

**Reclaiming Michael:
A Case Study of a Student with Emotional Behavioural Disorder**
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ABSTRACT

Reclaiming Michael: A case study of a student with emotional behavioural disorder describes the work in a school with a kindergarten to grade three student who was labeled emotionally-behaviourally disordered. Thirteen participant interviews were transcribed and analyzed to understand what the school did, how the school did this work, and why the work was done the way it was. Two themes reinforcing the importance of learning and building community emerged from the data. The data collected reinforced the general principles of both the ecological and humanistic perspectives, indicating theoretical possibilities for work with students with emotional-behavioural disorders in other schools.

CHAPTER ONE - THE NEGATIVE PROGNOSIS

I base it on the fact of okay....he's this kind of kid. He comes from this kind of background. I've seen lots of kids like that, right? And I'm old enough now I've watched it for a long time. ... So I've got this big case file in my head. And I know how they should progress. Roughly. ... And I tend not to tell people that. Cause they get discouraged if you tell 'em that (Nelson transcript, 2004).

Jeffrey Buffalo was a nine year old native boy featured in two one-hour radio documentaries on CBC radio's *Sunday Morning* on December 7, 2003 and then again on September 5, 2004. In his short time in the elementary school in Timmins, Ontario, Jeffrey was excluded from the school more than he was included. The documentary sympathized with Jeffrey and his frustrated grandparents and implied that the school system was inept, overtaxed by students with special needs, and unjust in keeping Jeffrey out of school. Jeffrey was excluded from school by the area school board because of his behaviour and the board's zero tolerance policy (Wells, 2003; Wells, 2004). In the broadcast, the description of Jeffrey's behaviours and his diagnoses by eight different psychiatrists indicated that in Manitoba, Jeffrey would be labeled emotionally-behaviourally disordered.

According to a body of literature on students with behaviour problems, few schools have successfully met the challenge of engaging students with emotional-

behavioral disorders (EBD) in the academic and social programs of regular classrooms (Bierman, Cole, Dodge, Greenberg, Lochman, McMahon, & et al., 2002; Eber, 2002; Lewis, Sugai, & Colvin, 1998; Scott, 2003; Stein & Merrell, 1992; Sutherland, 2000; Sutherland, Wehby, & Yoder, 2002). However, in rare cases, schools have successfully nurtured positive behaviour changes in students labeled EBD. One such case occurred at Ryerson School, the focus of this case study. Michael is a pseudonym for an eight-year old student in Ryerson School, a small, rural school in Manitoba. Michael was labeled emotionally-behaviourally disordered, Level Two. When he started kindergarten, he threw daily, out-of-control temper tantrums in the classroom, ran away from school, and tortured cats in the community. Three years later, in grade two, Michael was engaged in the academic and social programs of his classroom and the school. In grade three, despite huge daily challenges for Michael, his classmates, and the teacher, Michael stayed in school. He was not “fixed” and his behaviour still challenged the staff and resources of his school. Somehow the school met these challenges without excluding Michael from school. This case study focuses on the question: what did Michael’s school do to support his academic and emotional growth and keep him in school?

The change from out-of-control behaviour to normal classroom functioning in students with emotional-behavioural disorders is rarely seen. The question for this case study research was “What did Ryerson School do to work with their student labeled EBD Level Two?” I conducted a case study of the contextual conditions in which Michael’s behaviour changes occurred to attempt to “uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of [this] phenomenon” (Merriam, 1998, p. 29). The data in this case study was people’s perspectives of what happened. Through interviews and examination of

written records, I constructed a comprehensive, detailed picture of what people in Michael's school did and how they did it. From this practical representation, connections were made between an actual scenario, and the theories and research on effective school responses to students labeled EBD, or emotionally-behaviorally disordered. I have provided a specific realistic description of one school's experience with one student and compared it to the theories of what should work.

Reasons to Conduct this Study

There were many reasons to conduct this case study of what one school did to work with a student labeled EBD Level Two. The question of how schools can work effectively with students with EBD is important to me on a personal level, but as the "Fixing Jeffrey Buffalo" broadcasts indicate, it is also a provincial and national issue. As a teacher and a guidance counselor, it has been my experience that school personnel, and teachers in particular, are often overwhelmed and frightened by students whose emotional state and behavior is always unpredictable and often out-of-control. The literature supports this experience (Ellingson, Miltenberger, Stricker, Galensky, & Garlinghouse, 2000; Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Sutherland, 2001). Jeffrey Buffalo's sad experience is all-too-often the case, as the much-used solution of exclusion starts early. These students are put out into hallways, serve in-school suspensions, sit in isolation, are sent home for various lengths of time, and are frequently suspended and expelled from schools. In the case of Jeffrey Buffalo, he was actually "excluded" from school since he could not be indefinitely expelled from a public institution, but he could be indefinitely excluded (Wells, 2003). The success of these strategies is short-lived and unsatisfying. The short-term respite for the school system damages relationships with these children and their

families, and exacerbates the long-term academic and social problems for these students. School administrators, teachers, and educational assistants need to know specifically how to support behavior changes in students with EBD to keep them in classrooms, learning with their peers. Since success with students with EBD is so rare, exceptions merit examination. This case study highlighted the work of Ryerson School and attempted to distill the attitudes, approaches, skills in and out of the classroom, and methods that contributed to the changes and growth of Michael, their student with EBD. The case researched the question “What did Ryerson School do to work with their student labeled Level Two EBD?”

Along with my personal and professional observations, this case study is important on a provincial level. Seven school divisions in Manitoba are currently participating in the third and final year of a provincial pilot project to implement effective practices for students with emotional and behavioral disorders. In this pilot, how school divisions access funding and supports for students with EBD changes. At this time, school divisions submit individual applications for funding to the province for approval. In the pilot, a block of dollars is allocated to school divisions and they determine where funding is allocated. This change increases the need for a common understanding of the nature and impact of emotional-behavioral disorders, as well as the need for effective strategies to respond to these special needs. If school divisions are to allocate funding where it is most needed and best used then everyone - from teachers to resource teachers to clinical services personnel to administrators - needs to understand what programs and strategies best facilitate the inclusion and success of students labeled EBD. The funding to support students with EBD needs to be based on evidence of strategies that work. The

case I examined began in 2001, before the funding changes and current government recommendations were proposed. The information gathered about what Ryerson School did to work with their student labeled EBD Level Two provided an opportunity to compare this reality with the theoretical frameworks and provincial recommendations for successful work with students labeled EBD.

Providing successful school experiences for students with EBD is a national social concern. Students with histories of chronic and pervasive behaviour problems and associated academic deficits are more likely to go to jail than to graduate from high school (Scott, 2003). It is important that school policy makers inform their decisions with research-based evidence about what is effective with these students so that policy can support positive changes. Schools that promote lasting behavior changes for struggling students with EBD can potentially impact the youth violence epidemic that newspapers imply is upon us (Mayer, 1995; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). My case study focused on what one school did to work with their student labeled EBD Level Two. By collecting, describing, and sifting carefully through the details of this case, I searched for insights about what was unique about this case in this school, as well as what in this case reinforced which theoretical constructs. The theoretical principles that supported what Ryerson School did for Michael can then begin to inform future policy and practices in other schools working with students with EBD.

Case studies have “illuminated educational practices for thirty years” (Merriam, 1998, p. 26). For schools, working successfully with the special needs of students with EBD is a high priority. By recreating a comprehensive picture of how Ryerson School worked successfully with Michael, a student with EBD, and identifying the theoretical

principles of effective practices, other schools have a stronger basis on which to build effective school responses to students with EBD.

CHAPTER TWO - WHAT RESEARCH IS TELLING US

Number one importance [for working with students with difficult behaviour] would be the strategies and an understanding of what research is telling us (Abrams transcript, 2004).

Understanding the EBD Label

In my review of the literature prior to this case study, it became evident that there is no common, clear definition of the term emotional-behavioral disorder, commonly referred to as EBD. In fact, there is significant confusion about the EBD label (Clarizio, 1992; Pacer Centre, 1996; Stein & Merrell, 1992; Turnbull, Turnbull, Shank, Smith, & Leal, 2002). In school systems, the EBD label is intended to provide access to supports and services, but the reality is that labels like EBD sometimes limit and stigmatize the children to whom they are attached (Hobbs, 1975). As well, once institutions like schools receive government funding for children with labels, it becomes important that they continue to receive this support, so children get stuck with the labels. In Manitoba schools, EBD is one of the labels attached to children whose behaviours handicap their academic and social progress. When children's behaviour prevents them from functioning normally in schools, funding is available from the provincial government to pay for the supports that help keep children in schools.

In Ryerson School, Michael, as a grade one student, was funded under the category EBD, Level Two. What this label meant specifically in Michael's case was clarified by the literature review and in the data collection of this study. The literature review for the proposal of this case study examined Manitoba government guidelines for funding for EBD students, and described the background to current understandings of the

term EBD. In the interviews conducted during the study, I asked one participant how Michael acquired the EBD label. Detailed descriptions of Michael's behaviour by participants who were interviewed in the study clarified how the EBD label applied in this situation. Michael's behaviour and history created the emotional-behavioural disorder that handicapped him.

The people working with Michael at Ryerson School were not concerned about the official definition of EBD. They were, however, concerned about what they needed to help Michael reduce his handicap so that he could function satisfactorily in school. Mostly, there was matter-of-fact acceptance of his level of functioning, and a consistent determination to move him from that point towards normality. Because of this approach at Ryerson School, the extensive review of the definition of EBD that I completed in the proposal for this case study was extraneous. It included: the search for definitions of EBD in Manitoba government documents; the descriptions of disorders in the DSM-IV (1994) that are included under the EBD umbrella label; and the United States background to the development of a Manitoba definition. All of these sections, which were part of the literature review in my proposal for this study, are now appended to this thesis (Appendix A).

EBD in Manitoba Education, Training, and Youth Documents

There are several sources of information about the label EBD, which refers to emotional-behavioural disorders. As a result of the recommendations of the *Manitoba Special Education Review* in 1998, the Manitoba government attempted to clarify the definition of EBD by creating a "Rubric for Emotionally/Behaviorally Disturbed" which is used by school personnel applying for funding supports for students with EBD. This

rubric lists some specific behaviours and emotional components, some diagnosable behaviour disorders from the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV* (1994), and some environmental factors that can negatively affect children in schools.

Confusion about the definition of emotional-behavioural disorders was acknowledged in the *Manitoba Special Education Review* of 1998. In its attempt to clarify what EBD means, the Review cites the definition developed by the delegate assembly of the Council for Exceptional Children in 1991. This definition sounds very similar to the definition by the Mental Health and Special Education Coalition from the United States. The *Review's* definition says:

Emotional or Behavioral Disorder (EBD) refers to a condition in which behavioral or emotional responses of an individual in school are so different from his or her generally accepted, age-appropriate, ethnic, or cultural norms that they adversely affect educational performance in such areas as self-care, social relationships, personal adjustment, academic progress, classroom behavior, or work adjustment. (Proactive Information Services, 1998, pp. 138-139).

The *Special Education Review* also describes the characteristics of children with EBD in terms of their academic and social functioning in school. Typically, the behaviour of children with EBD depends upon whether the disorder is externalized or internalized (Proactive Information Services, 1998; Turnbull, et al., 2002). Externalized behaviors, such as aggression, non-compliance, defiance, and classroom disruption, often result in high levels of conflict with teachers and other adults in schools. Internalized

behaviours, such as sadness, preoccupied thoughts, crying, auditory or visual hallucinations, and low interest or motivation, rarely result in conflicts with teachers or classroom disruptions, but do result in poor social interactions and academic outcomes. Not surprisingly, students with externalized EBD are more frequently identified in schools and referred for services than students with internalized EBD (Proactive Information Services, 1998; Turnbull, et al., 2002).

Manitoba schools sometimes use the “Rubric for Emotionally/Behaviourally Disturbed” to ascertain whether students with behaviour problems qualify for funding for EBD. The rubric, developed by the Special Support Unit of Manitoba Education Training and Youth in 1999, lists components that help define emotional-behavioural disorders in Manitoba schools. The chart, Table One, outlines the range of expected behaviours and emotional responses of students with EBD. It is interesting to note that the word “disturbed” is used in the heading of the rubric, rather than the more commonly used “disordered,” another source of confusion about the EBD label.

Table One – Rubric for Emotionally/Behaviorally Disturbed

Behavioral Components	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Impulsive	Distractible, emotional, disruptive	Constant outbursts, out of control, physical tantrums	Places self or others in imminent danger
Sexual	Precocious, suggestive, sexual comments, gestures	Imitates sexual behaviors, masturbates in public, sexually harasses	Sexually assaults students or staff, stalks students
Dangerous	Noncompliant, defiant, oppositional, aggressive	Damages property, threatens staff & students, fights often	Mutilates animals, assaults staff or students. <i>Must be Pervasive and chronic.</i>

Emotional Components	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Formal Diagnosis	Biochemical/organic disorder or psychiatric disorder (i.e. learning disabled, tourette syndrome, ADHD, depression)	Complex or severe bio-Chemical/organic or psychiatric disorder (i.e. Conduct disorder, suicidal, borderline personality)	
Life Experiences	Difficult life experiences (i.e. School problems, parenting issues, family conflicts, lack of friendships, or negative peer pressure)	Severely destructive life experiences (i.e. Series of family crises, traumatic events, history of neglect, abandonment, family substance abuse, or spousal abuse)	Profoundly damaging life experiences (i.e. History of severe and repeated abuse, multiple placements, severe neglect and/or extreme loss and rejection)
Indicators	Emotional responses consistent with the above (i.e. negative self talk, fearful, helpless, angry, or moody)	Intense emotional responses consistent with above (i.e. severe indicators of post-traumatic stress disorder, freezes, huddles in fetal position, emotionally cold in a variety of sensitive situations)	

(Manitoba Education, Training, and Youth, 1999)

The three levels in the rubric represent the increased severity of behaviours and circumstances that determine the amount of funding available to schools. In Michael's case, Simon (the behaviour support teacher) wrote the funding application for level two. Simon was experienced in writing applications, and had been using the rubric in writing funding applications for several years. In his interview, Simon said Michael's history of abuse put him into the level two funding category. The specific behaviours that defined Michael as EBD are described in detail in Chapters Four and Five of this thesis.

The absence of a clearly articulated definition of the EBD label did not affect the work with Michael at Ryerson School. Simon used the label to access funding from the province. In my interviews with Ryerson School staff, they used the term EBD rarely.

When EBD was used to describe Michael, it was to increase the understanding that his behaviour and emotions were his handicap. Participants in this study were much more intent on understanding Michael than the term EBD.

Problem Behaviour: Two Theoretical Perspectives and Research Interventions

My examination of what Ryerson School did to work with their student labeled EBD Level Two was a descriptive case study. Descriptive case studies refer back to theoretical principles (Bassey, 1999; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994). Findings about what Ryerson School did to work with their student labeled EBD Level Two connected to several theoretical frameworks that describe behaviour. Different theories of behaviour indicate different ways of understanding and responding to behaviour problems. An overview of humanism, choice theory, and the ecological perspectives on behaviour provided the options for generalization for this study. After reporting what Ryerson School did, the findings are linked to the frameworks of these theoretical frameworks in Chapter Seven.

The Humanistic Perspective

Theory

The humanistic theory of behaviour is a philosophical and holistic perspective. In this approach, behaviour is seen as under girded by an inherent motivation to learn. Schools that reflect the humanistic perspective adjust the school environment to enhance students' natural learning processes. In this model, children's basic needs are attachment, support and belonging (Brokenleg, 2003; Dhaese, 2003; Scarlett & Associates, 1998). Student-teacher relationships are central as the emotional needs of students are nurtured through positive and genuine relationships with teachers. Teachers strive to enter the

cognitive and emotional worlds of their students to facilitate academic, social, and emotional learning. Unlike the behavioural perspective, students are viewed as in control and responsible for their own behaviour. Through this respectful and democratic approach, behaviour problems are usually prevented, but when behaviour problems do occur, students are supported through solution-focused processes. (Porter, 1996). Usually, this value-based approach is school-wide with the intent of nurturing each student towards becoming a fully functioning human being.

The practices of the humanistic perspective are not targeted, nor focused on particular behaviours. Instead, teachers believe that they may need to forego the classroom's short-term needs for compliance and order, for the student's long-term needs for healthy development and self-control. In this approach, "the main core belief is that behaviour management for the purpose of promoting children's self-control works best when children and teacher have formed *partnerships* and when teachers have worked to *share control*" (Scarlett & Associates, 1998, p. xv). When faced with the destructive and disruptive behaviours of children with emotional behavioural disorders, forming relationships and promoting self-control seems particularly challenging. However, research indicates that positive, caring, and nurturing environments that fulfill the human need for attachment promote and support positive behaviour (Brokenleg, 2003; Dhaese, 2003).

From the humanistic perspective, the key elements in schools to fulfilling children's needs are: to support the development of each child's inner resources; to support each child's struggle to master developmental tasks; to develop classrooms into caring and productive communities; and to embrace diversity (Scarlett & Associates,

1998). From this perspective, teachers enter into close, nurturing relationships with all children. A child's attachment to teachers forms the basis for future secure connections between adults and children, and children and children. These strong connections become the valued, internal reasons for positive behaviour, as children identify with the group. The humanistic perspective is largely preventive, but in it, teachers react with belonging when students are troubled (Brokenleg, 2003).

According to the humanistic perspective, schools often contribute to children's behaviour problems (Ayers, Clark, & Murray, 2000; Kauffman, 1977; Porter, 1996; Scarlett & Associates, 1998). Adjustments to the school environment to better accommodate the needs of children can prevent behaviour problems from developing and can reduce existing problems (Ayers, et al., 2000; Scarlett & Associates, 1998). Everything - from the physical environment to the curriculum to assessments to the interaction of teachers, specialists and administrators - affects students and influences their behaviour. When the impact is negative, and the behaviour inappropriate, changes in the surroundings and/or support of the student to cope with these surroundings can positively alter behaviour. Teachers need to connect to their students to do this work, as well as connect to other adults in the school to make the accommodations students require.

Although the humanistic perspective focuses on prevention, there is also a process to address behaviour problems in the model. Interventions support children in understanding their behaviour and its impact, and help them learn more suitable ways to behave. Teachers and administrators working within the humanistic perspective use problem-solving processes such as the Restitution Triangle, Life Space Intervention

(LSI), and the WEVAS (Working Effectively with Violent and Aggressive States) model to help students find their own ways to modify their behaviours (Brokenleg, 2003; MET, 2001; Porter, 1996). Ultimately these interventions foster the development of self-esteem and strengthen students' desires to fit into the school community.

A variation on the developmental model of the humanistic perspective is William Glasser's Choice Theory. With a similar emphasis on the development of student responsibility and independence, this model interprets all behaviour as efforts to meet five basic needs: safety, belonging, freedom, fun, and power (Glasser, 1986). Schools, therefore, adjust their curricula and operating systems to meet the needs of students. Teachers develop close relationships and encourage strong peer relationships. Learning is about acquiring mastery, problem solving, self-assessment, decision-making, creativity, and originality (Porter, 1996). In terms of problem behaviour, the model is preventive, requiring "whole school commitment...[for] practical management issues...[and] to support teachers, parents and the whole school community to encourage responsible behaviour and quality learning" (Porter, 1996, p. 130).

When behaviour problems occur, individuals are supported through a problem-solving process in which they are expected to find satisfactory solutions. The onus is on individuals to make behaviour choices that will get their needs met, but also respect the needs of the school, the teachers, and fellow classmates. This process promotes the development of social responsibility in authentic social situations.

In implementing Choice Theory, few institutions have established the quality school described in Glasser's book (1990) of the same name. However, in the mid-to-late 1990s schools in Minnesota, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba have instituted the Restitution

model based on Glasser's theory. Restitution is a whole school approach in which schools develop a set of beliefs about who they are and how they operate. These beliefs become the foundation upon which the entire system operates. Everyone participates in the development of school belief statements to ensure common understanding and investment. Classrooms often develop class beliefs as well, providing reinforcement and specificity for the broader belief statements. Students are taught the needs model of behaviour. This provides both a common understanding and language for dealing with behaviour problems. When working with disruptive behaviour, teachers use a set of classroom interventions that refocus and reinforce students' need to take responsibility for themselves. When working with disturbing behaviour, all school staff use the Restitution Triangle to reinforce students' needs and identity, fortify school beliefs, support students in developing effective ways to fix their mistakes, and help students return, strengthened, to the group. This is the restitution that promotes responsibility for self and others, while it nurtures attachment to the group. There are close links between this model and Native American models of restorative justice (Brokenleg, 2003).

Research

The research information from the humanistic perspective cites case studies, teachers' reports, and direct observations of behaviour changes in individuals. Marie Jose Dhaese (2003), a Canadian child therapist for the past thirty years, engages children one-to-one in play, art, and other creative expressive therapies. Through various creative mediums, children express their hostilities, fears, and conflicts, re-enact traumas, and let go of destructive images. In this intervention,

the [therapeutic] relationship, the milieu, the techniques altogether in their constant interactions, form the vessel which gives the child the emotional and physical safety and freedom necessary to psychologically heal himself as well as activate the healing potential that is within his psyche (Dhaese, 2003, p. 20).

Troublesome behaviours are dramatically reduced or eliminated through this therapy. School systems, however, rarely have the resources to provide such in-depth individual services to children.

Scarlett (1998) reports a classroom implementation of the humanistic perspective in pre-school and kindergarten classes. Here the primary intervention for problem behaviours was to build close, positive relationships with children. Through co-play and carefully structured activities geared to a particular child's interests, strong attachments were fostered between adult and child. In addition to close relationships, classrooms of very young children developed what Scarlett called "morality on the inside" (p. 90). Children formed caring communities in which they developed rules, made decisions, resolved conflicts, and took responsibility for each other's welfare. Behaviour difficulties resolved when children were supported in learning new group-approved responses, were intensely included in the group, and understood the importance of the group. In these examples, no set of strategies emerged. Instead, teachers engaged in "a delicate process of considering the unique needs of individuals as they [struggled] to develop a positive sense of self in a complex and confounding world" (Scarlett & Associates, 1998, p. xi).

Scarlett (1998) also reports adaptations in the school system to nurture appropriate behaviour and/or behaviour changes in children. He describes, with Myers, classrooms in which everything in the complex school system is structured to best

support children's development. Programming, including sequence of events, transitions, materials, and activities, is carefully planned on the basis of "young children's ability to handle the 'thousand natural shocks' to which they are subjected at school" (Scarlett & Associates, 1998, p. 123). The physical environment is also thoughtfully arranged to minimize frustrations and maximize children's ability to orient themselves. With these kinds of developmental considerations, Scarlett maintains that the school system is more likely to manage and prevent behaviour problems while supporting children's development.

McEvoy and Welker (2000) examine the role of school climate in establishing programs designed to reduce academic failure and antisocial behaviour in at-risk students. A key link to behaviour problems, according to their research, is poor academic performance. They report on findings that demonstrate how specific academic interventions, matched to the developmental interests of individuals, reduce behaviour problems. Addressing both academic and behavioural issues successfully is linked to positive school climates. To create a positive school climate, students are affirmed through close personal relationships with teachers and opportunities to achieve mastery. According to their review of the literature, the principles of promising school practices include:

1. Review and elimination or modification of practices that do not work.
2. Early appropriate assessments for academic and behavioural needs.
3. School-wide learning climates built on warm, learning relationships.
4. Universal and school-appropriate staff development.
5. Increased adult-child contact time.

In the research supporting the humanistic perspective, building positive, supportive, and nurturing relationships is the key to developing well-adjusted, educated, and socially responsible young people.

Schools built on the humanistic perspective emphasize: students' developmental needs, make environmental adjustments to meet those needs, nurture close relationships between students and teachers, and make school-wide efforts to create positive learning climates.

The Ecological Perspective

Theory

The ecological perspective views behaviour within the broader context of social systems. However, ecological theory places more emphasis on the interplay within and between systems. Systems function in complex, multi-level multi-factorial reciprocal interactions (Ayers, et al., 2000). Schools, for example, are examined from different levels of functioning such as the classroom, the administration, or the school as a whole. Different factors are considered when describing any of a school's systems or subsystems. Behaviour is also a system of reciprocal interplay between individuals and their physical and social environments. In schools, individuals' behaviours are influenced and generated by other individuals, classrooms, management structures, and the school climate. Problem behaviour is "influenced or even generated by ecological factors in specific contexts" (Ayers, et al., 2000, p. 88). In schools, factors at various levels of different subsystems may individually contribute to problem behaviours. For example, at the classroom level, a student might shove several classmates because they have infringed on his personal space in an overcrowded classroom.

In this model, systems beyond the immediate school context also influence behaviour in schools. In the ecological systems model, the levels of systems include: microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems. Microsystems in schools include the roles and relationships between individuals. Mesosystems refer to the school's relationships with individuals outside the school, like parents. Exosystems refer to the connections between those outside the school system, such as the relationships among parents. Macrosystems include all the various systems within a cultural context, such as the interactions between schools and community institutions like the businesses that employ students (Ayers, et al., 2000). Within this reciprocal model, problem behaviours in this model are influenced by a myriad of factors in multiple systems; and multiple systems are influenced in a myriad of ways by problem behaviours.

