – they look to free up – they are the money people – they get subs.”

New topics that refer to what facilitates collaboration. In addition to the areas identified earlier by participants that fit into existing research, there were a number of new topics raised that influence collaboration. The following topics were not raised as probes in the interview, but developed as themes in the rich conversations. The themes included: (a) seeing the children holistically, (b) having a solid team committed to collaboration, (c) influencing collaboration, (d) having an open mind and being adaptable, (e) having time, (f) having space, (g) having a collective understanding, and ix) having personal experience. These topics may be ideas for future research in the area of effective collaboration in inclusive schools.

Seeing the children holistically. Linda and Lori both referred to how student services teachers view student needs. Linda referred to, “We try to look at kids holistically. It is really hard to separate Guidance and Learning Support – they just go hand and hand – it is hard to find a child who is experiencing a hard time academically and are not experiencing a hard time behaviourally.”

Lori concurred and stated, “When you are supporting the student it maybe social, emotional, but at that point if the student is really into academics – and excited about doing work – yes, you counsel them, but you can help them at that moment in academics – it is not like ignore that moment that they are thriving in – like say ‘no I am a Counsellor and I just want to talk to you about the other thing’. To just kind of respond to the kids needs in the moment, what’s the priority at that moment?” Lori added, “I think it is looking at a student holistically – it gives that perspective that we are not looking at just the little parts of the kid.”

Beth commented, “I think the kids need are so – their diverse, the amount of needs we have – even things like having kids who come in from other countries....family situations, you know cultural things, we can’t possibly know everything about all that.”

Lance commented, “Kids renew people’s desire for people to get better at what they do. I hope that is what drives people.”

Having a solid team committed to collaboration. Some participants commented on the team’s level of commitment to collaboration as a factor influencing effective collaboration.

Lori emphasized the collaboration, “Just comes down to the particular people – really solid core of people who are committed to collaboration, just have that respect for each other and trust in each other and focus on that as a way to approach the challenges in the building.”

Respect influencing collaboration. The participants commented on respect for team members, that this influenced/facilitated collaboration.

Lori and Linda both commented on this. Lori stated, “Just have that respect for each other and trust in each other, and focus on that as a way to approach the challenges in the building.” She added, “We respect that other person’s contribution.”

Rhonda felt strongly that, “Opinion is accepted and respected on a level of whatever level – on the level of being a professional and coming from a thoughtful spot – and it’s trusting that you can put an opinion or thought out there and it will be considered and thought through.”

Having an open mind and being adaptable. Belinda felt and three others agreed that effective collaboration occurs when individuals put ego aside, when individuals are open-minded and have a willingness to do so.

Belinda referred to her current team when she said, “Thankfully, we are all sort of even tempered and we all go into each others classroom – there is no feeling that we are interfering.” She added, “Hard to nail down, but you just have to get along and not worry about whether or not you’re right.”

Beth concurred by saying, “I think a willingness to do....you’ve got to be willing to give up some of the control....”

Lance offered, “I think a willingness to collaborate and be in that situation not feeling threatened and not feeling like your giving up power, and just feeling what you come up with is going to be better because everyone’s heads (have) been put together.”

Linda felt strongly that, “I really think that I do have trust in other people and I value their input in every respect – I think that you really believe those things and open to learning – can really go a long way and just kind of putting your ego aside. The single most important obstacle to collaboration, in my opinion, is ego.” It means that despite how much education and experience we have acquired, there is always more to learn, and the, “learning may arise from the most unlikely sources and circumstances.”

Linda added, “One can learn the elements of successful collaboration, but the necessary mindset (including interpersonal skills) maybe prerequisite.” Belinda agreed that collaboration could be taught, “If a person is willing to learn.”

Lisa offered that collaboration, “Can be taught if somebody is willing to accept that role of team player.”

Rachel believed, “I think it can be taught in certain ways, but what works for me and my communication skills doesn’t always work for somebody else.”

Lucy offered core values as the basis for learning collaboration skills and finally, Lance focused on, “It is about changing attitudes and commitment.”

One participant spoke strongly to adaptability in saying, “We have to go in prepared to do one thing one day, and it is not even close to what you are doing (the next). So you just go ‘OK’ and be willing to try something for longer than a couple of days.”

Having time. Four participants referred to time as a factor that facilitates effective collaboration.

Lucy, Linda and Rachel listed time as a huge facilitator of collaboration.

Lucy said, “Time being able to effectively bring people together – it is a messy, dirty process that takes time – like 25 e-mails that bounce back and forth to find a time that everyone can make it.”

Linda agreed, “Time – because it takes time for people to commit to it (collaboration).”

Rachel added, “Time! That’s the biggest thing – we need time and the opportunity to meet.”

Having space. One participant, Lucy, referred to space as, “In this building, the space for a private meeting where there is space – that make a huge difference – so there is nobody sort of peeking in and it’s comfortable, but it is in high demand cause it is such a good space to meet – sitting around in a classroom is not ideal either.

Having a collective understanding. Lisa, Linda and Beth cited a common understanding of collaboration as a vital piece that facilitates collaboration.

Lisa stated, “Understanding the meaning of collaboration is important.”

Linda added, “I think understanding it’s like one of those words like ‘inquiry’ – everybody has their own definition of it. So I think if you both have a good concept of what you’re collaborating about and what the point is – for and how your collaborating it makes a difference – because I guess if you ask the teachers I support if they collaborate with me – they probably all would say, yes – even though their definition is that they met with me and scheduled...but, I didn’t have a whole lot of input on what I was going to do when I was there.”

And finally Beth believed a common understanding of collaboration is the greatest facilitator of collaboration.

Personal experience. One participant, Lucy felt strongly that her personal experience facilitated collaboration. “Part is my own personal history with exceptional needs to me that is really important and not everyone is up to speed on that – just to give you my own personal history – both my parents are deaf – and then I have a son with (diagnosis) that is why I am suited for the job I have.” Lucy commented on how this experience has supported her ability to collaborate.

In summary, the participants confirmed all of Koskie’s and Freeze’s probes related to the what facilitates collaboration. The most frequently mentioned or passionately discussed items were accountability and leadership. Within the new topics that the participants identified, the most frequently mentioned or passionately discussed was having an open mind and being adaptable. The second most frequently mentioned was seeing the children holistically and time as facilitators of collaboration.

Perspectives on the barriers to collaboration. The interviewees’ perceptions of what are the barriers to collaboration were common, in that the interviewees confirmed the importance of all the probes provided by the researcher including: (a) lack of parity, (b) lack of voluntary participation, (c) lack of mutual goals, (d) lack of common resources, (e) lack of shared responsibility, (f) lack of common relationships, (g) lack of professional skills, (h) lack of interpersonal skills, (i) lack of process skills, (j) role confusion, (k) lack of accountability, and (l) leadership as identified by Koskie and Freeze, (2000). The following is a summary of the participants comments regarding their perspectives on the barriers to collaboration.

Lack of parity. Many participants indicted that lack of parity is a factor that can be a barrier to collaboration. Lana commented on the concern that each voice is equal, but (if they) don’t mesh, they can’t come to agreement, it could cause conflict. Beth noted that parity is an

issue when she is in the designate role as administrator, when administration is away. Classroom teachers and other staff may see an elevated status due to that designated role.

In addition, Beth added that parity can be an issue, “If classroom teacher(s) don’t think you are any good or know what you are doing.”

Lance experienced that, “New people in this building may be causing some issues, because people are sort of waiting to see if they will involve the new people.” This can impact on parity in the sense of experience or age.

Finally, Lucy felt strongly that, “Everyone has an equal voice is my responsibility when we collaborate, that it is not just me talking – I am the case manager – including the student to make sure everyone has a voice – it is easier to do at high school than with younger kids. The hardest part is getting some agencies to talk less – because they have their mandate, the focus tends to be a bit more narrow.”

Lack of voluntary participation. The participants believed that any amount of forcing the teachers to collaborate was not useful and would hinder the collaborative process. Specifically Linda said, “Nobody should be forced to do it – besides that works against collaboration.”

Lana noted that, “Forced collaboration results in people being less inclined to be active participants.”

Lori, although not in the blended role herself, commented that, “I think the division is realizing that you can’t really push people, but still encourage people to work in a blended role.”

Lack of mutual goals. The participants had concerns about how mutual goals, a lack of mutual goals, impact or hinder collaboration. Lori offered, “That too many people impact....if you have multiple people doing things, it will fall apart.”

Lack of common resources. The participants had minimal comments related to the hindrance of common resources as they relate to collaboration. However, Lana offered a perspective on colleagues having diverse resources, she said, “It is helpful to have common resources, but nice to see what else is available [from others].”

Lack of shared responsibility. Shared responsibility can hinder collaboration as Rhonda and Lance offered. Rhonda noted, “If I look at Counsellors – and why they are blocking collaboration, they signed up for a role that is changing – they are upset about that role changing and as a result are not really open to collaborating.”

Lance added, “When I do Counselling in my learning support role, it hinders me because it takes me away from learning support position, my active role is academic support, so when I am spending time like today for instance, an hour because of behaviour issues that require some counselling intervention, than that is one hour that took away from my ability to support students academically. I love establishing those relationships with students and getting to know them in all domains, but at the same time, the job is already jammed packed when it comes to academic needs.”

Lack of common relationships. The participants did not identify lack of common relationships as a barrier to effective relationships.

Lack of professional skills. Some participants commented on how professional skills can hinder collaboration. Lance observed that, “We have some veteran people with new people and that is not truly collaboration – that environment is not the best and not the worst.”

A theme of professional skills being “new skills”, developed and participants commented on that as change. Lana noticed that, “Yes, I think there are some skills that can be taught – no

harm in teaching skills – even the best people who are great collaborators can still benefit from training, but hard to ‘teacher an old dog new tricks’.”

Rhonda added that some Support Services Teachers may be, “Holding on to the old rules and responsibilities and have a reluctance to change what rules and responsibilities look like.”

