

The Historical Development of Inclusive Special Education  
in a Large Urban Manitoba School Division (2002-2015)

by

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this qualitative research study is to examine the evolution of inclusive special education policies and practices within an amalgamated urban school division between the years of 2002 and 2015. An historical case study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Gillham, 2000; Lapan & Quartaroli, 2009; and Yin, 1997, 2004) is used as a methodology. Conceptually, the study is informed by a great wealth of local and international research on inclusive special education. Moreover, a two-dimensional theoretical framework is used to illuminate the concepts of inclusive special education/appropriate educational programming and divisional leadership to examine how these concepts may have contributed to the evolution of the policies and practices of inclusive special education in this amalgamated school division. Eight key themes were established from the findings and are related to both inclusive special education leadership research and the three basic tenets of successful leadership practice espoused by Leithwood, Seashore Lewis, Anderson & Wahlstrom (2004). Five key recommendations are suggested for school-based administrators to consider as they envision a model of student support services that aligns with the concepts of inclusive special education and appropriate educational programming.

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I also want to offer my thanks and my love to my wife Lynne, who patiently supported me throughout my master's studies – it was a lengthy journey! I also wish to thank my three wonderful children, Taylor, Alyssa, and Kylie for being patient with their father who was often busy working on his studies and for continuing to show me how important it is to work hard and keep learning - they are all fantastic students and I am very proud of and love each of them. Lastly, I want to thank my parents, Harold and Norma, for always supporting my various interests in school, life, and for being my very first teachers.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine the evolution of inclusive special education policies and practices within an urban school division, referred to by its pseudonym, the River South School Division (RSSD) between the years of 2002 and 2015. As a result of the 2001 Manitoba provincial school division amalgamation plan as announced by Drew Caldwell, then Minister of Education, Training and Youth, the RSSD was established out of two former legacy urban school divisions in 2002. I was interested in completing this study to develop a deeper understanding of leadership strategies that could influence the appropriate education of all students in schools in the RSSD. Moreover, an historical case study method (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Gillham, 2000; Lapan & Quartaroli, 2009; and Yin, 1997, 2004) was used and a two-dimensional theoretical framework was employed to draw upon the concepts of inclusive special education/appropriate educational programming and divisional leadership to examine how these concepts contributed to the evolution of the policies and practices of inclusive special education in the division. Regarding divisional leadership, the roles of the school principal, senior administration, and divisional student support services personnel were examined to determine how each practiced and/or implemented policies and practices in support of inclusive special education. As a current principal of a kindergarten to grade six school in the RSSD, I was particularly interested in examining the role(s) school principals could play in supporting the policies and practices associated with inclusive special education.

This study was both worthwhile and current as there has been much research concerning inclusive special education especially since the 1994 *Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education* reaffirmed the critical nature of inclusive education (UNESCO) to the success of “special needs” students in public schools. This World Conference arguably brought inclusive

special education further to the forefront of educational policy and practice, however numerous years later, as suggested by Ainscow and Cesar (2006):

... the field remains confused as to what actions need to be taken in order to move policy and practice forward. In some countries, inclusive education is thought of as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings. Internationally, however, it is increasingly seen more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners (UNESCO, 2001) (p. 231).

Presently, for Manitoba educators, inclusion is more widely regarded as an umbrella concept and as McGlynn & London (2011) suggest, “is concerned with overcoming barriers to all types of marginalization, exclusion and underachievement which may result from religion, culture, ethnicity, gender, ability/disability, socioeconomic status, language and other dimensions of diversity” (p. 156). As the principal of a large kindergarten to grade 6 school in the RSSD, I was most interested in examining the divisional approach to policies and practices regarding inclusive special education since an historical case study analysis could potentially provide key recommendations for my future actions as an administrator as I try to support the aforementioned diversity amongst all learners in RSSD.

### **Context/Background of the Study**

My interest in completing an historical case study of the development of inclusive special education in the RSSD was partially informed by two critical incidents that occurred through my experience and learning as a school-based administrator over the last 11 years. One incident

surfaced following my completion of a qualitative research paper entitled, *An Examination of Early Years Principals' Use of Ethical Principles to Resolve Dilemmas of Inclusion* for a Qualitative Research Methods in Education course that I took in the winter term of 2014 at the University of Manitoba. The second incident involved an example of attempts to include a student who was diagnosed with a severe form of the Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in a regular classroom setting with his same-aged peers at a previous school at which I had been principal.

For the aforementioned qualitative research paper, I "...examined three early years administrators' responses to a ten-question interview protocol which inquired of their perceptions of inclusion, values, ethical perspectives, and school-based dilemmas caused by conflicting values/ethical perspectives with regard to inclusion" (p. 2). After utilizing a constant comparative technique (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) to analyze the data generated by each of my three interview subjects, one common element that I noticed was that even though Manitoba Education has been publishing various documents on inclusive education since about 2001, there existed a lack of both clarity and consensus amongst these three RSSD administrators regarding a clear definition of inclusive education. This lack of clarity regarding the meaning of inclusion amongst administrators from the same division caused me to wonder about the professional development that had been provided to administrators in the division regarding inclusive special education. Moreover, I was curious about the initial divisional policies, structures and practices regarding inclusive special education service delivery adopted and/or endorsed by the division post- amalgamation. Another key question was whether there were any mandatory training sessions on inclusive special education created for administrators within the RSSD.

The second critical incident occurred in my fourth year as a principal of a smaller kindergarten to grade 6 school in the RSSD. This incident illustrates some of my experiences in trying to include a boy named Franklin (pseudonym) during the 2013 school year and the dilemmas caused by attempts to include this child. I previously reported on this critical incident for a research paper entitled, *Three Virtues Related to a Story of Inclusion at [School Name]* in 2013 for a course at the University of Manitoba.

When Franklin began grade one, the school applied for funding from the provincial government. The RSSD subsequently received Level 3 funding from Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth for Franklin as he had been diagnosed as having a severe form of ASD. According to Posar, Resca, and Visconti (2015), “autism spectrum disorders (ASD) are lifelong conditions severely impairing social skills and autonomy... ASD core features are: Persisting deficits of social communication and interaction; restricted and repetitive behaviors, interests, activities” (p. 146).

The school-based student support team including the resource teacher, the counsellor, divisional clinical support personnel, and myself met once every twelve days of the school cycle to review Franklin's educational programming and progress. In addition, the student support team met with the classroom teacher and educational assistant (EA) once per month to discuss Franklin's progress and if any changes were required to his program to support his success. The school team was committed to including Franklin in the general classroom setting; however, this inclusion required a great deal of teamwork and collaboration to support Franklin's learning.

In January of 2013, as Franklin was in his Grade 2/3 combined classroom, a critical incident occurred. When academic performance tasks for the morning were given to Franklin by

his classroom teacher, the EA used a visual representation of these tasks to help support Franklin's learning. At this point, Franklin appeared reluctant to do any of his work and his behaviour quickly escalated to yelling, throwing items, hitting classmates, the classroom teacher, and the educational assistant. The EA wore a walkie-talkie to facilitate a quick response from myself or the resource teacher to assist in dealing with Franklin's violent/aggressive behaviour in the classroom. In this case, I quickly went to the classroom to help. In addition, as part of Franklin's Behaviour Intervention Plan (BIP), the classroom teacher exited the classroom with all other students to allow Franklin time to calm down. When I attempted to intervene, and asked Franklin to use his words, he threw a chair at me. I side-stepped the chair and moved away from Franklin while continuing to speak to him in a quiet, calm voice. Franklin's yelling and pacing decreased after approximately ten minutes. At this point, I quietly debriefed with Franklin. Although he had difficulty talking about the incident, he seemed to listen to me as I explained to him that I was proud of him for calming down and using his words. I also added that it was okay to get upset, but that at our school we keep our hands and feet to ourselves even when we get "angry".

As I stayed with Franklin in his classroom, both the resource and classroom teachers spoke to Franklin's classmates in the school library about Franklin's behaviour. The teachers explained to the students that if Franklin got upset like he did that morning, on the classroom teacher's verbal cue, everyone's job was to quickly and calmly exit the room. This strategy had been explained to the students earlier in the year as well. The classroom teacher attempted to support the key idea of understanding the differences in others by reading a picture book on diversity to Franklin's classmates in the library.

As a result of this critical incident, I telephoned the parents of the children who were hit, completed a divisional violent incident report that was submitted by the EA who was hit by Franklin, and called Franklin's father. Franklin's father was disappointed to hear of his son's actions and stated that he would support the school by talking to his son about being a "good boy" and keeping his hands and feet to himself. Moreover, the father told me that Franklin would not be allowed to play with his iPad at home that evening. Understandably, when I called the parents of the children whom Franklin hit, they were concerned about their own children's safety and seemed less interested in the idea of including a student who exhibited violent and aggressive behaviours. In fact, more than one parent strongly suggested that I suspend this boy for a lengthy period.

Although Franklin had been diagnosed with ASD, his occasional behavioral outbursts appeared violent to the students and adults around him. Muscott (1995) contends that when it comes to including students who exhibit emotional and behavioral difficulties, such students are typically less welcome in general education classrooms than either their peers or students with other visible or nonvisible disabilities. Even though Franklin would occasionally demonstrate aggressive and violent behaviour, Manitoba Education policy is clear that a student may not be suspended if the behaviour is a result of a "special need". According to Manitoba's *Education Administration Act* (2005), "every teacher, principal, superintendent and school board must ensure a pupil's special needs, if any, are taken into account when deciding whether to suspend, expel or otherwise discipline the pupil" (p.2). Even though suspending Franklin may have satisfied community members who thought a more punitive form of justice was in order, a suspension would result in excluding Franklin and would have contravened the aforementioned Manitoba Education policy.

Based on my experiences as a school administrator in the RSSD, violent behaviour, as described above, seems to elicit strong feelings about whether to educate all students in the same classroom from teachers, administrators, and community members alike. The RSSD supports the concept of safe schools and that disciplinary consequences should be developmentally appropriate to the age of the child, however when dealing with that particular school community, I found that parents/guardians would often allude to the consequence of suspension. As suggested above, suspending students is an exclusive rather than inclusive strategy. I agree that from a “human rights” perspective, all children have the right to a public education and one that should occur in a safe and caring environment, however in reality, inclusion can often be difficult to both define and implement within the general classroom setting. In fact, numerous researchers have suggested that inclusion is an elusive, transitory, and often a narrowly defined concept (Ainscow & Cesar, 2006; Crockett & Kauffman, 1998; Thomas, 2013; Voltz, Brazil & Ford, 2001). This critical incident deepened my interest in determining the answers to several key questions about the RSSD including: how have inclusive special education policies and practices evolved between the years of 2002 and 2015 and what is the current divisional understanding of inclusive special education? Moreover, how clear was I about my own definition of inclusion and how did my personal definition align with divisional policies and Manitoba legislation?