Interventions in the ecological model have a system-wide emphasis. Schools operating with this approach develop school-wide management policies, programs, and supports for learning and behaviour. Individuals within the school, including students, staff, and parents, participate at various system levels to create positive classroom climate, facilitate learning, develop school discipline policies, nurture positive school ethos, develop affirming home-school relationships, and cultivate effective connections between the school and outside systems. Assessments of the school are completed to collect accurate and complete perceptions from those within and outside the system. These help target specific areas of concern. Interventions are then developed to address areas of concern.

Problem behaviours, the result of person-environment interactions, are targeted through adjustments to the physical, social, and/or academic environments in which they

occur. Physical adjustments could include changes to seating, temperature, or sensory stimulation. Social adjustments could include class groups, student-teacher negative perceptions and patterns of interaction, or increasing involvement in classroom decision-making. Academic adjustments could include adaptations in reading, addressing specific skills deficits, assigning a scribe or computer for writing, or providing added assignment assistance. Other systems changes may be implemented as well, including adjustments to referral processes, teaching practices, testing processes, attendance and hallway expectations, and discipline practices. People within the school systems strive to understand the individuals with problem behaviours and the needs of the system, and then design adjustments that can best accommodate both.

The ecological perspective emphasizes system-wide responses. Adjustments to social, academic, and management systems developed through multi-system collaboration, are common interventions for students with problem behaviours. People understand individuals, problem behaviours, and interventions as intertwined in a complex set of systems and subsystems.

Research

Much of the most recent research on promoting and supporting behaviour changes in schools emphasizes the ecological perspective (Bierman, et al., 2002; Carr, et al., 2002; Eber, 2002; Fox, 2002; Ialongo, 2001; Kamps, Kravitz, Stolze, & Swaggart, 1999; Kennedy, 2001; Kern, 2001; Kern, Choutka, & Sokol, 2002; Lewis, et al., 1998; Lewis & Sugai, 1999; March, 2002; Nelson, 2001; Nelson, 2000; Sawka, 2002; Scott, 2003, Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Sugai, Horner, Dunlap, Hieneman, Nelson, Scott, & el al. (2000); Sugai, 2002; Sutherland, 2000; Sutherland, 2001; Sutherland, et al., 2002; Walker &

Horner, 1996). Behaviour problems in schools are seen in the larger contexts of school systems, families, communities, and socio-economic systems. Factors like family income, neighborhood poverty, marital status, maternal education, and children's cognitive abilities, and the impact of these on children's emotions and behaviours, are considered in this research. For example, the Centre for Positive Behavior Support in the United States reports that a history of poverty and illiteracy predicts ten times more powerfully that a child will have school problems due to seriously challenging behaviours than any other factors (Scott, 2003). Based on this type of information, schools create preventive responses and interventions that provide system-wide supports for students at high-risk of developing serious behaviour problems. Studies report positive results from interventions through teacher-centered programs, classroom-based programs, school-home liaison programs, and school-wide behaviour programs. Adjustments to the wider systems promote and support pro-social behaviour for all students, positively impacting those at risk for serious emotional-behavioural disorders.

Various teacher-centered interventions are reported in the literature, reinforcing the critical significance of their role. Sawka (2002) reports on a teacher training model Strengthening Emotional Support Services (SESS), which increased staff knowledge of effective behaviour management for students with EBD and was associated with increases in student academic engagement and decreases in disruptive behaviour in self-contained classes of adolescents with EBD. The program included specific training for teachers and educational assistants, and follow-up consultation to support the transfer of knowledge and skills to classrooms. Training focused on ecological management and

empirically validated practices including four general topic areas with specific skills under each topic. Table Two outlines the SESS curriculum.

Table Two: Strengthening Emotional Support Services

Module	Specific Skills
Classroom environment Basic Behaviour Management	Effective Rules Organizing Classroom Space Developing Classroom Schedule Group Meetings Conducting Transitions Encouraging Student Through Praise Token Economy Warnings Logical Consequences
Academic Assessment Skill Development Model	Curriculum-Based Assessment Curriculum-Based Monitoring
Academic Interventions	Direct Instruction Peer Tutoring Cooperative Learning Self Management
Behavioural Assessments Interventions Behaviour Support Plans	Functional Behaviour Assessment Contracting Group Contingencies Home-School Contracts Social Skills Training Self Management Data-Based Decision-Making

(Sawka, 2002)

The details of SESS reinforce the principles of the ecological perspective: multiple levels of system-individual interactions impacts individuals' behaviour. The SESS intervention initially targets teachers and education paraprofessionals for training, but in effect creates changes in student-teacher interactions, classroom interactions, teacher-parent interactions, and student-teacher-parent interactions.

Other research also promotes behaviour changes in students with emotional-behavioural disorders through changes in teachers. Kevin Sutherland, in three separate

studies (Sutherland, 2000; Sutherland, 2001; Sutherland, et al., 2002), reports on the impact of teacher praise in classes of students with EBD. In this body of work, Sutherland cautiously reports that praise can positively affect the academic achievement and behaviour of students with EBD, within the larger contexts of structured, consistent classrooms, effective teaching practices, and social structures that support pro-social behaviour.

The impact of systems is reinforced from another perspective in Nelson's (2001) study of occupational stress for teachers of students with EBD. Lower levels of stress were reported by teachers who worked in systems where they perceived they had:

1. strong relationships with their principals
2. opportunities to make decisions
3. good relationships with their colleagues
4. the capacity to work with children with behaviour problems.

Positive working conditions were predictive of lower stress ratings, indicating the importance of the impact of systems on individuals, this time on teachers instead of on students with EBD.

Classroom-based interventions, some including a school-home component, are also reported in the research literature on students with EBD. Kern (2001) investigates the impact of simple classroom adaptations on the behaviour of students with EBD. Adaptations were based on functional behaviour assessments that provided accurate information about specific changes for specific students. Curricular changes included providing students with choices about activities and offering opportunities to use preferred methods, like computers, to complete work. Simple classroom adaptations

based on functional behaviour assessments resulted in improvements in students' academics and behaviours.

Ialongo (2001) examines the impact of a classroom-centered intervention and a family-school partnership intervention on all students in two first grade classrooms. In this longitudinal study, both interventions proved effective in reducing antisocial behaviour by age twelve. One intervention, the classroom intervention, included three components:

1. curricular enhancements in language arts and math
2. specific behaviour management practices based on group problem-solving
3. individual targeted interventions for children who needed more support.

The second intervention, the family-school partnership, was built on:

1. staff training in parent-teacher communication and partnership building,
2. weekly home-school learning and communication activities, and
3. nine workshops for parents conducted by the first grade teacher and the school social worker or school psychologist.

Both approaches resulted in lower teacher ratings of behaviours, fewer instances of suspension from school, and significantly fewer cases of Conduct Disorder than in the control group when all students were in Grade Six. Ialongo's (2001) results from both interventions reinforce the principles of the ecological perspective. Adaptations to systems and their interacting subsystems significantly impact the behaviour of individuals within the systems.

Bierman, et al. (2002) report on the impact of a home and school intervention they called the positive fast track program. The school components included social skills

groups, peer pairing, and academic tutoring. The home components included parent groups, home visits, and parent-child sharing times. The Fast Track Program, after three years of intervention, led to reductions in teacher- and parent-rated aggressive behaviours in groups of students at-risk for the development of emotional and behavioural problems.

A major portion of the current literature describes system-wide approaches to both prevent behaviour problems and implement effective interventions when behaviour problems do occur in schools (Carr, et al., 2002; Eber, 2002; Fox, 2002; Kamps, Kravitz, Stolze, & Swaggart, 1999; Kennedy, 2001; Kern, Choutka, & Sokol, 2002; Lewis, et al., 1998; Lewis & Sugai, 1999; March, 2002; Nelson, 2000; Scott, 2003, Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Sugai, et al., 2000; Sugai, 2002; Walker & Horner, 1996). Although the number of reports of empirical research studies is somewhat limited, there are numerous summary reports describing successes in various schools.

In their study of “Prevention strategies for at risk students and students with EBD in urban elementary schools,” Kamps, Kravitz, Stolz, and Swaggart (1999) established a school-wide program of multilevel interventions. The results of their study affirm the effectiveness of early intervention, multilevel interventions, and school-wide positive behaviour support systems. Specifically, the interventions used in this study included: social skills training; peer tutoring in reading; teacher training, consultation, and support; and a home-school note system. After one- to one-and-one-half years of intervention, EBD and at-risk students demonstrated improvements in appropriate requests for attention, on-task behaviours, and positive peer interactions and play at recess. Reductions in aggression, disruptions in class, and out-of-seat behaviours were also reported. The researchers in this study were particularly encouraged by significant

improvements in students' social and academic behaviours across multiple classrooms and schools.

In their study Skiba and Peterson (2000) argue that effective responses to difficult behaviour in schools requires “comprehensive and long-term planning, an array of effective strategies, and a partnership of school, family, and community” (9). They advocate an early response, multi-system approach that includes individual responses like functional assessments, and individual behaviour plans; classroom prevention strategies like conflict resolution, social instruction, and behaviour management strategies; school-wide interventions like systematic screening, data collection systems, and discipline and behavioural planning; district responses like data collection systems; and home-school programs that promote parental involvement. Comprehensive, proactive, systemic programs, they state, promote positive, pro-social behaviour.

Mayer (1995) advocates the prevention of antisocial behaviour in schools through constructive discipline which emphasizes the teaching of desirable behaviours through:

1. teaching of positive behaviours
2. creating clear, consistent school wide and classroom rules
3. building support systems for teachers and administrators
4. accommodating individual differences through appropriate academic materials, teaching methods, and behavioural strategies.

The ecological focus of identifying and correcting factors in the school system that promote antisocial behaviour is the major underlying principle of Mayer's constructive discipline program.

Much of the information on system-wide responses to students with EBD currently available in academic journals describes a model called Positive Behaviour Intervention and Support (PBIS). This model, also referred to as Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) or Effective Behaviour Support (EBS), is the adaptation for schools of successful behaviour change models used in business and mental health (Scott, 2003; Sugai, 2002). Some see the model as an applied science that focuses on individual behaviours and the environments in which the behaviours occurs (Carr, et al., 2002). Others, however, emphasize that

the focus of the PBIS approach has broadened from individual case management to systems-level implementation, especially for the school as a whole. As such PBIS has been defined as a broad range of systemic and individualized strategies for achieving important social and learning outcomes while preventing problem behaviors in all students (Sugai, 2002).

PBIS combines the behavioural science of functional behaviour assessments with the ecological perspective of adjustments to systems on multiple levels to promote behaviour changes. PBIS does not provide prescriptive solutions for all situations. Rather, it is a framework on which schools build specific programs and responses that fit their particular circumstances. The key features of PBIS include:

1. a prevention focus
2. a continuum of response and support
3. proactive, specific teaching of social behaviours in appropriate contexts
4. data based decision-making processes

5. conceptually sound and empirically validated practices
6. systems-based interventions (Scott, 2003; Sugai, 2002).

The aim of PBIS is to prevent problem behaviours by providing responses and supports for all students. Students with at-risk behaviours and students with high-risk behaviours receive additional levels of response and support, specific to their needs. There is a continuum of prevention in the model. At one end of the continuum is primary prevention which includes school-wide measures that are planned and implemented by all adults in the school. School-wide data is collected and analyzed to determine goals for PBIS implementation. Where the data indicates problems, school staff adjust rules, routines, and physical arrangements to minimize opportunities for problems to occur. Students are then specifically taught clear behavioural expectations using positive teaching practices similar to those used to teach academics. Teaching of appropriate behaviours and social skills occurs in relevant social contexts. Data continues to be collected to measure the impact of initial responses. If no change occurs, new strategies are designed and implemented. This is the first level of intervention.

Lewis, Sugai, and Colvin (1998), for example, researched the effects of a social skills instruction program combined with direct interventions for problem behaviours during lunch, recess, and transitions with 110 Grades 1-5 students in an elementary school. Specific behaviours for each setting, cafeteria, hallways, and playground, were taught in thirty-minute homeroom classes for five days, and then in follow-up reviews and integrated into the curriculum for the next three weeks. Direct intervention strategies followed social skills instruction and included group contingencies during lunch and recess as well as pre-correction and active supervision prior to and during transitions.

Results indicated the combined system-wide interventions reduced the overall number of problem behaviours in each setting.

Scott (2003) reports high success rates at the primary prevention level. Data from United States schools using PBIS to address school wide behavioural issues such as disrespect, non-compliance, and simple disruptions, show that 87% of 143,000 elementary school students had zero to one discipline problems. High rates of positive behaviour in schools support a culture of cooperation and learning.

Further along the continuum of prevention is secondary prevention which targets the small number of students in schools who are at risk of significant school failure and who require additional, individualized supports. These students continue to struggle despite the school wide efforts at the primary prevention level. Prevention is targeted to this group based on data collected from simple functional behaviour assessments across groups. This group receives added academic and social instruction, increased levels of prompts and cues, and specific pre-correction for identified concerns. Specified teachers and student support specialists implement the added interventions (Scott, 2003).

According to Scott (2003), roughly 15% of students in United States elementary schools are identified as at-risk for significant school failure. Based on 143,000 elementary students in schools using PBIS, the percentage of students requiring secondary prevention supports dropped from 15% to 9% (Scott, 2003). Successful prevention at the secondary level in this model requires added instruction for the more specific problems of identified groups of students, as well as system-wide interventions at the primary level. In this ecological approach, 25% of schools' time, energy, and effort is

spent responding to problems, while 75% is devoted to adjusting the environments in which all students function (Scott, 2003).

At the furthest point of the prevention continuum of PBIS, schools implement tertiary prevention and intervention. The system goal at this level is to reduce the number of complex, entrenched, and long-term problem behaviours of a few individuals. The goals for individual students at high risk for emotional, behavioural, and social failure is to provide the extensive supports required to decrease the duration, frequency, complexity, and/or intensity of the problem behaviours or situations (Sugai, 2002). The specific interventions and supports at the tertiary level include more intense, individualized behavioural assessments, follow-up instruction, Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), multi-agency, team-based interventions, person-centered and wraparound planning, and sometimes alternative placements (Scott, 2003; Sugai, 2002).

Kennedy (2001) reports on the impact of combining positive behaviour supports and person-centered planning on three students with behavioural disabilities. The study investigates the impact of positive behaviour supports as well as the impact of embedding person-centered planning within PBIS. Both interventions include identifying personal characteristics, preferences and abilities that have the potential to increase identified individual's success through functional behavioural assessments. Person-centered planning adds the collaboration of key individuals to bolster identified social supports to the PBIS process. Specific interventions are tailored to individuals. In Kennedy's study, person-centered planning included classroom teachers, special education teachers, a school administrator, and the authors of the study. These individuals collaborated to collect data about the individual's behaviour, develop suitable interventions for each

individual, monitor and adjust individual behaviour plans, and provide feedback and support for teachers implementing the behaviour support plans. With this increased level of intervention and support, two of the three students showed decreases in behaviour problems. Kennedy (2001) states that the combination of positive behaviour supports and person-centered planning demonstrates potential for dealing with problem behaviours in schools.

Fox (2002) and Eber (2002) also report on the impact of tertiary levels of intervention for children with serious emotional and behaviour problems. Fox (2002) emphasizes the significance of early response through family-centered interventions such as the development of an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) and the development of family-professional partnerships. IFSPs are developed using functional assessments and then family members deliver interventions across various social settings. Professionals provide training and support for family members. The entire model maintains a strength-based approach, building on the positive characteristics of child and family, and the power of effective collaboration between professionals and families.

Eber (2002) describes the details of a tertiary level response called wraparound. She describes the wraparound planning process as “a tool for building constructive relationships and support networks among youth with emotional and behavioural disorders (EBD) and their families, teachers, and other caregivers” (p. 1). In this process a team of involved individuals combine natural supports, such as childcare, transportation, mentors, and parent support groups, with formal interventions, such as behaviour change strategies, social skills instruction, reading instruction, therapy, and

medication, to create and deliver individualized systems of care for students with EBD.

The ten elements of wraparound identified by Eber (2002) include:

1. Community based
2. Individualized and strength-based
3. Culturally competent practitioners
4. Families as full and active partners
5. Team-based process involving family, child, natural supports, agencies, and community resources
6. Flexible approach and funding
7. Balance of formal and informal community and family resources
8. Unconditional commitment
9. Development and implementation of an individualized service/support plan based on a community/neighborhood, collaborative process
10. Outcomes determined and measured through the team process (p. 15).

These features, according to Eber, offer the kind of interventions needed at the tertiary level of PBIS. The ecological perspective is evident in the numbers of systems collaborating for success with individuals whose behaviour and emotions prevent them from functioning effectively.

Based on studies by the United States' government-funded Centre for Positive Behaviour and Support, Scott (2003) states that roughly 5% of school populations consist of students requiring tertiary levels of support. These students typically account for 50% of disciplinary office visits in schools, with two or three individuals accounting for the huge majority of these visits. Even at the tertiary level of intervention, the impact of PBIS

is not as significant in spite of the intense, time-consuming, and expensive levels of intervention and supports. Five percent of the 143,000 elementary school children in Scott's data qualified for tertiary levels of positive behaviour intervention and support. After tertiary interventions, the follow-up data reported a drop to 4%, reinforcing the discouraging reports that significant and lasting change with these students is difficult to achieve (Scott, 2003).

At the tertiary level of intervention in PBIS, the focus broadens and narrows simultaneously. The numbers and systems involved in supporting the individual with EBD increases dramatically, while the number of individuals identified for intervention drops. In reality, the ability of systems to collaborate effectively for coordinated interventions is uneven (Eber, 2002). At all levels, social service systems need to create pathways for resources to support effective collaboration (Carr, et al., 2002; Eber, 2002). While PBIS identifies the need for multi-agency support at the tertiary level, it does not include specific models of how this might be done effectively.

Much of the literature on effective responses to students with EBD in schools reinforces the ecological perspective. Comprehensive responses focus on changes to systems that impact individual's behaviour in positive ways. By increasing the numbers of individuals functioning effectively, fewer are left to function ineffectively. For the few individuals who do not respond to system-wide responses, multiple systems pull together to design multi-system interventions. While the target shifts to individuals, systems-wide responses are still identified for intervention. Research points to the effectiveness of this ecological approach to support students with emotional-behavioural disorders in school systems (Fox, 2002; Lewis, et al., 1998; Nelson, 2000; Scott, 2003).

Connecting Theory & Research to this Case Study

The responses to emotional-behavioural disorders described in the literature link to different behaviour theories. The ecological approach is most represented in the studies in academic journals. Some research emphasizes the humanistic perspective. Practical strategies for schools to respond effectively to students with emotional-behavioural disorders are also evident in the research.

The theoretical views of behaviour spiral outwards as the focus broadens from individuals to social systems. The behavioural perspective focuses narrowly and specifically on particular behaviours of individuals. Humanistic theory, through the developmental focus, broadens the perspective to understand behaviour as the mix of internal and external factors and places it in the context of the lifespan of individuals. The ecological perspective is the broadest view incorporating the interplay of individuals' internal views and external behaviours with systems, as well as the interplay within and between systems. Each perspective provides a description of behaviour that points towards different interventions that affect behaviour change. Each explains emotional and behavioural problems from a unique perspective, and each prescribes slightly different interventions to address these problems.

Precise lines between behaviour theories fade in reality. Each theory has merit in helping to understand why humans act as they do; each is limited in explaining why humans act as they do. In the case of Ryerson School and its responses to Michael, their student labeled Level Two EBD, parts of several theories were reinforced. The overriding question was: "What major principles of which behaviour theories were distilled in this

case?” This information, described in Chapter Seven, provides broad direction and guidelines for other schools to work effectively with children with problem behaviours.

CHAPTER THREE - THE PROCESS

The process that we're using right now is...very slow and painstaking, but...in the long run we're going to see the best result (Abrams transcript, 2004).

Methods

Descriptive case studies are defined by their comprehensive depictions of real situations. They provide in-depth, holistic perspectives of natural settings (Bassey, 1999; Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991). That was the goal of this study: to capture the situation and circumstances of how Ryerson School worked with their student labeled EBD Level Two. In this case study I collected and examined as much data as was available to me from Ryerson School. With the advantage of hindsight, I gathered data from numerous sources within the targeted case. Using written records, twelve interviews and transcriptions, and researcher observations, I melded many viewpoints and personalities, in an effort to illustrate the complexity of the situation. I used inductive reasoning to highlight and explain recurrent patterns in the vivid detail of the data. Data collection and data analysis proceeded simultaneously, as revelations from the data pointed to directions for further data collection. This concurrent process in the study reflects reality where “human nature and the social order are processual” (Sjoberg, Williams, Vaughn, & Sjoberg, 1991, p. 35).

Findings from descriptive case study research describe a particular reality from the multiple perspectives of those in it. As a result, case study research findings are not generalized to other populations. Instead, the detailed, in-depth pictures of reality from case studies are generalized to theoretical principles, either reinforcing, extending, or refuting what theory predicts should be the case.

Ethics

Research at the University of Manitoba requires the approval of their ethics committee. In order to conduct an ethical study, I submitted a proposal of the study to the university's ethics committee in April of 2004. The submission outlined the steps I would take to proceed with this case study. I received approval from the research ethics committee on April 24, 2004 to complete the study as outlined. Following my ethics proposal, I made an appointment with the superintendent of the Wheatland School Division (a pseudonym). At the appointment on April 27, I delivered a written request to initiate a case study of what Ryerson School did to work with Michael Penner (a pseudonym) from his kindergarten year to the present. The written request asked permission to:

1. conduct the study of what Ryerson School did to work with their student labeled EBD Level Two
2. contact Ryerson School's principal to request the participation of his school and school staff in the study
3. contact the parent to request her permission to conduct the study, have her son participate in the study, and participate in the study herself
4. contact the school division's psychologist and behaviour support teacher to request their participation in the study
5. access and make copies of written materials connected to the case.

The superintendent granted his permission to conduct the case study and proceed with the outlined steps on April 27th.

My first contact with informants was with Ryerson School's principal, Walter Abrams (a pseudonym). I contacted him by phone to arrange a face-to-face meeting to explain the case study and request permission to contact members of the school's staff and to access documents relevant to this case. I requested that the principal contact Michael's parent, Tina Penner (a pseudonym), to ask permission for me to contact her. I received written permission from the principal to proceed on April 28, 2004. The principal gave me the names of teachers and educational assistants who had been involved with Michael and agreed to contact the mother to ask if I could communicate with her about participating in the study.

After the principal's initial contact with Michael's mother (Tina), I contacted her by phone to explain the study in some detail. I requested to interview her and her son, and access written materials, including: Michael's cumulative file, his resource file, his Individual Education Plans, and his Behaviour Plans. I met with Michael's mother on May 4, 2004, presented my requests in person and in written form, and asked for her signature. She signed the letter of request that day. I asked Tina to introduce Michael to me, however, he was out wading in ditches the evening I met with Tina. I asked Tina if she would like me to come back another evening, or if Walter, the school principal, could introduce Michael to me at school. Tina was happy to have Walter introduce us at school.

As an elementary school counsellor in Wheatland School Division, I visited Ryerson School once a week. Walter introduced Michael and me on May 17th, during one of my weekly visits. Michael was enthusiastic about being interviewed and signed the letter of consent that day. During my weekly visits to Ryerson School, I also met briefly with the staff, who had or still were working with Michael, to describe the study and ask

for their participation. I sometimes left the letters of consent with these individuals, and sometimes the individual signed immediately and gave the letter back to me. I received permission to interview all school staff as follows:

May 10 – Resource Teacher, Susan Giesbrecht (a pseudonym)

June 9 – Grade Two Teacher, Ann Smith (a pseudonym)

June 9 – Grade Two Teacher, Jessica Black (a pseudonym)

June 9 – Grade Three Teacher, Sonja Fehr (a pseudonym)

June 14 – Grade Three Educational Assistant, Tracy Friesen (a pseudonym)

June 21 – Grades One to Three Educational Assistant, Helen Berg (a pseudonym).

Initial contacts with the school division psychologist and the behaviour support teacher were made by phone, requesting time to meet with them. I met with both on May 5th and explained the study briefly. I asked orally and in writing for their participation in one-hour interviews, and for access to any documents on this case. Both consented to participate May 5th.

Michael's grade one teacher was not at Ryerson School for the 2003-2004 school year, so I contacted her by phone, met with her, and received her written consent to interview her on May 19, 2004.

I contacted Bob Nelson, the former provincial supervisor of school psychologists, by phone August 18th, to ask for his participation in the study. He agreed to be interviewed and returned his letter of consent with an electronic signature on August 23rd. Everyone I contacted participated in the study. There was a sense of eagerness from those I asked to participate in this study. Many of them wanted to tell this story.

In order to protect the privacy of those involved in this study, pseudonyms were used in the interview transcripts and written reports. Pseudonyms replaced the names of the community, the school division, the school, and all people either interviewed or named in the study. Tapes, transcripts, and all written data collected are stored in a secure filing cabinet in my home. All participants, except Bob Nelson, agreed to submit written information about their work with Michael. However, only Walter Abrams, the principal, gave me any written materials. All of these materials were photocopies of originals which, Walter specified, did not need to be returned. All data connected to the study, including tapes, transcripts, and copies of documents, will be destroyed twelve months after the study is completed. These efforts to recruit participants, access and store data, and maintain confidentiality were in accordance with the expectations of ethical research.