Lack of interpersonal skills. Some participants identified some areas that effect interpersonal skills and therefore hinder collaboration.

For example, Lance has observed that, “High school is less concerned about interpersonal skills – (more concerned with) – content – this way of doing things is not conducive to collaboration.”

Finally, Cathy notes that, “People who are not willing to work with you” hinders collaboration “it needs to be two ways – openness and attitude.”

Lack of process skills. Two areas within process skills were identified as hindering collaboration. Lori offered issues regarding confidentiality and the need for flexibility “Issues that are confidential should not be collaborated on but it is about the child’s needs at that moment or in his life at that time”. “You need to be aware of steps, but not to be locked into these steps. If you know there is a process, you can be flexible about that process it can be helpful.”

Role confusion. Some participants felt role confusion could hinder collaboration; for example, Lucy offered that, “Probably a blended role and people don’t really understand what that means and what that entails. They could be confused and that can get them to not really do what they are supposed to do. You really need to understand what blended role or collaboratively means.”

Lucy referred to outside agency roles as hindering collaboration. “Interesting because there are so many people at the table – should the [outside] agency be telling or saying that or could they offer that this is an issue and how are we going to teach it and everybody adds.”

Finally, Lance offered, “Confusion....I hope it is people trying to do too much.”

Lack of accountability. Many participants identified some areas that accountability can hinder collaboration. Lori noted that, “People not knowing what they are supposed to be doing is a hindrance to collaboration.” Lisa noted that the level influences the effectiveness of collaboration, “It is challenging to this work at senior years’ level because it is more of academic (focus).”

Rachel believed, “When nothing happens – if we all sit on this meeting and then nothing changes – I think there needs to be something going on and the communication – you need to follow up after and see – is this changing? Is this what we discussed? Is this happening? Where is this going? And then it closes the doors that teachers and others don’t come to you and then nothing gets done. When people are not doing what they should be doing – yeah that really hinders it.”

Finally, Cathy commented, “When you collaborate – you want to move forward – often at the end of meetings – we go over what needs to be done.”

Lack of leadership. Leadership can hinder collaboration in some ways. Lucy identified leadership knowledge and understanding as an area of concern. “It is scary when administrations don’t really understand the scope of your job, and how to sort of constantly sort of justify how I spend my time when really I don’t have time to do that.”

New topics that refer to barriers to collaboration. When asked, “What hinders collaboration?” The participants agree that all the probes could be barriers to collaboration.

Additional comments regarding the interviewers' perceptions of new topics that are barriers to collaboration included: (a) multiple people, (b) people being territorial, (c) attitude/mindset, fear of change, and the lack of willingness to try something new, or ego, (d) physical space, (e) expectations and duties outside of working with students, (f) when nothing happens – teachers won't come back, (g) co-teaching and collaboration model may conflict, (h) stale teaching practices, (i) complex needs, (j) social/emotional needs need to be met of academic needs, (k) time, and (l) opinion rather than a result of collaboration and (m) confidence, (n) confidentiality, (o) changing role of counselor, and (p) counselor ratio. These topics may be ideas for future research in the area of effective collaboration in inclusive schools.

Multiple people. Lori, Linda, and Cathy identified multiple people can be hindrances in collaboration. Linda's comment was similar to Lori's. She said that, "Multiple people could be a hindrance; too many involved – too many equals forgetfulness". Lori said, "If you have multiple people doing things it can fall apart." Cathy added that "Too many people involved can pull kids and effect communication and make things confusing."

People being territorial. Linda felt that people who were territorial regarding their work could interfere with collaboration.

Linda's comment was, "That person is doing that and that's my territory and I could be doing that and I'm better at that or any of those kinds of attitudinal hindrance – that's where problems start."

Linda added a story regarding an outside agency and a request she made to them asking if she could visit and learn more about their services and the agency representative said that this was the first time that they had ever had a Resource Teacher come from school and talk to them about what they are doing. The representative said people are so threatened and they think that –

that this is their territory, that they shouldn't be involved with those – and I think, “Well, don't we want to be working together – like we can't do it all.” We need to be working collaboratively with other agencies and if they can be working where we can't – more power to them.”

Attitude/ mindset/resistance/fear of change/willingness/ego. Belinda, Cathy, Lana, Lori all referred to attitude or mindset as a potential hindrance to collaboration.

Belinda said, and the others agreed, “Mindset. If the people involved believe it isn't possible and aren't willing to work together, it won't work. Also, if the roles are too defined or someone feels the need to take over; which is just another way to say mindset.”

Belinda added, “Effective collaboration is facilitated by an open mind – flexible and adaptable – just the right attitude towards it. It is hard to nail down, but you just have to get along.”

Belinda and Beth, in their blended roles, both experienced some reaction to their unique roles in their division. This change caused a hindrance to collaboration.

Belinda referred to this as, “Fear of change, and I think in some cases of losing – I know there was a lot of fear when we decided we were going to do Guidance, but there was a big fear, concerns about how we were going to do Guidance, about how we were infringing and we did not have professional training; however, the staff that calls themselves Guidance Counsellors isn't professionally trained in Guidance either.”

Beth added, “So it's been interesting, because it's made it difficult for the other two girls having moved into this role and then they've had a lot more challenge about it then I did when I stepped into the role three years ago.”

Linda referred to the ego and that, “You just kind of put your ego aside....you always have to be open to learning and getting better and refining what you are doing....” She ended the

interview with a strong statement, “The single most important obstacle to collaboration, in my opinion, is ego.”

Physical space. Lucy felt that physical space or facility was at times a hindrance to collaboration. She commented a number of times on large meetings and the need for privacy. She said, “I just came from a meeting where the table was too crowded – I mean it happens – my job is not done in isolation – the implementation is absolutely done in isolation – the follow-up is done in isolation, but the stuff leading up to implementation is not done in isolation.”

Duties outside of working with students. Three of the participants commented on being the Administrative Designate in their respective school. Two of the three referred to that role as a potential hindrance for collaboration.

When referring to that role, Beth commented that it, “Sometimes, cause sometimes I am acting administration....we’re kind of seen not really like administrators, but not really like the teachers.”

Models conflict. Lucy spoke with energy about the conflict she experiences with the co-teaching model and collaborative model. Lucy said, “The model is evolving, but so is sort of the shift of what the role of Learning Support is in this school, which makes it really hard cause collaboration in the case manager approach and administration would like to see us in the classrooms – side by side with teachers – um modelling – which is really hard to do in high school – cause high school teachers have a thicker mindset. Lucy went on to say, “That’s been my struggle the last 12 months is this model that sort of conflicts. I actually had one administrator tell me that I should be done with all my case management stuff by the end of September. It was one of my proud moments – I didn’t say anything inappropriate.”

Stale teaching practices. Belinda and Lucy both felt that stale teaching practices hinder collaboration. Lucy offered, “We have teachers who have been teaching here for 50 years – that is where I see the least amount of collaboration – refusal to do any collaboration – they don’t want to be involved.”

Increased complex needs. Many participants noted the complex student needs as a hindrance for collaboration. As Linda stated, “Ever-increasing demands on schools to provide students with complex needs.”

Cindy added, “Counselling is not just an easy fix. There are times when I am working with a student and I think they feel or think I am a Counsellor – each student is a mosaic of issues.”

Beth noted, “As the needs have diversified we need to collaborate even more with other professionals because as teachers we can’t possibly be experts in all areas of mental health.

Lori pointed out that, “You can’t avoid that reality as many students may have more than one of the challenges.” (language, acculturation, war effected, mental health, learning needs, substance abuse, depression)

Belinda agreed emphatically, “The collaboration is now necessary, it’s not an option. Because of the diversity were seeing with our students’ needs, there are more people involved in collaboration.”

When discussing diverse student needs, Lisa pointed out that English as an Additional Language was not part of the support team.

Rachel concurred that needs have increased and with that, “I think teachers are more aware and that might make collaboration easier. I think kid’s awareness has helped with

collaboration. I think parents have helped with collaboration. It is not something that we hide in a closet or something like that”.

On the other hand, Lance commented, “We need to do a better job getting people comfortable and educated around helping a diverse group of kids. I think our biggest issue here is EAL.”

Lisa agreed, “So it is huge – a huge undertaking and we are at the beginning of it here – it is about changing attitudes, about commitment, about giving people the tools to support students.

Cathy referred to schools as, “The headquarters for coordination of services – advocates for getting services. I am not sure how we could work without collaboration.”

Priority of needs was identified when participants acknowledged the increase in complex students needs. They identified the difficulty in prioritizing needs. Although some participants noted that social emotional needs were a priority and need to be addressed before other needs such as academics. Some participants also recognized that social emotional needs were very complicated and not an easy fix. Lori said, “They want people when you are in the classroom or when you are supporting the student in maybe a social emotional way, but at that point of the student is really into academics – and excited about doing work – yes, you counsel them, but you can help them at that moment in academic – it is not like ignore that moment that they are thriving in – like you said ‘no, I am a Counsellor and I just want to talk to you about the other thing. Just kind of respond to kids needs in the moment – What’s the priority at that moment. It is about the child’s needs at that moment or in his life at that time.”

Lori also added, “Social, emotional support for the students may need to be first before tending to academic needs.”

Again, the topic of complex needs surfaced in the area of Counsellor and Resource Teacher roles. Three participants commented on how complex needs affect the roles of Counsellor or Resource Teacher and consequently, how they may collaborate effectively.

Lance recognized, “Most kids who are struggling academically it is because they are having a personal issue that prevents them from being successful. Inevitably, I end up in those discussions and while I would like to think that it is a positive thing because it helps me to build the relationship that is necessary to help students, it hinders me as well because it takes me away from the Learning Services position.”