While it is vital that school principals have a clear understanding of the definition of inclusive special education, it is also paramount that they provide a clear vision for creating a positive school climate in which inclusive special education can flourish. According to *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services* (2006), school principals “...have, subject to *The Public Schools Act* and the direction of the school

board, a responsibility for the education of all students in their schools and for the staff of the school division under their direction” (p.3). Moreover, as suggested by Praisner (2003):

due to their leadership position, principals’ attitudes about inclusion could result in either increased opportunities for students to be served in general education or in limited efforts to reduce the segregated nature of special education services. Therefore, for inclusion to be successful, first and foremost, the school administrator must display a positive attitude and commitment to inclusion (Evans, Bird, Ford, Green, & Bischoff, 1992; Rude & Anderson, 1992). (p. 136)

If the principal’s beliefs, actions, and attitudes regarding inclusion are critical to the success of inclusive special education as suggested above, then the professional development opportunities afforded both pre-service and in-service school administrators regarding inclusive special education would also be important. What then have the professional development opportunities been with a specific focus on inclusive special education for school administrators in the RSSD?

In addition to inclusive special education professional development opportunities offered to school administrators, Goor & Schwenn (1997) suggest that it is equally critical that school principals develop reflective behaviours in their journeys to become more effective in their roles to support inclusive special education. The authors state that:

developing reflective behaviors assists the principal to define this relatively new role of providing leadership for special education programs and to model behaviors of acceptance and inclusion that are themselves in transition. Students with disabilities are

surrounded by a web of legal protections. When a principal engages in reflective behaviors, legally defensible decisions and actions are more likely to occur. (p. 133)

How then has the RSSD created opportunities for school administrators to become more reflective concerning their decisions and actions regarding inclusive special education?

A final consideration relates to the divisional policies that have been created in the RSSD and the corresponding implementation plans for those policies to help support inclusive special education. According to the *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Extending Genuine Learning and Social Experiences for All School Communities, Final Consultation Report* (2006):

in Manitoba, publicly funded elementary and secondary schools are governed by *The Public Schools Act* and *The Education Administration Act*. This educational context is informed by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms which, as part of the Canadian Constitution, is the supreme law of Canada. Section 15 of the Charter guarantees to all Canadians equality before and under the law, the right to equal protection and benefit before and under the law and the right to equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination, in particular, “without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability”. (p. 1)

It is the responsibility of the RSSD to ensure that its policies regarding appropriate educational programming are first aligned with the province’s expectations followed by an alignment with

federal constitutional provisions. As suggested by Joshee (2004), however, policy implementation is not always seamless as the relationship between provincial or territorial ministries and school divisions can be varied. Moreover, well-intentioned policies do not always relate, in a practical sense, to effective actions by administrators, teachers, and other professionals regarding the implementation of such policies. As cited in Thompson, Lyons & Timmons (2015), “changes in public policy appear to promote an inclusive approach, yet there is some indication that implementation is lagging and there is a gap between policy and practice (Timmons, 2006; Statistics Canada, 2008)” (p.123). I hope to address the potential gap between policy and practice regarding inclusive special education in the RSSD by examining how divisional policies and practices have evolved since amalgamation as evidenced by select participants’ responses to the protocol questions from my qualitative interviews.

### **Research Questions**

The purpose of this study was to examine the evolution of inclusive special education policies and practices in the RSSD between the years of 2002 and 2015. Specifically, the study addressed the following research questions:

1. What were the initial policies and practices with regard to inclusive special education service delivery adopted and/or endorsed by the River South School Division (RSSD) in 2002?
2. a) How have divisional policies and practices been redesigned and/or changed since 2002 to support inclusive special education?

- b) What professional development opportunities were provided to school principals in the RSSD to support their understanding of these policies and practices?
- c) What forms of accountability (for example, public reporting about how the division is meeting the legislative, regulatory, and standards requirements of inclusive special education as mandated by the provincial and federal governments) have been implemented by the division to monitor the impact of the division's inclusive special education initiatives?

I collected interview data from May through November 2016. Study participants were recruited through purposeful sampling. As cited in Suri (2011), Patton suggests that:

the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting *information-rich* cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the inquiry, thus the term *purposeful* sampling. Studying information-rich cases yields insights and in-depth understanding rather than empirical generalizations (Patton, 2002, p. 230, emphasis in original). (p. 65)

Study participants included two critical groups – one group of three key retired employees- a former superintendent, a former trustee, and a former assistant superintendent of student support services. The second group included ten voluntary participants who were either school based administrators or divisional student support services personnel who agreed to be interviewed and were currently employed by the RSSD. I had asked the current Assistant Superintendent of

Human Resources to send recruitment letters to these current employees. Currently, it is divisional policy to make such research requests from the assistant superintendent of program or his designate as was the case above— approval having first been obtained from the University of Manitoba’s Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). The potential effects of my peer relationships with possible study participants were minimized as I was not in a “power over” situation with any of my study participants from the RSSD. Moreover, as a kindergarten to grade six principal of a school in the RSSD, I argue that I would not have any undue influence on other administrators or divisional student services personnel as I was not in a position to hire or provide a performance review to any of these individuals. The selection of initial subjects of the research study was informed by the current governance structure related to inclusive special education in the RSSD as outlined on their divisional website under the Student Services tab as follows:

The Student Services Team supports teaching and learning by:

Supporting the belief in inclusion and inclusionary educational practices; Assisting in the development and implementation of Appropriate Educational Programming (*RSSD’s Policy Document 1*); Encouraging the use of research-based practices that meet the needs of the whole child; Coordinating and providing professional learning related to inclusive education.

The primary mission of the Student Support Team shall be to provide multidisciplinary support for children with special needs by providing preventative, consultative, diagnostic and intervention services. The services provided shall be consistent with the most relevant research and proven methods in regard to the delivery of innovative and

quality education programs. The Student Support Team offer specialized services to all students in the River South School Division. The goal of intervention is to work collaboratively with schools, students and parents so that a student's educational potential is maximized. (p. 1)

As cited on the divisional website, the Student Support Team includes learning specialists who work with students who are experiencing significant learning difficulties; school social workers who work closely with school personnel, students, and family members to ensure that a student's social and emotional needs are being met at both home and school; speech and language pathologists who work with children who experience difficulties with language development; psychologists who provide reports for children who are experiencing various difficulties with either learning or behaviour; psychiatrists who provide consultation and direct services for children who may be experiencing various mental health conditions; and occupational and physical therapy services which provide assessment and consultative work with students on a priority basis who are experiencing any difficulties with gross and fine motor development and who require adaptations in order to experience success within the classroom.

The aforementioned list of personnel related to inclusive special education in the RSSD was the reason that I asked the Assistant Superintendent of Program's designate to send e-mail letters of recruitment to all administrators and members of student services teams. I recruited the first six interested administrators and the first three student services personnel who indicated their interest in being interviewed to me through e-mail correspondence. Since this was an historical case study, I only accepted potential interviewees who had a minimum of ten years' experience working in the RSSD. Great care was taken to protect the confidentiality of these

research subjects. All identifying characteristics were removed from the data and all interviewees were provided with nondescript identifications in the form of pseudonyms in any and all reporting. Moreover, the names of the two legacy school divisions that amalgamated to form of the current school division were all changed to pseudonyms to maintain their confidentiality.

My method included the use of two separate fifteen question semi-structured, open-ended interview protocols – one for retired employees and one for current employees. Each protocol included my four main research questions and secondary questions to fit the role(s) of the individual(s) interviewed. These secondary questions pertained to inclusive special education, collaboration, models of student support, funding, effective instructional strategies, divisional policies, professional development, and forms of accountability. I recorded all interviews with a Sony Digital Voice Recorder. Interviews were transcribed fully by the researcher.

For the purposes of this study, I employed an historical case study approach (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Gillham, 2000; Lapan & Quartaroli, 2009; and Yin, 1997, 2004). This method will be expanded upon in the upcoming Literature Review and Methodology sections.

Attempts were made to schedule all interviews one week apart to provide the opportunity to complete verbatim transcriptions for each interview. Moreover, after completing each transcription, an electronic copy of the transcription was provided to each participant in order that she or he could do a member check. Two participants indicated minor editing changes to their interview transcripts which the researcher complied with.

Individuals who consented to the study participated in as many as two personal interviews (each up to 60 min. in duration held at a place and time convenient for the participant from May to November of 2016). Informed consent to participate in the study, the nature of the study, as well as all caveats related to potential loss of anonymity and confidentiality were

written into the signed consent form and provided verbally to the participants before the start of each interview. Participants were e-mailed a copy of the interview questions prior to the actual interview so that each individual could ask for question clarification prior to their interview. As mentioned above, the transcripts from the personal interviews were e-mailed to each participant for feedback, additions, deletions, and/or changes to the e-mail address they provided as contact information on their consent forms. The review of the transcript took 20-30 minutes of their time. Participants were told in the consent form that they had up to two weeks to review their transcripts and provide feedback via e-mail, after which the principal researcher proceeded to analysis. No identifiers were used in the analysis, reporting, or dissemination procedures of the study. Moreover, pseudonyms were used to name the current school division and the two legacy school divisions which formed the new school division in 2002.

### **Key Terminology**

As argued by Towle (2015):

... language used to describe disability and disability experience and the way “special needs” are defined varies greatly from one jurisdiction to another. The terms “disability,” “special needs,” “exceptionality,” and “intensive needs” are used interchangeably in various inclusive education policies across Canadian provinces and territories... (p. 10)

Due to this variability in the meanings of various terms associated with inclusive special education and for the purposes of this study, it was critical to define some key terminology that was used. These key terms include: special needs students, disability, individual model of

disability, social model of disability, inclusive special education, inclusion, inclusive education, reasonable accommodation, undue hardship, mainstreaming, integration, and appropriate educational programming.

*Special Needs Students:* I utilized the Manitoba Office of the Auditor General's definition of special needs students as, "... those who require specialized services or programming when deemed necessary by the in-school team because of exceptional learning, social/emotional, behavioral, sensory, physical, cognitive/intellectual, communication, academic or special health-care needs that affect their ability to meet expected learning outcomes" (p. 251).

*Disability:* As cited in Oliver (1996), disability can be defined as, "...the loss or limitation of opportunities to take part in the normal life of the community on an equal level with others due to physical and social barriers (DPI, 1982)" (p. 31).