Design of the Study

Robert Yin, in his book *Case study research: Design and method* (1994), states that case study design includes:

1. What questions to study
2. What data are relevant
3. What data to collect
4. How to analyze the results (p. 20).

What Questions to Study

As this is a descriptive case study, in which I wanted to describe who did what, I studied the how and why questions described as most effective by Merriam (1998) and Yin (1994). In this case study of what Ryerson School did to work with their student labeled EBD, I posed three levels of questions to focus the collection of data. At the most

simplistic level of data collection and analysis were content questions: What was done? The next level of questioning was process: How did you do what you did? The third level was understanding or meaning questions: Why did you choose to do it that way? These three broad areas of inquiry guided the interviews, the collection and sifting of written data, the analysis of the data, and Chapter Five of the report on the case. Together, the information gathered from these areas of inquiry form an in-depth, holistic picture of what was done in Ryerson School to work with Michael, their student labeled EBD, Level Two.

What Data are Relevant

To create a comprehensive understanding of what Ryerson School did, many different perspectives from school personnel, parent, student, divisional clinicians, and the former provincial supervisor of school psychologists were gathered. Through face-to-face interviews and the examination of the principal’s written records, data relevant to the content, process, and understandings in this case was collected.

Data was collected through open-ended interviews with all of the identified participants. Table Three indicates the person, position, date, time and location of each interview.

Table Three – Interview Schedule

Person	Position	Date	Time	Location
Walter Abrams	Principal	May 12	2:15-3:30 p.m.	Ryerson School
Susan Giesbrecht	Resource Teacher	May 18	7:00-8:00 p.m.	Ryerson School
Simon Peters	Behaviour Support Teacher	May 28	7:00-8:00 p.m.	My home
Michael Penner	Student	June 8	11:00-11:45 a.m.	Ryerson School

Tina Penner	Michael's Mom	June 14	9:30-10:45 a.m.	Tina's home
Sonja Fehr	Grade 3 Teacher	June 17	12:00-12:45 p.m.	Ryerson School
Tracy Friesen	Grade 3 Educational Assistant	June 18	9:00-9:40 a.m.	Ryerson School
Helen Berg	Grades 1-3 Educational Assistant	June 21	1:00-1:45 p.m.	Ryerson School
*Ann Smith and Jessica Black	Grade 2 Teachers	June 24	11:45-12:45 p.m.	Ryerson School
Molly Toni	Psychologist	July 5	1:30-2:15 p.m.	Wheatland School Division Office
Mary Braun	Grade 1 Teacher	July 7	1:30-2:15 p.m.	Her home
Bob Nelson	Psychologist (Former provincial supervisor, school psychologists)	Aug 25	2:00-3:00 p.m.	University of Manitoba

*(*Note: Ann Smith and Jessica Black shared a grade two classroom when Michael was in their class. They were interviewed at the same time because they identified that this joint interview would reflect most accurately the picture of Michael's grade two year).*

A brief guideline for questions for professionals is included at the end of this report as Appendix B-1. However, the interviews were open-ended, so these questions were only guidelines for areas of inquiry. In most interviews, all areas of inquiry were covered. A different guideline for questions for Tina, the mom, is included as Appendix B-2. Again, the interview flowed from Tina's input, covering these questions as well as much more information. When Michael was interviewed, questions for him were sensitive to his age and respectful of his personal privacy. The guideline for questions for Michael is attached as Appendix B-3. In his interview, I brought the guiding questions with me. I felt it was particularly important with Michael to ask questions that would be comfortable and easy for him to answer. As a result, the interview with him was less spontaneous and more structured than with any of the other participants.

All twelve interviews were audio taped and transcribed to better capture the facts, opinions, and insights collected from informants. I began transcriptions of an interview immediately after I completed the interview, so, for example, Walter’s transcription was done before I interviewed Simon. I completed eleven transcripts before I contacted Bob Nelson. Included in the transcripts were my observations and comments about the participant, the school, Michael, and later similarities and differences between participants’ perspectives. Transcripts were completed as outlined in Table Four.

Table Four – Transcript Completions

Participant Name	Position	Completion Date	Total Pages
Walter Abrams	Principal	May 23	21 pages
Susan Giesbrecht	Resource Teacher	May 30	17 pages
Simon Peters	Behaviour Support Teacher	June 13	19 pages
Michael Penner	Student	June 23	10 pages
Tina Penner	Parent	July 18	33 pages
Sonja Fehr	Grade 3 Teacher	July 24	13 pages
Tracy Friesen	Grade 3 EA	July 26	11 pages
Helen Berg	Grades 1-3 EA	July 30	13 pages
Ann Smith, Jessica Black	Grade 2 Teachers	August 5	16 pages
Molly Toni	Psychologist	August 10	17 pages
Mary Braun	Grade 1 Teacher	August 12	21 pages
Bob Nelson	Psychologist	September 18	14 pages

Although written data might have provided valuable information in this case, and I requested and gained permission to access written data from all participants except

Michael and Bob, I only received written information from Walter, the principal. From him, I received copies of two of Michael's Individual Education Plans (grades one and two), Michael's psychological assessment from September 2001, copies of Walter's personal notes from team meetings, and Michael's grade two and three responses to the school-wide needs surveys. This information from Walter corroborated what he and other participants said in their interviews. Because the information gathered from the interviews was substantive, I did not make further efforts to collect written information from informants. During my final analysis of the data, I did refer to Michael's psychological assessment and his Individual Education Plans to confirm some facts. There were twelve interviews with thirteen participants and two hundred and five pages of transcripts providing multiple sources of data to describe what Ryerson School did to work with Michael, how they did this work, and why they did it the way they did. Participants' interviews reinforced and built upon one another creating a comprehensive and detailed picture of how Ryerson School worked with their student labeled EBD.

How to Analyze the Data

In this descriptive case study, data was analyzed from several perspectives. I re-read each transcript and made notes in the margins on what was done, how it was done, and why it was done. During a second re-read, I made a second set of notes on Michael's story, recurring themes, and changes noted in Michael and Ryerson School.

An academic advisor from the University of Manitoba read all twelve transcripts and provided feedback about both the words of the participants and my comments. There was significant agreement between my observations and thoughts, and the feedback from

this individual. This long-distance, independent review of the data provided a valuable check on the validity of my data.

Chapter Four, *Michael's Story*, pulls the story of Michael's journey at Ryerson School from the perspectives of all participants. Using many of their words, I recount what happened in this case. It is a touching and inspiring story of a short period of time in a child's life. As in many children's stories, it may portray a life-changing time.

Chapter Five outlines a more cut-and-dried approach to the data analysis, outlining what was done to work with Michael, how this work was done, and why it was done the way it was. This analysis was completed by compiling the details from the transcripts to create as complete a picture as possible of the work done. In examining the how and why questions, I attempted to provide a summary of both external and internal factors that motivated participants to work as they did in this case.

Chapter Six continues the data analysis by describing two major recurring themes that emerged from the data. Careful reading and re-reading of the data in search of themes distilled these two themes as common in all the transcripts. Finally, in descriptive case studies such as this, pattern-matching logic is the dominant mode of analysis (Yin, 1994). The empirical evidence collected was compared to the predicted patterns defined prior to data collection. In Ryerson School, the predicted pattern to which the collected evidence is compared in Chapter Seven is the ecological framework of understanding behaviour change in schools. In examining the data, I looked for elements of the ecological perspective, including collaboration between various systems, system-wide focus on the social-emotional development of students in the school, and positive, developmental support for Michael who struggled in the school system. According to the

literature, and reinforced in the data, these elements of the ecological perspective nurtured the behaviour changes evident in Michael. These patterns emerged from what people said they did, their descriptions of how they did this, and their explanations for why they took the actions they did. As well, other patterns from the humanistic perspective emerged from the data. These patterns are matched to the humanistic perspective in the data analysis in Chapter Seven.

To test the validity of my data analysis, I asked two participants to read Chapters Four, Five, and Six. Walter, the principal, in his interview, provided an overview of Michael's case from within the school. His response to the data analysis was that "it captured the essence of what happened." He also thanked me profusely for studying the work of his school, giving them "an opportunity to reflect on what we're doing." Simon, the behaviour support teacher, provided an overview of Michael's case from outside the school. His response was "Thank you for bearing witness to this work. Thank you for telling his story." This review of the data analysis by two of those interviewed verified the accuracy and validity of the meaning I drew from the information gathered.

Combined, the story, the what, how, and why, the themes, and the pattern-matching logic provide a comprehensive analysis of the two hundred and five pages of interview transcripts collected in this case study. These multiple data analyses add depth to the recreation of what Ryerson School did to work with Michael.

Case Study Structure

The work done by Ryerson School with their student, Michael, was a critical case. According to Yin (1994), a critical case tests well-formulated theoretical constructs. As stated in the literature review, research and government documents indicated that support

for an ecological approach would emerge from this case. Ecological theory predicted that divisional, school, and classroom systems working together with the home and community, through systems-wide interventions, would positively impact all the individuals and systems involved in this case. Michael's behaviour improved dramatically in his first two years of school. According to the literature (Nelson, 2004; Scott, 2003), this kind of change was unusual, providing a test case opportunity to determine whether the propositions of ecological theory "are correct, or whether some alternative set of explanations might be more relevant" (Yin, 1994, p. 38). Michael's next dramatic behaviour change in grade three added another dimension, further testing the approaches used in Ryerson School, and therefore, the theoretical constructs on which these approaches were based.

Besides the opportunity to measure theory against reality, this in-depth study of how Ryerson School worked with Michael contributed to the body of knowledge about emotional-behavioural disorders. Michael's story, crafted from carefully collected data, resonates with truths about human beings that transcend the unique circumstances of his story (Feagin, Orum, & Sjoberg, 1991; Williams, 1991). Simon, who read the story, asked to meet with me to discuss this point. He was moved and grateful for the telling of the story, and reflected how its significance, in his view, went beyond the people and events in the story into the realm of what it means to be human. Hopefully, Michael's story will inspire others as it did Simon. It is necessary to change the outcomes for individuals with EBD. Michael's story, recounting one school's success, can bolster other peoples' efforts to work with challenging students.

CHAPTER FOUR – MICHAEL’S STORY

It was from words dropped by chance that, little by little, everything was revealed to me (de Saint-Exupery, 1971, 11).

This case study is about what Ryerson School did to work with a student labeled emotionally-behaviorally disordered (EBD) Level Two. But the story is Michael’s story.

I very clearly still remember the first moment that I met him. I can’t remember exactly how it was that I was asked to come to the school, but I walked in and there was this little guy huddled outside the kindergarten door, and he won’t go in. And the teacher bending over him, and in a very kinda snarly, snarky voice telling him that he better get in there right now cause she’s just had enough of waiting for him. ... And all I did is I just... sat down beside him. ... on the floor. And I just sat there. It was one of those kinda timeless times that coulda been a long time, coulda been a short time ... and then ... when I sensed that he might be willing to hear me, I told him who I was, and I asked him who he was, so...so he said ‘MMMich-ael.’

... And I just said “Wow. That looks like a pretty scary class.” And he said “Yyee-ah.” So then he and I ... went to the computer lab and I asked if he liked to color and we started drawing and coloring. And then you could just see, he just kinda loosened up. Took a couple of hours but eventually got him into the classroom and I stayed with him in the classroom.

These are Simon Peters’ words. Simon, the behaviour support teacher for Wheatland School Division, came to Ryerson School on a regular basis to work with teachers of

children with emotional-behavioural disorders. He was the first person to build a connection with Michael.

Simon remembered that Michael “just showed up” at Ryerson School on March 8, 2001. Michael’s family left their home in Ontario to escape his father whose application for parole sent his Mother into panicked flight. His jail time, Simon thought, was “for sexually abusing [Michael], his brother, and 14 or 15 other kids.” If this incarceration was over, it was no longer safe in Ontario, so Michael’s Mom packed up her four children and drove west. She got as far as Ryerson, Manitoba. This was the first stop in the mother’s search for a safe place where she could get help for herself and her wounded children.

Michael was five years old. That first day, his mother brought him to the school and into the office of Walter Abrams, the principal, who said,

The thing that I remember about him coming is ...that mom said that this transition will be very difficult, and the right thing for me to do is to leave and let you connect with Michael. ...Usually parents with a child that is having a rough day may want to stay around and help, and she felt help looked like her leaving to give a chance for someone else to get to know Michael. So after we had our conversation she left, and we had the opportunity to get to know Michael. And Michael had a mistrust of adults.

Mom was right about Michael’s transition to school. The resource teacher, Susan Giesbrecht, saw Michael that first day too. “I remember him. And the day he arrived, I remember him sitting in the hall crying and crying. And not wanting to go into his classroom at all.”

Others, said Walter, noticed Michael's difficulties that first day as well.

He didn't feel comfortable going into the kindergarten room at all. In fact refused to go into the room and the kindergarten teacher at that time was very academically focused. ... Felt that her job was to teach and she did a super job of that, but didn't see ...that before you can teach a child you also need to look to connect, to build a relationship with the child. And so the grade two teacher was across the room, saw what was going on, brought him some toys, and made small conversations with him.

This first incidental link between the frightened Michael and a caring adult became one of many in Michael's story.

Long after the first day, Michael continued to struggle to cope with his new environment. Tina, his mom, described their morning routine.

I had to carry him on and off the bus day after day. Every morning I had to force him on the bus. And he resented me for that. ... He wasn't ready. ... It was extremely hard for me to watch him cry and scream and go through that torment of having to go on that bus day after day.

In a place where most children felt excited and eager to learn, Michael found his own comforts. Simon described that

what we saw initially was hiding. ...All of a sudden Michael would be gone and we wouldn't know where he was. ... And I remember we'd find him curled up under a desk, curled up in a different class's coats. Or he would have pulled the coats over him. And he was just curled up and turtled up.

When he did remain visible, Michael sought comfort from familiarity in his new environment. Walter tried to help build on what was comfortable and familiar to Michael. He said, “The first couple of weeks he spent a lot of time in the classrooms where his brother was in grade one and with his grade six brother.”

After weeks of experiencing patience and persistent kindness, Michael began to feel somewhat safer coming to Ryerson School. Then he began to communicate in other ways. Many staff became aware of Michael as a new student. Helen Berg, an educational assistant in Michael’s classes, for three years said, “I was trying to think of when I first met him. He’s very bright.” With his observation that “[Michael] was a very bright lad,” Walter agreed with Susan’s assessment that “he’s very smart.” Simon summed up that “it became obvious very quickly that...A. We had a very bright kid. And B. He was going to use a lot of behaviour to talk to us.” So Michael’s academic gifts quickly became evident, creating the hope that once he felt safe, being in school would be easy for him. There were, however, other barriers. Walter saw that

he was overwhelmed by things that the regular kid would be able to handle. ... If he couldn’t understand it right away, then his way of solving it was to either run out of the classroom or to run home. Or just to be oppositional. ... Say ‘This is stupid. I don’t want to do this.’

Once Michael became more comfortable at Ryerson School, he also became more ready to express himself. According to Simon, it was

then we started to see a greater level of acting out. ... He would shout and he would scream. ... Maybe some pushing. ... And when he was first in kindergarten,

he was very, very, very disruptive. And extremely oppositional. ... He probably was what has been diagnosed as full-blown ODD when we first got him.

These were aspects of Michael that Tina, his mom, knew only too well. Although she left Michael alone with Walter that first day, Susan said she was often at school to “fight hard for supports” for her children. Tina knew they needed help. According to Tina, Michael struggled with “his rageous tempers and his overall general lack of connecting with people.” At school, she reported to Molly during Michael’s psychological assessment that “he was the main victim of sexual abuse” by his father and that he suffered “three to four nightmares every night.” Michael’s brief school experience in Ontario had been difficult. Tina remembered how “he was in Junior Kindergarten when the school was ready to just let him go out of school...because they couldn’t handle [him]. And that was related to his temper.” Michael’s mom said she and her children “needed support all the way around.” But with Michael, the added challenge, she said, was that “it was hard...to even connect with him, ‘cause he wouldn’t allow anybody to even become a friend to him. ... He hated everybody in general.” In fact, she said,

for the first years that we were here, the first two years, I remember, he wouldn’t allow nobody to hug him. You couldn’t get close to him. ...You couldn’t hold his hand or touch him. ... He would scrub his hands off. ‘Til they bled.

What Michael remembered about starting school was “the hardest was the teacher” because “at first the kindergarten teacher was very mean.” But then, said Walter, “he slowly built up trust. And slowly got into the kindergarten routine.” Michael with his child-like wisdom and egotism, said simply, “I just started being nice, and then she started being nice to me. ... Like I didn’t get into trouble and all that.”

That was the beginning.

Michael and his family stayed in Ryerson through that first difficult spring and into the next school year. Michael's mom, Tina, said:

I had to really affirm the fact that [the school people] were listening. And they were caring. And continuously repeating the fact that they're not going to hurtchu. ... And if they do, we're just goinna leave. Just like we did Ontario. We'll leave to another place. We'll find a safe place.

Tina's promise to Michael that they would find a safe place clearly indicated what this family needed from Ryerson School.

Several forces, perhaps his mom's persistence, perhaps his delicate connection to Ryerson School, perhaps his new teacher, or perhaps his eagerness to learn, seemed to balance Michael's overwhelming fears and anxieties enough to keep him coming back to school as he began grade one in September 2001. Michael started to connect to Ryerson School through individuals who worked with him there. His mom said: "The very first person he connected with was Simon Peters. ... And yet he was very scared of him. He was very scared of Simon because he was a man." Tina recalled Michael's very words from his early school experience with Simon:

"He's [Simon's] not going to be like my dad?"

'No, Michael, he won't be like your dad.'

'He's not going to hug me?'

'Nope, Michael, he won't hug you.'

'What is he going to do?'

‘He’s just going to try and be a friend to you. And help you with your school work. And help you with learning how to be a different person.’

‘ Am I a bad person?’

‘ No, you’re not a bad person. But some things we just can’t do like this.’”

Tina’s words indicated her sense that she and her children had found a safe place in Ryerson, and that their healing could begin.

The new grade one teacher, Mary Braun - who Walter said, was “very understanding” and who Susan described as “supportive” and “sensitive to his needs” - became another safe connection for Michael. His tiny social world expanded to include one more person. Still, Mary saw that Michael “would only...talk to people, when he was being disturbed by something, that had...earned his trust. Or he knew he could trust. After watching them for awhile, or...getting to know them for awhile.” In grade one, Mary became one of those few, exclusive connections: “If he was having problems or something...he would not respond to anyone except me.”

Michael’s struggle was not limited to his relationships with adults. He clashed with other children as well. Simon recalled how

we started noticing out on the playground that [Michael] didn’t really seem to know how to play with kids. We would get the parallel play where he’s playing beside a kid but...he didn’t know how to initiate the action...the interaction. And so we would see things like he would go up and the kids were playin’ ...buildin’ something, and he’d take it apart and break it...and then run away.

More and more, Michael’s “overall general lack of connecting with people” became apparent.

Outside experts were brought in that year to assess Michael. The provincial supervisor of school psychologists, Bob Nelson, saw Michael as a child “who looked pretty damaged.” He said,

I don't know that I could put my finger specifically on what it was. I mean he was aggressive,...he was unsocialized. All those kinds of things....And he was in rough shape. ... He was more feral in his response. Feral in how he protects himself. ... Everything's watching out for the next attack and attacking back. ... Protecting what you have and defending against everything. ... Everything is a potential threat.

In his world “where everything is a potential threat,” Michael's connection to others was both his greatest challenge and his best chance for success. He could hardly allow himself to be that vulnerable, and he could not function in the tiny world of Ryerson School if he did not.

Mary, the grade one teacher, backed by a team of provincial, divisional, school, and classroom supports, patiently nurtured Michael's socialization. Like the building of any relationship, this took time and understanding and continual adjusting. She told this story:

Well, the first few times when he was hiding, it took me almost an hour to try and get him to come to school. So then I would ask him very calmly, talk to him ‘What's wrong? What can I do to help?’ And eventually he'd open up to me and tell me what it was that was bothering him. ... So then I kinda picked up on that. And that was usually his problem when he was hiding from people. That he didn't

want to stick out. That he didn't want to arrive at school late. ... 'Cause it meant he stuck out when he came in the morning.

Another thing would be if someone did something better than him. Phys Ed was a tough time for him because he's very competitive, he's not athletic, and so he wasn't the best. In reading, he was one of the top of the class, so that was always a good time for him. ...

And also if he didn't want to do something when someone pushed him. ... It was always a power struggle for him. ... He needed to know he was the one in charge. ... Always. Not that I let him know that he was the one in charge. But I kinda tried to be one step ahead of him before...the power struggle happened. ...

And often, when I could see that he was cycling into his behaviour, I would take him out of the classroom and do some Math with him. Or do some reading with him. ... He was very good in reading so sometimes, when he was reading at level fourteen, I would take a level sixteen book and say 'Michael, I want to see if you can read level sixteen for me.' Of course, he always could. So then I praised him like crazy and he forgot what was bothering him.

Through the connections he formed in grade one, Michael changed. Mary described how he "enjoyed working one-on-one." Helen, an educational assistant or EA in Michael's classroom remembered how "he wanted to work in grade one. ... He was in the classroom all the time [and] did all of his work." Mary said "Everything seemed to get better as the year went on. ...He seemed to enjoy his time there. Playing with other kids. ... It was good for him to learn the social skills. From other kids." By the end of grade one, Walter saw

that Michael had “gained a lot of confidence.” A web was developing out of the tiny thread of connection that attached Michael to Ryerson School.

Michael’s words about grade one were simple and emphatic. “My teacher’s name was Mrs. Braun. And she was **very nice.**” And he also remembered other connections: “At first when I was alone. Was kinda scary. And then I met some friends. And then I ...wasn’t scared any more. ... I met my friends Billy, Brian, Sam and a few more.”

Michael came back to Ryerson School for grade two in September of 2002 and started school with a whole year of positive social and academic experiences to build on. Walter saw the confidence that Michael gained through grade one “going over in grade two. We actually had a very smooth year where he could do a lot of work and a lot of things that were bothering him when he came initially were not there the second year.”

In grade two Michael’s teachers were a mother-daughter teaching team. Jessica, the daughter, was the teacher who brought him toys and small talk as he sat petrified outside the kindergarten classroom in March of 2001. Ann, in Simon’s words, was

an exceptionally good teacher, ... probably in the last five years of her career, ...

[who] provided a consistent sense of order in her classroom. ... Kids knew what to predict and that’s always been important to [Michael] because surprises and

changes and transitions at that point were extremely difficult for him.”

Both Ann and Jessica, in Ann’s words, “expected the same academics [from Michael] as everyone else.” Michael quickly demonstrated that he was up to the task, “because,” said Ann, “he is a very smart boy. He can read very well. His Math skills were excellent. ... He liked competition so I would do Mad Minutes with him. I would send home Mad Minutes worksheets which he just loved doing.” Jessica added:

another thing he really enjoyed [was] project work. And he really got absorbed in that kinda thing. And I know a couple of times we'd even let him stay after school because it was important to him to be able to finish. ... Some of the science construction stuff that I did with him, I found that he just loved the whole process: the planning, and gathering the supplies, and then the building. Like he loved that all. ... Like especially in the example of the boat building, I remember that one clearly. He stayed after school to finish it. That next day we had a little competition whose boat could hold the most pennies. And he was right in there and excited...and luckily for him, his boat won."

The resource teacher, Susan, remembered how Michael "was reading chapter books every night." Michael himself stated quite proudly: "in grade two already I used to read BIG chapter books like about that thick," holding up his thumb and third finger to show almost an inch.

As he met academic challenges, Michael struggled with the internal work guided by the school psychologist, Dr. Molly Toni. Molly said she "took on the individual work with Michael" and "met with [him], at the most frequent times every two weeks, sometimes...once a month to do individual kind of play therapy."

It was pretty unstructured...because I kinda let Michael just kinda lead the way. I didn't really know what to do with him. I just threw a bunch of kindof crafts stuff into a box I called the 'Imagination Box.' Cause when I first started with him, he was very tense, very perfectionistic. He used to tantrum when something wasn't perfect. He didn't like to be touched. Very kind of prickly. Didn't like to make things. ... He didn't want to talk about his Dad or anything. ... He just kind of took

it in. ... At first he couldn't even really play. ... I think the first three or four times he didn't even do the box. But he would just try to pull things out, nothing was structured. Like we couldn't make anything. Just tantrum and cry. And it was a disaster.

So then I started doing structured crafts. ... And he still wouldn't do anything that made him feel dirty. I had to do all the gluing, because he couldn't do it. And so we slowly kindof moved from there where he would do half the gluing, but he would still freaked and have to go wash whenever there was any paint or glue on him. ... So for the first year we just kind of did those kinds of things til we got to the point where he was comfortable with glue on him or crayon or maker.

I didn't know what to do with the touching thing. You know, because I thought someone who's kindof lived through that, had his dad rape him who knows how many times, what do you do with that kind of thing? So finally I ended up....I took my dogs. I have five dogs and then finally I just asked the principal if I could just bring a dog every second week. ... 'Do whatever you want. I'll clear the gym. I'll do whatever. Bring your dogs.' And so one by one, I brought my dogs. And it was the one and only time that that boy talked about his Dad. And it was only with one dog. And we actually were out on the playground equipment one day, and ...it was with my dog that was hand-shy. And he asked me why Abby was afraid when you kindof raised your hand. And I told him it was because we had gotten Abby from the pound and we had thought that she had been abused from her previous owners. And then he just said to me 'My dad did that to me.' And he said 'Why do people hit people they love?' And he just talked and talked about his dad,

hitting people that you love. You know, it was just this wonderful thing. With dogs. Pet therapy thing. ... For a while. ... So we did the dog thing. And that really helped.