Linda observed that, “Each child is a mosaic of issues – how do you tease out with borders what a Counsellor or a Resource Teacher needs to do? How well you collaborate to make this system work. If you don’t have collaboration – it really breaks down.” When asked if an increase in diversity, disability, mental health needs and co-occurring disorders has changed their view of inclusion or collaboration, all interviews (with the exception of one) agreed that the increase in students needs has driven the increased need for collaboration. One interviewee stated that given her experience in the classroom and work with collaboration, she does not see an increase – other than new Canadians; however, she indicated that English as an Additional Language teachers are not part of the support team. As needs are diversified, some participants expressed the need to collaborate even more with other professionals because Lori said “as teachers we can’t possibly be experts in all areas of mental health”.

Collaboration is decreasing for students where the need is not that great (level II Block funding), yet increasing overall for kids with trauma and mental health issues so there is more need to collaborate as more people understand certain disabilities and kids.

English as a second language students pose a challenge rather than seeing it as a disability. Inclusive schools need to view students holistically and work collaboratively. As Linda noted, “It takes a village to raise a child.” It takes a collaborative team to create a successful school experience for those students who require support.

Needs are increasing because of the change in the support model, Belinda noted the “Attached at the hip model is something that we are trying to get away from and because there is more need to collaborate as a teacher. Collaboration is now necessary, it’s not an option.”

Brenda noted that, “It seems to me that there are more students with diagnosed disabilities. Maybe we are just more aware of them, but the number of students even in this building since I started 5 years ago has over doubled – because when I started I wrote five Individual Education Plans and last year I wrote twenty-five, this year forty-two with 850 students in this school.

Lucy’s comment was, “More agencies to collaborate with.” And later added, “When you think about ‘pull out’ programming so the classroom teacher wasn’t involved as much – only parents and I talking about planning. That table is pretty crowded with who has a role in this student’s life. I spend much of my time planning and implementing those plans.” Lucy noted that, “There are more diverse supports and services available, for exceptional students, outside of the school and parent voice increasing.”

Lana noted, “I think there has always been a need for effective collaboration to champion students with disabilities. I suppose when you are working in a situation where it is mandated that all children of all needs to be in the classroom, it’s imperative for effective collaboration.”

Cindy added that there is an, “Increasing need to assist students, society is changing, family is changing, and support for student is changing. How they present at school is changing, lots of students present with special needs. Students change frequently.”

Cathy added that, “Schools are the headquarters for coordination of mental health services. It would be helpful to have more collaboration for direct access to therapists outside of school, to whom I would refer students with parental permission.”

Time. All the participants noted that time is related to hindering collaboration. Beth listed ‘time’ as number one hindrance to effective collaboration. Rachel was clear, “That’s the biggest thing – we need opportunity to meet.”

Lisa agreed that, “With all the expectations and duties outside of working with students.” Lori agreed, “Insufficient time.” Every participant mentioned time as an issue in effective collaboration.

Opinion. Linda commented that a hindrance to collaboration came from “team members acting on opinion rather than as a result of [a] collaborative decision for that student”.

Confidence. Some participants commented on teacher confidence as a barrier to collaboration. Cathy said, “Professional confidence is how people feel about the work they do (this can be barrier to collaboration) however, within my training I have taken a lot of courses as to student disabilities and the psychology behind it.” Lucy added that counselors don’t work with students with special needs as much as she thinks they should, “I don’t think they have the education or experience to do so. Cause I’ve seen them talk way over kid’s heads, knowing what we just finished talking about before the meeting or having seen the paperwork where the student is weak cognitively and they’re making plans or talking university or college and realistically that is not the path the student is going to take...” “ I think it is a lack of experience or lack of education, there is a piece missing...”

Confidentiality. Some participants commented on confidentiality as a barrier to collaboration, Lori said, “I just don’t think they want to erase counseling skills and values and

whatever, but they respect that-the moments when the counselor should go and really talk about, you know, those issues and confidentiality and those things that should not be collaborated on- but they want people when you are in the classroom and when you are supporting the student it maybe social emotional but at that point the student is really into academics and excited about doing work-yes you counsel them but you help them at that moment in academics-it is not like ignore the moment they are thriving in-like you say 'no, I am the counselor and I just want to talk to you about the other thing', to just kind of respond to kids in the moment-what's the priority at that moment sometimes." Cathy added, "When I go into meetings, I am aware that others know what is going on. Administration will be talking to kids, families are talking, otherwise I ask kids if I can ask other team members if I can ask for help. I have never had a student say 'no'."

Changing role. Many participants acknowledged the roles of Counsellor and Resource Teacher have been and continue to change and as a result effect collaboration. Rhonda noted that, " [the] role of counselor is changing, some counseling positions are gone. Traditional role of counselor one-on-one in a room addressing many social issues is gone." Rhonda added, "Resource teachers tend to be much more open to collaboration than counselors, counselors are holding on to old rules and responsibilities and reluctant to change what those rules and responsibilities look like." Linda commented on a changing role is driven by student needs and said, "Social, emotional and academic development are so closely related that it is impossible to separate the two and assign specific roles to service providers within a school." Beth in her blended role reflected, "Since we have started to combine our roles, we are more collaborative than ever. Lots of crossover with us-there is no stepping on toes-we have many part-time people-we are constantly collaborating."

Cindy noted that, “When I first came here, the Counsellor did not get involved with students with special needs, but that is changing. In the last five years, due to the number that have been coming in, Resource Teachers are dealing with the social, emotional needs of students with anxiety.” Lucy said, “It is uncomfortable for Counsellors at the senior years to talk about academics-to get past the emotional to see how it all works, there is a corner that they are in and that is their domain and that’s it. They are separate and guidance has always operated separate.” Cathy said, “I can’t think of a time when I was discouraged to get involved. We speak to each other and then proceed. I try really hard to tell myself that things we might get under the category of special needs doesn’t mean not attending to social emotional needs just like I would with any other student. A lot of kids I work with may not fit under category of special needs but definitely ‘special’. You can’t compartmentalize either counseling or resource-a lot of kids I work with may not fit under a category.”

Student:Counsellor ratio. Cindy commented on the student:counselor ratio and how it can be a barrier to collaboration. Cindy noted that, “The student:counselor ratio is not equal to the student:resource teacher ratio.”

In summary, participants confirmed most of Koskie’s and Freeze’s characteristics for effective collaboration in inclusive schools. The most frequently mentioned or passionately discussed topics of barriers to collaboration were lack of accountability. Within the new topics of barriers to collaboration that participants identified most frequently or passionately were increased complex needs, mindset, time, confidence and changing roles.

Perspectives on leadership and collaboration. In regard to leadership or how leaders can influence collaboration or provide the opportunity to learn how to collaborate, participants commented on the importance of opportunities in the area of all probes provided by the

researcher: (a) time management, (b) roles and relationships, (c) timetable structure, (d) common planning time, (e) minimizing the need to cover all the curriculum, (f) recognize the unique contributions of each team member (Brownlee & King, 2000), (g) flexibility and organization, (h) commitment, (i) extended thinking, (j) administrative support, (k) trust and sharing, (l) believe in common goal, (m) understanding roles (Halldorson & Bubnowicz, 2009), (n) collegial partners, (o) decision making process, (p) clearly structured service delivery model, (q) listen and gather information, (r) share expertise, (s) liason with community, and (t) model of professional development (Seller, 1993, Uhl & Perez –Selles, 1995).

Time management. Some participants indicated that time management was important to effective collaboration and leadership. Rachel noted if you don't have time nothing is going to happen and if you don't give the time-like even if a teacher stops me in the hall-that would be collaborative too and that is what I was scared of going into the washroom (earlier). You have to stop and make time." Lance agreed by saying, "Time management is very important, it needs to be given a lot of attention in that to truly do collaboration there needs to be time for the people involved."

Roles and responsibility. Some participants commented on the importance of roles and responsibility in effective collaboration and leadership. Rachel acknowledged that valuing people and their roles is really important, such as saying or behaving in a way that says, "you are the most valuable, the relationship you will get with the teachers and family will come if things are happening." Lance supported this when he said, "We need to take a look at them [relationships] being genuine and not forced-leadership needs to be careful of that."

Timetable structure. The participants indicated that timetable structure was important in effective collaboration and leadership. Beth noted that, "Administration needs to show support

for the idea (of collaboration) by building in times for planning.” Cindy added, “I think administration has done a great job, could there be improvement...yes, a challenge to put in the co teaching group but they are working on that-the co teaching piece is so important.”

Common planning time. Some participants noted the importance of common planning time in effective collaboration and leadership. Linda said, “When leaders adopt a ‘team approach mentality’ and make decisions which clearly promote collaborative efforts, for example building in common planning time, they model behavior which conveys their belief in collaboration.” Lori added that, “Common planning time needs to be a priority in planning.”

Minimize the need to cover all curriculum. Many participants noted the importance of minimizing the need to cover all curriculum in effective collaboration and leadership. Lance said, “I am a big believer in that [but] it is tricky, tricky juggling act especially at grade 12 and 11 and even 10. We need to be more flexible with that but then again they are dealing with provincial exams.” Rachel noted that, “I’ve spent most of my career in middle years and now I’ve moved to high school, and you have to because it is those credits and I guess it depends on who you are collaborating with...” Cathy said, “Curriculum-I have learned over the years we are looking at needs of child and less curriculum. That was freeing for me. I wonder if it is confidence. That no one was checking on me, I felt free to.”

Recognize the unique contributions of each team member. Some participants noted the importance of recognizing the unique contributions of each team member in effective collaboration and leadership. Lisa said, “They have done a great job of that, creating co-teaching teams and pairing them up together-everyone has strengths and what each person can contribute. Lance noted, “So the leader needs to delegate certain responses just to ensure the quality.”

Flexibility and organization. Some participants believed there is importance in flexibility and organization in effective collaboration and leadership. Rachel said, “You need to take the time when teachers talk to you”. Cindy added, “Flexibility, absolutely our leadership is flexible, (they have) time to meet or give support in a situation where you need help and they are organized and that is really beneficial.”