*Individual Model of Disability:* This model of disability involves two critical features that, as described by Oliver (1990):

...locates the 'problem' of disability within the individual and secondly it sees the causes of this problem as stemming from the functional limitations or psychological losses which are assumed to arise from disability. These two points are underpinned by what might be called 'the personal tragedy theory of disability' which suggests that disability is some terrible chance event which occurs at random to unfortunate individuals. (p. 3)

For this study, I preferred to use Oliver's (1990) individual model of disability rather than a medical model of disability since, as argued by McKenzie (2012), a medical model of disability centers:

... around an overemphasis on impairment that places it as the central problem of the disabled person's life that must be treated or rehabilitated as far as possible. This perspective grants excessive power to medical professionals and makes of disability a technical problem rather than a social one. (p. 371)

Rather than utilizing the above mentioned medical model of disability, I used Oliver's (1990) *individual model of disability* since it better describes the idea that a disability is some chance event that befalls an individual which then corresponds with that individual being perceived as "unfortunate" and in need of remedy. Moreover, I argue that much of the history of provincial funding for "special needs" students in Manitoba has been based on Oliver's (1990) *individual model of disability* in which the disability is viewed as an in-child problem which requires fixing. For example, Sharma (2015) argues that, "... children with disabilities are defined and judged by what they are missing rather than what they can offer" (p. 317).

*Social Model of Disability:* For the purposes of this study, I used Oliver's (1990) definition of a *social model of disability* as it:

does not deny the problem of disability but locates it squarely within society. It is not individual limitations, of whatever kind, which are the cause of the problem but society's failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account in its social organisation. Further, the consequences of this failure does not simply and randomly fall on individuals but systematically upon disabled

people as a group who experience this failure as discrimination institutionalised throughout society. (p. 3)

This *social model of disability* is more critical of social organizations such as schools who may be host to professional educators who may identify students as being special needs based upon the aforementioned *individual model of disability*. Moreover, as argued by Oliver & Barnes (2010), “[t]he disabled child in education may well have an impairment but his or her participation in school is restricted by an inaccessible curriculum, negative staff attitudes and physical barriers to getting around” (p. 552).

*Inclusive special education* was used here to denote a broad concept that describes the teaching strategies, opportunities, and/or additional supports required for the successful learning of any student who is not appropriately supported by standard delivery of the provincial curriculum. Standard delivery in this definition refers to any teaching and learning strategies that may be used for the general population of students without requiring any adaptation to those teaching and learning strategies to ensure student success. The provincial document entitled, *Special Education in Manitoba: Policy and Procedural Guidelines for Education of Students with Special Needs in the Public School System* was created in 1989 (known as the ‘Green Book’) to serve as a guide or framework to ensure that students with special learning needs could take full advantage of educational opportunities in a public school setting. This document has since been replaced by numerous more current publications such as *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Extending Genuine Learning and Social Experiences for All School Communities. Final Consultation Report (2006)*.

*Inclusion:* Since this study was conducted within a Manitoba school division, it seemed appropriate to reference the Manitoba Government's definition of inclusion as cited in, *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba* (2006). This definition states that:

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

The statements "evolves to meet the changing needs of its members" and "equal access to the benefits of citizenship" seem to connect to numerous researchers' (McGlynn & London, 2011; Riehl, 2009; and Thomas, 2013) suggestions that inclusion has evolved into a broader concept that includes the ideas of diversity, human rights, and citizenship. Although the above definition of inclusion is an acceptable one, I argue that the language used in the definition is somewhat vague. For example, what does "meaningful involvement" refer to? A more current definition of inclusion has been suggested by Booth (2005) as:

inclusion is about increasing participation in, and reducing exclusion from, the curricula, cultures and communities of local education settings. It is about developing education settings so that they are responsive to diversity in a way that values all students and staff equally. (p. 152)

For this study, I utilized Booth's (2005) definition of inclusion as it was more specific than the definition from the Manitoba government. It is important to note however, that as cited in *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: A Handbook for Student Services* (2007), there are 11 key values and beliefs which supplement the provincial government's definition of inclusion.

*Inclusive education:* For this study, I used a definition of inclusive education that has been suggested by Lutfiyya & Van Walleggem (2001) as:

... inclusive education means that the regular education class, with appropriate supports, is the first option considered. Students are educated in classes with their age peers and where the number of those with and without special learning needs is proportional to the local population (e.g. typically 10 to 12% will have identified disabilities). (p. 79-80)

*Mainstreaming:* According to Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth (2001) in their published document, *Supporting Inclusive Schools: A Handbook for Student Services*, mainstreaming is defined as, "the selective placement of special education students in one or more regular education classes" (p. 2). Mainstreaming in this definition simply refers to the placement of a child in one or more "regular" classrooms throughout the school day without any additional supports being put into place to help that child succeed. As cited in Lowenthal (1999):

mainstreaming has been defined as the re-entry of children with mild disabilities in the regular class (Bricker, 1995). Hanline and Galant (1993) have added another

dimension to this definition by concluding that mainstreaming refers to the placement of children with disabilities in classes in which the primary purpose is to serve typically developing children. (p. 17-18)

As a result of mainstreaming, students with disabilities were placed into classrooms with typically developing classmates and were left on their own to survive the regular classroom setting.

*Reasonable accommodation:* I used the definition of reasonable accommodation as described in the glossary of Manitoba Education's (2012) *Student-specific planning: A handbook for developing and implementing individual education plans (IEPs)*:

the school's obligation to address special needs of students where these needs stem from the protected characteristics specified in *The Human Rights Code* of Manitoba, such as physical or mental disability, and affect the individual's ability to access educational/school services or facilities; the measures to accommodate special needs will be reasonable and required unless they cause undue hardship due to cost, risk to safety, impact on others, or other factors. (p. 87)

*Undue hardship:* Undue hardship, in the context of this study, was related to the ability to accommodate "special needs of students"; therefore, I used the description of undue hardship as cited by the *Canadian Human Rights Commission* (2013) as:

the duty to accommodate has limits. Sometimes accommodation is not possible because it would cause an organization "undue hardship." Under the *Canadian Human Rights Act*,

an employer or service provider can claim undue hardship when adjustments to a policy, practice, by-law or building would cost too much, or create risks to health or safety.

There is no precise legal definition of undue hardship or a standard formula for determining undue hardship. Each situation should be viewed as unique and assessed individually. It is not enough to claim undue hardship based on an assumption or opinion, or by simply saying there is some cost. To prove undue hardship, you will have to provide evidence as to the nature and extent of the hardship. (p. 1)

*Integration:* I utilized the definition of integration from the glossary of the Manitoba Special Education Review described as, “the practice of placing exceptional students in regular school environments. Integration may occur for varying periods of time or, moving towards a more inclusive philosophy, for the entire instructional day” (p. 2).

*Appropriate educational programming:* I used Manitoba Education’s (2011) definition of appropriate educational programming as, “a collaborative school-family-community process through which school communities create learning environments and provide resources and services that are responsive to the lifelong learning, social and emotional needs of all students” (p.85) in this study. Since Manitoba Education identifies appropriate educational programming as being linked to “all students”, it connects well to the previous government definition of inclusion. It is also important to note the following important distinction between the definition of inclusion and appropriate educational programming as suggested by Van Wallegem & Lutfiyya (2013):

we see inclusion as a commitment to general social involvement, acceptance, and value. It is not meant to be limited solely to educational practice, and within education, it is not simply an issue of student placement. On the other hand, we see *appropriate educational programming* as a legal and procedural expectation. It requires that students' learning differences be addressed through a process of differentiated instruction and individualized decision-making which culminates for some students in the development and implementation of an individual education plan (IEP). (p. 1-2)

These two local scholars see appropriate educational programming as a legal expectation of the province since it came out of legislation amending the *Public Schools Act (PSA)* in 2005 with *Bill 13, Appropriate Educational Programming (AEP)*. This amendment to the PSA was intended as a guide to policy and programming for all students in Manitoba and supported the government's philosophy of inclusion.

By first examining key definitions in various provincial documents and policies related to inclusive special education since 2001 and then comparing these to international definitions of inclusive special education, as argued earlier, there seems to be variability in the language used to describe concepts related to inclusive special education. There is also an historical component to many of these terms. This variability in the meaning of various terms associated with inclusive special education supports the idea that there still exist different perspectives about what inclusive education means. Furthermore, Lutfiyya & Van Walleggem (2001) argue that, "... the term 'inclusive education' is currently used to refer to a wide range of practice in Manitoba" (p.79).

According to Thomas (2013), narrow definitions of inclusion need to be avoided in education and additionally:

... ‘inclusive education’ now refers to the education of all children, not just those with disabilities. But we should note that the pulse that has forced this change was social and political more than it was educational. The crystallization of political and social movements for equity in the Civil Rights movements of the 1960s brought us to see inclusion as being about diversity and social justice just as much as it is about mainstreaming and disability. (p. 473-474)

Thomas (2013) accurately describes an evolution of thinking about inclusive special education from the concept of “mainstreaming” to meeting the needs of “diverse” learners in all classrooms. To avoid confusion, and for the purposes of this study, I used Booth’s (2005) definition of inclusion as a pivotal distinction in my analysis of key board documents from RSSD and in my data analysis of the information which resulted from my interviews. However, when analyzing government and/or divisional documents, I used the terms designated in the respective literature.

### **Delimitations**

Some delimitations that may have affected my research include:

1. The historical development of inclusive special education was only examined in a single Manitoba public school division – the RSSD.

2. Participation in the study was voluntary; therefore, it is possible that the study participants may have had a strong interest in being interviewed about the historical development of inclusive special education in the RSSD.
3. The study was small and occurred over a short period (May to November, 2016).