And then the next year, the Imagination Box worked. ... I stopped structuring the crafts. And that little kid just started makin' amazing things. ... We did a mask. Which I thought was a real cool thing cause you had to put it over your face. ... I thought 'I wonder what that does to someone who's been abused?' ... And then we made an exploding volcano. Was the ultimate in cool.

And there were days when...I mean I remember one session when he came in and it was obviously a bad day, and he was just kind of disorganized and didn't make anything and he had tears in his eyes and he wouldn't do anything. ... I just looked at him and said 'Sooooah, what's up?' And he just looked at me and he started to cry and said, 'Make me into somebody else.' 'Okay,' ... I said, 'So who do you want to be?' And then he looked at me and said 'Make me into an Indian.' So we took like an hour and from head to toe, we made him into an Indian. Right.

Headband. The whole body thing. And then I made him shoes too. Lace-up shoes. Like he was just grinning from ear to ear at the end of the session."

New abilities revealed through the creative play thrilled Michael. Molly described his reactions: "He'd be grinning and proud. And he really is quite creative and talented. And his stuff would be really nice. Some of it was nicer than what I made. ... Just a really self-esteem boosting kind of thing for him." The therapy had individual and internal impact for Michael, but there were social consequences as well. Molly quickly saw how

what happened with him was that it was also a status thing. It became a status thing in his class because when I walked in that school...it was a small school, the whole school would just say 'Dr. Toni's here Michael. You're so lucky. You're just so lucky. What are you making today?' And you know ...he went from being the bad kid, the kid who's always in trouble, to being the lucky kid.

The therapy affected Michael's internal state, but also inadvertently helped to change his social status with his peers.

Difficulties Michael experienced in grade two occurred during what Susan called "the looser times" and were often what the teacher described as "recess-related." He was, however, learning some basic social skills. Susan remembered

last year when I was on duty one day and it had been a situation of getting along with friends. I can't remember the specifics, but he ended up calling someone a bitch. And...so the kids, of course, came to me. 'So and so he said something he's not supposed to say. Blah. Blah.' 'Kay I got the story. Of course, he ran. He bolted. Didn't leave the school property. But just ran away. And so I tried to talk to him. But he didn't want to. He ran. But he came and hid around the corner of the school. And I was pushing someone on the swing and he kept peeking around the corner to look at me. Kept peeking around the corner to look at me and I took it as an invitation. So I went to go talk to him and then he was willing to tell me about it.

Walter saw changes as well.

Initially he had very few friends. So often ... the reason for that was his behaviour would keep kids away from him 'cause they would be afraid of him. ... And as he

was learning to play differently with kids, he gained more friends. So that by the end of grade 2, he... was no longer looked on as 'the bad kid' or the kid that didn't have friends. Now he had friends and a lot of it had to do with learning how to play with others. And also when you're not getting what you want, doing it differently rather than kicking or hurting somebody else.

Experts outside Ryerson School were amazed by the second grade Michael. Simon, the behaviour support teacher, was in charge of accessing funding for programming supports for children, like Michael, labeled emotionally-behaviourally disordered (EBD). He said:

Michael was able to connect socially, form friendships from a peer group within that class, and at the same time thrive academically, while beginning to learn how to behave appropriately. ... Like I would say for the most part of grade two, he did not present as an EBD kid.

Bob Nelson, the provincial supervisor of school psychologists, was astonished by the changes in Michael from kindergarten to grade two.

I couldn't BELIEVE the change in him over a short period of time. It was absolutely remarkable. ... I've seen lots of kids like that. ... So I've got this big case file in my head. And I know how they should progress. Roughly, ... and I tend not to tell people that 'cause they get discouraged if you tell 'em that. ... And he didn't make progress like he should have. He made it much faster. And much more striking in terms of the socialization part. He was starting to get the very basic structures for social interaction. Of peers. And that's no mean feat. That's a very very complex and complicated thing to do.

By the end of grade two, educational assistants, teachers, clinicians, and experts were freely talking about the “growth” and “positive change” in Michael. Jessica, who comforted the frightened Michael outside the kindergarten door two years earlier, said, “For me to see from, you know, a kid that didn’t even want to be in the room, to where he was at, it was like WOW! It was really exciting.”

When I first started this case study, grade two was the end of the story. As in all narrative inquiry, I stepped into the middle of a story and it continued as I did my work. The lovely ending to grade two developed into a whole new “ending” in grade three. I would be remiss in arbitrarily cutting off Michael’s continuing story as my work dragged on.

At the beginning of grade three, supports for Michael were adjusted because he didn’t appear to need them the way he had when he started at Ryerson School. Tina, whose early insistence had created lots of pressure to provide supports, said, “They decided last year Michael was doing so well that...he wouldn’t qualify for this year. ... They just thought he was doing so well that he didn’t really need it.”

Michael’s grade three teacher, Sonja Fehr, was new to the teaching profession, new to the school, and new to the community.

In September when I was first introduced to Michael, I was told that he...did not not take well to new people and strangers and he did not like to be touched. And yet at our Meet-the-Teacher night, he was perfectly fine walking around me and seemed to react in a surprising manner. In that he seemed to be comfortable coming in and be comfortable with me.

And I did not notice that there was anything unusual with him. When we played gym we often did high fives. And at the end of the day they have the option of giving me a high five or a handshake, that kind of thing, and he did not seem to be adverse to that at all.

So had I not been told about it, I would not have seen it in class. He was very quiet and very reserved. ... And so there really were no issues in September and October in that he just stayed in class fully [and] he did all of the work that was required.

But Michael's miraculous transformation began to come undone. Sonja described how towards November and December, there was more writing. And he started off doing some of the writing. ... And he found it very difficult. He would get easily frustrated and cry but he would still do it. ... He would just kind of manage to calm himself down, so he would be distressed at it, but he would be able to settle down and get it done. ... It did kind of progress before Christmas to where he became very frustrated and angry and he would start throwing the...notebook across the room. And just yelling 'I'm not going to do this.'

Something wasn't working for Michael anymore, and he was sending that message the

best way that he knew how. In January, Sonja said she saw that Michael

became increasingly frustrated in that he would just try to disrupt the class. Was no longer sitting quietly or throwing the book and then sometimes he would kind of put his head on his desk before and would be crying softly or just kind of sitting there. ... But it escalated to where he'd make noise so I could not talk over his noise. ... And so that kind of escalated into where we started doing Joey drills*. ...

And it ...reached the point where...we had three Joey drills in one period and he would run in and out of the school and hide. Or in and out of the classroom and hide.

(“Joey drills” were a class code indicating that all students were to leave the classroom. The class was trained to leave in a calm, orderly fashion if a student became out of control in the classroom. Since there were two students with emotional-behavioural disorders in this class, the students were quite practiced in this routine. Off the record, Susan actually told me the story of this class marching down the hall and, when she brightly asked where they were off to, one student sighed “Oh nowhere. We’re just doing another sloppy joe drill.”)*

Nobody quite knew how to understand what was happening with Michael, not even Michael. “Into February,” Sonja remembered, “things just kept getting worse, and we met with him to talk to him about having ‘I don’t feel like working’ cards which worked for all of a day. ... So trying to give him a card so that when he wasn’t able to verbalize, that he could just hold up the card.”

Sonja thought Michael’s frustrations grew out of all the “times when I as not available to him.” Helen, an EA who had been in Michael’s class since grade one, commented that “Michael used to love to work and love challenges, but this year he doesn’t want to touch it.” Tracy, the EA who later worked directly with Michael one-on-one, observed that “last year [the class] was more structured” and now “the grade they’re in, it’s far more movement. ... This is happening. That’s happening. Like it’s exciting, but...I don’t know if that overwhelms him sometimes.” According to Tracy, the other kids in the class changed, too. “From last year to this year, they have become very active, very

social, need to move around.” Michael’s mom, Tina, predicted that Michael would need continued support at school even though he had made such remarkable progress in grade two. She thought removing any supports would be detrimental. “I told them last year that I don’t think that’s a good idea. I think it’s too soon.” Molly suspected that things might have “fallen apart at home” and she definitely saw

frustration in terms of the school team as the behaviour of the boys [Michael and his brother] deteriorated. And everyone’s been so disheartened. ... We’ve just come so far. And then now ‘UAAAA.’ Here we are. Back where we were a year ago.”

Despite numerous team meetings and many attempts to support Michael in the classroom, Sonja said that by February, Michael began “to spend the morning outside of the classroom. And in the afternoons he would come back and spend in the classroom. And that has worked out really, really well.” Sometimes when a teacher identifies that removing a student from the classroom “has worked really, really well”, that means it has worked well for the teacher. In Michael’s case, however, he continued to demonstrate academic, social, and personal growth as he moved back and forth between the classroom and individualized, self-directed learning. Sonja made sure to provide Michael with

an LA option, one of which was a written or a reading [component]” or “some software he could use so he could do an LA assignment. And then there were options for Math as well. So he was still doing the same work, but he was choosing when he would do it. And there were parts where he would decide the order they would be in.

Michael's academic progress was easy to measure. By May of grade three, Susan reported that Michael was doing "the grade four math outside the classroom."

Michael worked with an educational assistant in the alternative setting of the computer lab. Up until this time, he would have nothing to do with educational assistants. But as Michael and Tracy spent time in the computer lab, Tracy said

we started to form a bond together. We're right together. Then we'd play games and he would teach me. How to play certain games. ... I couldn't do all the little tricks. 'Oh there. You're supposed to do this.' Hittin' buttons and it's like 'It's not moving! What's happening?' And he'd laugh...saw that he kinda taught me...how to do the games. ... It made him feel more comfortable. Okay, like I'm just the same as him. And all the learning and stuff. He's teachin' me, so he got a real kick out of that.'

In the past, Michael had refused to work one-on-one with an EA. In grade three, Michael connected to another person, an educational assistant, in a new and appropriate way. Tracy thought he actually identified with her in learning something new and this supported his efforts to expose himself to new learning.

Michael's rocky grade three year presented several opportunities for him to demonstrate the extent of his social growth as well. Susan, the resource teacher, Walter, the principal, and Simon the behaviour support teacher, all told the same story. In Susan's words:

One of the situations happened not too long ago. ... [Michael's] competence was threatened again. A kid in his class who he knows is not as bright as he is said he read three chapter books in one day. Well, [Michael] knew it was a lie because he

had seen [Jon] flip through books and he knows [Jon] can't read that much. And so 'don't you dare say that you can, because you can't.' And that made him mad. It started a fight one day and the next day it went on into the playground. And so then [Jon, the] kid that didn't really read the three books, you know, said something back to him and then Michael grabbed his hat. And ran away with it. And this really upset [Jon]. Tears and crying and very upset. 'Why's he taking it?' ... That just happened to be a day when there were like five teachers outside. And so I was called 'Can you go maybe get the hat from him?' Well in the meantime he'd got his bike from...the bike parking area and started driving on the playground. Well my concern was safety for the other kids at that time, so I just marched over and I very firmly said 'Michael, get that bike off the playground now.' And he went.

But then he drove back and forth by the playground down the road by the playground with this hat, taunting this other boy who, he could see was just hysterical. And then what happened was he drove home. Or then actually another student, a grade six student, I guess saw him there, but didn't see me watching. ...tried to go get him and tell him 'Not supposed to do that.' But he bolted off home and then drove around the school the other way. And then he came here and another student got the hat away from him and then that made him so mad he went home, put bricks in his pocket, a brick in his hand. He was coming to school to kill everyone.

Well mom chased him down. Brought him back to school and we got together in a room ... to talk about what had happened when he was upset.

And as soon as I walked in the room he said ‘I don’t want Mrs. Giesbrecht here.’

And I said ‘That’s fair. I don’t have to be here now.’

And then his mom said ‘But what if I want Mrs. Giesbrecht here? I think it’s important that’s she’s here.’ Which I thought was very good for Mom to support the school.

And ... then I just said ‘Well, I spoke to you very firmly on the playground. You probably didn’t like that very much.’ And then, of course, the tears come right away. Well he didn’t like that.

‘I didn’t like the way you talked to me.’

I said ‘That’s fair. But I was concerned about the safety of the other kids.’

‘Well I would drive safe.’ You know he had every excuse.

I said, ‘But I was concerned about the safety of the kids. I needed you to be off.’

So then after that we could discuss what had happened and it all came back to that whole book incident where [Jon] didn’t really read three chapter books. And we talked about how ‘But isn’t it our belief statement at Ryerson School that we encourage people? Part of our belief statement. And by telling Jon that’s he’s a liar and didn’t really read ‘em, is that encouraging him?’

‘Hm. No.’ He realized it wasn’t. And by the end of it all, he asked to talk with Jon by himself or with Walter.

[Michael] said [to Jon] ‘I’m proud of you for reading three books. Next time try and read five.’

Michael lost control of the situation and his emotions. But, given the opportunity to do what Susan called “some fixing,” he was able to successfully evaluate his behaviour and then find ways to re-connect to the school beliefs and his friend.

Simon, the behaviour support teacher, continued to work one-on-one with Michael throughout grade three, particularly after Michael’s classroom collapse. To provide safe opportunities for Michael to experience frustration and anger, Simon described how he and Michael

play a lot of games and sometimes he invites friends. ... Sometimes one is okay, two depending who it is. Just note that he really still struggles in a group. ... He just gets really hyper and wired. He’s a high energy kid. ... And initially, you know, if he would lose it would just be he couldn’t handle losing anything with anybody. And now in game situations...we play Life, and we play SORRY, and...he plays just for the fun of it. The game. He doesn’t mind winning, he doesn’t mind losing.

But, Simon chuckled, like any normal eight-year old, “he still likes winning better than losing.”

Aside from Michael’s increasing capacity to include others in his world, there were other indicators of Michael’s social growth. Tina described how in the earlier times that Michael met with Simon “If there was a day that...Simon couldn’t make it, Michael would blow a fuse at home, at school, everywhere. ... Michael did not take it lightly when he had to share Simon with other children.” Then, in June of Grade three, she noted a change:

Now he's kind of acknowledging that that would be selfish. So he tells me 'It wouldn't be fair for me to just have Simon. I kind of felt sorry for the other kids. They need to know how nice Simon is. How good he is.' So he will kind of give...sympathetic feelings towards the others. The children in regards to they don't know how nice, how good Simon is.

Simon also described the evolution of Michael's relationship with him: “

Something that I think indicates success is, I think Michael is not dependent on me. He likes it when I come. He likes doing stuff with me, but he can now handle, let's say, if I can't come for whatever reason, he can keep on going with his day.
... So when you talk about successes, it's those kinds of things.

Interesting how a measure of progress for Michael, who could not connect with anyone when he came, was that he did not depend on important relationships to determine how he felt about his day.

Michael formed solid friendships. On the latest of Ryerson School's semi-annual *Needs Survey*, which Michael filled out in May of grade three, he colored in the “5 ☺” (Happy Face), named Sam under the words “I feel like I am a friend to someone,” and named eleven boys from grades two to five in Ryerson School under “Others are being a friend to me.” Walter, Susan, Simon, Sonja, Tracy, and Helen all identified that Michael is “well-liked” by a “circle of friends” where he “now is one of the group of boys” who “fits in really well.”

Perhaps at the root of Michael's social growth were a new level of self-understanding, self-acceptance, and, to use Sonja's word, “self-regulating.” Michael chose when to stay in the classroom and when to join the class based on his assessment

of his level of agitation. Helen, an EA in Michael's grades one to three classrooms, said, "If he feels he can't be in the classroom, he can leave when he wants to. ... At first he wasn't very good at judging that. ... You know, and towards the end, ...he has a good judge of that and kinda knows when he can be in the class or not." Sonja, the teacher, said the same thing. "When he feels himself getting frustrated, he will ask to leave. And so that's really remarkable for him."

At eight years old, Michael was beginning to learn strategies to deal with emotional reactions that prevented him from functioning effectively. Tina, his mom, said Michael now "knows when he's angry. ... He can now guide himself to making a positive choice where before he couldn't. ... Before he couldn't see the difference between positive and negative. He knows what positive now means. And negative."

Michael could **tell me** what works for him. He said he likes a schedule at school so that "there's not just one thing that we have to do. We have to learn more things and do all of it. And so if we didn't have a schedule, ... we would have to do the same boring thing over and over." He said it was hard to be in the classroom "when it's too confusing. And when I'm in the middle of doing something else and then the teacher tells me to do different things." Words are now sometimes available to Michael to communicate some of his needs. He cannot always find and use the right words in every situation, but he is only eight years old. The key, said Simon, is "he just seems to spend more and more time in his competent state." Through strengthened connections between Michael and people in Ryerson School, Michael learned to understand how the environment affected his emotions and how to use the connections with others to help control that environment.

Tina, with heartfelt love, dread, and sense of responsibility for her children, expressed what she experienced with Michael in the last four years.

Because my Michael he would become somethin' that could be dangerous to all of us. If he wasn't gettin' the support. If he wasn't getting help. I'm not saying that he cou...that he will. I'm saying he could. ... It is always there. It will always be with him. But at least now he's learning to change. And learning to redirect himself. ... He's a positive child now. He's a loveable child. ...Now you can hug. He's a loveable child. He likes to be hugged now.

CHAPTER FIVE – WHAT, HOW, & WHY

“The biggest challenge was trying to figure out...what would make his year look successful[so] whatever worked, we did (Braun transcript, 2004).

The research question of this case study was: “What was done at Ryerson School to work with a child labeled emotionally-behaviourally disordered, Level Two?” In interviewing participants, supplementary questions were “How was this work done?” and “Why was the work done the way it was?” All thirteen participants’ answers to these three questions were consistently similar, reinforcing the reliability of the data collected.

In response to the question of what was done, participants identified actions taken at several levels, including one-to-one, in the classroom, in the school, in the community, and in the school division. In response to the question of how the work was done, participants described the details involved in their efforts to make interventions happen. These descriptions outlined how the external realities of time, space, and people were organized. More subtly, the descriptions of how the work with Michael was done at Ryerson School also included explanations about the internal influences that determined how people communicated and interacted with Michael one-on-one, or in his presence in the classroom, on the playground, or in the school. Responses to the question about why the work was done the way it was explained what motivated participants. People interviewed in the study were motivated by external factors like job expectations, research, school planning and leadership, and divisional goals and leadership. People also described and implicated internal motivators like a sense of responsibility, their beliefs about behaviour and learning, and their profound sense of the value of children, learning, and community, as motivating their actions.

What Ryerson School Did to Work with Michael

“We’re responding by giving ...kids like Michael... more” (Giesbrecht transcript, 2004).

In the work with Michael at Ryerson School, interventions were implemented at multiple levels on a continuous basis. All thirteen participants interviewed for this case study, in describing what was done to work with Michael, referred to many of the same interventions.

On an individual level, interactions with Michael were tailored to his needs. From accommodating him in his brother’s classes, to spending time searching and retrieving him when he hid, to giving him time in the gym or computer lab to cycle down, staff at Ryerson adjusted to meet Michael’s needs. Practical, in-the-moment adaptations were made by people in the school time and time again. The resource teacher, Susan, and the principal, Walter, were involved with Michael one-to-one when he needed help to calm his anxieties, to debrief with him, and to coach him through the process of fixing his mistakes. Simon, the behaviour support teacher, spent one-on-one time with Michael drawing and playing games. Furthermore, social experiences were created when Michael’s friends were invited to participate. Molly, the school division’s psychologist, provided play therapy and special outings during her individual time with Michael.

In the classroom, accommodations were also made to serve Michael’s needs. Different teachers made different adaptations as Michael progressed through grades one, two, and three. In grade one, Mary did daily mood checks, used academic distractions, offered him choices, and constantly monitored his reactions to figure out what triggered and what alleviated Michael’s distress. In grade two, Jessica and Ann kept Michael’s

stress level down in the classroom by allowing him to do his corrections immediately rather than during the scheduled time. They also used academic challenges, like chapter books and extra Mad Minutes in math, to entice Michael's full attention in the classroom. Transitions from recess to class were turned into competitions to distract and motivate Michael. In grade three, Sonja did not use a red pen or x's to mark Michael's work, let him watch classroom activities until he was comfortable to join in, and used the computer lab as an alternate setting in the mornings.

Adding an educational assistant (EA) to the classroom was another intervention for Michael. Initially the EA supported learners in and out of the class when the teacher worked with Michael individually. Then in grade three, an EA assisted and supervised Michael's learning activities out of the classroom in the mornings. During this time away from the classroom, Michael's learning occurred in an individualized, alternative setting in the school's computer lab. Adaptations were made to Language Arts and Math, so, for example, he completed substitute activities like emailing the behaviour support teacher instead of writing stories.

There were school-wide interventions for Michael at Ryerson School. Every participant interviewed for this study spoke of a team of school and divisional staff who worked together to support Michael's success. Walter, Susan, Simon, Molly, Sonja, and Tracy all talked at some length about the school's commitment to the Restitution Model which underpinned the learning of individuals, classes, and the whole school. Susan, Simon, Molly, and Sonja identified that the leadership of Walter and Susan in direct work with Michael, team meetings, connections to Michael's home and in the community, and in support of other school staff was critical to their work with Michael at Ryerson School.

Susan and Mary described that daily communications among school staff members, and between the school's staff and home were central to the efforts with Michael. Ann and Jessica also identified that the exchange of information about Michael in the transition from grade to grade was significant.

An important element of the support to Michael from grades one to three was the connection with Tina, his Mom. When she arrived in Ryerson, Tina fought hard to access supports for her children, making many demands of the school. She compared the past to what was happening now: "I asked for somebody to help me with it. And I never got it. The only place that ever did... give me the help I needed for him was Ryerson School." Walter, the administrator, Susan, the resource teacher, the divisional specialists, and the classroom teachers all provided the help Tina requested. In grade one, Michael's teacher made almost daily calls home to let Tina know what had happened during the day and to share strategies about how to work effectively with Michael. Walter made regular contact in numerous ways, including walking Michael's brother home every day for two months to smooth the transition from school to home. In addition, the school division's social worker met regularly with Tina to provide her with supports that increased the stability at home.

Another level of support occurred in the community. Susan described the way in which she, along with others in the community, took Michael and his family into their homes. There were church connections, and a mentoring relationship between Walter and Michael and his brothers. When parents expressed concerns about the impact of the behaviour of children with emotional-behavioural disorders on their children, a meeting

was held at the school to initiate the process of educating parents about behavioural disorders and the school's philosophy and practice of inclusion.

Finally, participants in the case study referred to the impact of divisional support in their work with Michael at Ryerson School. Walter, the school administrator talked about the school division's commitment to the philosophy and practice of the Restitution Model. Through the divisional budget for professional development, large numbers of staff in the division, including educational assistants, teachers, and administrators received training in this model. The division also provided information about and access to provincial documents that outlined recommendations to support school's planning for behaviour interventions. The division trained staff, including the behaviour support teacher, to be WEVAS (Working Effectively with Violent and Aggressive States) trainers so that there was ready access to both expertise and training in this model. This workshop focused on the development of individual skills and classroom strategies to keep and move students into competent learning states. The division contributed further by employing specialists like the behaviour support teacher, the psychologist, and the social worker. Ryerson School accessed these resources fully in their work with Michael.

At Ryerson School, multi-level supports were pulled together to build a comprehensive individual, classroom, school, and community program for Michael. The chart on the next page provides a detailed summary of what interventions were implemented to work with Michael at Ryerson School

TABLE FIVE - WHAT	Educational Assistants	Teachers	Resource Teacher	Administration	Clinicians
Individual (Michael)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one-on-one academic support in the classroom - one-on-one academic support in alternative setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - one-on-one time (behaviour) - individual academic challenges and adaptations - mood checks - alternate setting + academic options - choices - academics + setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Process behaviour problems one-on-one - Attend to Michael if class in Joey drill 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Process behaviour problems one-on-one, with peers - Attend to Michael if class in Joey drill - After school time + activities - Mentoring in community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -psych assessment -counselling (psychologist) -one-on-one support and -social skills training (Behaviour Support (BS) Teacher)
Class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -supervise class while teacher works one-on-one with Michael -work with all students in the class -accompany students during Joey drills -supervise students during lunch hour and recess on the playground 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -watch for and avert potentially stressful situations -plan for Michael to minimize his distress (academics, events) -plan for Michael to maximize his success (academics, events) -ensure that key people are available to work with Michael in the classroom -adjust routines -Joey Drills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -support classroom teachers (collaboration time, resources) -support EAs (collaboration time) -Joey drills (Work with Michael) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -support for teacher (substitute, debrief teacher and Michael, plan) -Joey drills (Work with Michael) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -BSTeacher – one-on-one support for teachers -BS Teacher – teach needs (Restitution Model) -BS Teacher – Substitute for teacher -Team meetings
School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -be near Michael on the playground to provide positive support and supervision -team meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -provide extra comforts (toys in Kindergarten) -ensure key people are available to be with Michael for school events (field trips, school picnic) -team meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -lead team meetings -process behaviour problems with Michael and other students (individual and groups) -funding applications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Belief Statements (School, classes, staff) -Team meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -input and time during crises or emergencies -field trip supervision
Home		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -regular contact -positive information -call about school events -team meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -discuss behaviour problems with Michael and Mom -invite Michael to home for dinner, to play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -walk Michael's brother home from school (2 months) -process behaviour problems with Mom and Michael (school and community related) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -social worker – support for mom and family
Community		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -participate in meeting to inform parents about Joey drill and working with EBD in the classroom 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -church connection to Michael's family participate in meeting to inform parents about school's way of working with EBD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -organize and chair parent council information meeting on EBD -church connection with the family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -provide expert information at the parent information meeting
Division	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -participate in WEVAS and Restitution training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -WEVAS training -Restitution Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -knowledge of provincial documents (Funding, Behaviour Plans) -WEVAS, Restitution training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -WEVAS, Restitution training -Provincial expectations -Access divisional supports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -help access divisional supports -support for funding applications and behaviour plans

How Ryerson School Worked with Michael

“How can [you] tell me next time...so that I know what your needs are, and you know where I stand, and we can mutually respect one another?” (Abrams transcript, 2004).