Commitment. Some participants agreed that commitment was important in effective collaboration and leadership. Rachel said, “That teacher showed that yesterday when she came back to us again, she is committed to the kids and there are many kids and I think that is the thing. If you had a case manager for certain things, like if it is a focus group for aboriginal kids or just one kid and you keep us committed to that. They are on our list, I need to touch base and almost do a check list of all the kids I am involved with and say-oh my gosh I haven’t talked to him and I need to do that.” Lance note, “Persuading people to do it is less effective, it comes back to leadership and making sure people buy in and understand why we are doing something and why their attention needs to be on something-leadership has to do what is necessary to potentially change attitudes-there has to be proven examples of success there has to be data, education and opportunities to practice.”

Extended thinking. Some participants felt that extended thinking was important in effective collaboration and leadership. Lisa said, “I think it is important that they (administration) are willing to look outside the box.” Lance added, “Extended thinking-I am a big proponent of that, I think the kids now, if we are staying with the status quo, rightly or wrongly what I term as ‘old fashioned teaching’ standing at the front of the room you know it is just not going to work for our kids now a days. I think that leadership has to promote the idea,

things that kids want to get in to. If you have to change your objectives and your outcomes-do it! Try It!”

Administration support. Three of the participants said that administration support was important to effective collaboration and leadership. Lucy said, “They are the money people, they hold the purse, they can get some subs to free up some teachers to attend these meetings to get involved.” Rhonda added, “One good person who knows how to ask people the right questions and engage people is important.” Linda said, “I think leadership plays a crucial role in the success or failure of collaborative efforts in an inclusive school.”

Trust and sharing. Some of the participants said that trust and sharing was important to effective collaboration and leadership. Linda said, “When leaders adopt a team approach mentally, they model behavior which conveys the beliefs in collaboration which promote trust, respect and collegiately.” Lance added, “Important with leadership because if you are being asked to do something that may be uncomfortable and you do fall-right or wrong-learn from it! Like co teaching, learn from it-trust that they have some time to explore some things.”

Believe in common goal. Some of the participants said that belief in a common goal is important to effective collaboration and leadership. Lori said, “Leadership is a factor as leaders set a tone.” Linda added, “Leadership plays a crucial role in the success or failure of collaborative efforts in an inclusive school. I think shared beliefs needs to be added to this list.”

Understanding roles. Two participants said that understanding roles is important to effective collaboration and leadership. Rhonda said, “One person who knows how to collaborate and know what that looks like and knows how to ask people the right questions and engage people is important.” Lucy added, “It’s scary when you get administration who don’t really understand the scope of your job.”

Collegial partners. None of the participants commented on this probe.

Decision making process. Some of the participants said that a decision making process was important to effective collaboration and leadership. Cathy said, “Decision making depends on the decision that needs to be made, decisions that are difficult, we need to get together and work on that. I don’t feel like I need to do that in isolation.” Lana said, “We are an interesting group, it needs to be collaborative but at the end of process, a decision has to be made. It is from the leader of the group or of the school, whatever the case may be, you can’t dance around it for a long time. Lucy added, “Part of the leadership role is sharing with my colleagues my philosophies of how we support students and encouraging processes that sort of facilitate that.”

Clearly structured service delivery model. Many of the participants stated that a clearly structured service delivery model was important to leadership and collaboration. Lucy said, “That’s been my struggle for the past 12 months, in this model that sort of conflicts, although I support it and I am being encouraged to collaborate, also now being encouraged to be in classrooms which is a different model of support. I actually had one administrator tell me that I should be done with all my case management stuff by the end of September. It was one of my proud moments, I did not say anything inappropriate.” Rachel added, “That is one thing we don’t have and I know it would help.” Lance added, “In terms of leadership, it is very important because in this school division it is not necessarily held in the highest regard, they want autonomy and when it come to what has happened in a similar situation in the past or what to do there is not a lot of process-there is a lot of commonly held practice, so that can be confusing, especially compared to (my last division) where there is a guideline and a 2nd guideline for it-that is interesting!” Cindy said, “ There is no current service delivery model”. Cathy said, “Some

literature on how things work from division but not so much, mostly (operate) on the needs of the child”.

Listen and gather information. None of the participants commented on listening and gathering information and the importance it holds in effective collaboration and leadership.

Share expertise. None of the participants commented on sharing expertise and the importance it holds in effective collaboration and leadership.

Liaison with community. One of the participants said that liaising with the community is important to effective collaboration and leadership. Cathy said, “Yesterday’s situation with mental health and complex needs (our administration) went far beyond (school), leadership has freedom to make community connections-school is front and centre in child’s life.”

Model professional development. Two of the participants said that modeling professional development is important to effective collaboration and leadership. Beth said, “Leadership needs to show support for the idea by building in planning and allowing for education during professional development days so everyone in the school understands collaboration and what it will look like in the school and follow up with all staff to see how collaboration is working.” Rachel added, “I’d like to see professional development within Guidance Counsellors, Resource Teachers and administrations.”

New topics on leadership and collaboration. Many of the participants offered a number of new topics for effective collaboration and leadership. These new topics included: i) showing encouragement, support and setting a tone and setting collaboration as a priority, ii) buy in or mindset iii) creating a climate for risk taking, iv) understanding personalities, v) having an awareness of past events, vi) understanding that mutual goals are more important than

leadership. These topics may be ideas for future research in the area of effective collaboration and leadership.

Showing encouragement, support and setting a tone and setting collaboration as a priority. Beth, Rhonda and Lucy agreed that leaders offer effective collaboration in inclusive schools by showing support and encouragement and setting a tone and setting it as a priority. Beth said, “Yes, without encouragement from leaders in the school it won’t work, collaboration can definitely be taught administration is a factor in collaboration as they encourage, show support, build in time, plan professional development and follow up.” Rhonda said, “I think it [collaboration] is something that is fostered by a really good leaders and good administrator who sees and values that.” Lucy said, “Leaders who don’t really understand the scope of you job” and “it is my experience-for me if the leadership supports the model which is the collaborative model-they facilitate that.” Lori added, “Leadership is a factor as leaders set the tone-priority for planning, where to spend money for professional development etc.”

Buy in or mindset. Nine of the participants felt strongly about buy in, mindset or attitude and how they contribute to effective collaboration and leadership. Beth, Lori, Belinda, Lisa, Lucy, Lance, Lana, Cathy and Cindy all commented on the importance of buy in mindset or attitude.

Beth said, ‘Willingness, willing to give up control, willingness to try something new ‘seeing collaboration have positive results.’” Lori said, “People mindset facilitates collaboration; collaboration can be taught if people buy in.” Lori added, “pPut your ego aside, ‘that person is doing that and that is my territory’ -any of those kid of attitudinal hindrances-that is where the problem starts.” As well as, “oOne can learn the elements of successful collaboration, but the necessary mindset may be prerequisite.” Belinda agreed when she said, “Mindset, if people

involved believe it isn't possible and aren't willing to work together-it won't work, if roles are too defined or someone feels the need to take over which is mindset or frame of mind." Lisa added, "Willing to accept the role of team player." Lucy supported this when she said, "If you don't come from that place philosophically than you may not be as intuitive." Lance agreed, "It is about changing attitude, about commitment and giving people the tools to support students-it comes back to leadership." Lana said, "Changing mindset of teachers who are not on the same page-not 'universally collected', open mindedness who have a willingness to take risks. Leadership is very important without it things become stale mate." Cathy added, "Co-teaching is an example of lack of engagement, openness and attitude that hinders collaboration." Cindy said, "Desire to want to do it-mindset-awareness to assess and adjust and be receptive to change and taking ownership is entwined somehow."

Creating a climate for risk taking. A participant said that risk taking was important to effective collaboration and leadership. Rachel said, "I think it is something you either put yourself out there, you are taking risks when you suggest something, you need to learn from each other."

Understanding personalities. A participant said that collaboration could not be taught to Some and that leadership understanding personality types may be helpful to effective collaboration. Lana said, "Some are naturally collaborative, they like to talk and work things out, great for extroverts, and introverts can be taught but hard."

Having an awareness of past events. A participant said that collaboration can be effected by the history of the school. Cindy said, "It is important for leadership to understand the events that have caused mistrust."

Understanding that mutual goals are more important than leadership. When asked, a participant said that mutual goals may be more important than leadership. Rachel said, “We all need to agree on that-like you know that is why we are meeting, we need to connect this kid, this kid and how can we do that? But if somebody comes in and they are only concerned about their one class and there isn’t a mutual goal that we are all working on then I feel there needs to be something mutual.”

The participants confirmed Brownlee and King, Halldorson and Bubnowicz, and Seller and Uhl’s work related to leadership and collaboration. The most frequently mentioned or passionately discussed topics were a clearly structured service delivery model and commitment to collaboration. Within the new topics that the participants identified, the most frequently mentioned or passionately discussed topics were buy in or mindset, setting a tone and mutual goals were more important than leadership.

Now the literature review and findings have been presented, they will be used to derive answers to the original research question in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The necessity of providing good and not special teachers.

-Baroness Warnock, 1999

This chapter is a brief summary and discussion of the findings. In addition, there are some important implications for theory and practice and, finally, a review of how this study relates to existing research as well as recommendations for educators and researchers.

This study was an examination of the perceptions of Resource Teachers and Counselors of the barriers and facilitators of collaboration in inclusive schools.

In the past decade, *Appropriate Education Programming* for students with disabilities has been mandated in Manitoba (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2006). Consequently, there are now both legal and ethical reasons why educators must endeavor to provide inclusive school settings for all students, including students with special needs. Many researchers strongly suggest that collaboration is a key to creating and maintaining successful inclusive schools. However, professional development in collaboration skills and collaborative service delivery models has been offered to education professionals, specifically resource teachers and counselors, with mixed results. This study confirms the mixed results. The participants' perceptions support the notion that although collaboration is recommended, it is difficult to achieve. As Cook and Friend, 2010 point out, 'the term collaboration is used in many ways, often contributing to confusion, rather than clarity, about ideas, programs and services.