### **Limitations**

The nature of this qualitative research study relied upon participants' self-reporting their understandings of the evolution of inclusive special education policies and practices in the RSSD since 2002, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings. A further limitation was my singular focus on the evolution of special inclusive education regarding practices and policies within the RSSD and the corresponding practices/behaviours of divisional and school-based administrators and select members of student services teams in the division. I also neither analyzed inclusive classroom practices nor the related experiences of *special needs* students within the school division. Moreover, since the researcher is currently employed by the RSSD, this employment status may have impacted the researcher's ability to be critical of the division's approach to inclusive special education.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this study, an historical case study method (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Gillham, 2000; Lapan & Quartaroli, 2009; and Yin, 1997, 2004) was used to examine the perspectives of select employees' responses to interview protocol questions that relate to the evolution of inclusive special education policies and practices in the RSSD from 2002 until 2015. As cited in Bogdan & Biklen (2007), "a case study is a detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or one particular event (Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1989; Stake, 1994)" (p.59). A detailed examination of the evolution of inclusive special education policies and practices in the single setting of an amalgamated urban school division seemed to fit this case study approach. As further argued by Lapan & Quartaroli (2009), "... case studies have been thought of... as social scientific research used to discover the complicated interactions between people, settings, and programs. These multilayered case studies focus on the "how" and "why" questions about educational and social programs" (p. 167). These two authors further suggest that case study research consists of four main components that include case selection, study question formulation, collecting data, and synthesizing results. The format of an historical case study was well-suited to examining and analyzing the evolution of inclusive special education policies and practices within the RSSD. Moreover, the concepts of inclusive special education, appropriate educational programming, and principal leadership were also used to guide the literature review so that it closely connected to my research questions. Finally, to strengthen the literature review, board documents that referred to inclusive special education within the RSSD were examined to illuminate the evolution of the meaning of inclusive special education in the division.

### **Historical Development of Inclusive Special Education**

In order to analyze the historical development of inclusive special education in the RSSD, it is critical to examine the development of inclusive special education at both international and local levels. Other scholars such as Blais & Van Camp, 2005; Epp, 2015; Hutchinson, 2010; Lutfiyya & Van Wallegghem, 2001; Mitchell, 2012; and Zaretsky, 2010 have previously provided detailed descriptions of the historical development of inclusive special education in Manitoba. As a result, rather than describe each and every historical event associated with inclusive special education, key historical links between the Canadian/local context and the international one regarding inclusive special education will be articulated. In order to establish these links, the research of numerous scholars (Belanger & Gougeon, 2009; Blais & Van Camp, 2005; Britton, 2006; Dorn, Fuchs & Fuchs, 1996; Epp, 2015; Ferguson, 2008; Florian, 2008; Hodgson, 2013; Hodgkinson, 2010; Hutchinson, 2010; Jahnukainen, 2011; Lutfiyya & VanWallegghem, 2001; Miles & Singal, 2010; Mitchell, 2012; Peters, 2007; Skrtic, 1991; Thomas, 2013; VanWallegghem & Lutfiyya, 2013; and Zaretsky, 2010) will be used and organized into the following five time frames:

1. 1960 – 1970 Segregation and Mainstreaming
2. 1970 – 1980 Mainstreaming, Integrated Settings and Integration
3. 1980 – 1990 Additional Classroom Supports
4. 1990 – 2000 Equal Opportunity to Public Education
5. 2000 – Present Inclusion and Appropriate Educational Programming (AEP)

Moreover, to simplify the organization of the numerous historical events associated with inclusive special education, two timelines have been created as *Tables 2.1* and *2.2* below:



Canadian/Manitoban Inclusion Milestones	
1957	Macfarlane Commission
1958	Public Education Act/First Separate Schools for Special Needs Children Formed
1963	Christianson Report
1965	Bill 16
1967	Mandatory Integration/Child Development Services Branch Formed
1970	Manitoba Association for Children with Learning Disabilities (MACLD) Formed/Provincial Funding for Special Education Altered
1971	Council for Exceptional Children Formed
1972	MB Government Places Children with Learning Disabilities
1974	Deputy Minister Places Child Development Services in Education Portfolio/ Leveled Funding (i, ii)
1975	Special Needs Working Group Creates Bill 58
1988	School/School Divisions Made Responsible for Appropriate Fund Distribution to Special Needs Students
1989	Policy and Procedural Guidelines for Education of Special Needs Students Released
1993	Level III Funding Now Includes Deaf and Students with Profound Emotional/Behavioural Disorders
1995	Interdepartmental Agreement to Support Medically Stable Students and Students with Extreme Emotional Behavioural Disorders
1996	Eaton v. Brandt Court Case Establishes Right to An Equal Opportunity to An Education in Public School
2001	Special Education Review Finalized and Special Education Review Inative Established
2002	Response to Special Education Review Presented to Manitobans - School Divisions required to submit Student Services Plan
2004	Manitoba Government Develops and Distributes 10 Support Documents in Special Education for Ten Years from 1994-2004/ Bill 13 - Appropriate Educational Programs - Passes Legislation
2012	Moore v. British Columbia Court Case Affirms Legal Rights of Students With Learning Disabilities to An Appropriate Education
2013	The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)

### 1960 – 1970 Segregation and Mainstreaming

According to Lutfiyya & Van Walleghem (2001), in the years prior to 1960 and into the mid-1960s, school-age children who had various sensory, physical and/or cognitive disabilities were segregated from their peers by being kept at home or being placed in, “.... a residential asylum/school or a private, parent run school” (p. 80). This segregation or separation of select students continued through the 1960s. As cited in Lutfiyya & Van Walleghem (2001):

children with cognitive or other impairments were ‘... simply denied public education services; either they remained at home with no access to school, or they were forced to leave their families and move to the Manitoba School for Retardates,’ located in Portage La Prairie (Association for Community Living – Winnipeg, 1989). (p. 80-81)

As an additional local example, Blais & Van Camp (2005) cited that, “the Manitoba Department of Education funded the attendance of blind children at the Brantford School for the Blind in Brantford, Ontario, and deaf children in the Saskatoon School for the Deaf and the Manitoba Day School for the Deaf in Winnipeg” (p. 4). Ferguson (2008) suggests that educators in the decade between 1960 and 1970 operated under the assumption that a child should first be “diagnosed” with a physical or cognitive limitation and then placed in an institutional setting which would provide the child with the required specialized services for her or his learning needs rather than attend the local public school. Moreover, as suggested by Belanger & Gougeon (2009), “[a]t its height in the 1960s and 1970s, special education was host to a whole group of specialists who supported a parallel but separate education system where students were more or

less grouped according to the diagnostic category of disability to which they belonged (Tomlinson, 1987; Corbett & Slee, 2000)” (p. 290). It was this common practice of segregating the perceived “disabled” that contributed to a variety of government actions that were linked to the human rights of all students to attend public school both locally and internationally. For example, in Manitoba, as suggested by Blais & Van Camp (2005), there were three provincial actions that targeted the abolition of segregation and moved toward the mandatory integration of students diagnosed as having some type of disability. These actions included the *Macfarlane Commission*, the *Christianson Report*, and the passage of *Bill 16* in 1965 that “... repealed the section of the school act excluding Mental Defectives” (p. 4). As cited in Lutfiyya & Van Wallegghem (2001):

when Bill 16 passed in 1965, mandating public responsibility for all school age children by July 1, 1967, it was the result of advocacy on the part of parent groups... the Department of Education then hired two special education consultants in 1966 to respond to the demands from school boards for assistance. In 1967, the Department of Health formed the Child Development Services Branch and hired a single staff member. (p. 82)

As a further measure, the government expected that within one year, the school district would provide educational services for all children thereby creating “mandatory integration” for students previously identified as “mental defectives”. It is critical to note, however, that none of these changes were implemented as the government changed in the next provincial election.

Similar rights-based actions took place on an international level as described in an excerpt from the 1960 United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Constitution:

**Recalling** that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights asserts the principle of non-discrimination and proclaims that every person has the right to education,  
**Considering** that discrimination in education is a violation of rights enunciated in that Declaration, **Considering** that, under the terms of its Constitution, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization has the purpose of instituting collaboration among the nations with a view to furthering for all universal respect for human rights and equality of educational opportunity, **Recognizing** that, consequently, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, while respecting the diversity of national educational systems, has the duty not only to proscribe any form of discrimination in education but also to promote equality of opportunity and treatment for all in education... (p. 181)

The international pressure to promote both equal opportunities and equal treatment of all students in educational settings would now continue.

Belanger & Gougeon (2009) argue that:

special education is founded on the essentialist perspective which defines disability as a problem or deficit that squarely resides in the individual (Slee, 1998). It is also informed by developmental psychology (Bloch et al, 2006; Lloyd-Smith & Tarr, 2000) which, through its theory of intelligence, developmental stages, and categorization (Vial, 1990), has drawn a line between normalcy and abnormality. (p. 290)

The above argument about the distinction between normalcy and abnormality is reminiscent of Oliver's (1990) *individual model of disability* which continues to inform and/or have an impact on present-day decisions about inclusive special education. During my 15 years as a classroom teacher and 11 years as a school administrator in Manitoba, I have witnessed students designated as "special needs" based upon sensory, physical, cognitive, and/or social and emotional characteristics that distinguish them from their peers. These designations may be based, in part, on the kinds of thinking that caused the segregation of disabled students in the first place – that the "deficit" resides squarely on the child and not the educational setting. As will be argued later, provincial funding continues to be based upon Oliver's (1990) *individual model of disability* which results in a diagnosis for children whose needs are ascertained by student services personnel and/or members of the medical community.

### **1970 – 1980 Mainstreaming, Integrated Settings and Integration**

Moving into the decade between 1970 and 1980, the focus on human rights and movements to "mainstream" or "integrate" children identified as having various forms of

disability continues in both local and international educational settings. As cited in Lutfiyya & Van Wallegghem (2001):

by 1970, most school divisions across the province were operating special schools or at least a number of special classes. Some divisions contracted with adjacent ones for special education services and then transferred their students. The province began providing funding for special education infrastructure in 1970, with grants for special education coordinators and resource teachers (Province of Manitoba, 1978). (p. 82)

As suggested by Blais & Van Camp (2005), in Manitoba during this time, funding for special education changed from block (based upon school enrollment) to categorical. For categorical funding, schools would apply for “low-incidence funding for students with severe to profound special needs (Level II and III), as well as high-incidence funding for students with mild to moderate (Level I) needs” (p.5). In addition, the Deputy Minister set up a special needs study group which ultimately produced Bill 58 which stated, “[e]very school board shall promote or make provision for the education of all resident persons who have the right to attend school and who require special programs for their education” (p. 5). The Bill 58 statement about students who require special programs for their education is reminiscent of Belanger & Gougeon’s (2009) argument that “the integration or ‘mainstreaming’ movement centered on interventions or rehabilitation strategies that promoted the student’s adaptation to the regular classroom setting” (p. 290). As suggested by Lutfiyya & Van Wallegghem (2001), even though “... Bill 58 was

never proclaimed there was a continuing demand for special education services across the province” (p. 83).