An analysis of the external factors affecting how the work with Michael was done at Ryerson School is relatively straightforward, outlining the logistics of organizing time, space, and people. People described how these elements were organized to accomplish the one-on-one work with Michael, the classroom work, and the school-wide strategies. The analysis of the internal factors of how this work was done is rather more complex, involving the subtleties of individual and systemic communication styles and attitudes. These internal factors were evident in how the one-on-one, classroom, and school-wide interventions were accomplished.

One-on-one Interventions

When Michael was unable to function in the classroom, from his inability to enter the kindergarten room when he arrived, to his running and hiding, to his disruptive behaviour in grade three, an individual from Ryerson School’s staff connected with him one-on-one. While one adult interacted with Michael for a period of time, other adults covered for that person. That was how people altered the organization of their time to accomplish some of the one-on-one work with Michael. The one-on-one time was about “cycling him down,” to use Walter’s words, and then what Simon called “validating the need behind the behaviour” and “always using [the situation] as a teaching tool.” The one-on-one interaction was a gentle, supportive process, used as an opportunity to encourage Michael to learn new emotional and behavioural responses. There were select

people who could do this work with him; usually adults who had built what Walter called “a trusting relationship” with him. This meant the staff covered for each other to ensure that a trusted adult was available for Michael at all times.

Michael’s emotional and behaviour problems provided many real-life social experiences through which he was taught new behaviours. This teaching did not happen one or two times with Michael, but many times, so that eventually, as Walter said, “rather than using behaviour for words, he was actually starting to talk about what was bothering him.” In Michael’s case, one-on-one interactions worked to form trusting relationships between him and adults in the school. In the context of these trusting relationships, he began to be able to understand his emotions and behaviours. Part of how Ryerson School worked with Michael, participants explained, was patiently building relationships with adults who first validated, and then challenged his emotional and behavioural responses. The process Michael experienced over and over was about understanding and internalizing appropriate social behaviours.

How adults communicated with Michael was important. Walter described how Mary, Michael’s grade one teacher, successfully built a working relationship with him:

And then he moved to grade one and he had a very understanding teacher. ... So when he forgot his lunch kit, he would burst out crying and she would ask him what he needed. “Well I forgot my lunch at home.” She would ask him “Well would you like to go and pick up your lunch?” And he would say yes. And he would go home and pick up his lunch and then he would have a good day. Or if he didn’t know how to do something, she would spend the extra time with him and show him how to do things and he just had a much easier time. [The]

teacher seemed to have the empathy. Always inviting and encouraging him. [She] used a very calm ...calm neutral voice. And it seemed to calm him down and allowed him to understand that ‘yes I can do this.’ And he gained a lot of confidence in grade one.

Mary concurred that how she framed her interactions with Michael was critical. She said, “I said everything in a very positive way for him. Like anything was said negative, then he would resist. Head down and not talk.” In the WEVAS model, what Walter and Mary described was “Open Communication” which, again in the WEVAS model, was used to help Michael stay competent and also move him from an anxious to a competent state. Often, when Michael was more than anxious, Mary said she would offer him choices to re-engage his thinking. Susan described how Mary did this:

if Michael was getting upset or agitated or didn’t like what was going on, the teacher then would just make sure...that she was the one who would go talk to him. And do the same things: talk to him, give him a couple of choices, disengage, and then come back to him. Probably get him out of the class, so she could talk to him privately. And give him some space.

How the one-on-one interventions were conducted with Michael required adults to make practical adjustments of time and space, as well as sensitive, skilled responses to his needs.

Classroom Interventions

At the classroom level, teachers and educational assistants worked to build classroom successes for Michael. According to Mary, “the biggest challenge was trying to figure out, in the beginning of the year especially, what would make his year look

successful.” Staff took notice of Michael’s strengths and stressors and adjusted classroom routines to accentuate his strengths and minimize his stressors. In grade one, Mary identified what she observed:

As the year went on, I got to know better what was making him cycle. ... One thing...was when he was late for school. Automatically meant a bad day for him. ... ‘Cause it meant he stuck out when he came in the morning. ...Another thing would be...if someone did something better than him. ... Also, if he didn’t want to do something when someone pushed him. ... That would make him shut down.”

Mary, who said, “I was always watching for signs of him cycling down or up,” and “I had to be one step ahead of him,” also identified that

often when I could see that he was cycling into his behaviour, I would take him out of the classroom and do some Math with him. Or do some reading with him. ...He was very good in his reading. ... So then I praised him like crazy and he forgot what was bothering him.”

Mary, using acute observation skills, kept close watch on Michael moment-to-moment in her classroom to prevent and protect him from situations that could trigger his hypersensitive emotions. She often used Michael’s academic strengths to help him return to emotional stability and a sense of competence. Her sensitive vigilance was an important part of how she worked with Michael in her classroom.

Mary worked successfully with Michael in her grade one classroom. She said, “Routines were very important,” but also emphasized how her strategies with Michael “[were] always changing.” She said, “Whatever worked we did” and spent much literal and mental time figuring out what worked “and then taking note of things for next time.”

The strategies Mary employed were not particularly sophisticated. However, the work she did to employ these strategies successfully with Michael in a classroom full of six-year olds, including another child with an emotional-behavioural disorder, required an attentive, thought-filled, and complex balancing of Michael's immediate and long-term needs, her needs, the class's functioning, and expectations in the school environment.

The teachers and educational assistants in Michael's grade two and three classes continued to implement strategies that had worked with him in grade one. Teachers and EAs shared information about how to work with Michael on an on-going basis. Jessica, one of the grade two teaching team, said

the transition meeting with the grade one teacher during the year was really good.

... She gave us some very clear little tips on some ...things. ... She gave us

information that we could apply right away and we found worked really well.

Like Mary, Jessica said, they "[tried] to pick things that we knew he would be successful at. Wouldn't be frustrated." Throughout grade two, Michael thrived in the positive, success-filled environment that was thoughtfully constructed around him. The atmosphere and attitude of this environment helped explain how Ryerson School operated with Michael.

In grade three, adaptations for Michael in the classroom increased in number and intensity as the year progressed. In her chronology of the year during her interview, Sonja, the teacher outlined the numerous strategies she designed on her own, together with the resource teacher, together with the principal, and together with the school team. The work was, as it had been in grade one, a recursive testing of interventions to meet Michael's changing classroom needs. It involved constantly assessing what was and was

not working, and making adjustments or wholesale changes to find something that would succeed. A significant example of this effort was the creation of an alternate curriculum and setting for Michael. Numerous attempts to change what Michael was doing, where he was doing it, who he worked with, and when he did specific subjects, over several months culminated in independent, individualized LA and math programs in the school's computer lab. This effort required creativity, patience, and persistence from everyone – Michael's classmates, teacher, the EAs, the resource teacher, the principal, and the behaviour support teacher.

With support and coaching, by the end of grade three, Sonja identified that Michael learned “to choose accurately whether or not he could be an effective learner in the classroom.” Walter described how this situation evolved:

What we were noticing was that there were a lot of disruptions when he was in the classroom and so there were a lot of Joey drills, where the rest of the kids left and then he would remain in the classroom with the EA until one or two of the other members of the team came to help him sort through his behaviour. And so we felt that was just happening too often, and we would try a different method. ... In the morning he would come to school [and] the first period he would spend working on the computer, doing something he wanted to do. Just to put him in a positive mood. And then in periods two, three, and four he would work on different assignments that the classroom teacher had that the kids were working on in the class. But he would work with the EA in the computer room. And so he chooses the assignment similar to what the kids are doing in the classroom, except he might be doing it period four while the others are doing it in period two. But he

has that freedom of choice. Often he'll put his assignments up on the bulletin board so he'll know exactly what he's doing period one, two, three, four. Sometimes it won't get up there, but he'll still do what his job is in the morning. And that has grown to the point where the teacher has met with him and said 'You're doing such a good job' that if he ever wants to, he can also choose to join the class in the morning if he chooses. So initially that wasn't an option but ...now it is an option. And so...sometimes he is choosing to join the class in the morning. But he was finding it a challenge to be in a structured classroom for the whole day, and so the afternoons he's now with the rest of the class [as] he has been all the time. And he will join in other activities like phys ed. He'll join in with the rest of the class ... in the mornings or afternoons.

Walter talked extensively about how the skills and attitudes displayed by the classroom teacher affected Michael. He talked about "being invitational" and then elaborated:

Not...taking his behaviour personally so that, for example, if he swears at you, he's telling you he's frustrated. He needs some space for himself, and then after he cycles down, being able to talk about what kind of language. How can he tell me next time in other words that you're upset or angry or that you need some space? So that we can broaden your vocabulary to be more respectful to one another. And so that I know what your needs are and you know where I stand and we can mutually respect one another. And continuing that calm, neutral tone of voice rather than harsh or loud or condescending voice. 'Cause one thing that we've learned is that these students are very perceptive of whether you're judgmental or not. They will pick up that body language or your tone of voice

even though you try not to portray that. They'll say 'you know the way you looked at me' or 'the way you talked to me' and that doesn't help the situation and they take it very personally.

In some ways, how the classroom work with Michael was done reflected how the one-on-one work was done. The persistent efforts of adults created a safe environment in which he experienced academic and social success. His academic gifts were a solid foundation for school success. Positive experiences of learning in both the regular and adapted classrooms then nurtured the fragile social connections Michael risked making.

School-Wide Interventions

At the school level, on-going communication between adults in the building guided interactions with Michael. Mary remembered how she informed the music teacher during Michael's grade one year: "For music, I would often...give her a warning. ... 'Watch out. Don't push him too far today.'" She also communicated with the rest of the staff. She said she "would often write on the whiteboard in our staff room. ... Or I would just tell the teachers that were on duty just to watch out. Like you know, to keep an eye." Mary extended her watchful presence beyond the classroom by connecting and communicating with others. This was an important part of how Michael's safe learning environment was expanded beyond the classroom and into the whole school.

An important way in which interventions were developed for Michael at Ryerson School was through a school team. Initially this team included the classroom teacher, the resource teacher, the principal, and the behaviour support teacher. Later the divisional social worker and the mom, as well as the educational assistant working with Michael, were also included on the team. They met regularly, once a month. Participants said they

also met more often when crises required immediate attention and action. Susan, the resource teacher, led the team meetings. She said her understanding was that “it was...an expectation...from the division and from the... Department of Education...that we work with these...EBD kids with a team.” The focus of meetings, she said, was “to discuss [Michael’s] progress. What’s working, what’s not working. What we would like to do to help him be successful. ... We do some planning ahead.” Teachers, educational assistants, and clinicians all agreed that shared responsibility for Michael’s success was crucial. Susan summed up what everyone expressed succinctly: “I don’t know any other way of doing it. I can’t imagine having to handle it all on my own.” Walter said:

the key around it is the idea that there is a team built around these students and that the teacher does not have to feel they’re an island unto themselves and that they have to carry the load. And by the members of the team getting together and reflecting on a monthly basis - what’s working, what isn’t working, what are we going to do differently, supporting one another - it’s healthier. There’s more of a focus on...what we can do...that is working. Rather than always looking at the cup half full, we’re looking at “Hey, the four degree of change. That is a big step.”

Clear lines of communication and shared responsibility were essential components in how the school team functioned at Ryerson School. Their focus was success-oriented and the interventions they implemented built on Michael’s strengths.

Another critical component of how the work with Michael was done on a school-wide basis, according to Walter, Susan, and Simon, was the school’s adoption of, in Susan’s words, “the process of Restitution.” Walter indicated that the interventions with

Michael, as well as with all other students, were grounded in the school's philosophy of restitution.

Maybe initially it was trial and error, but we've been using the Restitution Model for the last five years. ... And over that time span, training...in restitution and the divisional professional development has been orchestrated [for] individuals and at a school-based level and at the divisional level.

Implementing this model, said Walter, "sets the whole climate for the whole school."

Participants identified three major components that explained how this model was used at Ryerson School. One component was the development and continual reference to school, staff, and classroom belief statements. Walter described how this school arrived at these belief statements:

Each classroom teacher with their students talked about what the ideal classroom would look like,...and how they wanted to interact with one another. And that was shared with the whole staff and we took the key common components out of that. And that is [how] we actually built the belief statement... And if you look at the key words it also spells "respectful." And so respectful looks like listening, understanding, having fun, and trying our best, and caring and encouraging, playing nicely, and sharing. And so with everyone. And so that's the challenge.

When students, including Michael, exhibited difficult or hurtful behaviour, the belief statement was referenced as part of teaching students other behaviours. In Ryerson School, Restitution was working well when students used it in interactions with each other. Susan described one such situation:

I know there was one situation in grade two when another kid called down or insulted or did something to someone else, and a third kid stepped in and said ‘You can’t say that. You are responsible for you. At Ryerson School we don’t do that. We’re kind to each other.’

The belief statements were, said Susan, not only “what we believe,” but more practically “how we do business here.” Walter was more emphatic about the Restitution-based belief statements: “That’s what grounds us all into what...it should sound like and look like and feel like when we’re at our school.”

A second component of the Restitution Model used on a school-wide basis was what Susan described as “very deliberate teaching [of the] basic needs.” Students and staff were taught that, in Walter’s words, “All behaviour is purposeful.” Behaviour was understood as a way to get needs met. Students were taught to identify their five basic needs: safety, power, belonging, fun, and freedom. The goal was that a common understanding of behaviour would support all interactions in the school - among staff, students, and between students and staff.

The third component of the Restitution Model built on the understanding of behaviour as a way to meet needs. This component was the view of misbehaviour or conflict, in Susan’s words, “as an opportunity to fix something. An opportunity to learn something from what they’ve done.” Walter described how this opportunity to learn was used throughout the whole school:

This is what usually ... happens with a student that is trying to meet their needs in a negative way. ...We usually give the student some time to cycle down. Once they cycle down, we give them an option to express their feelings and then we

look at how can we do this differently next time. So that they don't hurt themselves or hurt someone else. And ... also give an opportunity to either fix it with the student or with the adult. And sometimes it has to happen another day or sometimes it takes a few days before the student is prepared to actually act on what has happened. But the key point is that you give them the time, and you give them the space, and you also validate their feelings. 'Yes. You must have felt really angry when this student did this to you.' Or 'you must have been really sad when they took this away from you.' Or frustrated. And 'what's another way to deal with this?' And it takes [time]...and you need to give them the time. You need to give them an opportunity to express their feelings...validate their feelings before you can show them another way. This is definitely one way of doing it, but there is a better way.

At Ryerson School, the Restitution Model provided an articulated belief system, a common understanding of behaviour, and a debriefing process designed to promote the development of intrapersonal, interpersonal and social skills from the conflicts that arose in daily school life. This model determined how people interacted with Michael at Ryerson School.

Walter also identified a school-wide emphasis on planning as a significant factor that affected how the school operated. The school plan not only set the general direction for the school, but also included some very specific strategies and indicators that drew the staff together towards clearly articulated and shared goals. Walter outlined how school planning brought the staff together with a positive focus:

Part of it is the school planning that we're expected to do every year. ...There was a Safe School project that we've been working on for the first time this year. And one of our goals ...was that every staff meeting we would take the first fifteen minutes to look at something positive that has happened in the last month.

Doesn't matter how small it might be, but some interaction that the teacher had with one or two students that was an accomplishment. The other part of the school plan [was] where we look at "Are the students meeting their...needs like of power and belonging and fun and safety and freedom?" And we survey the students at the beginning of the year in October and then we also do it in May. And the goal was that ninety percent of our students should achieve - on a scale of five, where zero is terrible and where five is good, that they should have at least a three, four, or five rating in those different categories of needs. ... We have done that for the last two years so we have data that shows...[what] the students are experiencing in the school in the area of meeting their basic needs of fun, belonging, power, safety, and freedom. ... [And] yeah. We are there.

Planning as a school affected how the school functioned in general and with Michael specifically. The planning at Ryerson School took into account feedback from the students, including Michael.

Other planned and scheduled responses influenced how Ryerson School functioned. Walter identified times set aside for staff communication and connection. He described:

One of the strategies that we're using through this school's initiative this year is that [during] the first thirty minutes of our staff meeting, EAs and teachers are

together and we talk about those things that we have in common. That we deal with in common. And so we use that time to understand what are the plans for the different students that ... we're working with that have emotional behaviour disorders. And that's time that ...questions can be asked, and we can give answers for clarification. ... Also the resource teacher has, once a month, a thirty-minute window of opportunity to meet with all the EAs as a group. And they can discuss ...what are things that they find helpful, what are things that we need to be aware of that aren't working. And so...when we do get together as a staff, we can look at what we can do differently so that we're all working together as a team. Cause often there's disunity among team members. Just that the lines of communication aren't clear and they don't understand why we're doing what we're doing. And so it's very important that we communicate very clearly what we're doing and why we're doing it.

Intentional networking and planned responses on a school wide basis created the atmosphere and environment to promote a unified response to Michael.

School-Home Interventions

Ryerson School staff and Michael's mother identified that school contact with the home was an integral part of how the work with Michael was done. Mary, Michael's grade one teacher, started making phone calls to Tina early that school year. Mary remembered:

I had close contact with [the mother]. I would call her quite often. ... I would just phone his mom without him knowing it and tell her how his day was. ... Just wanted to let her know how things were going at school... She wanted to know. ...

What was working, what wasn't. And she told me what worked at home. What didn't. ... So we kinda worked together as a team.

This affirming connection with Michael's mom reinforced the positive approach used by the school team to identify strategies to build Michael's academic, social, emotional, and behavioural capacity. The connection to the home extended the school's efforts to build on what worked for Michael.

Tina described the impact of Mary's phone calls on Michael:

She would regularly call home and let me know. And Michael knew. And he just drew and fed off of that. ... Whenever he could get her to make a positive phone call home to his mom, he loved it. ... She kept connected. ... Even if it was about a negative incident, ...she made a positive phone call. ... The incident can be negative. But the phone call had to be positive.

Positive school-to-home contact became an important component of the interventions for Michael. Teachers, the resource teacher, and the principal all communicated with Tina about Michael's successes and challenges. The proactive intent of these communications resulted in an increased number of positive ways for both the school and the home to support Michael's development.

Through on-going contact with Tina, it soon became evident that she also needed support. The school division's social worker began to visit Tina at home, adding another positive connection between the school and the whole family. This support was added when Tina was ready and able to accept it, extending the work with Michael beyond him and the school system.

School-Community Interventions

The work with Michael extended into the community as well. Simon described that:

a HUGE piece of support [was] the local church. They provided these kids with clothes. Around Christmas time they made sure that there was you know special food in the house, and that there were gifts for the kids. So it's...not only has there been support for the kids in the school system, but there's been support for the mom and for the whole family.

Susan described other examples of community responses:

I think the community has generally been supportive of them. ... Small community. I live here. We've gone to church together. I know that in church other families would let these kids sit with them. ... Take them on outings to ball games or whatever. Races and things like that.

Susan was also aware of a limited understanding in the community about the nature of Michael's emotional and behavioural difficulties.

I think generally the community [doesn't] really understand how handicapping this emotional-behavioural stuff is for this child. And so the community as a whole doesn't quite understand what's going on. They love them and want to support them, but don't quite understand how it is for these kids.

To respond to the limited community understanding about emotional behavioural disorders, Ryerson School began an educational process with other parents of children in the school. Susan clearly outlined how this process was initiated.

Well it was interesting because Walter went to a parent advisory council meeting. And they, of course, are concerned about the stories kids are coming home with about kids like Michael. You know...swearing at the teacher or stomping around the room or ripping things off walls. And getting away with it. They think from their eyes. And so parents are concerned and want to understand. The meeting was wonderful. Without giving specifics about any kid or whatever, we tried to teach [parents] that it's a handicapping condition for them. They're just overwhelmed by what's going on ...and that we're responding by giving them...more. Giving them more positive attention. By trying to deliberately [teach] them the skills on how to handle things. And I think that it was a good meeting. And I think there's a long way to go yet, but it was a good start. And we've made that start and I think that's positive.

Efforts to create a safe place in which Michael could learn how to connect with others and handle his tumultuous inner world extended well beyond the school walls and into the community.

School Division Interventions

Direction from the school division also contributed to how Ryerson School worked with Michael. Walter referred briefly to Wheatland School Division's participation in a provincial Safe Schools pilot. This project required every school to establish multi-level programming to create classrooms and schools in which all students felt safe to learn. Planning for this programming was scaffolded on provincial documents, including *Towards Inclusion: Planning for Behaviour* (METY, 2002). The implementation of the Restitution Model five years ago at Ryerson School preceded the

kind of programming outlined in the provincial documents and expected in the Safe Schools Pilot project.

Another component describing the work at Ryerson School was Wheatland School Division's vision and direction about how schools should educate children with emotional behavioural disorders. During Michael's grade one to three years, one of the school division's goals was to promote the social-emotional growth of all students. Simon, the division's behaviour support teacher, was involved with the school division's initiative. He said:

The school division has basically designated - you know, as a clinical services team - that part of their mandate is to work to support schools with the difficult kids, so we have like your half time counselling piece, Jean's eighty percent social worker, full time psych, full time behaviour support. So they're actually throwing money and supports into there.... And this division is very intentional about training through offering lots of individual P.D. opportunities. And we have summer institute. I think prior to amalgamation we were further along ...creating a base of ... stuff you have to have to work in our school division. I'm trying to get it ...we're trying to get it back to that again. I know the question was do we need to have WEVAS and Restitution in summer institute. I said absolutely.

Out of this divisional goal, decisions were made to designate funds to train educational assistants, teachers, administrators, and clinicians in both Restitution and WEVAS.

Walter, Susan, Sonja, and Tracy all referred to the benefits of this training for Ryerson School and for Michael. Furthermore, Wheatland School Division committed significant dollars to hire highly qualified and highly skilled individuals to support school staff in

their daily work. The behaviour support teacher, psychologist, and social worker were all employees who provided much-needed expertise and support to Michael, Tina, and the staff at Ryerson School. Qualified, available experts were an important part of how Ryerson School did the work with Michael.

Ryerson School operated within a school division where education was guided in a purposeful direction by senior administration and the school board. The work by the school division to promote social-emotional development positively affected how Ryerson School worked with Michael.

The external factors that determined how the work with Michael was done at Ryerson School were relatively obvious. There was one-to-one support from an educational assistant, teachers, the administrator, and specialists. There was a school team and a school-wide set of beliefs to guide students and staff. School staff extended supports to Michael and his family in the community. The school division provided access to specialists and training in how to work with difficult behaviour.

The internal factors that influenced how the work with Michael was done at Ryerson School were not as easily described. Individuals adjusted their understanding and responses to Michael's difficult behaviour. Staff worked together, sometimes more successfully than other times, to support how the work with Michael was being done. The challenges of working with Michael were framed in positive language, and oriented towards success by building on his strengths. Everyone interviewed talked about finding ways for him to thrive. The attitude and drive to promote success permeated the interactions at Ryerson School: interactions between staff members, teaching staff and administration, school staff and divisional specialists, school employees and Michael's

Mom, and school staff and members of the community. This common positive approach created strong bonds of support as people in tense and difficult situations pulled together to be supported and to simultaneously support others in the challenging work of reclaiming Michael.

Why Ryerson School Worked with Michael the Way They Did

“Why were things done the way they were?” I think part of it was...the way we understand what is the best thing for these kids (Giesbrecht transcript, 2004).

One of the interview questions for participants in this case study was “Why was the work with Michael at Ryerson School done the way that it was done?” There were at least two levels of responses to this question. On an external level, participants identified that they were doing what was expected of them based on educational research, school division goals, their job descriptions, and their training. People explicitly stated these reasons. On an internal level, participants indicated that they believed in and were committed to providing a positive, nurturing community where meeting the needs of children and fulfilling their social responsibilities were fundamental to learning and teaching. People revealed these reasons through their descriptions of what work they did, and how they did that work with Michael at Ryerson School.

Expectations

Walter, Ryerson School’s principal, was interviewed first in this study. He said that in order to be effective with students, teachers and educational assistants needed “an understanding of what research is telling us. ... And why. Why we’re doing what we’re doing. Why things work.” He did not elaborate specifically what research he was referring to, but he did explain many times in his interview that the school understood

and responded to children using the Restitution Model. This seemed to help him explain why he and others responded to Michael as they did. Tracy, Michael's educational assistant in grade three echoed what Walter was saying when she said it was important that "explanations [were] from everybody" so that she knew "what we're going to try...[and] ...what's expected of me...and...what I'm supposed to do." Susan thought Ryerson School formed a team to work with Michael because "it was...an expectation...from the division and ...the Department of Education." At all levels of work in the school, people said they did what they did because it was expected of them.