Given the inclusion mandate of the province and the expectation that school personnel, specifically counselors and resource teachers, will work collaboratively to meet the needs of

students, it is important to examine their understanding of collaboration. This research was guided by the following question: What are the perceptions of school-based student support services team teachers, specifically counselors and resource teachers, regarding collaboration within inclusive schools?

Collaboration, although recommended by provincial policy makers in documents related to inclusion, is neither clearly defined nor thoroughly explained in any document. This lack of attention to the concept of collaboration and subsequent collaborative skills, along with what seems to be an expectation that all professionals know how to collaborate without definition, without substantial pre-service preparation, and without significant in-service professional development, was the basis for this study.

In schools today, the term collaboration is used in many ways, often contributing to confusion, rather than clarity, about ideas, programs, and services (Cook & Friend, 2010). This study focused on the participants perceptions of collaboration, specifically in the areas of their: (a) understanding of collaboration in an inclusive school, (b) perceptions of what facilitates collaboration in inclusive schools, (c) perceptions of what barriers exist to collaboration in inclusive schools and finally (d) perceptions of leadership and collaboration in inclusive schools.

Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth (2004) produced *Supporting Inclusive Schools*, a document intended to promote school planning and reporting and provide a framework for developing and implementing annual school plans and reports. Within the document, the term collaboration is used numerous times and the writers suggest that collaborative planning can provide educational benefits when done properly. The benefits identified include: (a) consensus among partners about purpose and direction, (b) improved communications among staff, (c) heightened staff and student morale, (d) effective relationships

among school staff and parents and increased parental and community involvement, (e) greater teaching effectiveness, (f) greater overall acceptance of change, (g) effective approaches to discipline issues, (h) better coordination of programming and services between grades and across disciplines, (i) effective relationships with external agencies and organizations (e.g. social services, local businesses, seniors' groups, etc.), (j) greater awareness of a school community's strengths and weaknesses, and (h) effective and efficient use of resources, including time (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2004). Done properly, collaboration contributes to a shared clarity of thought, direction, and purpose; and it helps planners to learn from the past. This, in turn, enhances the identification and future accomplishment of new plans. It was important in this study to determine the participants understanding of collaboration, their value of collaboration and the tension that might exist between the desired state of collaboration and the reality of collaboration in their inclusive schools. The process for determining this was to ask: (a) what is their understanding of collaboration in an inclusive school? (b) what is their perception of what facilitates collaboration in inclusive schools? (c) what is their perception of what barriers exist to collaboration in inclusive schools? And finally, (d) what is their perception of leadership and collaboration in inclusive schools?

Synopsis of the results. Understanding the barriers and facilitators of collaboration in inclusive schools was a broad topic for the 12 participants in this study. There were many topics that existing research provided to spur rich discussion. As well, the participants added their own new topics to the discussions. Although all participants had an understanding of collaboration as 'team work' or 'working as a team', many more topics were offered as influences on collaborative work. In the interviews, the participants confirmed the research probes that were presented to them regarding their understanding of collaboration, what facilitates collaboration,

what are barriers to collaboration and leadership and collaboration. From the existing research probes, the participants most frequently discussed the following topics: (a) student need, (b) service delivery model, (c) accountability or lack of it, (d) leadership or lack of it, and (e) an important result on the question of training in a collaborative model.

Student need. The participants confirmed the following research that was presented in Chapter 2 Literature Review. Given the diverse and complex needs of students with disabilities and students with other special needs, the need for effective collaboration on behalf of students with disabilities has never been greater (Cook & Friend, 2010). In light of the diversity and complexity of today's learners and their ever-changing life contexts, collaboration with families, across disciplines, and among agencies is not optional (Villa, Thousand, Nevin, & Malgeri, 1996). Collaboration and consultation are interwoven in the day-to-day lives of educators in inclusive schools (Freeze, 1996). The day- to-day collaborative guidance of individual interventions most often is mediated almost fully by a school-based team. The resource teacher and counselor often are the only school based educators with the unique qualifications needed to lead the student services team in the problem solving, creative planning, interventions provision, and the long term follow-up across grade levels necessary to meet students' needs effectively (Freeze, 1996). The research was confirmed by the participants as they commented on the challenge of meeting the complex needs as the school based educators. Linda commented, "That (collaboration) is increasing because we have more students with disabilities and more challenges, in our school, in particular more English as an Additional Language students, so that poses a challenge."

Rachel remarked that the increase resulted from, “More students with a diagnosed disability – I don’t know if we are just more aware of them, but the number of students even in this building since I started 5 years ago has over doubled – you know in the two years....”

Rachel and Lucy related the increased need for collaboration to more work being done with outside agencies. Rachel stated, “...with that I find there is more need to collaborate with outside agencies, the Doctors you know”. Lucy stated, “[that there were]...more diverse supports and services available for exceptional students outside the school community”.

Finally, Lori added, “The increase in student need has caused an increase in the need for collaboration and as a result there is a need to ‘prioritize our needs’...like we had a team meeting just to prioritize our needs and we came out everybody had a priority of needs like we had social emotional, academic, language and the social emotional was the highest. We had a huge number of kids like that – so there is no way we can say that is all for you – you have to do it. We had to say the priority here is to work on the social emotional so we all shared it.”

Rachel commented that, “The need for collaboration with Counselors and Resource Teachers is greater due to more kids, because we are looking at the kids more as a whole, you know where guidance and resource if there are social emotional problems, there may be academic concerns that are causing them or these social emotional (problems) could be effecting the academic concern too.”

Lance shared that English as an Additional Language (EAL) has influenced the need for collaboration within student services. “For us, our biggest problem right now is inclusion of students from other countries, outside of Canada. It is just increasing exponentially each year.....we went from two Learning Support Teachers to four last year with the sole purpose of working with teachers to change practice.”

Service delivery model. Many participants confirmed the following research that was presented in Chapter 2 Literature Review. Although collaboration has been recommended as a style to achieve successful inclusive schools, many schools do not have a particular service delivery model. Koskie and Freeze (2000) offered a possible solution involving new values, assumptions, models and practices in an effort to promote true collaboration among professionals who work with and for students with complex disabilities. The Transdisciplinary Team Approach supports team members working together and sharing their knowledge with other team members (Linder, 1993). The model is grounded in general systems theory (Koskie & Freeze, 2000) and it promotes a conscious melding of disciplinary theory, language, and professional development, and provides consumer coordinated work, as well as assuming a greater interdependence of team members. Participants felt strongly that models that once had been utilized in schools were now changing. That change according to participants, was attributed to increased needs.

Belinda and Lucy noted that the increased need for collaboration related to the change in the support model that is being used in schools. Belinda stated, “Need is increasing because of the change of the support model – the attached at the hip model is something that we are trying to get away from and because of that there is more need to collaborate as a teacher. Attached to the para or EA – when that happens it is almost as if the children is removed from the teachers responsibility. The teacher is taking a more and more active role.”

Linda said, “When I think about the meetings that I sort of had to be part of, or the funding – there was more pull out programming so the classroom teacher wasn’t involved as much – so you didn’t have to worry about him. That table is now pretty crowded with who has a role in this student’s life.”

A number of participants reflected on the increased need for Counselors and Resource Teachers to collaborate due to changes in support services teachers' roles and the structure of service delivery. For example, Belinda, in her blended role as Learning Support Teacher and Guidance Counselor shared, "In our case, we are one and the same and since we started to combine our role(s) we are more collaborative than ever..." Beth comments agreed with Belinda as she noted, "All I can say is that when there was a distinct Guidance Counselor and distinct Learning Support People, they didn't collaborate on stuff and they didn't meet about kids and talk about them."

Belinda also added that full-time equivalence had an effect on collaboration. "Lots of crossover with us – there is no stepping on toes – and because she is part-time and I am part-time and our Vice-Principal does some resource, so there is lots of cross over there....so that structure alone of that many part-time people – forces collaboration."

Lisa noted in her new role as Learning Support Teacher she was experiencing increased collaboration with resource. "Now I feel that there is more need or greater experience for collaboration – I felt that but maybe that is being in the classroom where I didn't have that experience or communication or collaboration with resource."

Lucy related the increased need for collaboration to a change in delivery of services. "Greater – like I said before, I spent less time in meeting earlier in my career with all the stakeholders – than I do now – I'd say at least....today was 45% was planning or collaboration with teachers or parents in a week it almost feel like you could say almost 60% of the week is collaborating. I do almost zero direct service with students – except assessment – and even then it is shifting for teachers to do the assessment."

The participants raised the issue of the service delivery model under the themes of ‘Barriers to Collaboration’ and ‘Leadership and Collaboration’. I will discuss the service delivery model under those headings later in this chapter.

Accountability. Many participants confirmed the research presented in Chapter 2 ‘Literature Review’ and stressed the importance of accountability as a facilitator of collaboration. Rachel spoke strongly about accountability, she said, “What hinders collaboration is when nothing happens - if we all sit in this meeting and then nothing changes – I think there needs to be something going on and the communication you need to follow up after and see is this changing. Is this what we discussed? Is this happening? Where are we going? So that’s what I think hinders it.”

Linda clarified, “As long as people say o.k. – I’m going to take this on and as long as you can count on those people to get that piece of the job done, then you are going to have effective collaboration in the end.”

Belinda did not see accountability as an issue, “We use graphic organizers to know who is doing what – it is dated – we bring them to support team meeting – we also use Faye Brownlee’s (work).”

Lana concurred that accountability is, “Vital – essential to collaborative process – you can’t make decisions without follow through and someone to check in with. Make decisions without collaboration and (it) can come back to bite me – taking ownership is intertwined somehow.”

Leadership. Researchers Smith and Leonard (2005) as well as Crockett (2002) point to school leadership as the key to effective collaboration. “Collaboration as a cornerstone of effective school inclusion is an idea that has high theoretical currency among many scholars in

the areas of special education and educational leadership” (Smith & Leonard, 2005, p. 269).