On an international level, action was demanded to eliminate discrimination and exclusion as a basic human right as suggested in the following excerpt from the 1975 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Disabled Persons:

disabled persons have the inherent right to respect for their human dignity. Disabled persons, whatever the origin, nature and seriousness of their handicaps and disabilities, have the same fundamental rights as their fellow-citizens of the same age, which implies first and foremost the right to enjoy a decent life, as normal and full as possible. (p. 1)

Sharma (2015) further argues that, “negative societal attitudes founded on ignorance often cause children with disabilities to be perceived as different, dependent, and incapable, which leads to exclusion via marginalization, institutionalization, abandonment, or neglect” (p. 317).

Lutfiyya & Van Wallegghem (2001) suggest that on a local level, much of Manitoba’s response to placing students with an increasingly wider range of conditions within the regular classroom was, “... largely in response to advocacy efforts by parents and individual educators. Policy and practice provisions available in other parts of Canada and the United States greatly influenced these demands” (p.83). Moreover, the placement of students based on ability level, as argued by Thomas (2013), is centered upon attitudes about “within- child” problems that dominate inclusive special education thinking. Thomas (2013) suggests that, “these attitudes

continue to thrive because of the relentlessly deficit-oriented history of special education and because of beliefs about ability...” (p. 477). The beliefs and/or perceptions of local and international educators about “ability” will impact various human rights milestones in the next historical time frame as well.

### **1980 – 1990 Additional Classroom Supports**

On a local level, the 1980s brought numerous government and school division actions that affected the historical evolution of inclusive special education. According to Blais & Van Camp (2005), the Department of Education changed the funding of special needs students in 1988 by making either individual schools or school divisions responsible for allocating appropriate funds to high incidence (Level I) students. Moreover, as argued by Zaretsky (2010), “it was also about this time that school divisions began to recognize the need for additional supports for teachers in the classroom with students with special needs and started to hire educational assistants” (p.44). The hiring of educational assistants (EAs) to support special needs students- those with an identified disability- was a practice that was consistent between the previous legacy school divisions that amalgamated to form the RSSD. During my experiences as both a classroom teacher and school administrator in the RSSD, I have witnessed or taken part in this practice of hiring EAs or instructional assistants as a way to support various student learning needs within a classroom setting - especially for those students with an identified disability.

In a study by Edelman, Giangreco, Luiselli, & MacFarland (1997), it was found that “instructional assistants were regularly observed separating the student with disabilities from the class group” (p.12). So, at this point in the history of inclusive special education, an interesting

human rights conundrum seems to emerge. From a human rights perspective, disabled students should be included in as many interactions with their peers as possible, however the irony was that EAs often separated students with disabilities from the group in Edelman et al.'s (1997) research. If the disabled child is frequently missing from the classroom setting, then he or she does not become part of the classroom culture and is certainly not included with his or her peers during such times.

An additional issue that arises from hiring EAs to support student learning is their level of training as compared to that of certified classroom teachers. As argued by Broer & Giangreco (2003):

while strengthening paraprofessional [EA] training is necessary, it is not sufficient. We must be vigilant to ensure that we are not inadvertently perpetuating a double standard whereby students with disabilities receive the bulk of their instruction from paraprofessionals, while students without disabilities have ongoing access to qualified professional educators. (p. 22)

The use of EAs or instructional assistants to support students with a variety of conditions within the regular classroom continues to be a contentious issue. As cited in Giangreco (2013):

internationally, the utilisation of teacher assistants to support the education of students with disabilities has reportedly increased in several western countries (e.g., Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Malta, United Kingdom [UK], US; Blatchford et al., 2011; Bourke, 2009; Giangreco & Doyle, 2007; Giangreco et al., in

press; Logan, 2006). Reliance on teacher assistants is considered by many a necessary mechanism to support inclusive education. Problematically, teacher assistants have become almost exclusively *the way*, rather than *a way*, to support students with disabilities in general education classrooms, especially those with severe or low-incidence disabilities (e.g. autism, intellectual disabilities, behaviour disorders, multiple disabilities; Giangreco & Broer, 2007). (p. 94)

The above argument about the exclusive use of EAs to support students with disabilities is a model of support for inclusive special education that presently continues in the RSSD. I argue that this type of support is at least partially based upon the previously mentioned individual model of disability in which a “within-child” problem guides educators’ actions as opposed to examining the way that educators set up the classroom and provide programming to all students. In both Manitoba and the RSSD, the in-class placement of an EA to help support a special needs child continues to be deemed appropriate and seems to be a key model of support for students identified with some type of disability.

According to Zaretsky (2010), the Department of Education also developed a Special Education Certification process in 1988 and began to provide money to school divisions who hired teachers with their Special Education Certificates. Zaretsky (2010) further argues that the Department of Education also saw the value in and importance of school divisions hiring resource teachers with specific training in special needs education; however, Manitoba Education ended the requirement for this certificate in 1992. Many local school divisions have since required and/or supported their staff in obtaining a Special Education Certificate. For example, the RSSD has supported numerous cohorts of teachers to earn their Manitoba Education Special

Education Teacher Certificate through the Post-Baccalaureate Diploma in Education (PBDE) program at the University of Manitoba.

On an international level, the 1980s saw an increased focus on the recognition and importance of human rights concerning individuals with identified disabilities. As argued by Peters (2007), the 1981 Sundberg Declaration was "... a landmark document recognizing not only the specific rights of people with disabilities to education, but also that their education will benefit the wider community" (p. 102). Peters (2007) further argues that the declaration was important because it introduced the word "appropriate" to describe the education provided to individuals with disabilities. The word "appropriate" continues to be utilized today in such important local documents as Manitoba's *Appropriate Educational Programming – Bill 13. Bill 13* was proclaimed in October, 2005 and is now called the *Appropriate Education for All - Amendment to the Public Schools Act*. As the next decade approaches, some key actions will occur that are attempts to move inclusive special education away from the concepts of mainstreaming and/or integration.

### **1990 – 2000 Equal Opportunity to Public Education**

In the decade of the 90s, various arguments against mainstreaming and integration will emerge on the basis that both practices rely heavily, as suggested by Belanger & Gougeon (2009), on "... the psycho-medical approach that assumes the 'problem' necessarily resides within the individual" (p.290). Moreover, during this decade the idea of special needs or disability comes to be viewed from more of a social perspective (Belanger & Gougeon, 2009; and Peters, 2007) and as cited in Belanger & Gougeon (2009), disability is:

a procedural category, not as something people cannot do; as procedural category it is a term used in discursive practices where impairment may or may not be present, but where the presumption is made that it is. We need to suspend presumptions about the presence of impairment when we talk of disability because disability is relative to social practices in a number of ways (Fulcher, 1999, pp. 22-23). (p. 290)

This idea that the category of disability is relative to our social practices connects with Oliver's (1990) suggestion of a *social model of disability* that differs from the view of disability as a "within-child" problem. This change in how one might view disability reinforces the premise that the 1990s was one of the most pivotal decades in the historical evolution of inclusive special education. Moreover, numerous scholars (Belanger & Gougeon, 2009; Blais & Van Camp, 2005; Epp, 2015; Jahnukainen, 2011; Mitchell, 2012; Peters, 2007; Skrtic, 1991; Thomas, 2013; VanWalleghem & Lutfiyya, 2013; and Zaretsky, 2010) have identified that it was during the 90s that inclusive special education began to transform into a concept that takes into consideration the diverse learning needs of all children rather than just those with identified disabilities.

On an international level, one of the most important historical events in the evolution of inclusive special education occurred at an international UNESCO conference held in Salamanca, Spain in 1994. At this conference, delegates from 92 different countries met to discuss and analyse the trends in educating children and youth with disabilities throughout the world – however, the conference became much more than a singular focus on educating children with disabilities. As suggested by Peters (2007), the resulting *Salamanca Statement* postulated that the focus:

...at the individual level is on abilities, rather than deficiencies. At the institutional level, the Salamanca Statement was unique for its time, going beyond issues of access and equal opportunity to address quality in the form of child-centered pedagogy and several other quality indicators of schooling. (p. 104)

Belanger & Gougeon (2009) further argue that the *Salamanca Statement* provided policies which addressed student learning needs by recommending that schools create a welcoming and safe environment which, through the careful planning and programming of skilled educational professionals, would respond to "...the needs of each student, especially those at risk of exclusion or marginalization" (p. 291). At this point in history, the meaning of inclusive special education becomes broader as it no longer simply refers to meeting the needs of only disabled children within the classroom as demonstrated at the Salamanca World Conference.

An additional critical milestone in the historical development of inclusive education occurred in Canada during the mid-90s – the Eaton vs. Brandt (County) Board of Education court case in which a "child's best interests" came to the forefront. As cited in the Canadian Council on Learning's *Lessons in Learning* (2007), Emily Eaton was a young woman from Ontario who had cerebral palsy. She was non-verbal, restricted to a wheelchair and visually impaired. Emily's parents made the request for her to be placed in her local school on a trial basis. Emily was identified by school staff as having numerous "special needs". She was provided with an educational assistant to help her with her learning tasks during the school day. After spending three years in her local school, the teachers and educational assistants decided that the placement was not in Emily's best interests. Consequently, an Ontario Identification, Placement, and Review Committee decided that Emily should be placed in a segregated "special-

education” classroom. Emily’s parents disagreed with this decision and eventually took the case to the Supreme Court of Canada. As suggested by Henteleff (2010), “the Supreme Court affirmed in Eaton that equal access, that is, equal opportunity to public education, means access to the same benefit, not some lesser benefit” (p. 3). Moreover, Henteleff (2010) argues that the Eaton case reinforced the idea that the rights of the child to access what was in her or his best interests was separate and distinct from that of her or his guardians and/or the school system. As suggested by Towle (2015):

the Eaton case is significant because it demonstrates the extent of a school board’s authority to decide on the placement of children with disabilities. It started a conversation between school boards and parents about what serves as the “best interests” of their children with disabilities. For example, school boards must provide empirical evidence of the child’s experience in both a segregated classroom and a regular, inclusive classroom in order to override the parents’ and child’s versions of best interests. But the definition of “best interests” is still subjective. (p. 8)

I argue that inclusive special education continues to be influenced by decisions made about the best interests of the child and making accommodations for that child up to the point of undue hardship. Even though best interests are to be determined by a qualified professional, as Towle (2015) suggests, best interests are still subjective.