Applying what Walter described as "what research is telling us" in reality happened as a result of purposeful, planned direction from Wheatland School Division. Providing resources, training, and specialist supports all pointed schools in the division towards the kinds of actions taken with Michael in this case. Walter, Simon, Susan, and Sonja identified that the school division in which Ryerson School operated was proactive in its efforts to equip teachers with theoretical models and tools to deal with behaviour in schools. This divisional work was part of why Ryerson School staff worked with Michael as they did.

By their words and actions, Susan, Simon, and Walter provided the leadership and support to move divisional goals into reality in school. Susan said:

"Why were things done the way they were?" I think part of it was because of the people who were here. Sort of in charge: Walter and myself. And the way we understand what is the best thing for these kids. If you had someone else in charge who wanted to use the punitive way of handling things, it wouldn't have worked as well. I think leadership had a lot to do with... what was going on.

People in key positions in Ryerson School guided other staff towards larger, divisional goals.

The way the clinical services team in Wheatland School Division and the staff at Ryerson School understood their jobs was also part of why the work with Michael was done the way it was. The focus of that work, from the perspective of principal, teacher, educational assistant, and clinician was, in Simon's words,

“What do we want these kids to experience?” ... We framed it around the treatment needs. “What needs to be in place for the kid to develop? To grow?” ... “What do we want the kid to experience in this classroom? In this setting? In Ryerson School? And why?”

People understood their jobs within the context of Michael's needs, as well as the normal, routine job descriptions for an educational assistant, a teacher, a resource teacher, a principal, a behaviour support teacher, a social worker, and a psychologist. This articulated understanding of their work with Michael led to constant communication between those involved. Communications happened through team meetings and informal talk about Michael's needs and what responses could best be made by different people in different settings to meet those needs.

The analysis of the internal reasons why the work with Michael was done the way it was required a re-reading of the interview transcripts with the question “Why are these people doing this work in the ways that they are?” Transcripts revealed that people were motivated to do this work by a sense of responsibility, commitment, common beliefs and values.

Responsibility and Commitment

A deeply held sense of responsibility for fellow human beings was a motivator that became evident in the transcripts. Bob Nelson, the provincial supervisor for school psychologists, saw the work at Ryerson School from outside the immediate school or division. His question, when he saw what he described as “the level of gains” with Michael at Ryerson School was:

Well, why? Why? Well...it’s really simple. Look at this group of helping people around him. Helping people do stuff. ... All the way from helping the mom so she’s not lying on the couch depressed all the time in her pjs, ...to [Michael] starting to have some acceptance from other kids. ... It was as though someone in the community that needed some help. Not someone who was a problem. Someone who needed some support.

Bob saw the work of these people as atypical. He felt that:

This was very different. This was lots of people who didn’t need to be there. ... At multiple times. Multiple different people doing multiple different things. ... And the range. I’ve never seen before. ... For everybody to kick in...all the way down to the community level...is really, really unusual.

He likened the kind of commitment he saw here to that of a family. His words were:

[People] all made sort of a group commitment. It was almost like a family forms around him. ... That kind of commitment. You know, family standing. That kind of level of real dogged commitment.

Simon also described the kind of committed efforts of fellow team members and the community. He said:

Walter works late hours and so he has this deal with [Michael and his brother].

Any time that he is at school, basically these kids and their friends...can come in.

And Walter is there for him like that ALL the time.

Simon said this kind of commitment and support was extended to Michael and his family in the community, as well. Simon described that he saw “support for the mom and for the family through...the local church.” From his perspective, people’s commitment to Michael and his family were crucial. Simon’s words were: “I think that...the extra, extra mile that the resource teacher goes for these kids, and Walter, and ...the school social worker...to support the mom...has been critical.” The passion in the voices of the staff interviewed, the stories of unrelenting efforts participants told about each other, and the enthusiastic participation in an interview that took an hour of their valuable time, also all attested to the depth of commitment of these people to their work, to Michael, and to his family.

Beliefs

Case study participants who worked with Michael one-on-one, in the classroom, and on the playground all talked about beliefs that explained why they did this work the way they did. Simon said, “It’s important...to note that in Ryerson School, the whole building is under girded by Restitution philosophy that talks about how we treat people.” Using the Restitution framework, they believed behaviour was an expression of need. Much work was done to build understanding of this view of behaviour amongst staff and students. Simon said, “It’s all about teaching social responsibility. That whole...[piece] within the Restitution Model. That whole sense of how do I meet my needs and your needs at the same time.” Susan talked about the challenges of having everyone

understand behaviour as an expression of need and what that meant in terms of responding.

There's a core of us who believe that these kids [with EBD] just need more attention. More positive attention that we need to give give give to these kids.

Some of our staff members... believe that they're getting what they want. And that we're rewarding them for bad behaviour.

Interestingly, Susan's description of the staff's beliefs reflects a similar understanding: children's misbehaviour was getting them what they wanted. However, what she described was that tension developed between adults in Ryerson School because the perceptions about how to respond to this misbehaviour were different. Walter described how the work with Michael exemplified his beliefs about behaviour:

Michael has taught our school...that just because something works with one student doesn't necessarily mean it will work with the next. And fairness isn't...treating everyone the same. Fairness is giving them what they need.

The beliefs about behaviour at Ryerson School were based on the Restitution Model. Everyone at Ryerson School, Susan said, "knows the words." When she went on to describe a deeper level of understanding, her words were: "a lot of us have internalized it and live it." These internalized beliefs partially account for the understanding, desire, and commitment to do the work with Michael in the manner that it was done at Ryerson School.

Much of the work with Michael at Ryerson School provided him with social experiences through which he could learn appropriate behaviours to get his needs met.

Participants believed that conflict was, as Susan and Walter both said, an opportunity to fix something. Susan's words were:

An opportunity to learn something from what they've done. ... We go back to the belief statement. ... It always can come back. So...we talk about 'At Ryerson School we respect each other. And so when you call your teacher names, that's not being respectful.' So it always comes back to the teaching piece.

Walter adhered to these same beliefs about behaviour and learning in his work with his staff at Ryerson School. He explained how the beliefs “

[give] the staff an anchor. ... Or if something isn't working, it's okay to ask for help. And you try something and it doesn't work, then we've learned something...and hopefully we're a step closer to something that will work.

Learning new behaviours resulted from reflecting on situations, behaviours, and finding new ways to respond, for both adults and children at Ryerson School. Walter said one of the most significant changes in Michael was that he knows at Ryerson School “it's okay to make mistakes, and that he will still be invited back and that we learn from what we do here at school.” The people at Ryerson School did the work the way they did because they believed in the importance of learning. In their beliefs, learning included acquiring appropriate ways to get their needs met without violating others' needs or the needs of the system. When those needs were in conflict, which was much of the time, opportunities to learn presented themselves. A common set of beliefs, expressed and sometimes internalized, was an important explanation of why the work with Michael was done the way it was.

Values

The values of individuals and systems became evident as individuals from Ryerson School described the work that was done with Michael in the past three years. At the heart of the work was a deep sense of the value of children. Connected to this value were the convictions that learning and the development of connections were the purposes of education.

The evidence of how children were valued at Ryerson School permeated the interviews and my experience of doing interviews in the school. On the orange, paint-chipped doors at the front entrance of the school, an extra door handle was screwed below the already lowered door handles. As an elementary school counsellor, I visited six different elementary schools in the division. No other school had a lowered handle below the lowered handles. It was a small symbol of how children were regarded at this school. The school was also open for children. Children were in the school and on the schoolyard outside of school hours. Children's artwork and projects filled the hall walls. Before I interviewed him, the principal showed me a mini-egg hatchery in the kindergarten room. His words were "By tomorrow morning here will be twelve to eighteen of these little guys for the kindergarten kids to see." His excitement was about the children's upcoming thrill in this experience and that he would be a part of that. Ryerson School valued children, striving to make it a place that was for them and about them. Participants in this study revealed a child-centered focus in their words and actions.

Beneath all the needs language used by Walter, Susan, Simon, and Mary was their quest to accurately understand the child's perspective. In this case it was Michael's perspective, but it was no different for other children in Ryerson School. The adults

interviewed in this study were keenly aware of what worked and what did not work for Michael. Their goal was his success. This was stated many times. All of these efforts pointed to a profound sense of the importance of – and even love for – the child, Michael, and all children in their care.

The data collected in this study also revealed a profound sense of the value of learning. Susan described the kind of learning valued at Ryerson School when she talked about her own learning of the restitution model. Although she couldn't quite find the descriptor she wanted for restitution – she tried “program” and then “process” and then “way,” she did clearly say how learning this model influenced her. She said:

Everyone [at our school] knows the words. A lot of us have internalized it and live it. ... That means we really believe it's a good process and it's a really good way to handle situations with children. And we take it back home with us and we do it there in our homes too.

The kind of learning valued and sought at Ryerson School influenced feeling, and thinking and working and living. A school in which learning was valued in this way was important for Michael who needed to learn on all these levels.

Appreciation of learning was evident in every participant's comments about Michael's academic giftedness. Clearly his ability to learn was noticed and valued. Team meetings focused on sharing what individuals had learned about what worked with Michael. Michael's innumerable incidents with staff and students were the curriculum through which he learned appropriate social behaviours. The value of learning from mistakes was fundamental in the work done with Michael at Ryerson School. Participants all talked about their own learning in the work they did with Michael. While it may seem

obvious to state that a key value in a school is learning, the way in which learning infiltrated every aspect of the work done with Michael at this school was remarkable. Learning at Ryerson School was not only the gathering and dispensing of information. Learning was not only for students. Learning was the process of internalizing and living new ways of doing and being. This kind of learning was what Tina had come searching for. This kind of learning would, as Tina had said to her son, “help you ... to be a different person.”

The value of connections between people was evident in the work at Ryerson School. Individuals connected with Michael because they valued him and his learning. But they also valued the connection itself. Efforts were made to help Michael connect to peers so he could learn new behaviours. Simultaneously, efforts were made to teach Michael new behaviours so he could connect to his peers. Adults formed a school team to support and sustain each other. In the community, people joined together to help a family in need. In the school division, direction was set and dollars were spent to create links between schools and experts, resources, research, and provincial expectations. At the school in this case study, networks of connections between individuals, groups, and systems helped explain why the work with one boy with an emotional-behavioural disorder, Michael, was done the way it was.

CHAPTER SIX – WHAT IS ESSENTIAL

And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye (de Saint-Exupery, 1971, 87).

In analyzing the transcripts of the thirteen participants' interviews in this case study, several themes emerged. Two ideas infiltrated every transcript: learning and community. Because these two themes were so strongly evident throughout the data, each also had several sub-themes that built on the main idea.

Learning

I was a new person in the community and I was addressing something very serious and something that we brought with us. And I didn't want the community to suffer the consequences of what we brought with us. Or I wanted them to learn from it That there will always be children coming into every system that have similar problems and if they got somebody into their system with those kinds of problems, that's like education for all of us (Penner, T. transcript, 2004).

An important, but unpredicted, theme emerging in this study was that learning was a powerful agent of change. The theme becomes more meaningful when it is stated using the words of study participants. Walter used the phrase “slow and painstaking process” to describe what he saw happening with Michael in his school. Susan used the words “internalize and live” to describe the depth of her learning of the Restitution Model. Using their words, the theme that emerged from the data was that the slow and painstaking process of the kind of learning that is internalized and lived was a powerful agent of individual and systemic change at Ryerson School.

Learning for Everyone

Michael's story of his first three years at Ryerson School illustrated this theme. Just as significant, however, were the continued references from all participants to their own learning, the learning they saw others experience, and the learning that occurred on a systemic level as a result of the work done in this case. Michael's learning journey at Ryerson School has already been described in Chapter Four. A brief retelling of his story highlighting the learning experiences illustrates Michael's slow and painstaking process of internalizing the learning offered to him at Ryerson School. This learning for Michael was what Tina, his mom, described as "learning to be a different person." The parallel for many adults directly involved with Michael was that they learned new ways of functioning that made them more effective in their roles. At the school level, what Walter and Susan, the school leaders, learned was that the consistent application of the principles of their belief statements made Ryerson School a place where a child with an emotional behavioural disorder, like Michael, could learn to be different. The school, they discovered, could provide an emotional-behavioural curriculum while delivering academics. Molly, the school psychologist, said: "I think this has been an incredible learning experience for everyone involved in this."

Michael started at Ryerson School almost petrified by his fear of new experiences, environments, and people. He could run, he could hide, he could lash out, but he could not risk exposure to the unknown. This condition, what Bob Nelson a psychologist, called "pretty damaged," prevented Michael from engaging in the learning experiences of everyday school life. Michael's learning challenges were to acquire the emotional stability and repertoire of behaviours to be a regular student. In turn, Michael's

learning challenges required enormous educational efforts for individuals at Ryerson School, as well as for the larger school system. The challenges were as significant for others as Michael's were for him because they involved many adults with, and working in, established ways of operating.

Michael arrived at Ryerson School two years after the school had begun to implement the Restitution Model to guide interactions between people in the building. He was, according to Mary, his grade one teacher, "the second EBD kid [that the school] had ever worked with." The difficult work of educating a child like Michael pushed individuals and the whole school to "internalize and live" the words of the Restitution Model. From moment to moment, Michael's erratic and inappropriate-for-school behaviours tested people's understanding of and commitment to this model. Both Walter, whose language was laced with restitution words and phrases, and Susan, who said she absorbed and lived the Restitution Model, described the tension between themselves and others who believed in a more traditional behaviourist model of negative reinforcement and punishment as a way of teaching different behaviour. Susan said:

If you had someone else in charge who wanted to use the punitive way of handling things, [what we did with Michael] wouldn't have worked as well. ... And let me tell you... sometimes with some of the adults in our building, I want to go back to the quick way and say "Now don't you get it? This is the way you need to do it." ... But it doesn't work that way. And I'm finding that even getting along with my colleagues, and especially around EBD issues ... [I] sorta have to...think of this..."How would you handle this situation with an EBD child?" And that's how I'm going to handle it with this adult.

Susan stated clearly that the methods used to help Michael learn new behaviours became a model for promoting behaviour changes with everyone at Ryerson School, including adults.

Learning Opportunities

When Susan used the phrase “handling it,” she referred to the restitution process of converting what was not working, a mistake or a misbehaviour, into “an opportunity to learn a better way,” to use Walter’s phrase. With Michael, it was and continued to be an immense effort to accept that mistakes were opportunities to learn. Everyone who worked directly with him noted that his perfectionism presented a huge barrier to his learning. Initially, his mistakes were emotionally devastating for him. By the spring of grade three, after countless opportunities to experience learning a better way, Michael was beginning to accept mistakes as learning opportunities.

Data from the transcripts indicates that Michael experienced the following steps in the learning process:

1. New challenges triggered extreme emotional reactions (anxiety, fear, anger)
2. Michael hid, ran away, became oppositional, disruptive, and/or aggressive
3. An adult intervened and provided time for his emotional peak to stabilize
4. An adult validated Michael’s emotions by stating what his actions indicated (“That looks like a scary classroom” “It’s upsetting when you don’t get what you want.”)
5. An adult helped Michael analyze and describe his need in the situation
6. An adult helped Michael plan how to meet his identified need in more appropriate ways.

Over time, and with countless practice opportunities, Michael learned to cope with his emotional reactions when confronted with new situations. Walter described how he saw this happen:

Initially when he came whenever he was overwhelmed he would run home and then the ... staff took the time to talk to him and share with him that ... running home is one way but at our school we can also come and talk ... if something is bothering you. And after running home a couple of times and being invited back, and being given the time to think about what he had done, eventually he stopped running and rather came to us and was able to talk about the behaviour. Rather than using ... behaviour for words he was actually starting to talk about what was bothering him. That started nicely in grade two. 'Til that point he often struggled with running home when things didn't work out. ...Since grade two that has not been the situation. ...It was a gradual process. That was supported through the efforts of the grade one teacher and the grade two teacher. Definitely we're seeing the benefits now at the grade three.

Walter later described this learning process as "slow and painstaking," and the grade one teacher, Mary, added that in her year with Michael she "needed a lot more patience...than any other year." Michael's emotional learning was immensely challenging for him, requiring years of experiences to bring about enough change so that by the end of grade three, when this study ended, Sonja the grade three teacher, identified that Michael had learned a whole new repertoire of behaviours. These new behaviours did not eliminate Michael's handicap, but they did move him much closer to normal expectations for classroom behaviour. Sonja described the appropriate behaviours she saw by grade three:

There's been times when he hasn't been able to use a computer...and... he's handled it. Not always happy. ...But he's handled it. ... Even the issue about corrections. He is now able to do them. ... And even socially. In September when I started he was somewhat isolated, and now he is one of the group of boys. ... And he still doesn't like performing, [but] he's participated in the dramas. ... And not any kind of undue duress or anything. ... We don't see the frustration anymore. ... And again, he's now self-regulating in that when he feels himself getting frustrated, he will ask to leave. And so that's really remarkable for him. ... And even in terms of accepting assistance. ... He ... actually asks [the EA] to come with him...to the lab. ... So just the fact that he's accepted the assistance [and that] doesn't diminish him. ... He has made so much progress.

In between these descriptions of Michael's learning, Sonja also described the process of learning of adults, both inside and outside of the school. She said:

Sometimes we hear adults saying things...about [Michael} being rewarded for behaviour. Or EBD children being rewarded for acting out. And not understanding. ...Parents actually called and asked, "Why is this child acting up and being rewarded by going to the lab?" ... [We had] a lot of discussion...how we have different needs. ... [Children with EBD] are different and we needed to have adaptations put in place. So that's kind of an ongoing thing.

Sonja described how the learning that resulted from Ryerson School's work with Michael extended to adults out in the larger community. Of her learning, Sonja said:

[It was] trying many different things along the way. ... There was a lot of trial and error. ... Trying to figure what it was he needed because he was not able to articulate it. And we were not able to figure it out.

Sonja then went on to describe how she was supported in her learning.

So it was ...just wonderful to have people around that were open to new ideas and they were offering ideas and I don't know. ... I would NOT have been able to handle it without them.

The work of the adults was to learn new ways to understand Michael and meet his learning needs. Their efforts paralleled Michael's efforts to learn new ways to behave. And, as Sonja said, even as an educated adult in the system, like Michael in his learning, she, too, needed support to be able to "handle it." The phrase "handle it" was used often by Sonja, Susan, and Walter and it usually referred to the difficult internal process of converting mistakes into opportunities to learn. Like Michael, adults also needed many attempts in order to occasionally "get it right." This approach to learning at Ryerson School nurtured the slow and painstaking process of students' and adults' growth.

While Michael and the teachers simultaneously struggled to internalize and live more successful ways of being, Michael also took on the academic challenges of learning to read, write, and compute. For him, this learning was easy. Every participant commented on Michael's academic giftedness. Bob, the former supervisor for school psychologists in the province, said:

For a lot of kids...that don't have the academic skill and intelligence, ... and it's a real struggle for them, ... they eventually have another set of problems. And so

[Michael's intelligence] was really helpful for him. ... It always helps, right?

Intelligence always helps.

Michael's academic successes likely made a huge contribution to his fragile self-confidence. While the school setting provided constant overwhelming emotional challenges, it also provided numerous academic opportunities in which Michael could function successful and easily. It is impossible to know the impact of these academic successes on Michael's emotional growth in the last three years. It is important to note, however, that these successes occurred during the time that Michael was learning, in his Mom's words, "to be a different person."

Learning Social Structures

There was a third even more complex level of learning happening in Michael at Ryerson School. While Michael was learning academics and new responses to his tumultuous inner world, he was also learning, as Bob said it,

the very basic structures for social interaction. Of peers. And that's no mean feat.

That's a very, very complex and complicated thing to do. And it's often the thing we do the poorest with. ... We can shape behaviour. We can shape "you sit in your seat." We can shape those kinds of things. ... But the social interaction part is

very, very complex. ... Very difficult. We can do the pieces, but it's very difficult.

As Michael "learned to play differently," in Walter's words, he as given many opportunities at Ryerson School to practice what he was directly taught during debriefing sessions, and what was modeled by the adults who worked one-on-one with him. Simon, the behaviour support teacher, came into Ryerson School to coach, debrief, and support the adults who coached, debriefed, and supported Michael. He said:

I think a huge piece, ...and Walter and Susan have disclosed that for me,... [is that] they've framed it around learning. ... Just learning about...how do we meet our needs in a socially responsible way. ... And so it's all about teaching social responsibility.

Both Simon and Walter talked about providing Michael with social opportunities to learn. Simon's description of an example of this kind of experience is humorous.

He and I we always we play a lot of games and sometimes he invites friends. And it's interesting. ... Sometimes one is okay; two depending who it is ...just note that he really still struggles in a group. Just he gets too...he just gets really hyper and wired. He's a high-energy kid. And ... initially if he would lose, it would just be he couldn't handle losing anything with anybody. And now in game situations...we play Life, and we play SORRY, ... and he plays just for the fun of it. The game. He doesn't mind winning, he doesn't mind losing. Doesn't ...he still likes winning better than losing. And I've taught him to play cribbage. He is in grade three. We've been playing cribbage now for three months and he now knows that game totally independently. He needs no assistance in counting. He's just nailed the game. And he just sent me an email yesterday saying would I have my cribbage board with me, because we're going to take a couple of kids that I play cribbage with, and in June I'm gonna have - I won't call it this - but it's going to be the EBD Cribbage Championship. And not sure how that's going to go. We're going to have to find a way to have more than one winner.

Creating social situations that were fun and real life for eight-year old Michael was an important way to facilitate his social learning. These social situations and the playground

at recess were opportunities for him to test and practice the “different person” he was learning to be through on-going, one-on-one debriefing sessions with adults.

By grade two, Michael was good at planning how to fix mistakes he made on the playground. Like some teachers, as Susan said, he “knew the words.” But, Jessica said, [It was often] easy to make the plan. Not so easy to follow through. Like when his temper did flare. ... He didn’t always know how to redirect his...anger. ... Even though he thought he had a plan.

The process of internalizing new social skills was not complete with Michael. For some, this might have been an indication that the restitution way of working with Michael was not effective. However, the data indicated that by the end of grade three, Simon, Susan, Walter, and even Michael himself, all saw social progress. He was, in Sonja’s words “one of the group of boys.” Michael was beginning to internalize appropriate social actions, a complicated, complex piece of learning.

Learning in the System

While an inanimate organization like a school is not able to learn, in this case the changes in the Ryerson School happened as a result of the learning of individuals in that system. Sonja and Mary both described their individual efforts to learn what worked for Michael in their classrooms. Jessica and Ann learned from Mary what strategies to use with Michael in their classroom. In grade three, when Sonja and the school team could not figure out what might work for both Sonja and Michael in the classroom, strategies that affected the whole system were implemented. Sonja described how Michael moved out of his classroom.

I spoke to Simon and he had a really good insight and he just said, “Let’s set up a program...where he spends the morning outside of the classroom. ... So he could do an LA assignment on either reading a book with the EA, or reading something on the computer. And then there were options for Math as well. So he was still doing the same work, but he was choosing when he would do it, and there were parts where he would decide the order they would be in. So there were options there and he would put them in order. He would kind of plan his morning. ... In the afternoons he would come back and spend in the classroom. ... Initially he struggled with it. He knew he was missing things and he would come back and forth and check and see what we were doing and whether he was doing the same work. And often I would bring him the work. ... So I would bring it to the lab and Mrs. Friesen would come and she would see what we were doing during the day and then bring it to the lab. ... And so initially it was difficult for him. But ... I think he seemed to realize that he needed it. ... It’s evolved to what it is today in that he chooses when he’s in the classroom and when he’s not. ... And that has worked out really really well.

Sonja adjusted the curriculum for Michael and juggled her time between the class and the computer lab. Tracy, an EA, moved out of the classroom and into a one-on-one support relationship with Michael. Space was created in the computer lab. Simon became the writing coach through the emails Michael sent to him as the writing component of his LA. Walter accessed the divisional email program and sometimes keyed these emails into the computer for Michael. In fact, I received an email from Michael early in June 2004 asking when I was coming to interview him. This email came from Walter’s address in

Wheatland's internal email system. Many individuals adjusted what they did as they figured out what Michael needed to keep learning. In doing so, they learned to step outside routine system practices. Michael made his own timetable, in an individualized setting, using technology and adapted LA and Math curricula. There was no template for this work so it pushed the edges of Ryerson School's systems to expand its repertoire of learning options. This system "learning" paralleled Michael's learning.

In his interview, Walter referred several times to the changes in Ryerson School as a result of the work they did with Michael. At one point he said:

I think we were finding out that things we usually do weren't working. ... Those types of approaches simply weren't working and so we had to look at what else we can do.

He also said:

The hardest, the biggest thing that Michael taught our school is that just because something works with one student doesn't necessarily say that it will work with the next.

Later, he continued:

Fairness isn't ... treating everyone the same. Fairness is giving them what they need. And often we struggle with that as a staff. Especially when [the handicap] isn't physical. If it's physical, a child needs a wheelchair, we have no problem getting a wheelchair. When it has to do with emotion and behaviour, often we don't see what that wheelchair is. And we struggle with that.

As the school's principal, Walter's perspective revealed the system struggles and learning that occurred during the three years of Michael's education. From these struggles and learning came changes within the system that nurtured Michael's learning.

Learning was embedded in the culture of Ryerson School. Through learning, individuals changed. Michael learned important academic skills, and, to his great satisfaction, that he could learn. He learned to manage some of his emotional eruptions and new behaviours to express these feelings. He was beginning to learn the complexities of social interactions. Adults learned new ways of understanding and responding to behaviour. They learned new ways of teaching academic skills. And, to their great satisfaction, they learned that they could find ways to promote learning that would, as Tina asked, "help [Michael] be a different person."