Smith and Leonard’s study revealed the critical and challenging role of the principal in establishing collaborative cultures for successful school inclusion. Participants identified leadership as important to facilitating collaboration in inclusive schools. Leadership facilitated effective collaboration, according to Rachel, “I think it is administration, if they support and if they feel it is important that we do collaborate and give you time to – it helps. What I also think too is you need somebody to take charge – someone to be the case leader – consult with everybody and pull everybody together. You have a head person to start the ball rolling.”

Lori believed, “you need those people to monitor, carry on, and review so leadership is huge – co-coordinator or case manager on the school team – so whatever is going on in this case comes back to the case manager.”

Cathy commented on, “Former administrator has such a way – never telling people how or what to do, but provided much guidance – safe to make mistakes – safe to say no.”

Belinda noted that, “We take turns – but there is a member of our team that is a natural leader, but with that she is also very good at letting us lead.”

Lucy has observed that (as a leader), “Part of the leadership role is sharing with my colleagues, my philosophies of how we support student and encourage processes that sort of facilitate that. So especially with a couple of brand new people in the department they want to problem solve. I will say indirectly you are coming to the wrong person – we need to be talking to the teacher, to the parent, we need to be talking to the student and if you need to be getting them all together. It is easier and faster to give the right answer, but it is not encouraging the new people on staff to go back and talk to everybody involved and if you need to bring them

together because their ideas are so diverse – then bring them together. Very rarely is something happening is isolation.”

And finally Lucy commented, “We have new leadership here so in my experience – for me if the leadership supports the mode which is the collaborative model – they facilitate that – they look to free up – they are the money people – they get subs.”

Researchers Smith and Leonard (2005) as well as Crockett (2002) point to school leadership as the key to effective collaboration. “Collaboration as a cornerstone of effective school inclusion is an idea that has high theoretical currency among many scholars in the areas of special education and educational leadership” (Smith & Leonard, 2005, p. 269).

Training. When the participants responded to the question of what training they had related to collaboration, 9 of the 12 participants had little or no training related to this topic. This included training in pre-service teaching programs or degrees or in professional development. One of the participants who did have some training had taken the training in another career opportunity not in education while another participant who had some training, had taken the training in her counseling program. One of the participants, Linda, referred to a divisional presentation that she had attended, focused on ‘Strategies for Support Teams: Creative use of Energy and Resources based on the work of Brownlee and King and Halldorson. Research in Chapter 2 offered a training model by Koskie and Freeze, 2000 called The Transdisciplinary Team Approach. None of the participants referred to this model.

New topics raised by participants. While confirming the existing research related to collaboration in inclusive schools, many of the participants identified new topics regarding barriers to and facilitators of collaboration. The new topics developed as themes in all the areas discussed with participants, the areas included their understanding of collaboration, barriers to

collaboration, facilitators of collaboration, and leadership and collaboration. The strongest topic raised was a collection of words that came to have similar meanings as I spoke with participants. The topic of mindset, attitude, open mindedness, ego or willingness surfaced in many discussions. Other topics included increased complex needs, time, changing roles, and mutual goals greater than leadership.

Mindset. Many participants raised open mindedness or adaptability as a new topic of facilitating collaboration in inclusive schools. The participants referred to this topic as mindset, attitude, open mindedness, adaptability, willingness and resistance. Belinda felt and three others agreed that effective collaboration occurs when individuals put ego aside, when individuals are open-minded and have a willingness to do so.

Belinda referred to her current team when she said, “Thankfully, we are all sort of even tempered and we all go into each other’s classroom – there is no feeling that we are interfering.” She added, “Hard to nail down, but you just have to get along and not worry about whether or not you’re right.”

Beth concurred by saying, “I think a willingness to do....you’ve got to be willing to give up some of the control....”

And Lance who offered, “I think a willingness to collaborate and be in that situation not feeling threatened and not feeling like your giving up power, and just feeling what you come up with is going to be better because everyone’s heads (have) been put together.”

Linda felt strongly, “I really think that I do have trust in other people and I value their input in every respect – I think that you really believe those things and open to learning – can really go a long way and just kind of putting your ego aside. The single most important obstacle to collaboration, in my opinion, is ego.” It means that despite how much education and

experience we have acquired, there is always more to learn, and the, “Learning may arise from the most unlikely sources and circumstances.”

Linda added, “One can learn the elements of successful collaboration, but the necessary mindset (including interpersonal skills) maybe prerequisite.” Belinda agreed that collaboration could be taught, “If a person is willing to learn.”

Lisa offered, “Can be taught if somebody is willing to accept that role of team player.”

Rachel believed, “I think it can be taught in certain ways, but what works for me and my communication skills doesn’t always work for somebody else.”

Lucy offered core values as the basis for learning collaboration skills and finally, Lance focused on, “It is about changing attitudes and commitment.”

One participant spoke strongly to adaptability in saying, “We have to go in prepared to do one thing one day, and it is not even close to what you are doing (the next). So you just go ‘OK’ and be willing to try something for longer than a couple of days.”

This topic was raised under barriers to collaboration as well as leadership and collaboration. Other terms used to describe open mindedness included willingness, adaptability, mindset and attitude. This term was not discussed in Chapter 2 ‘Literature Review’. Research that does reflect this term and concept might include Kasa-Hendrickson’s work ‘there’s no way this kid’s retarded: teachers’ optimistic constructions of students’ ability.’ I obtained this article in a phone conversation with Ms. Mary Anne Updike in March, 2012 as we discussed teachers’ mindset or attitude in working with students with special needs. Although the article discusses non-verbal students and the need for ‘educators to ‘adopt[ing] the concept of “presuming competence”’ (Kasa-Hendrickson, 2011) and not specifically collaboration, it lends itself to the

concept of how we all may benefit from positive presuppositions and a strength-based approach to collaboration in inclusive schools. It raises the question, is collaboration about one's mindset?

The participants once again said mindset, willingness or open mindedness was a factor in collaboration. In this case they identified it as a barrier to collaboration. Belinda, Cathy, Lana, Lori all referred to attitude or mindset as a potential hindrance to collaboration.

Belinda said and the others agreed, "Mindset. If the people involved believe it isn't possible and aren't willing to work together, it won't work. Also, if the roles are too defined or someone feels the need to take over; which is just another way to say mindset."

Belinda added, "Effective collaboration is facilitated by an open mind – flexible and adaptable – just the right attitude towards it. It is hard to nail down, but you just have to get along."

Belinda and Beth, in their blended roles both experienced some reaction to their unique roles in their division. This change caused a hindrance to collaboration.

Belinda referred to this as, "Fear of change, and I think in some cases of losing – I know there was a lot of fear when we decided we were going to do Guidance, but there was a big fear, concerns about how we were going to do Guidance, about how we were infringing and we did not have professional training; however, the staff that calls themselves Guidance Counselors isn't professionally trained in Guidance either."

Beth added, "So it's been interesting, because it's made it difficult for the other two girls having moved into this role and then they've had a lot more challenge about it then I did when I stepped into the role three years ago."

Linda referred to the ego and that, "You just kind of put your ego aside....you always have to be open to learning and getting better and refining what you are doing...." She ended the

interview with a strong statement, “The single most important obstacle to collaboration, in my opinion, is ego.”

Many participants discussed buy in or mindset often and used words such as willingness, attitude and putting ego aside to describe mindset or buy in when discussing leadership and collaboration. Participants felt strongly about buy in, mindset or attitude and how they contribute to effective collaboration and leadership. Beth, Lori, Belinda, Lisa, Lucy, Lance, Lana, Cathy and Cindy all commented on the importance of buy in mindset or attitude. Beth said, ‘willingness, willing to give up control, willingness to try something new ‘seeing collaboration has positive results.’” Lori said, “People mindset facilitates collaboration; collaboration can be taught if people buy in.” Lori added, “Put your ego aside, ‘that person is doing that and that is my territory’ -any of those kind of attitudinal hindrances-that is where the problem starts.” As well as, “one can learn the elements of successful collaboration, but the necessary mindset may be prerequisite.” Belinda agreed when she said, “Mindset, if people involved believe it isn’t possible and aren’t willing to work together-it won’t work, if roles are too defined or someone feels the need to take over which is mindset or frame of mind.” Lisa added, “Willing to accept the role of team player.” Lucy supported this when she said, “If you don’t come from that place philosophically than you may not be as intuitive.” Lance agreed, “It is about changing attitude, about commitment and giving people the tools to support students-it comes back to leadership.” Lana said, “Changing mindset of teachers who are not on the same page-not ‘universally collected’, open mindedness who have a willingness to take risks. Leadership is very important without it things become stale mate.” Cathy added, “Co-teaching is an example of lack of engagement, openness and attitude that hinders collaboration.” Cindy

said, “Desire to want to do it-mindset-awareness to assess and adjust and be receptive to change and taking ownership is entwined somehow.”

Seeing children holistically. Four Participants raised the topic of seeing the children holistically when discussing what facilitates collaboration in inclusive schools. Linda and Lori both referred to how student services teachers view student needs. Linda said, “We try to look at kids holistically. It is really hard to separate Guidance and Learning Support – they just go hand and hand – it is hard to find a child who is experiencing a hard time academically and are not experiencing a hard time behaviorally.”

Lori concurred and stated, “When you are supporting the student it maybe social, emotional, but at that point if the student is really into academics – and excited about doing work – yes, you counsel them, but you can help them at that moment in academics – it is not like ignore that moment that they are thriving in – like say ‘no I am a Counselor and I just want to talk to you about the other thing’. To just kind of respond to the kids needs in the moment, what’s the priority at that moment?” Lori adds, “I think it is looking at a student holistically – it gives that perspective that we are not looking at just the little parts of the kid.”

Beth commented, “I think the kids need are so – their diverse, the amount of needs we have – even things like having kids who come in from other countries....family situations, you know cultural things, we can’t possibly know everything about all that.” Lance commented, “Kids renew people’s desire for people to get better at what they do. I hope that is what drives people.”