**2000 – Present: Inclusion and Appropriate Educational Programming (AEP)**

In this final time period, the RSSD emerges out of the amalgamation of two urban legacy school divisions in 2002. The historical milestones that occur on an international level during this period continue to focus on the rights of all children and their corresponding education; however, a particularly important treaty was created on an international level in 2006. This treaty was the United Nations (UN) *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities* and was adopted by the UN General Assembly in December of that year. This Convention was the first human rights treaty established by the UN in the third millennium and according to Article 5 of this Convention (2006):

1. States Parties recognize that all persons are equal before and under the law and are entitled without any discrimination to the equal protection and equal benefit of the law.
2. States Parties shall prohibit all discrimination on the basis of disability and guarantee to persons with disabilities equal and effective legal protection against discrimination on all grounds.
3. In order to promote equality and eliminate discrimination, States Parties shall take all appropriate steps to ensure that reasonable accommodation is provided.
4. Specific measures which are necessary to accelerate or achieve de facto equality of persons with disabilities shall not be considered discrimination under the terms of the present Convention. (p. 6)

This 2006 Convention was important to inclusive special education as it was intended, "...to promote, protect and ensure the full and equal enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental

freedoms by all persons with disabilities, and to promote respect for their inherent dignity” (p. 3). Moreover, the Convention further established definitions for both reasonable accommodation and universal design principles that applied to, “...products, environments, programmes and services to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design” (p. 4).

On a local level, three key milestones occur in the forms of a response to the *Manitoba Special Education Review* in 2001 including the legislation of *Bill 13 – Appropriate Educational Programming* in 2005; a final update of a court case from British Columbia that reaffirmed the legal rights of students with learning disabilities to an appropriate education in 2012; and proposed changes to provincial funding for all students. In addition, the Manitoba government passed into law *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)* on December 5, 2013 which will also have an impact on access to and appropriate programming for all students.

According to the Manitoba Department of Education’s published audit on *Special Needs Education* (2012):

between 2000/01 and 2009/10, enrolment for student-specific special needs funding increased 86%, from 3,850 to 7,156 students, and related funding doubled from \$40.8 to \$82.0 million. During the same time period, total school enrolment decreased 7% and total Provincial school operating funding increased 26%, from \$730.6 to \$920.8 million. (p. 249)

As mentioned earlier, the current funding model for special needs students in Manitoba (Levels II and III) continues to be based upon one of deficits (Belanger & Gougeon, 2009). Moreover,

the funding for students with behavioural difficulties does as well – in fact Manitoba is one of the only Canadian provinces that has two categories of funding called profoundly emotionally/behaviourally disordered (EBD2 and EBD3). In my experience as a school principal, I have observed student services personnel, such as school based resource teachers, writing funding applications to the provincial government which focus on a child's deficits rather than her or his strengths. I believe that this occurs to increase the chances of getting funding approval for a child. Moreover, because of the aforementioned significant increase in the enrolment of "specific special needs" students in schools across Manitoba, the Department of Education developed specific guidelines that outlined its expectations for school divisions' delivery of special needs programming. In this 2012 audit, however, the Department of Education admitted that they discovered a low level of compliance amongst various school divisions regarding key standards related to inclusive special education. This reported lack of accountability helped inform my third research question for this thesis. As cited in the Manitoba Schools' Finance Branch's *Funding of Schools 2016/17 School Year* document, a portion of Level 1 funding which is intended to support the learning needs of all children in the public school is determined as follows:

The Student Services Grant consists of a per pupil amount combined with socio-economic and children-in-care components. Support is the lesser of:

(a) the sum of A + B + E + F, where:

A = \$303 multiplied by eligible enrolment at September 30, 2015

B = September 30, 2015 eligible enrolment for each school multiplied by a rate per pupil corresponding to the Socio-Economic Indicator Rate Table

The socio-economic indicator is calculated as:

$(.75 \times C) + (.25 \times D)$ , where:

C = the percentage of low income families with school-aged children in the school catchment area (based on 2011 National Household Survey data)

D = the incidence of school migrancy (2011/2012 school year)

For schools drawing enrolment from feeder schools, the migrancy factor is based on the school itself while the low income factor is based on feeder school data weighted according to the percentage of total enrolment drawn from those schools. Weighting of the low-income factor is based on September 30, 2011 total enrolment.

E = \$500 per pupil reported in eligible enrolment at September 30, 2015 as being under the care of Child and Family Services.

F = as a transition measure for 2016/2017, if the sum of B is less than G, then

$(G - B) \times 50\%$ , where

G = 2014/2015 Socio-economic Funding

(b) allowable expenses as reported under Student Support Services (Programs 210 to 260) on the Calculation of Allowable and Unsupported Expenses in the 2016/2017 FRAME financial statements. Revenues deducted in the Calculation of Allowable and Unsupported Expenses for the Student Services Grant includes support for Special Needs: Coordinator/Clinician and Special Needs: Level 2 and 3 as well as any other revenues related to Programs 210 to 260. (p. 5–6)

As a further measure to support students with more significant learning needs, Manitoba Advanced Education and Learning provides level 2 and 3 funding as listed below:

level 2 and 3 funding is part of the Special Needs Categorical support provided through the Funding of Schools Program. The process for determining eligibility for level 2 or 3 funding requires Manitoba Education to consider applications on an individual basis. The Student Services Administrator together with resource teachers and other division-based personnel identify those students requiring exceptional supports who meet the Guidelines for Level 2 or 3 funding support. (p. 1)

What follows is a description of the categories for Levels 2 and 3 Funding from this website:

Students who meet the criteria for Level 2 support receive \$9,220 per year. Funding eligibility criteria for Level 2 support are based on the student's profile of need and level of support required for a majority of the school day, and full time attendance. Categories of funding include: severe multiple-disabilities (MH2), moderate autism spectrum disorder (ASD2), deaf or hard of hearing (HOH2), severely visually impaired (VI2), very severely emotionally/behaviourally disordered (EBD2), and other 2 (OTH2).

Students who meet the criteria for Level 3 support receive \$20,515 per year. Funding eligibility criteria for Level 3 support are based on the student's profile of need and level of support required for the entire school day, additional specialized supports provided by the school division/district, and programming requirements significantly beyond those established for Level 2 support. Categories of funding include: profound multiple-disability (MH3), severe to profound autism spectrum disorder (ASD3), deaf (HOH3), blind (VI3), and profoundly

emotionally/behaviourally disordered (EBD3). While some of the funding is based on individual needs, the school division does not have to allocate that money only to that student.

As argued earlier, the above provincial language used to describe categories of disability seems to be based upon a deficit model of disability which aligns with Oliver's (1990) definition of an *individual model of disability*. Moreover, a more appropriate model of funding for special needs students might align with Oliver & Barnes' (2010) arguments about a *social model of disability* which is, "based upon the simple idea that people (are) not disabled by the functional limitations of their impairments but by the external barriers that prevented their full participation in the societies in which they lived" (p.549-550). There have been recent indications from Manitoba Advanced Education and Learning that the previous funding model for special needs students may change. According to Martin (2016) on the [winnipegfreepress.com](http://winnipegfreepress.com) website:

the painful years of parents of special needs children and their teachers painting the worst-possible picture of the kids' disabilities to get them the education they need may soon be over. Education Minister James Allum announced Thursday that if the NDP wins the April 19 election, the province will eliminate the onerous months-long application process that determined the support a child would get — usually based on just how badly that child's situation could be depicted. (p. 1)

In this same online article, Martin (2016) suggested that the funding of special needs students will depend on which political party gains power after the April 19, 2016 provincial election. The Liberal Party had suggested that they would follow a similar modified funding process that would emphasize the strengths of a student; however, the Provincial Conservative Party had said

that they would not unveil their funding process until after the provincial election. Although the PC Party was successful in winning the 2016 provincial election, changes to the funding for special needs students have been slow to emerge. Martin's (2016) online article from the *Winnipeg Free Press* seemed to suggest that proposed changes to funding would occur. As of February, 2017, it remains unclear whether these proposed changes to educational funding for special needs students are more aligned with the suggestions from Manitoba Education's 2015-*Task Force on Special Needs Funding* that:

the complexities inherent in creating an equitable, inclusive, "user-friendly," effective, student-centred provincial model for funding are broad and deep. The Task Force's ongoing discussions include a desire to "level the playing field" across the province to account for the differences from school division to school division. The members were very conscious of not recommending changes where some divisions would be "winners" or "losers." The Task Force felt it important that divisions must have local decision making, and that the funding model needs to consider the big picture while also considering anomalies. There are new demands such as inter-agency collaboration, mental health, and increased advocacy for specific interventions. The committee agreed that there is a need for accountability, transparency, and a comprehensive communication strategy. Change may be necessary but any change must be done thoughtfully, cautiously, and respectfully. (p. 7)

I agree with this task force's recommendation that any change to provincial funding for special needs students should be done with great care and thought. As previously mentioned, however, it

remains unclear how provincial funding for students with special needs will change in the province.

One of the most important local decisions to support inclusive educational programming passed in 2005 with the legislation of *Bill 13 - Appropriate Educational Programming*. This law prompted all local school divisions to develop supporting regulations and/or policies to support the learning of both students identified as having special learning needs and all other students in Manitoba classrooms. In addition, as argued by Zaretsky (2010):

...on October 28, 2005, the Manitoba Government proclaimed and enacted “The Appropriate Educational Programming” Amendment to the Public Schools Act. This shifted the mandate for all schools within Manitoba from simply providing education to providing appropriate education to all students. The legislation stated, “Every school board shall provide, as may be directed or prescribed by the minister, appropriate educational programming for every pupil and resident person who has the right to attend school” (MECY, 2003, p. 2). (p. 48)

Once again, this amendment to the *Public Schools Act* moves the thinking in inclusive special education to a broader perspective as being about providing an appropriate education to all students. However, as argued by Peters (2007):

as long as the discourse in international policy documents continues to insist on providing an education that is “appropriate to the child’s condition” and one that is

“subject to available resources” (UNICEF,1990, p.7) rather than on preparing all schools to reach out to all children (EFA Framework for Action) and on building an inclusive society (Salamanca Statement’s *Framework for Action*), inclusive education may not become a reality for the majority of people with disabilities now excluded from education. (p. 106)

How then has the RSSD made inclusive special education a reality for all school-age children and especially those with an identified special learning need?

An additional pivotal court case occurred in Canada on November 9, 2012. On this date, the Supreme Court of Canada unanimously ruled that a public-school system in British Columbia (BC) failed to provide adequate and meaningful access to education for a dyslexic student who had entered a Vancouver public school in kindergarten. As cited in Philpott & Fiedorowicz (2012), the Supreme Court of Canada found this BC school division discriminatory and stated that, “... adequate special education, therefore, is not a dispensable luxury. For those with severe learning disabilities, it is the ramp that provides access to the statutory commitment to education made to all children...” (p. 1). The “ramp that provides access” is reminiscent of Thomas’ (2013) argument that it is not the diagnosis and separate treatment of a child with a disability and the corresponding rehabilitation strategies that are provided to such a child that make the biggest difference in the child’s success at school. What is more important is “... the existence of the right conditions for learning [the ramp] – of an understanding of what learning is and what it can be in school” (p. 477). I argue that numerous factors in schools, school divisions, and the province of Manitoba will have an impact on and influence the “ramps” of inclusive special education. One such factor is related to the conceptual framework of divisional leadership that

can impact both the ramps and the delivery of such ramps afforded to all children as related to inclusive special education. According to the RSSD's Policy Document 1, for example, all educators in the division will "...provide each student with appropriate supports, including instructional placements, to develop their personal best in a setting that respects their abilities" (p. 2).