Connecting

"I cannot play with you," the fox said. "I am not tamed." ...

"No," said the little prince. "I am looking for friends. What does that mean – 'tame'?"

"It is an act too often neglected," said the fox. "It means to establish ties."

"'To establish ties'?"

"Just that," said the fox. "To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you. And you, on your part, have no need of me. To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world...." (de Saint-Exupery, 1971, 80).

A major theme running through all twelve transcripts in this case study was the significance of trust and belonging and community. Participants described how the relationships built on these factors provided the safety and confidence required for learning to occur. This was vital in the Ryerson School community.

In the data from this study, two parallel themes are how Michael changed over time and how Ryerson School changed over time. Michael evolved from a terrified child, alone in the world of school, to Michael, the lovable child, who was just one of the boys. Ryerson School evolved from an established system into which children fit, to an adaptive community that adjusted around the needs of an individual child with an emotional-behavioural disorder. For both Michael and Ryerson School, as connections increased, understanding between people grew into satisfying relationships.

Taming Michael

As described in his story, Michael and his family arrived unexpectedly at Ryerson School in the spring of 2001. They were a family living in fear. Tina, the mom, said about her move from Ontario:

It took a lot of courage for me to make sure that [Michael] was going to get to a place where he could feel like he was in a safe place. ... Like I sacrificed a lot. ... I mean a lot of big sacrifices. Just for my children's safety. ...For my safety as well. 'Cause it was not just my children that were in jeopardy of being unsafe when their father gets out of prison. It was also my safety...cause in order to be a good parent...I would have to feel safe.

The kind of fear that drove Tina out of her home was obvious in Michael's behaviour when he arrived at Ryerson School. He huddled in corners, hid under desks and coats,

and ran away. His mother knew how difficult the school's first task with Michael would be. As stated in Chapter Four, Michael's story, she said:

It was hard for them to even connect with him. And it was hard for anybody else to connect with him. 'Cause he wouldn't allow anybody to even become a friend to him. ... He hated everybody in general. I would say, you know, "I trust this person and can you just...try? Can you try to like this person?"

"How do you know you like them?"

"Because they're listening to me." And they were caring. And continuously repeating the fact that "they're not going to hurtchu."

Tina's work at home was to help Michael trust that he was safe in his new environment. For a child abused by an adult who was instinctively trusted to keep him safe, the fear of trusting other adults was overwhelming. Michael could not step into Ryerson School and assume that it was a safe place. He also could not assume anything about how any of the adults in Ryerson School would treat him. When he arrived at the school, Michael could not risk connecting with anyone.

Tina also indicated that Michael would need to connect with someone if he was going to conquer his early childhood trauma. She identified that she needed professional help to support him in overcoming, in her words, "his rageous tempers" and "his overall general lack of connecting with other people."

At school, people's initial efforts with Michael were to help him feel safe. What began as comforting, momentary connections, like bringing him toys and letting him be in his brothers' classrooms, became a three-year process of developing family-like bonds between Michael, his family, and Ryerson School.

The first connection Michael made at Ryerson School, according to Walter, Susan, Helen, and Tina, was with Simon, the behaviour support teacher. Tina said, “The very first person [Michael] connected with was Simon Peters. ... And yet...he was very scared of Simon because he was a man.” Susan went on to describe that the relationship between Michael and Simon was built on Simon’s “[spending] a good deal of time...sitting beside [and] helping him through things” in the classroom, and Simon’s sensitive ability “to do the dance” of connecting with Michael. This connection with an adult male was particularly difficult and important for Michael. Susan, Walter, Simon, and Ann all recognized that Michael particularly needed, in Susan’s words, “a positive male role model.” Simon stated that “a male presence was important, so Walter, the principal, and myself, we very consciously [were] part of [Michael’s] plan. [We] built in connecting time during the day.” Simon also identified that he put in extra one-on-one time with Michael because “he desperately needed the connection.”

In grade one, Simon continued to connect with Michael, and Mary the grade one teacher, became another person to develop a genuine, trusting relationship with Michael. Susan, Simon, Walter, and Tina all remarked on how Mary was consistently able to bring Michael back from his fears and into believing he was safe. Susan described Mary as:

a very supportive teacher who was very sensitive to his needs. ... She was very observant and would go out of her way to make it very safe and comforting for him. ... She was VERY sensitive to [his needs]. She spent a good deal of time making sure that he had choices.

Michael's experiences of continuous support and understanding from individuals at Ryerson School, and his mother's reassurances that the people and the place were safe, seemed to alleviate his often overwhelming fears for his safety.

Individual adults at Ryerson School who reached out to Michael to support him, also promoted the development of social skills that helped him form peer relationships. This was a delicate process because it meant showing Michael the destructive impact of his behaviour on relationships, maintaining a very fragile trust, and reassuring him that Ryerson School was safe. Simon described how Walter

focused a lot on his social learning needs and the treatment needs which ... are the ones that the kids can't learn, but the kid needs the environment to provide for him. We focused a lot on that. Lots of connections. Connecting him to his strengths. Connecting him to things that he enjoyed doing. And always holding him accountable for behaviour that was dangerous, violent. And behaviour that would get in the way of him being able to make friends and being able to maintain friends.

Walter did the bulk of that. And that was ... Walter's own form of a combination of Restitution and Life Space Intervention. But always teaching, stabilizing the kid. You know, "you're not a bad kid." It's important maybe to note that in Ryerson School the whole building is under girded by Restitution philosophy that talks about what we believe about how we treat other people in this building. And so Walter always - when processing with Michael or any student-...I mean this wasn't unique to Michael,...took it back to "Well what do we believe about how we treat each other in Ryerson School? Always treat each other with kindness,

and with caring, and safely. And then have him take the chance at saying “Okay, do you want to talk about it?” And usually over time, Michael would talk about it with Walter. And Walter would always take him back to ... “It takes a lot of courage to ... talk about this. You know, we’ve made a mistake.” And he’d always ... walk him through that so they both understood it. But then always turns it back to “Okay. What do you need to do to fix it?” And he would do that when it was with teachers. He would do that when it was with EAs, when it was with other students. It didn’t matter...at which level it was. He always took him back to that and it was ...“How do you fix it?”

And I think the biggest piece though ... that Michael learned [was] that he didn’t have to be afraid in Ryerson School. If he made a mistake no one was going to yell at him. No one was going to hit him. No one was going to belittle or demean him. And I think he also learned ... through the process that when you tantrum, we will make sure you’re safe, and we will make sure other kids are safe. Then we’ll bring you back “Okay. Let’s take a look at this situation.” ... Help the kid think through what was happening to them and always encouraging the good choices that they made.

Michael’s trust of Ryerson School grew in a system where he saw and experienced that everyone was safe and treated respectfully.

Expanding Michael’s Community

In the first months at Ryerson School, Michael’s relationships with peers were, in Susan’s words “rough and tumble.” Mostly, Walter said,

he was seen as the bad kid, cause he would act out... Initially he had very few friends...so often the reason for that was his behaviour. [It] would keep kids away from him 'cause they would be afraid of him. And, as he was learning to play differently with kids, he gained more friends. So that by the end of grade two, ... he was...no longer looked upon as 'the bad kid' or the kid that didn't have friends. Now he had friends and a lot of it had to do with learning how to play with others. And also when you're not getting what you want, doing it differently, rather than kicking or hurting somebody else.

Simon stated that early on Michael could not play with others. Tina, Michael's mom, also said, "for the longest time, he had no friends. He would never go make any friends." By the middle of grade three, however, when the interviews for this study were conducted, this was no longer the case. Walter and Susan identified that connections with the specialists like the behaviour support teacher and psychologist, and with classroom teachers helped Michael learn to "play differently," as Walter said. Simon and Susan identified that Walter's teaching "a better way" through the Restitution Model contributed to Michael's growing number of friendships. Susan, Helen, and Tracy identified that peers began to enjoy his fun-loving, silly ways, but also to challenge him when his inappropriate behaviours affected them. As Michael's trust and the skills to be in peer relationships developed, so did his sense of belonging in the Ryerson School community.

In his interview for this study in early June of his grade three year, the importance of Michael's connections to friends at Ryerson School was strongly evident. When asked about being in school with others, Michael's reply was "At first when I...was alone...was

kinda scary. And then I met...some friends...and the I...wasn't scared anymore."

Questions about important people he met at school were answered with friends' names. No adults were mentioned until I specifically asked about Mr. Abrams, Mr. Peters, Ms. Braun, Dr. Toni, Ms. Friesen, and Ms. Giesbrecht. From earlier interviews with these adults, I had assumed that Michael's relationships with these adults would be the most significant for him. I was surprised when he named his friends. By the end of grade three, Michael's connections to school, like most children's, revolved around peer relationships. When Michael started at Ryerson School, he was too scared to connect with anyone. By the end of this study, however, several adults identified that he not only fit into what Walter described as a "circle of friends," but he was beginning to understand the give and take of mutual relationships. Tina saw that Michael could now "kind of give sympathetic feelings towards [other children]." Simon agreed: "He now is beginning to...empathize with kids. ...[because] I think he feels genuinely remorseful and he values ...relationship too." For Michael, this was enormous growth, as Bob Nelson, the former provincial school psychologists' supervisor, said in his interview. From the time of cowering in the presence of proffered support, Michael had grown to the point where he was now able to reach out to others. He was indeed beginning "to establish ties" (de Saint-Exupery, 1971, 80).

Walter attributed this growth in Michael to "the building of trust." He elaborated how this work was connected to education:

I think before we can teach them we need to build a relationship. And if we don't build that relationship we can't do that next piece. And if that trust isn't there, it

doesn't matter how much talking we do. And even if we're right, if that trust isn't there, it just...will not be internalized."

Simon thought Michael's ability to participate in relationships grew out of his experiences at Ryerson School. What Michael experienced, he said:

goes right back to the Restitution Model. Or safety. That here nobody hits you and nobody screams at you. ... Huge sense of belonging. Here you are. Here you belong. You are accepted. And so that's integrated. That whole piece of inclusion. But also around the safety piece. Everybody needs to be safe. You need to be safe. The others need to be safe.

Molly, the school psychologist, also saw how connected Michael became to Ryerson School. She said Michael was now "happy to be where he is. I think he very much feels he belongs in that school." Bob Nelson, from his perspective far outside Ryerson School was most emphatic about the evolution of Michael from an "unsocialized," "feral" child to a child who "was starting to get the very basic structures for social interaction."

Connecting School and Family

At Ryerson School, Michael began to interact socially when he felt secure to hear, as Bob said, "the message to me is 'I belong.' And my family belongs." Tina agreed with Bob's understanding of the importance of this belonging message. When asked what school responses made a difference for Michael, she said:

I think that what made the biggest difference is that they actually...acknowledged that I need support. ... That made my children feel like they were helping me. They weren't just trying to help them. They were helping me too. ... My kids wanted mom to be liked. They wanted their Mom to be somebody. ... Because me

is the one they ultimately went home to. ...So if mom wasn't important to the teachers, they would all relate that to a bad connection.

Michael and his family developed a sense of trust and belonging and community in his years at Ryerson School. These profound social experiences laid the groundwork for the possibility of a successful school life, and more importantly, for satisfying relationships.

Strengthened School Community

While Michael journeyed from his internal place of fear and isolation to safety and community in Ryerson School, it is interesting to note what happened in Ryerson School. When Michael arrived, the school was, according to Walter and Susan, two years into the development of a school community based on the Restitution Model. Working with Michael was a new experience for this fledging community; an experience that challenged the belief statements Ryerson School had collaborated to develop. During the formidable experience of working with Michael, the web of connections that formed and supported Ryerson School grew stronger and more elaborate.

Common Beliefs

According to Walter, Ryerson School had intentionally promoted the development of a school community by adopting the principles of the Restitution Model. A primary principle of that model was that the members of the organization collaborated to articulate a set of beliefs to guide their everyday functioning. Both Walter and Susan described how Ryerson School developed their belief statements. Walter said:

[The Restitution Model] sets the whole sets the whole climate for the whole school because as a school we came up with a school belief statement that says "At Ryerson School Everyone Shares, Plays nicely, Encourages, Cares, Tries their

best, has Fun, Understands, and Listens.” And how we arrived at that belief statement [was that] each classroom teacher with their students talked about what the ideal classroom would look like,...and how they wanted to interact with one another. ...That was shared with the whole staff and we took the key common components out of that. And that is [how we] built the belief statement. That’s what grounds us all into what which what it should sound like and look like and feel like when we’re at our school. And if you look at the key words it also spells “respectful.” And so respectful looks like listening, understanding, having fun, and trying our best, and caring and encouraging, playing nicely, and sharing. And so with everyone.

Susan described how the whole school was involved in this process:

And part of [the program of restitution] is coming up with a belief statement of what we believe and how we do business here. And so everyone in their classrooms talks about things that happen. ...I know that when I did it when I was in the classroom, I said “Kay. What are some rules? What are some rules that you know? That you have at home or at school or whatever?” And then we brainstormed them. And then we cut them apart, and then, because I was in grade one, then we put ones that were sorta the same and had to do with safety, that had to do with kindness, that had to do with those types of things. And then we wrote a statement that said you know “In grade one, we believe that it’s important to try our best.” Whatever came out of that. Then as a staff we took the classroom belief statements, we pulled out the commonalties... and it’s uncanny how they’re almost all the same...and put it together and we post it in school. And it’s a

process we do every two years. We change it. They do it with their classes ...and we've also done it as a staff.... The staff belief statement is on its own. And then the school belief statement is different than that. They basically say the same thing, but we have two different statements.

The cumbersome collaborative process reflected Ryerson School's commitment to community. Simon, the behaviour support teacher, was a divisional employee who made scheduled visits to Ryerson School. He remarked that "In Ryerson School, the whole building is under girded by Restitution philosophy that talks about what we believe and how we treat people in this building." As he described this school, even Simon's language was inclusive – he said "we" – indicating the strength of the sense of connection and community in this school.

Common Understanding of Behaviour

Also embedded in the Restitution Model used at Ryerson School was the understanding of behaviour as a response to internal needs. Once again, the entire population of Ryerson School was taught to understand their behaviour and the behaviour of others as needs fulfilling. This encouraged everyone to understand themselves and others in a similar way, and laid the groundwork for resolving problems and conflicts. One core need, in this model, was belonging. Everyone was taught the basic needs, both in the classroom and in one-on-one problem-solving situations. The common understanding of how everyone needs to belong also reinforced the sense of community in the school.

The importance of community at Ryerson School was inherent in the school's beliefs about teaching and learning, as well. Walter was interviewed first in this study.

When we sat down for that interview, my initial request to him was “Tell me the story of how Michael came to the school and how you worked with him.” Walter said in reply: “Michael arrived on March 8, 2001 and he was in kindergarten” and then went on to say that “before you can teach a child you also need to look to connect. To build a relationship with the child.” Later, when asked what was the most important learning for Michael, Walter reiterated his beliefs about teaching and learning: “I think the most important thing for him has been the building of that trust.” It was clear very early in this study that Ryerson School believed in acceptance, connection, and community as fundamental elements of their learning community.

According to Mary, Michael’s grade one teacher, Ryerson School had virtually no experience with students with emotional-behavioural disorders before Michael and his family arrived. As a result, the experiences with Michael, as described in the interviews done for this case study, were a genuine test of the strength of the beliefs developed at Ryerson School.

The actions of individuals, towards Michael from when he arrived at Ryerson School and throughout his three years there, have already been extensively described in the data analysis of this study. Walter, Susan, Simon, Molly, Mary, Ann and Jessica, Sonja, and Tracy all reached out in a variety of ways to connect with Michael and reinforce that he was accepted at Ryerson School. He was rarely isolated or suspended, often typical school responses to behaviours outside the norm. Simon remembered:

I know Michael has sometimes received time outs, and in-school suspensions for maybe an hour or two hours when it’s been a case of when he’s done something that’s been violent. But other than that...as much as possible it’s been this huge

philosophy of inclusion. That the kids need to be...part of that group. That whole idea of the belonging need. If you can't meet the belonging need, and the safety need, ...you can't move forward with any social emotional development.

There were struggles in the three years with Michael to adhere to the principles of inclusion, but these were faced, according to Walter, Simon, and Susan, with the same philosophy and strategy of acceptance. When there were differences in how adults perceived what should be done, the leaders in the school tried to accept those opinions, and then support the adults towards adjusting their beliefs to fit better with those of the school community.

Establishing Ties Through Collaboration

An interesting revelation in the data was the ways in which the Ryerson School community was strengthened through their work with Michael. Everyone interviewed referred to the establishment and efforts of a team that was vital in planning, evaluating, and carrying out interventions for Michael. Over time, this team formed strong group and individual professional bonds that provided them with the energy and determination and commitment to do the kind of long-term, demanding work with a student like Michael. A small, but telling indicator of the bonds between team members was the use of inclusive language like “we” and “our” that peppered the interviews of Walter, Susan, Simon, Molly, Mary, and Tracy. There was also a common understanding of the work they were doing. This work with Michael was not a problem to be fixed, but a collective effort to improve the human condition. From his perspective outside the school, Bob Nelson said:

The thing that absolutely amazed me about the case was how everybody pitched in. And instead of getting a body and getting a problem away from us, everybody

decided they wanted to do something about it. ... How I saw them do it, it looked like they didn't see it as a problem to be solved. They saw it as an opportunity to help some other people. ... And I know this sounds sorta like the same thing, but it ... expresses itself differently. So the principal getting the phone call from the mom in the middle of the night. And doing something about it. Getting out of bed and going and rounding up the kid. ... I don't know if I've ever heard of that before. ... I know principals...who've gone down to the Youth Centre on their own time and sat with kids. But this was...really parenting. ...This wasn't just connecting with the kids. ...This was really parenting. ...It was everybody...doing a piece. Everybody seemed to fit in the community. You know, it's four of them, and I mean it's like everybody's decided "Here's someone to help. Here's...some human beings to help." ...And "what could we do that would be helpful?" ... And so it didn't have the flavor of being a problem kid or a problem. It really became someone in our community who needed some support. But we all do at times.

The group together provided a more intense experience of acceptance and belonging for Michael and his family than a single person could have. As the work of this group had an impact on Michael, the group strengthened and generated more energy to persevere.

Molly's voice was passionate when she described the impact of the team's work, and the work's impact on the team. She said:

The team kinda pulled together and got all that going. ... Kinda spearheading all of it. ... It is phenomenal. ... It's a phenomenal amount of time and energy. ... It's been an incredible privilege. It's been a phenomenal amount of work. I think no one would deny that. But it's been very rewarding. ... Just kind of the sense of

everybody working together and kinda puzzling things out. It's just been great.

Like it has. ... If people can pull together for kids like this, like kindof put in the time and effort, it's just amazing what you can do. Like phenomenal.

The way that Ryerson School succeeded with Michael was to gently include him and his family in their community. In the end, the way this work to incorporate Michael was done at Ryerson School strengthened that community.

Taming Tina

A whole new perspective on the theme of safety, acceptance, and belonging that ran through the data was apparent in Tina's transcript. She was passionate and absolute in her expressions of Michael's need for acceptance. She was just as passionate, and as direct, about her own need to be understood and accepted. According to Tina, in spite of his early fears of and resistance to connecting with others, "Michael was...overall just a goofy kind of child that just longed to be loved as he was." She also described how Michael changed when individuals, classroom teachers, the school team, and eventually the whole school community managed to fill that longing in Michael. She said: "We all could see the difference it makes when somebody's being heard."

Tina's need to be heard was also addressed by Ryerson School. Again, in order to be effective with Michael, Ryerson School extended the principles of inclusion and community- building beyond the school. Tina joined the school team. Walter described how Tina added an important dimension to the team, and reinforced the school-home connection.

Mom wanted to be part of the team and it was gratifying to see that the members of the team felt safe that they wanted mom to be a part of the team. So it was a

joint thing. Mom ...was assertive. She would like...to know what's happening, so that she could support the team too. And I think teachers felt that it's important for mom to know what we're doing so that hopefully some of the things that we're trying in school...she can continue doing... at home. ... I think it definitely added another level of support for Michael. Because Michael now saw mom working with the staff and saw the staff working with mom and ...the message that's sent to him is that ...mom and the teachers are all working and trying to provide an environment for him that's safe and supportive. ... I think there's still always tension there when things aren't working. But I think mom's more open to share "This is what I'm seeing at home. Help me understand" rather than coming down hard on the school "We're doing this wrong." There's more of an understanding. So that's ...a definite plus to including the parent on the team. There's ...a better understanding of what we're trying to do. And she sees us as people. Often there are frustrations I think both at the teaching and at the parental end, but there's less of this attacking one another. But rather looking at "this is what I'm seeing as a teacher. This is what you're seeing as a parent. Now how can we work together?" Focus on a solution.

It sounded like it initially felt risky to extend the team to include Tina, but that the connections that were built as a result benefited everyone involved.

Another important connection for Tina and her family was the addition of the school social worker. Simon, Walter, Susan, and Tina all identified how this added support increased the effectiveness of the school's work with Michael by connecting Tina

to support. Tina, after describing how she “had an issue with [Jean] from day one...in regards to [the social worker] label on her shirt,” went on to say:

She became my ally. ... Somebody that I would go back to and say “Hey, this is what I’m feeling. Tell me if I’m wrong.” I need to be affirmed or assured. ... She was very much in support of me.

Tina said over and over in her interview that no one in her previous community listened to her. She said: “The only place that ever did...give me the help that I needed was Ryerson School.” She also said, in a quiet, subdued voice, that being heard, believed, and understood by people at Ryerson School “kinda saved my life.” In helping Tina, Ryerson School pushed the community building beyond the immediate school environment. This was growth for them as well as for the Penner family. It was evidence, in action, of their intent to provide a safe, accepting environment in which “learning to be a different person” could occur. It was building a learning community by expanding their understanding of who they were, and what they could and would do.

What is Essential

The idea that trust and belonging and community were central to the work with Michael at Ryerson School ran strongly through all the transcripts. Just as interesting was the evidence that the challenges of working with Michael and his family strengthened the Ryerson School community by creating new bonds between people within and outside the school system. Often, systems set the limits of the work they do based on funding. In this instance, Bob Nelson said the power of community far surpassed the power that dollars inject into any system.

I've seen lots [of cases] where we spent...a great deal of money, and it's been a disaster. ...The dollars are not the issue. The issue really was this sort of community forming around him where people [have] this very high commitment to "this is another person in our community who's of value." ...And it takes a huge commitment...with a big "C."... And the message to the kid is "I matter." "People care for me." "I've got value." And somehow "I'm special."

Systems, even those designed for children, sometimes forget to send this vital message. In the last three years, Ryerson School sent that message to Michael over and over in many different ways. Michael, it appears, got the message and the entire school community was strengthened.

The importance of belonging and building understanding was reiterated many times in the data of this study. Simply counting the number of people who talked about it, or the number of times this theme was mentioned does not really reflect how important it was to those involved in this case. The most telling information came from the passion and affection in people's voices. In hindsight, I am not surprised that it was so easy to get permission from everyone to do this study. Participants were anxious to describe what they had experienced together. Molly's words summed up what many said: It was "an incredible privilege, ... a phenomenal amount of work, [and] very rewarding." The "simple secret" - the essential "invisible to the eye" - truly was that "one only understands what one tames" (de Saint-Exupery, 1971, 83).

CHAPTER SEVEN – ONE STORY, MANY TRUTHS

Because my Michael he would become somethin' that could be dangerous to all of us. If he wasn't gettin' the support. If he wasn't getting help. I'm not saying that he cou...that he will. I'm saying he could. ...It is always there. It will always be with him. But at least now he's learning to change. And learning to redirect himself. ...He's a positive child now. He's a loveable child. ...Now you can hug him. ...He likes to be hugged now (Penner, T. transcript, 2004).

Connections to Theory

This case study of how Ryerson School worked with Michael, a student labeled emotionally-behaviourally disordered, level two, was a descriptive case study. Through interviews with thirteen individuals involved at different times and in different ways with Michael, the study provides an in-depth, holistic depiction of a real situation. Every participant described Michael's successful adaptation to school and the school's committed efforts to adapt to Michael. The data from this one case, examined in detail, reinforced what theory and previous research predicted.

Ecological Perspective

In descriptive case studies such as this one, pattern-matching logic is an important method of data analysis (Yin, 1994). As stated in the literature review conducted prior to this study, research and government documents indicated that an ecological approach would underlie the work with Michael at Ryerson School. Ecological theory predicted that divisional, school and classroom systems, working together with the home and community, through systems-wide interventions, would positively affect Michael, his family, Michael's peers, teachers, educational assistants, and divisional staff. Michael's

positive behaviour change was unique, providing the opportunity to test the theoretical constructs of the ecological perspective through this critical case study.

Elements of the ecological framework would predict that, in working with Michael, Ryerson School had:

1. collaboration between systems such as the school division, community, school, and home
2. a system-wide focus on the social-emotional development of all students in the school
3. positive, developmental support for Michael
4. support for Michael's home.