The issue of seeing the children holistically was touched on in Chapter 2 ‘Literature Review. Researchers encourage collaboration when working with complex situations. ‘Ideally, these professionals work collaboratively to meet the challenge of complex student needs.

Unfortunately, a collaborative ethic is not a defining characteristic of many schools, but rather a culture of isolation prevails', (Villa et al., 1996). One outcome of professional isolation may be student segregation. As Erford (2007) notes:

“For too long, students with special needs have been identified and served through special programs without appropriate attention given to their developmental academic, career, and personal-social needs” (p. 318).

When asked where students with special needs spend their time, interviewees indicated that students with special needs are in classroom with their peers. Lori said, “Depending on their level of disability, strengths, interests, and needs”. However, Rachel added, “It is noted that the time with peers does not always include interactions”. In addition, Lana added, “Student with special needs have periods of the day when they are having special needs met in physiotherapy, occupational therapy, hygiene, work experience, etc”. However, lunch time may vary from school to school, as one interviewee notes that students with special needs choose to find each other – they created their space – they choose to meet with each other and me (the interviewee) – we have board games or cards – they could have gone anywhere in the whole building and this is what they choose to find, their own peers. Lance noted that, “Schools are the first place to offer opportunity for everybody to do the same thing – work places are starting to follow”. He would add that we need to do a better job with our EAL students so that staff can support all students. We need to do a better job of getting more people comfortable and educated around helping diverse groups of kids. Lucy noted that, “Involving students with disabilities is challenging for both students with and without disabilities. Inclusion depends on the definition of peers – what are the needs and who are the peers?”

Changing roles. Six participants said that changing roles was a barrier to collaboration. The participants acknowledged the roles of Counselor and Resource Teacher have been and continue to change and as a result effect collaboration. Rhonda noted that, “Role of counselor is changing, some counseling positions are gone. Traditional role of counselor one-on-one in a room addressing many social issues is gone.” Rhonda added, “Resource teachers tend to be much more open to collaboration than counselors, counselors are holding on to old rules and responsibilities and reluctant to change what those rules and responsibilities look like.” Linda commented on a changing role is driven by student needs and said, “Social, emotional and academic development are so closely related that it is impossible to separate the two and assign specific roles to service providers within a school.” Beth in her blended role reflected, “Since we have started to combine our roles, we are more collaborative than ever. Lots of crossover with us-there is no stepping on toes-we have many part-time people-we are constantly collaborating.”

Cindy noted that, “When I first came here, the Counselor did not get involved with students with special needs, but that is changing. In the last five years, due to the number that have been coming in, Resource Teachers are dealing with the social, emotional needs of students with anxiety.” Lucy said, “It is uncomfortable for Counselors at the senior years to talk about academics-to get past the emotional to see how it all works, there is a corner that they are in and that is their domain and that’s it. They are separate and guidance has always operated separate.” Cathy said, “I can’t think of a time when I was discouraged to get involved. We speak to each other and then proceed. I try really hard to tell myself that things we might get under the category of special needs doesn’t mean not attending to social emotional needs just like I would with any other student. A lot of kids I work with may not fit under category of special needs but

definitely ‘special’. You can’t compartmentalize either counseling or resource-a lot of kids I work with may not fit under a category.”

One interpretation of this study is that we need to spend more time on mindset, attitude, and willingness to collaborate.

Limitations of this study. The limitations of this study include:

1. This study offered the perceptions of 12 educators and cannot possibly represent the collective voice of all teachers in student services.
2. This study had an over representation of female participants responded to the recruitment package. 11 of the 12 participants were female. Gender perspective may be a consideration in this study.
3. This study had an over representation of resource teachers and learning support teachers. 8 of the 12 participants were resource teachers or learning support teachers. Counselors did not respond as willingly to the recruitment package. An over representation on the perception of one title in support services may be a consideration in this study.
4. This study targeted resource teachers and counselors in the recruitment package. Respondents ranged from resource teachers, to learning support teacher, blended role teachers and counselors. Individual schools and school divisions have given titles such as ‘learning support teachers’ and ‘blended role’ teacher to specialized roles. Confusion regarding roles may be a consideration in this study.

Recommendations for educators. The recommendation from this study include:

Based on the findings in this study I make the following recommendations:

1. Given that 9 of the 12 participants had no training related to collaboration, the first recommendation is the introduction of pre-service and professional development training for teachers, as well as graduate studies, that offer collaborative skills and models. Provincial mandates require all staff to have the training, confidence, and willingness to work together to meet the needs of all students.

This training needs to be cross disciplinary rather than being treated separately in special education, counseling, and classroom teaching courses and workshops. Collaboration is essential because invention requires reflective problem solving through discourse in a social constructivist process in which the voice and collaboration of each team member contributes to the construction of new knowledge (meaning) within the organization (Gray, 1989). It is important to provide the time, structure, and opportunity for educators to build confidence and understanding regarding collaboration.

2. Given that many participants noted the absence of a model of support, a second recommendation is that a Differentiated Model of Student Services and Differentiated Model of Leadership needs to be considered as we continue to promote the Differentiated Model of Instruction in the classroom. This recommendation is anchored in the philosophy of differentiated instruction, ‘every teacher must work toward continuous improvement to develop and maintain a rich repertoire of strategies, techniques, and approaches and to know when, with whom, and how to employ a particular strategy, technique, or approach (Manitoba Education, 2012). A Differentiated Model of Student Services would have the expectation that, every students services teacher must work toward continuous improvement to develop and maintain a rich repertoire of strategies, techniques, and approaches and to know when, with whom, and how to employ a

particular strategy, technique, or approach. This shift may require some training in the ‘Social Model of Disability’ (Lloyd, 2007), or promoting ‘that disability is part of the common experience of humanity’ (Brown, 1992).

3. Given that the participants said that leadership was an important influence in collaboration in inclusive schools, it is recommended that Educational leaders be given a solid understanding of collaboration and service delivery models. This solid understanding will support and redefine how adults work together. Researchers Smith and Leonard (2005) as well as Crockett (2002) point to school leadership as the key to effective collaboration. “Collaboration as a cornerstone of effective school inclusion is an idea that has high theoretical currency among many scholars in the areas of special education and educational leadership” (Smith & Leonard, 2005, p. 269).

Recommendations for future research.

1. Further research should involve examining the relationship between Resource Teachers and Counselors. Skrtic describes professionals such as counselors and (special education) resource teachers as part of the professional bureaucracy that does client-centered work that is too uncertain to be rationalized and formalized. As such, it requires a division of labor based on specialization and, given the division of labor, the workers (i.e., counselors and resource teachers) are loosely coupled (Bidwell, 1965; Weick, 1976). The Appropriate Education Mandate has shifted the roles for student services teachers and an examination of the relationship could lead to richer services for students.
2. Further research should examine approaches or models within student services that are currently utilized. Sharing what is working within inclusive schools is important to

constructing knowledge and building confidence along with a mindset that collaboration is necessary and possible.

3. Further research that targets counselors and gains their perspective, is necessary in order to have a more balanced view of current practice.

Conclusion. Having been a Classroom Teacher, a Counselor, a Resource Teacher and now an Administrator I have come to realize that collaboration is a critical component in any educational role in an inclusive school. My sense of working relationships and solution focused planning and support has been further affirmed by the dedicated professionals that I had the opportunity to interview in this study.

This study has contributed to confirming appropriate education or inclusion as the right action for supporting students and their needs while affirming collaboration as the style in which to achieve that goal. This study was critical social analysis, an immanent critique, to expose the contradictions between provincial, divisional and school-based claims about inclusion and the real condition, values and practices of school-based student services Counselors and Resource Teachers. Collaboration is a confusing term, professionals, in this study, are indicating that a positive attitude or mindset and willingness to work together are the key attributes for successful collaboration. In support of this, the role of the administrator or leadership in a successful inclusive school is critical in order to encourage, invite and in some cases direct the style of collaboration to be used.

All participants agreed that increased student need is driving a heightened need for collaboration. A service delivery model would also assist with managing the complex

needs and time issues. The service delivery model may consider the unique contributions of individuals and begin to look like a differentiated student's services model of delivery.

Leadership is also a key factor to supporting collaboration as an essential style for successful inclusion and leadership will need to follow up with accountability, training and shifting mindset. Pre-service training on the topic of collaboration is a growing need for professionals as they prepare to meet complex student needs, changing student services roles and seeing the whole child rather than the pieces.

Collaboration proposes an opportunity to successfully meet student's needs while fulfilling the mandate of appropriate education.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

PSEUDONYM: _____ DATE:

START TIME: _____ END TIME: _____

DURATION: _____

Opening Comments: I am talking with you today about your perception of collaboration in working within school support services. As you may recall, I will be taping our conversation as well as taking notes in order to analyze the comments as a later time. Are you ready to begin?

1. What is your title in student services, are you resource teacher or counselor?
 - (i) What grade levels do you work with?
 - (ii) How long have you been in this role?
 - (iii) Can you share your education, training as well as professional development?
 - (iv) Do you have a Bachelor of Education? Counselor education, Post Baccalaureate, Masters or Special Education Certificate?
 - (v) Are you full-time or part-time in resource teacher or counselor role?

2. What is your understanding of collaboration?
 - i) Is the need for effective collaboration on behalf of students with disabilities increasing, staying the same or decreasing, in the past decade?

- ii) Do the school-based role of counselor and resource teacher experience greater demand, same or lesser for collaboration, in the past decade?
- iii) Have you had experience or training with a consultative or collaborative model of service delivery, and if so where and when?
- iv) What do you think of the euphuism 'two heads are better than one'?
- v) What is your involvement with funding applications?
- vi) What do you think affects effective collaboration? What facilitates it? What hinders it?