The final milestone in the historical evolution of inclusive special education that I will mention occurred in Manitoba in 2013. At this point in local history, the Manitoba government passed into law *The Accessibility for Manitobans Act (AMA)* on December 5, 2013. As a result of this law, the Manitoba government created mandatory accessibility standards for all individuals living in Manitoba for both private and public sector organizations. According to the Disabilities Issues Office of Manitoba (2013):

For 2016, and every second year after that, the act will require Manitoba government and broader public sector organizations to prepare accessibility plans that address the identification, prevention and removal of barriers. Public sector organizations include municipalities, public transportation organizations, colleges and universities, hospitals and school boards. (p. 7)

Moreover, the AMA's standards will focus on five key areas as identified by the Disabilities Issues Office of Manitoba (2013):

1. The **Accessible Customer Service** standard will be the first standard to be developed. It will address business practices and training needed to provide better customer service to people with disabilities.
2. The **Accessible Information and Communications** standard will address the removal of barriers in access to information. The standard could include information being provided in person, through print, websites or other means.
3. The **Accessible Built Environment** standard will address access into and within buildings and outdoor spaces and is expected to build on Manitoba's Building Code. The standard could include things like counter height, aisle and door width, parking and signs.
4. The **Employment Accessibility** standard will address paid employment practices relating to employee-employer relationships, which could include recruitment, as well as hiring and retention policies and practices.
5. The **Accessible Transportation** standard will address aspects of accessible public transportation. Access to transportation is needed for going to work or school, shopping and other aspects of daily life. (p. 11)

As of February, 2017, the impact of this provincial act has not yet fully emerged in the RSSD. However, according to the current assistant superintendent of student support services in the RSSD, Manitoba Education and Training has mandated that all Manitoba school divisions report on their progress with the five standards of this provincial act by the end of December, 2016. It seems that the five AMA standards will play a key role of informing the practice of both the public and private sectors in terms of ensuring accessibility to all individuals regardless of their abilities.

## **Leadership to Promote Inclusive Schooling – What Can Principals do to Lead Inclusive Education?**

As suggested by Edmunds & Macmillan (2010):

leadership for inclusion means seeking out an understanding of the fundamental tenets of inclusion and constructing an administrative approach that complements the execution of those tenets by teachers. Without the aforementioned understandings and an active and carefully directed administrative approach, the facilitation of inclusion will occur more by happenstance than by professional design. (p. xiii)

Moreover, as summarized by McGlynn & London (2013), “existing studies indicate that effective leadership for inclusion is dependent on the ability of strong leaders to create shared meanings around inclusion and to build a collaborative culture based on inclusive values” (p. 158). These two scholars further suggest that leaders must be reflective in their approach to understanding the differences within students in their schools and to question whether such differences as ethnicity, culture, gender, socioeconomic status, and ability/disability are in fact part of the natural order of their schools and that no such students become marginalized due to any policies and/or practices in the school. Moreover, Edmunds, Macmillan, Specht, Nowicki, & Edmunds (2009) further argue that, “[l]eaders, and especially principals, are unilaterally able to mobilize support for inclusion, implement inclusive practices, and monitor teachers’ efforts toward successful implementation” (p. 1). What follows is my attempt to highlight the leadership

dimensions of the school principal that will appropriately drive an inclusive response to multiple student differences in schools.

In order to more deeply examine school principals' reflective approaches to understanding student differences and as a way to guide my conceptual framework of divisional leadership with regard to implementing inclusive special education programming and policies, the inclusive special education leadership research from Cobb's (2015) four general components of special education; Crockett's (2002) five core principles of inclusive special education administration; Waldron, McLeskey, & Redd's (2011) five activities that principals' should undertake to support an inclusive school; Billingsley, McLeskey, & Crockett's (2014) four critical components of principal leadership to support inclusive schools; Theoharis & Causton's (2014) seven key steps of leadership to support and develop inclusive school reform; and Riehl's (2009) three tasks that inclusive education administrators face will be connected to the three basic tenets of successful leadership practice espoused by Leithwood, Seashore Lewis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom (2004).

Leithwood, et al. (2004) argue that there exist three sets of "basic" practices that are fundamental to successful educational leadership practice in any organization including: 1) setting directions; 2) developing people; and 3) redesigning the organization. As a way to organize and structure my conceptual framework of leadership for inclusive special education, I will explain how the work of numerous inclusive special education leadership researchers aligns with these three basic tenants or practices of general educational leadership.

Leithwood et al. (2004) argue that the leadership practices involved in setting directions for an organization have the potential to critically impact employees' senses of purpose and

particular roles. The authors further suggest that, "... specific leadership practices as identifying and articulating vision, fostering acceptance of group goals and creating high performance expectations" (p.8), help staff to make sense of their work and the important role they can play in realizing school and divisional goals/directions. This setting of directions aligns with Cobb's (2015) "overriding organizational framework"; Crockett's (2002) "...equity under law (providing child benefit through disability law, financial options, and public policies)..." (p. 162); Waldron et al.'s (2011) "...setting the direction of the school..." (p. 51); Billingsley et al.'s (2014) "...building a shared vision and commitment..." (p. 25), Theoharis and Causton's (2014) first step of setting "... a vision for the school reform initiative..." (p.83) and seventh step of "... creating a climate of belonging..." (p. 87); and Riehl's (2009) "...creating new meanings about diversity..." (p. 185). As cited in Billingsley et al. (2014), it is critical that school principals build a shared vision for inclusive schools since, "several investigations emphasized the important role the principal plays in recognizing the need for a shared vision that addresses students with disabilities and inclusion and working to promote inclusion as a core value in the school (Burstein et al., 2004; Fisher et al., 2000; Guzman, 1997; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Janney et al., 1995; Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell, & Capper, 1999; Lieber et al., 2000; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Salisbury, 2006; Salisbury & McGregor, 2002; Waldron et al., 2011)" (p. 25-26). Theoharis & Causton (2014) argue that setting a vision for inclusive school reform which focuses on how adults and students are best arranged to support learning and correspondingly to meet the learning needs of all students in a general classroom setting is critical to a school's success as an inclusive setting. Moreover, these two authors further suggest in their seventh step to supporting inclusive school reform that, "... creating a climate of belonging means working with all stakeholders in the school to assume competence and to value all students, purposefully

building community in each classroom throughout the year...” (p. 87). Finally, Cobb (2015) argues that school division policies, laws (such as Bill 13), and documents which refer to inclusive special education help to make up the organizational framework of the school division. For this study then, as part of my interview protocol, I will inquire of the participants what the initial policies and practices of service delivery were (the setting of directions or organizational framework) for educating both special needs and all students in an inclusive classroom.

The second basic effective leadership practice is that of developing people. Leithwood et al. (2004) suggest that supporting the professional development of staff members through such experiences as, “... offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support and providing appropriate models of best practice and beliefs considered fundamental to the organization’ (p. 9), are critical to positively impacting student learning. Developing people connects with Cobb’s (2015) “assessment parameters”, “programme delivery model”, and “a personnel network” (p. 215). By assessment practices, Cobb (2014) refers to the instruments that are used to determine a child’s areas of strength and areas for growth and development. Moreover, the assessment parameters should ascertain the child’s progress regarding being within the expected performance level for that age of child. The program delivery model that Cobb (2015) refers to includes the various teaching methodologies and degrees of support provided to each child including such practices as establishing an Individual Educational Plan (IEP) for specific children. By personnel network, Cobb (2015) means, “the people involved in special education assessment, identification, programme delivery, and decision-making includ[ing], school administrators, school board psychologists, social workers, and consultants, among others” (p. 215).

Leithwood et al.'s (2004) developing people also connects with Crockett's (2002) "...ethical practice (advocating for informed decisions based on child benefit, respect, and full educational opportunity)" (p. 162); "...individual consideration (attending to exceptional needs requiring the extraordinary response of specialized instruction) ..." (p. 162); and "...effective programming (providing and ensuring programming designed to produce positive student outcomes)" (p. 162). By ethical practice, Crockett (2002) suggests that it is critical to successful inclusive school administration to, "... develop moral leaders who are capable of analyzing complexities, respecting others, and advocating for child benefit, justice, and full educational opportunity for every learner" (p.163). Crockett (2002) further argues that individual consideration, "... develops leaders who are attentive to the relationship between the unique learning and behavioral needs of students with disabilities and the specialized instruction to address their educational progress" (p. 163). Finally, Crockett (2002) suggests that an effective program, "... develops leaders who are skilled at supervising and evaluating educational programs in general, and individualized programming in particular..." (p. 163).

Waldron et al.'s (2011) "improving working conditions..." (p. 55) aligns with Leithwood et al.'s (2004) tenet of developing people. Waldron et al. (2011) found that in their study of an inclusive school in Florida that, "... shared decision-making provided the foundation for the development of a learning community at CES, as teachers worked together to make decisions about how their school should be redesigned" (p. 55). Waldron et al. (2011) further argue that the benefits of a school principal sharing decisions with others about inclusive programming; helping support a learning community that devoted itself to professional development; and providing appropriate resources to teachers who required them to support diverse students

assisted in developing "... a sense of community and equity among teachers" (p. 56) and ultimately improved teacher working conditions.

Billingsley et al.'s (2014) argument that an inclusive school leader "builds a professional community that shares responsibility for improving the learning of all students" (p. 27) also connects with Leithwood et al.'s (2004) tenet of developing people. As cited in Billingsley et al. (2014):

in most of the inclusive settings, principals and others provided leadership for ensuring that teachers were well prepared to address the needs of students in their classrooms. This occurred through the extensive use of planning time and opportunities for PD before beginning the inclusive program (e.g., Burstein et al., 2004; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999). Teachers in these settings indicated that these learning experiences were important preparation for new models of teaching (Burstein et al., 2004; Janney et al., 1995). (p. 28)

These authors further suggest that school principals who either develop or help to develop professional learning communities amongst all teaching staff regarding supporting diverse student needs promoted an improvement in collegial staff relationships, an improvement in teaching techniques, and an overall improvement in learning outcomes for all students.