Collaboration

The data collected in this study found each of these elements present. Walter, Simon, and Susan all identified that the school division provided leadership, opportunities to plan, training, and staff supports before and during the time that Michael was at Ryerson School. This collaboration between the school division and the school affected the one-on-one work that was done with Michael. Simon, the behaviour support teacher, Molly, the school psychologist, and Jean, the social worker, were all divisional employees. Simon and Molly worked one-on-one with Michael, and Jean worked one-on-one with Tina, Michael's mom. Collaboration between Wheatland School Division and Ryerson School also affected the school by providing the direction to establish a system-wide set of beliefs and practices to support the social-emotional growth of all students, including those with emotional-behavioural disorders. Training and resources, and people to support Ryerson School in implementing the Restitution Model came from the school

division. The school board in Wheatland School Division had articulated the goal to promote the social-emotional growth of students, providing a visible focus on the importance of this goal.

Collaboration was a key to the work in this case. The kind of collaboration between the school division and the school was extended into the school between all levels of staff, and between staff and the home. Molly also described the collaborative work of Jean, the school social worker with mental health and income assistance systems, as part of the support work that was done with Tina, Michael's mom.

Perhaps the most noted collaborative effort in this study was the work of the school team. This team met regularly, included school division staff, school administration, the resource and classroom teachers, educational assistants, and the parent. The purpose and process this team used was also collaborative: they met regularly to support each other's roles, debrief difficult situations, solve problems, and address any immediate crisis situations. Every participant interviewed remarked several times on the necessity of this team effort. The ecological perspective emphasized that intra- and intersystem collaboration would support positive behaviour change. The case study of what Ryerson School did to work with Michael supported that construct.

System-Wide Emphasis

The second element that the ecological perspective predicted was necessary to promote positive behaviour change was a system-wide focus on the social-emotional development of students. This case study of Ryerson School supported that principle. The school division provided direction and supports for the implementation of the Restitution Model that had been adopted by Ryerson School two years prior to Michael's arrival. The

Restitution Model set Ryerson School on the journey towards the collaborative development of classroom and school belief statements. These statements underpinned the learning community in which people were taught a common understanding of behaviour. Finally, the Restitution Model also provided Ryerson School with a disciplinary process that was embedded in the social structure of the school, so that students learned and practiced behaviours through daily social experiences. For Michael, whose behaviours were outside social norms and school expectations, this Restitution process had the effect of slowly and continually drawing him into the school community as he learned new behaviours.

Positive Developmental Support

The third significant element that the ecological model of behaviour would predict as important in promoting behaviour change would be the presence of positive, developmental support. At Ryerson School, positive support was provided for Michael. Specialists, like the behaviour support teacher and the school psychologist, the principal, teachers, and Michael's EA in grade three, all supported Michael beyond the expectations of their jobs. All of these people remarked on that about themselves and each other in this case. Walter, Susan, Simon, the teachers and EAs continually searched for ways to promote Michael's academic, social, and emotional growth. Numerous interventions were created, implemented, and evaluated on a continuous basis. Behaviour lapses became opportunities to learn new behaviours. When summarized in this way, it reads like every situation worked out perfectly. That did not happen. However, the intent of individuals and the system was to support Michael positively and, from the information gathered in this study, more often than not, that is what happened.

System-to-System Support

Support for the home was another element that the ecological perspective predicted would be important in this case. There were many instances of this support reported in the data. The school principal did a vast amount of this work: everything from chasing one of Tina's difficult boyfriends out of the house to walking Michael's brother home every day for two months. Susan, the resource teacher, invited Michael and his brother to her home to play with her children and have supper with her family. Mary, the grade one teacher, phoned home almost daily with positive information for Michael's mom about how his day had gone. The school social worker met regularly with Tina, Michael's mom, to support her personally and in her efforts with her family. The ecological perspective focuses on systems and their impact on each other. In this case, the positive work with Michael in the school system affected Michael at home, and the positive work with the home by the school system affected Michael at school.

Many of the elements of the ecological understanding of behaviour were reinforced by this case study. From the literature reviewed prior to conducting the study, this was predicted. Also evident in this case was some overlap of the theoretical models. This, too, was not unexpected since reality rarely mimics the clean-cut neatness of theory. The ecological perspective reflected what was done in this case. The humanistic perspective was reflected in how the work was done and helped explain why the work was done the way it was.

Humanistic Perspective

Elements of the humanistic perspective that were evident in this case included the importance of relationships and an emphasis on the internal sources and control of

behaviour. The individual therapy Michael experienced with Molly also reflected the humanistic expressive therapies for children.

Relationships

Every participant in this case, including Michael, identified that relationships were critical. People who entered into genuine, committed relationships with Michael were instrumental in fomenting behaviour change. Participants concurred that Walter, Simon, Susan, Mary, Ann and Jessica, Sonja, and Tracy were all important connections for Michael at school. They also agreed that Michael's relationship with his mom was extremely important and that Tina's positive relationship with Jean, the school social worker, other individuals at Ryerson School, and the school as a whole, positively affected Michael's behaviour. Interestingly, the relationships formed between adults who worked with Michael were also important to sustain the level of intervention required in this case.

Internal Behaviour Control

The Restitution Model, so central to the way that Ryerson School operated as a system in general, and with Michael, in particular, builds on William Glasser's Choice Theory. Part of that theory is the belief that individuals make behaviour choices to get their needs met, and that the choice to balance personal needs with the needs of others, comes from internal motivations. Ryerson School was committed to the needs-based understanding of behaviour. The principal and resource teacher, as school leaders, used this understanding of behaviour to govern their interactions with everyone: other staff, parents, and students. This commitment provided leadership in Ryerson School when the

work with Michael became difficult and the temptation was to punish him for inappropriate behaviours.

In the situations when Michael had opportunities to learn from his mistakes, people acknowledged the internal motivations of his behaviour before attempting to help him develop alternate behaviours. This respectful approach allowed him to be less defensive and more open to change. People worked hard to understand and verbalize what Michael felt or his possible reasons for reacting as he did. According to Walter, he was told that his response was one way, but that in the school he was in, his response did not fit well with the school beliefs. He was then helped to try and discover other ways of behaving. Positive relationships also contributed to the sense of safety Michael needed to make behaviour changes. The relationship-based interventions, founded on the principle that Michael controlled his own behaviour, reflected the humanistic understanding of behaviour.

Expressive Therapy

In her work with Michael, Molly described the process of providing Michael with the materials and opportunities to work through his deeper issues in a safe way. Several creative projects reflected Michael's anxieties: he constructed an exploding volcano, a papier mache mask, and a head-to-toe costume designed to, in his words "make me into someone else." The close connection between Molly and Michael, the creative mediums, and the dedicated time all reflected the humanistic approach to children's therapy.

Patterns in the data of this case study of what Ryerson School did to work with their student labeled EBD, level two, reflect the principles of ecological and humanistic theories of behaviour. It is probably significant to note that there was a system-wide

commitment to these perspectives that affected Michael, his family, the whole school, and the whole school division. The high level of commitment to the theoretical principles and practical processes of Restitution informed the practices at Ryerson School and then, in this descriptive case study, reinforced some of the principles of ecological and humanistic models of behaviour.

Limitations of the Study

Every study has limitations. Research of a single case is limited by its singularity. It is only one case and cannot be directly generalized to other populations or situations. The specifics of what Ryerson School did to work with their student labeled EBD Level Two cannot be applied, recipe fashion, in other schools. This is a specific description of particular actions by particular people in unique circumstances during a certain time period. Instead, as stated previously, the case study links to broad principles of theory underpinning the particular responses in that case. Since Ryerson School's responses reflected the principles of ecological and humanistic theories, other schools can be more confident that these principles may be successful in their efforts to deal with students labeled EBD Level Two.

Alternate Interpretations of the Data

There are always many possible interpretations in case studies, particularly when the data collected is rich in depth and detail. As stated by Bob Nelson, the former school psychologists' supervisor in his interview:

I don't know that [the change in Michael and the work of the school is] a one-to-one relationship. ... It's a mix of ...the right people in the right key positions. ...

And then you had this basic belief structure around it. And you had a kid who had

some skills who could latch. ...And he was still young enough. ...It was sort of a whole series of things that all came together.

Bob also said he saw Michael make “gains much faster than I could have imagined he would” in the midst of the work being done at Ryerson School, but that “you never know” that one set of actions has caused the other. It is impossible to definitively state that the actions of those at Ryerson School caused the behaviour changes in Michael.

EBD Definition

It could be argued that Michael was not truly emotionally-behaviourally disordered and therefore the behaviour changes were normal growth for a boisterous child. The unclear parameters of the umbrella label EBD might not have included Michael, particularly after his second relatively uneventful year at Ryerson School. Simon and Bob directly addressed the reasons for labeling Michael EBD, saying that the physical, sexual, and emotional abuse from his past had left him “pretty damaged” at five years old. Walter and Susan also alluded to the abuse and how they believed it still plagued Michael by triggering inappropriate emotional and behavioural responses at unpredictable times. The psychological assessment completed by Molly in Michael’s grade one year stated that he was “extremely defiant and violent in the home environment” and that he had “significant emotional problems due to a past history of abuse.” The descriptions of Michael’s behaviours in the applications for EBD funding and participants’ descriptions in their interviews all fit the accepted definition of EBD: Michael’s emotions and behaviours prevented him from functioning normally in the school setting. It is likely that he was emotionally-behaviourally disordered and that the

behaviour changes seen in Michael in his three years at Ryerson School were not the extraordinary growth of a normal child.

Possible Explanations

There are other possible interpretations that might explain what happened with Michael at Ryerson School. He could have matured enough to be, in his mother's words, "a different person." He could have used what his grade one teacher called his "radar brain" to discern that his actions got him less satisfaction than compliance, and so he changed. Michael's explanation of how he eventually got along with his kindergarten teacher was just that: "I just started being nice, and then she started being nice to me." There might have been a single intervention out of thousands that was the key to Michael's behaviour change, but it is impossible to pinpoint what that might have been in all the information collected from the thirteen participants in this case. Participants, eager to be seen as competent, might have described what they wanted the situation to be, rather than what it actually was. There are many possible ways to interpret the data collected in this case study.

Replicating the Study

As in every case study, it is impossible to replicate exactly what Ryerson School did to work with Michael in another case study. Instead, the similarities and themes in the data from multiple perspectives reinforce the validity of the data analysis. As well, the data reinforced the principles of ecological theory, as the research review indicated it would. This was not particularly surprising since efforts to support behaviour change at Ryerson School were built on the theory and research before Michael arrived in that school. While no one can replicate this case study exactly, they can examine the way the

study was conducted. I have made every effort to conduct careful research, report exactly and explicitly the methods used to complete the study, and analyze the data collected from several perspectives to ensure that the work done is both reliable and valid.

Researcher's Perspective

There is always the risk in case study research that researchers, consciously or unconsciously, pull those interpretations from the data that best align with their thinking. In this instance, I have used many different sources to generate several interpretations of the data. I have addressed the questions of what Ryerson School did, and how and why they did the work the way they did. This was to fulfill what I said I would do when I proposed to conduct this study. I also included Michael's story, using the data from many participants, to add life and reality to the information. Finally, I included a section describing the overriding themes that emerged in the words, language, and implications of participants. The layers of interpretations of the data were an effort to provide a comprehensive, in-depth response to a large volume of information, as well as to accurately reflect different ways of interpreting the information. Other researchers, with different backgrounds and interests, would certainly find similar content in the data, but would also likely bring their own unique emphasis in interpreting the themes.

Case studies represent in-depth reflections of reality. Data that is collected in case studies should be subject to many interpretations, since no one person's interpretation of reality is absolute. The reality of what Ryerson School did to work with Michael pictured here relies heavily on the words of people interviewed in an effort to accurately reflect what work was done, how it was done, why it was done the way it was, and what it meant to those who did it.

Significance of the Study

Case studies examine “the reality behind appearances, with contradictions and the dialectical nature of social life, as well as...a whole that is more than the sum of its parts” (Sjoberg, et al., 1991, p. 39). In studying the case of how Ryerson School worked with their student labeled EBD Level Two, the complexities and intricacies of school systems and how these intertwine with the lives of individuals in these systems was described. This reality is important providing an increased understanding of what works in schools.

Research is about advancing knowledge. “Educational research is critical enquiry aimed at informing educational judgements and decisions in order to improve educational action” (Bassey, 1999, p. 39). In this study, the important information provides school systems with better understandings of how to manage with students with emotional-behavioural handicaps. This information is needed at the provincial, divisional, school, classroom, and individual levels.

The point of social sciences is to change the world for the better. This important principle looms as central in many case study projects, including this one (Feagin, et al., 1991). In this case study, Ryerson School’s actions and understandings illustrated how one school provided one boy with an EBD label with the opportunities to have a regular school experience, and possibly, as Bob Nelson said, “a reasonable life.” In the larger picture, this case may also illustrate key principles that other schools can apply to provide their children with EBD with the same opportunities.

I have been overwhelmed and humbled in the process of completing this study. It is a heavy responsibility to accurately capture Michael’s story. It is humbling to witness the truths about human beings emerging from the story. Like Molly said: “It’s been a

phenomenal amount of work. ... But very rewarding.” In this small story of one boy in one school, big truths emerge. There are truths about what it means to really learn; truths about what it means to care for others; and truths about how a system can serve those who do not easily fit. The truth for schools everywhere is that they can accommodate the Michaels in their systems, but the learning and growing they must do is as difficult and important as the learning expected of the Michaels.

Appendix A

Understanding the EBD Label

The EBD Label in Manitoba Government Documents

In 2001, Manitoba Education Training and Youth released another document in their “Towards Inclusion” series, as follow-up to the recommendations in the *Special Education Review* (Proactive, 1998). “*From Challenges to Possibilities: Planning for Behavior*” (2001) outlines five categories of school responses to a range of behaviours. Categories 3, 4, and 5 use the term *behavioral disorders* and *emotional/behavioral disorders*. No specific definitions of the disorders are outlined, but the categories are differentiated by increasingly antisocial and violent behaviours. In category 3, behaviours “can be quite impulsive, aggressive, and demanding” and “their problems are noticeable in the home, school, and community” (Manitoba Education, Training & Youth (MET), 2001, p. 4.8). Students who require category 4 supports “have particularly complex needs...distorted life-views and often-violent behavioral coping strategies” (MET, 2001, p. 4.10). Category 5 describes students who may not be in school because “extreme violence and antisocial behavior mark their behavior” (MET, 2001, p. 4.13). The *Planning for Behavior* document helps schools to develop responses to support students with emotional-behavioural needs, and removes the negative impact of the EBD label. The positive focus and direction is proactive, however, the document does not clearly define the term emotional-behavioural disorders. As well, the *Planning* (2001) document makes no specific reference to the rubric previously used to determine funding eligibility for students with EBD.

The EBD Label & Disorders in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV

A more in-depth look at the general understanding of the term EBD is also helpful. The American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders IV* (1994) provides some details about behaviour disorders diagnosed in childhood. The DSM-IV (1994) lists symptoms for the clinical diagnosis of "Disruptive Behavior Disorders" which includes some of the behaviours included in the EBD rubric. The DSM-IV (1994) groups "Disruptive Behavior Disorders" with *Attention Deficit* in its chapter "Disorders Usually First Diagnosed in Infancy, Childhood, or Adolescence" (pp. 37-121). Included in the "Disruptive Behavior Disorders" are Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, Conduct Disorder, and Oppositional Defiant Disorder. These behaviour disorders define many of the symptoms teachers see in their students labeled EBD. The Manitoba rubric also uses some terms like ADHD, Oppositional, tourettes, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder which are from the DSM-IV (1994). Whether Michael had any of the disorders as described in the DSM-IV (1994) will be determined through questions directed at the psychologists involved in this case and by careful examination of the available written information. Outlining the specific behaviours in each disorder in this literature review will help determine the kinds of questions to ask in the interviews and the information to look for in the written data.

Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) is described as "clinically significant impairment in social, academic, or occupational functioning" due to inattentive, hyperactive, and impulsive behaviors that are maladaptive and inconsistent with the developmental level of the child (DSM, 1994, p. 52). Children with ADHD have

particular difficulties with the expectations of the classroom because this disorder is characterized by inattentive behaviors like careless mistakes, difficulty sustaining attention, failure to listen, inability to complete tasks, poor organizational skills, forgetfulness, and the inability to focus attention and filter out distractions. In some instances, inattention is accompanied by hyperactivity and impulsivity with behaviors such as: fidgeting, inability to remain seated, excessive talking, interrupting, intruding, and difficulty waiting in turn. Typically, several of these symptoms appear before seven years of age. Children with these problems are not well suited to the expectations and structures of the classroom.

Conduct Disorder is defined as “a repetitive and persistent pattern of behavior in which the basic rights of others or major age-appropriate societal norms or rules are violated” (DSM-IV, 1994, p. 90). Children with conduct disorders are aggressive to people and animals, destroy property, are deceitful, steal, disregard curfews, run away, and are truant from school. All of these behaviours seriously impair the child’s social and academic progress. The DSM-IV (1994) also provides criteria to specify if the CD is mild, moderate, or severe. Mild conduct disorder is when “few if any conduct problems in excess of those required to make a diagnosis **and** conduct problems cause only minor harm to others” (DSM, 1994, p. 91). In moderate conduct disorder the number of behaviour problems and their impact on others is “intermediate between ‘mild and severe’” (DSM-IV, 1994, p. 91). When many more behaviour problems than those required to make a diagnosis **or** the behaviours “cause considerable harm to others” (DSM-IV, 1994, p. 91), the disorder is specified as severe. Individuals with CD may demonstrate little empathy or concern for others and show no guilt or remorse for their

misdemeanors. Frequently, they interpret other's behaviour as hostile or aggressive and become aggressive to counter misperceived threats. Usually, CD individuals have poor frustration tolerance, irritability, and temper outbursts. From the DSM-IV description of Conduct Disorder, it is not hard to understand why children with this disorder are difficult to support in the school system.

Oppositional Defiant Disorder is also described as Disruptive Behavior Disorder in the DSM-IV (1994). The diagnostic criteria for this disorder include: a pattern of negativistic, hostile, and defiant behaviour lasting at least 6 months; the disturbance causes clinically significant impairment in social, academic, or occupational functioning; and the behaviour cannot be attributed to psychotic or mood, conduct or antisocial Personality disorders. Children with ODD often lose their temper, argue with adults, defy or refuse to comply with adults' requests or rules, deliberately annoy others, are touchy or easily annoyed, and are spiteful or vindictive. In school, ODD may not be apparent until the child knows the adults and peers well. Then there are often conflicts with teachers and peers, low self-esteem, mood lability, low frustration tolerance, swearing, and the precocious use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs.

The guidelines for *Disruptive Behavior Disorders* provided in the DSM-IV (1994) describe the behaviours schools might experience with students who have EBD. Some of these behaviour disorder labels appear in the rubric that is used to describe students with EBD who qualify for funding support in Manitoba. Specific descriptions of the maladaptive behaviours help to understand the EBD label and, in this study, will help to more clearly understand how the EBD label applies to Michael.

The United States' Background to the EBD Label

The work in the United States on emotional-behavioural disorders precedes that of the Manitoba government, and the many references to United States' sources in the Manitoba government documents suggest that a clearer understanding of the term EBD might be available through a review of these sources.

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (1997) in the United States defines *emotional disturbance* in its regulations for dealing with students who struggle with emotional issues. Section 300.7 (c)(4) states:

(i) The term means a condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long time and to a marked degree that adversely affects a student's educational performance:

- (A) An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or other health factors.
- (B) An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
- (C) Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
- (D) A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
- (E) A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

(ii) The term includes schizophrenia. The term does not apply to children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they have an emotional disturbance” (Turnbull, et al., 2002, p. 146).

IDEA legislates disabled students' rights to equal educational opportunities in the United States, but excludes students who are "socially maladjusted." In effect, this definition artificially separates the behavioral components from emotional disturbances.

An advocacy group in the United States, the Mental Health and Special Education Coalition, suggests a more inclusive, alternative definition for students whose behaviors and emotional states handicap their school success. Sounding remarkably like the definition in Manitoba's *Special Education Review* (Proactive, 1998), this definition says:

- (A) The term ***emotional or behavioral disorder*** means a disability that is
- (i) characterized by behavioral or emotional responses in school programs so different from appropriate age, cultural, or ethnic norms that the responses adversely affect educational performance, including academic, social, vocational or personal skills;
 - (ii) more than a temporary, expected response to stressful events in the environment;
 - (iii) consistently exhibited in two different settings, at least one of which is school-related; and
 - (iv) unresponsive to direct intervention applied in general education, or the condition of a child such that general education interventions would be insufficient.
- (B) The term includes such a disability that co-exists with other disabilities.
- (C) The term includes a schizophrenic disorder, affective disorder, anxiety disorder, or other sustained disorder of conduct or adjustment, affecting a

child if the disorder affects educational performance as described in paragraph (i). (Turnbull, et al., 2002, p. 146).

This definition broadens the description of emotional and behavioral disorders to include: Oppositional Defiant Disorders, Conduct Disorders, Anxiety Disorders, Affective Disorders, and schizophrenia. The nature and symptoms of ODD and CD have already been outlined and will not be described again, but a more detailed review of Anxiety Disorders, Affective Disorders, and schizophrenia helps clarify what emotions and behaviors are included in the Mental Health Coalition's definition. One of these disorders may also be what caused Michael to be labeled EBD, Level 2.

Anxiety disorders are the most common childhood disorder (DSM-IV, 1994; Turnbull, et al., 2002) and include phobias, generalized anxiety disorders, panic disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorders, eating disorders, and post traumatic stress disorders. While each of these has its own specific behavioural manifestations, they all share a common emotional component of pervasive, excessive fear, worry, and tension that impairs social and academic functioning.

Affective disorders are characterized by extreme variations in mood not attributable to normal circumstances. Depression, the most common mood disorder, results in prolonged, extreme feelings of unhappiness. Less often, particularly in children, bipolar disorder is characterized by extreme manic highs and extreme depressed lows. The behavioural manifestations of childhood depression may include irritability, crying or sad face, reduced contact with friends, dropping out of activities, declining academic performance, eating or sleeping too much or too little, disregarding hygiene, and/or expressing suicidal ideation.

Schizophrenia is rarely diagnosed in childhood, but becomes more prevalent in adolescence. A thought disorder characterized by hallucinations, withdrawal, delusions, loss of contact with reality, and disorganized speech, schizophrenic episodes are not treated in schools. Medications and sometimes hospitalization are required to bring the symptoms under control so those students can eventually return to classes.

There are definitely similarities in the Manitoba and United States' understandings of the term EBD. The picture emerging about the EBD label is that it includes any emotions and behaviours in children that cause noticeable impairment in regular social and academic functioning. The nature, degree, and impact of Michael's impairment will be confirmed by comparing what is evident through interviews and the examination of written records, and the general understanding of the EBD label as described in this literature review.

It is beyond the scope of this study to clarify the meaning of the EBD label. However, by examining the understanding in Manitoba documents, the meaning of the EBD Level 2 label becomes clearer. The information from the DSM-IV (1994) provides a more detailed description of various disorders under the EBD umbrella. The background information from the United States broadens the understanding of the EBD label. Together, the information clarifies that the term "emotional-behavioural disorders" refers to a condition that handicaps children in their academic and social functioning in schools.

APPENDIX B-1

Oral Interview - Guiding Questions

Professionals (Psychologists, Behaviour Support Teacher, Teacher, Educational Assistant(s), Principal)

What was your role in working with Michael at Real School?

Can you describe what behaviours you saw when Michael entered school in kindergarten?

(Everyone, except the EA) Can you describe how the school decided to label Michael EBD Level 2?

- who was involved?
- what did you see in Michael?
- did you use the MB government rubric?

What did you decide to do in this case?

How did you decide to _____?

What was your thinking in choosing to _____?

What part of the work with Michael seemed to have the most positive impact?

How could you tell the impact was positive?

What made you choose to do _____?

What factors at Real School impacted your role in working with Michael?

How did these factors impact your role?

What factors at Real School most impacted the work with Michael?

How did these factors impact Michael?

How did these factors impact others working with Michael?

Note: Questions are NOT a structured interview, but guidelines into areas of inquiry during the oral interviews.

APPENDIX B-2

Guiding Questions - Oral Interview

Parent

Topic of the Interview: Research project – case study of the school’s work with your son.
Main focus is: *What did the school do to work with your son?*

What did the school do to work with Michael when he started kindergarten?

What effect did this work (or specific _____) have on Michael?

How did the school decide to do _____?

What, do you think, made them decide to do _____?

What things that the school did worked well for Michael?

How could you tell _____ worked?

How are things at school for Michael now?

What is working well?

Note: Questions are NOT a structured interview, but guidelines into areas of inquiry during the oral interviews.

APPENDIX B-3

Oral Interview - Guiding Questions

Student

Topic of the Interview: - research project

- what did the school do to work with you when you first started school in kindergarten?

Do you remember what school was like when you first started kindergarten?

Who was your teacher?

Which was your room?

Who was the principal?

Were there other grown-ups in your class besides the teacher? What did they do?

What things did you do?

What things did you like to do in kindergarten?

Was there anything hard about being in kindergarten?

Was there anything that you didn't like about kindergarten?

What was it like to be with so many other kids all day?

What was it like to have to follow a schedule every day?

You got to meet and work with Mr. F. in kindergarten. What did you do when you spent time with

him? Do you still meet with him? What do you do when you meet with him?

You got to meet and work with K.P. in kindergarten. What did you do with her? Do you still meet?

What do you do when you meet with her?

Do you like school?

What's good about school?

What's not so good about school?

What do you think of YOUR school?

If you were telling someone else about your school, what would be the most important thing for this person to know?

Note: Questions are NOT a structured interview, but guidelines into areas of inquiry during the oral interviews.

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