Probes: (a) parity, (b) voluntary participation, (c) mutual goals, (c) common resources (d) shared responsibilities, (e) common relationships, (f) professional skills, (g) interpersonal skills, (h) process skills, (i) role confusion, (j) leadership, (k) lack of accountability

- 3. With whom do you collaborate in your work in student services?
- 4. How often do you collaborate with others? Please indicate their role and how frequently collaboration occurs.
 - i) What facilitates this collaboration? What hinders it?

Probes: (a) informal or formal collaboration (b) referrals (c) Individualized Educational Plans (d) behavior plans (e) transition meetings etc.

5. What training do you have related to collaboration in your professional work or role?
(i.e.) formal, professional development or independent study? What specific collaboration skills do you possess and find most useful?

6. Can you think of a time when collaboration was helpful or not helpful to a student?
Please explain how and why you thought it was helpful or not helpful?

7. Do you believe collaboration is an attribute or can it be taught?
 - i) Is leadership a factor in collaboration in inclusive schools? If so, how? Probes:
(a) time management (b) roles and relationships (c) timetable structure (d) common planning time (e) minimize the need to cover all curriculums (f) recognize the unique contributions of each team member (g) flexibility (h) organization (i) commitment (j) extended thinking (k) administrative support (l) trust and sharing (m) belief in a common goal (n) understanding roles (o) collegial partners (p) decision making process (q) clearly structured service delivery model (r) listen and gather information (s) share expertise (t) liaison with the community (u) model professional development .

 - ii) Do counselors have a role with students with special needs? If yes, what role?

 - iii) Do resource teachers have a role with students with social/emotional needs? Is yes, what role?

 - iv) Has an increase in diversity, disability, mental health needs and co-occurring disorders changed your view of inclusion or collaboration? Probes: (a) language acquisition (b) acculturation (c) dealing with the affects of war and conflict (d)

mental health (e) complex learning issues due to inadequate prior schooling in their countries of origin (f) substance abuse (g) learning disabilities (h) depression

v) Where do students with disabilities or other special needs spend their time? Do they spend time with non-disabled peers?

8. Can you list other professionals that you would like to collaborate with but have not for some reason?

9. What are the greatest obstacles to collaboration?

10. What are the greatest facilitators of collaboration?

11. Please check the appropriate response:

Age: 20-30___ 31-40___ 41-50___ 51-60___ 60 +___

Years of experience: 1-10___ 11-20___ 21-30___ 31-40___ 40+___

Gender: Male___ Female___

Degree(s)in progress or complete (please indicate): Bachelor of Education___

BA/BSC/Nursing___PBDE___Special Education Certificate___

Counselor Certificate ___Master in Counseling___Masters in Inclusive Special Education___

From Whom?_____

Other_____

Number of workshops or conferences attended and topic (if possible):_____

Masters in Counseling___Masters in Inclusive Special Educaiton_____

APPENDIX B: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Title of Study: Student Services Teachers' Perceptions of Collaboration in Inclusive Schools

Student Researcher: Colleen Roberts

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

This letter is an invitation to participate in a study I am conducting for a Thesis at the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. My advisor for this work is Dr. Rick Freeze, (rfreeze@cc.umanitoba.ca). I would like to provide you with more information about this study and what your involvement would entail if you decide you would like to take part.

The focus of this study is on collaboration between resource teachers and counselors within school-based student services. The study will help me learn more about this topic area and use my skills in research design, data collection and analysis, and write a thesis.

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately one hour in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location and time outside of school hours. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Furthermore, you may decide to withdraw from the study at any time and without penalty by the researcher. As follow up to the interview, I will be contacting you by email or telephone to check for accuracy in my recordings as well as to provide you with a summary of our meeting. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded to facilitate the collection of accurate information, and later transcribed for analysis by my assistant. All information you provide is considered confidential. Your name or any other personal identifying information (e.g. name of your school) will not appear in any part of the study or in the poster presentation that I may share with others. However, with your permission, quotations may be used along with pseudonyms to protect your identity. Transcriptions and or tapes collected during this study will be retained until the thesis is

completed, and will be in a locked filing cabinet at my house and then shredded or erased. Only I will have access to the data along with my assistant who will transcribe.

There are no risks to you as a participant in this study, but you may benefit from the professional dialogue and reading final results of the study which I will make available to you. There will be no compensation for your participation.

If you have any questions regarding this project, or would like any additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at my home by email at colleen.roberts@mts.net or at 204-261-0483.

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

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

I very much look forward to speaking with your and I thank you in advance for your assistance in this research.

Sincerely,

Colleen Roberts

Participant's Name (please print)

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

Please read the following statements and use a check mark to indicate your response.

Yes____ No____

I agree to participate in this research

Yes____ No____

I agree to have my interview tape recorded.

Yes____No____

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in the study and any presentation of the results.

Please forward a summary report of the research findings to me by email using the following address:_____

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF REQUEST TO SUPERINTENDENT

UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Superintendent of _____ School Division

January, 2011

Dear _____,

I am a Master's student at the University of Manitoba, in the Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology studying in the area of Inclusive Special Education. I am conducting a thesis study on the topic of "Student Services Teachers' Perceptions of Collaboration in Inclusive Schools". I would like to interview 12 Student Services Teachers' in your School Division, specifically 6 Counselors and 6 Resource Teachers. The interview will be approximately one hour in length, outside of the regular school day, and will be recorded for analysis purposes. The identity of the interviewees, their schools and the name of the school division will be kept completely confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Please see the enclosed items for full details. If this proposal meets with your approval, I will be sending a letter of recruitment to each of your principals asking for their approval to contact their resource teachers and counselors. Once that approval is received, I will send a letter of recruitment to each resource teacher and counselor at the respective schools. Resource teachers and counselors that are interested will be randomly selected to represent 3 resource teachers at the kindergarten to grade 6 level and 3 resource teachers at the grade 7 to grade 12 level and 3 counselors at the kindergarten to grade 6 level and 3 counselors at the grade 7 to grade 12 level. As follow-up to the interview, I will contact the participants by phone or email to check for accuracy of my recordings and I will provide each participant with a summary of our individual meeting.

In addition, I would like to review any divisional documents that relate to this topic, documents would include: Divisional policies, School policies, School handbooks, brochures, record keeping forms, planning forms, website information, school mission statement and job descriptions for students' services teachers, specifically counselors and resource teachers.

Enclosed you will find:

1. Letter to Principals.
2. Interview Protocol

3. Letter of Informed Consent

I appreciate any consideration that you may give my request and I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at colleen.roberts@mts.net or my home 261-0483.

Sincerely,

Colleen Roberts,
Researcher

APPENDIX D: LETTER OF REQUEST TO PRINCIPALS

UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA

Dear Principal _____,

January 2011

I am a Master's student at the University of Manitoba, in the Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology studying in the area of Inclusive Special Education. I am conducting a thesis study on the topic of "Student Services Teachers' Perceptions of Collaboration in Inclusive Schools". I have received approval from your School Division Superintendent to request permission from you to recruit Student Services Teachers, specifically Counselors and Resource Teachers for interviews. I would like to interview 12 Student Services Teachers' in total from your School Division, specifically 6 Counselors and 6 Resource Teachers. The interview will be approximately one hour in length, outside of the regular school day, and will be recorded for analysis purposes. The identity of the interviewees, their schools and the name of the school division will be kept completely confidential through the use of pseudonyms. Please see the enclosed items for full details. With your permission, I would like to send the attached 'Letter of Recruitment' to the Counselors and Resource Teachers in your school. If they are interested, I will arrange for the interview and ask them the 'Interview Protocol' questions that you will see attached. I will ask the participants to review and sign a 'Letter of Informed Consent', which is also attached for you. As follow-up to the interview, I will contact the participants by phone or email to check for accuracy of my recordings and I will provide each participant with a summary of our individual meeting.

In addition, I would like to review any divisional documents that relate to this topic, documents would include: Divisional policies, School policies, School handbooks, brochures, record keeping forms, planning forms, website information, school mission statement and job descriptions for students' services teachers, specifically counselors and resource teachers.

Enclosed you will find:

1. Interview Protocol
2. Letter of Recruitment
3. Letter of Informed Consent

I appreciate any consideration that you may give my request and I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience. If you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me at colleen.roberts@mts.net or my home 261-0483.

Sincerely,
Colleen Roberts,
Researcher

APPENDIX E: LETTER OF RECRUITMENT**UNIVERSITY
OF MANITOBA**

Dear Student Services Support Team Member (Counselor or Resource Teacher),

I am a Master's student at the University of Manitoba, in the Department of Educational Administration, Foundations and Psychology studying in the area of Inclusive Special Education. I am conducting a thesis study on the topic of "Student Services Teachers' Perceptions of Collaboration in Inclusive Schools". I have received approval from your School Division Superintendent to request permission from you to recruit Student Services Teachers, specifically Counselors and Resource Teachers for interviews. I would like to interview 12 Student Services Teachers' in total from your School Division, specifically 6 Counselors and 6 Resource Teachers. The interview will be approximately one hour in length, outside of the regular school day, and will be recorded for analysis purposes. The identity of the interviewees, their schools and the name of the school division will be kept completely confidential through the use of pseudonyms. However, with your permission, quotations may be used along with pseudonyms to protect your identity. Transcripts and or tapes collected during the study will be retained until the thesis is completed and may be used if I pursue further studies at the next level. The transcripts will be in a locked filing cabinet at my house and then shredded or erased. Only I will have access to the data as well as my assistant who will transcribe. As follow up to the interview, I will be contacting you by email or telephone to check for accuracy in my recordings as well as to provide you with a summary of our meeting.

If you are in agreement with this request, I will provide you with a letter of informed consent that requires your signature in agreement to the interview.

There are no risks to you as a participant in this study, but you may benefit from the professional dialogue and reading the final results of the study which I will make available to you.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like any additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me by email at colleen.roberts@mts.net or 204-261-0483.

I look forward to speaking with you and I thank you in advance for your assistance in this study.

Sincerely,

Colleen Roberts,

Researcher

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