Theoharis & Causton's (2014) fifth step of "...impacting classroom practices..." (p. 87) and sixth step of "... ongoing monitoring, adjusting, and celebrating" (p. 87) both link to

Leithwood et al.'s (2004) leadership tenet of developing people. Theoharis & Causton (2014) argue that it is important for all staff to create a responsive professional development plan regarding inclusive education since, "... all schools that have become more inclusive through this process have spent significant professional development time and energy learning about collaboration, co-teaching, and differentiation" (p. 87). Moreover, these two authors suggest that not only is it critical to monitor the school's inclusive education plan on a regular and ongoing basis, but to adjust the plan as necessary without giving up, "... at the first moment of struggle or resistance" (p. 87).

Riehl's (2009) idea of promoting inclusive educational practices also connects to Leithwood et al.'s (2004) developing people. The task of promoting inclusive educational practices, argues Riehl (2009), is based upon two separate dimensions that include, "... promoting forms of teaching and learning that enable diverse students to succeed and molding school cultures that embrace and support diversity" (p. 187). Based upon Leithwood et al.'s (2004) concept of developing people, for this study, I will ask a question in my interview protocol concerning the professional development offered to school principals for any inclusive educational policies and practices to see how well the RSSD has aligned with the critical practice of developing people. Moreover, I will ask a question about shared instructional practices within the division that supported inclusive special education service delivery.

The third and final basic tenet of effective leadership is redesigning the organization. Leithwood et al. (2004) argue that:

successful educational leaders develop their districts and schools as effective organizations that support and sustain the performance of administrators and teachers, as well as students. Specific practices typically associated with this set of basics include strengthening district and school cultures, modifying organizational structures and building collaborative processes. (p. 9)

This final tenet of effective school leadership connects with Crockett's (2002) "...productive partnerships (negotiating and collaborating on behalf of learners with exceptionalities and their families)..." (p. 162); Waldron et al.'s (2011) "... redesigning the organization" (p. 54) and "... using data to drive decision-making" (p. 57); Billingsley et al.'s (2014) "redesigns schools for inclusive education" (p. 29); Theoharis & Causton's (2014) creating service delivery maps, aligning school structures, and rethinking staffing by creating specific instructional teams (p. 84-85); and Riehl's (2009) "... building connections between schools and their communities..." (p. 185).

Crockett (2002) argues that her "... fifth principle develops leaders who are effective in communicating, negotiating, and collaborating with others on behalf of students with disabilities and their families" (p. 163). Waldron et al. (2011) suggest that it is critical that the school principal works together and shares responsibility with teaching staff as teachers from their study, "... realized that they were empowered to make real decisions about their classrooms and school, they were motivated to improve their practice and determine approaches to better meet the needs of all students" (p. 55). Waldron et al. (2011) also suggest that data collection is

critically important to redesigning a school in order that it can better meet the needs of diverse students. For example, in their study they found:

... that having a system for monitoring student progress was indispensable to making their school work. They further noted that this data system could not simply be summative tests administered for accountability by the state, but had to be data on student progress that was meaningful to teachers, directly tied to the content of classroom instruction, and useful for planning classroom instruction. School improvement was simply impossible without such a data system. (p. 57)

As cited in Billingsley et al. (2014), principal leadership to redesign a more inclusive school setting is critical since:

...substantial evidence reveals that most schools require extensive redesign or systemic change to successfully develop an effective inclusive school, and the principal is often the most important school leader as change occurs (Guzman, 1997; Idol, 2006; Ingram, 1996; Keyes et al., 1999; McLeskey & Waldron, 2006; Waldron et al., 2011). Changes often require addressing beliefs of school staff and other stakeholders regarding students with disabilities, changing curriculum and instructional practices, and altering teacher roles (Fullan, 2007; McLeskey et al., 2014). These changes necessitate substantial redesign of a school that requires changes in the school culture (Ingram, 1996; McLeskey &

Waldron, 2002, 2006) and places demands on principals to provide leadership related to school change, which results in supportive working conditions that “allow teachers to make the most of their motivations, commitments and capacities” (Leithwood et al., 2008). (p. 29)

Theoharis & Causton (2014) recommend that the school principal and her or his teaching staff create a current service delivery map since, “this process requires school teams to map out their current service delivery and the way they use their human resources in efforts to meet the range of student needs” (p.85). After creating a description of the school’s current service delivery model, the authors further suggest that, “... the staff looks to create a new inclusive service delivery plan by redeploying staff members to make balanced and heterogeneous classrooms where all students are included, to enhance inclusion and belonging” (p.85). Theoharis & Causton’s (2014) recommendation to rethink the use of staff members to support inclusion definitely aligns with Leithwood et al.’s (2004) suggestion of redesigning the organization. Theoharis & Causton (2014) argue that instructional teams including general education teachers, specialist teachers such as resource teachers and other members of student services personnel, and educational assistants be put into appropriate teams and then have these teams carefully place students into heterogeneous classrooms which would reflect “... the school’s natural proportions of students...” (p. 85). The authors further argue that “part of creating classes, whether at the elementary, middle, or high school level, is to not overload or cluster many students with special education needs into one room or section’ (p. 85).

Regarding redesigning the organization, Riehl (2009) suggests that:

as the needs of students grow more complex and the number of institutions who deal with youth and children increases, consequently increasing the array of organizations within a neighborhood, it is more apparent that schools cannot function as isolated entities.

Effective administrators understand these inter-organizational and community dynamics and seek to position schools to take advantage of positive resources offered by other institutions... (p. 189)

For this study, then, the interview protocols were used to make inquiries that addressed how initial policies and practices regarding inclusive special education may have changed from 2002 to 2015. Moreover, questions about data collection and coordinating efforts with other agencies to benefit the learning needs of all children within the school were also asked of the participants.

### **Inclusive Special Education Policy Documents in the RSSD**

As cited in Duhaney (1999), “several variables appear to be important in reviewing policies/position statements on inclusion (Consortium on Inclusive Schooling Practices, 1996)” (p.369). Duhaney (1999) further suggests that numerous variables such as definitional issues, philosophical issues, placement issues, and legal issues are important to consider since they may affect both the practice and policies created regarding inclusive special education. Moreover, Harpell & Andrews (2010) suggest that:

although the basic framework relative to educational matters across the provinces and territories is similar, there is considerable variation with respect to the direction and service provision for special (inclusive) education across the school jurisdictions [in Canada]. (p. 192)

Creating a vision of inclusive special education and the corresponding services provided to all students is critical at both provincial and local levels. Provincially, the legislation of appropriate educational programming with the proclamation of Bill 13 in 2005 supported Manitoba's philosophy of inclusion. As mentioned earlier, it is important to note that along with creating an inclusive vision, schools and school divisions in Manitoba are required to create appropriate action plans and/or policies to support inclusive instructional practice. If the action plan or policy fails to identify appropriate supports for inclusive practice, then as argued by Muscott (1995), the inclusive vision will be "... unethical and represents poor policy and practice for all students" (p.372). The policy for inclusive special education in the RSSD was created three years after amalgamation in 2005. This policy, known as the *RSSD's Policy Document 1- Inclusion And Appropriate Educational Programming*, has not been reviewed nor revised since its inception in 2005. This policy endorses the aforementioned Manitoba Education's definition of inclusion, however it also includes other philosophical statements such as:

The Division recognizes that today's classrooms reflect our diverse communities and include a combination of student needs, learning styles and cultural backgrounds. The Division is committed to the rights of all students to participate in educational

programming that, within available resources, will maximize the opportunity for students to achieve their individualized learning outcomes. (p. 1)

The phrase, “within available resources” is reminiscent of the earlier Peters’ (2007) quotation about “subject to available resources”. It appears that the RSSD will maximize the opportunities for all students to learn, as long as the division has the resources to do so. I wonder what happens if the school division does not have the available resources? As suggested by Harpell & Andrews (2010):

each province and territory has its own unique formula for the allocation and distribution of education funds (which typically comes from a combination of provincial property taxes and government grants), and special education programs and services are highly dependent on this funding. (p. 192)

Even though school divisions are dependent on provincial funding to support the education of all students, there currently exists a lack of accountability for how school divisions allocate funds for the appropriate education of their students. As cited in her work on Northern Manitoba principal’s perceptions of special education legislation, Zaretsky (2010) argues that:

in the United States, data regarding the American states’ compliance with their federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (IDEA) are collected annually. Their data serves as a determinant in the Federal funding received by the state to support their programming for their students with special needs. The annual tracking of state

compliance is the responsibility of the United States Department of Education (Daniel, 1997; Kluth, Villa, & Thousand, 2002; Quarry, 1990). The National Council on Disability (2000) analyzed the data and found, “every state was out of compliance with the requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and that U.S. officials are not enforcing compliance” (Kluth, Villa, & Thousand, p. 24). However, no research was found regarding the compliance of Canadian provinces with their specific provincial legislation supporting the appropriate educational programming of all students. (p. 18)

While funding is obviously important to help support inclusive special education within the division, Policy Document 1 also refers to the following programming and/or instructional strategies incumbent upon all educators in the division:

- foster school and classroom communities where all students, including those of diverse needs and abilities, have a sense of personal belonging and achievement
- identify and foster practices by which students with a wide range of learning needs can be taught together effectively
- enhance, through modeling and instruction, student abilities to deal with diversity
- offer students an environment that provides potential for dignified, meaningful relationships
- provide each student with appropriate supports, including instructional placements, to develop their personal best in a setting that respects their abilities
- help each student contribute to the classroom and school community
- develop and maintain competencies for achieving these principles (p. 2)

The above principles seem to align with Leithwood et al.'s (2004) effective leadership strategies of setting directions and developing people, however in the preamble of Policy Document 1, only “a combination of student needs, learning styles and cultural backgrounds” are mentioned. Moreover, by suggesting that the division will be committed to individualizing educational programming and providing students an opportunity to “deal with diversity”, it seems that the RSSD’s conception of inclusion is at least partially aligned with Booth’s (2005) definition of inclusion. However, since the RSSD has not reviewed nor revised their policy on inclusion over the past 11 years, I argue that the division may be missing key groups of students who are “diverse” beyond simply learning needs, learning styles, and cultural diversity.

### **Summary**

This chapter included an examination of inclusive special education research from both local and international sources. Moreover, the chapter was organized into five different time frames including:

1. 1960 – 1970 Segregation and Mainstreaming
2. 1970 – 1980 Mainstreaming, Integrated Settings and Integration
3. 1980 – 1990 Additional Classroom Supports
4. 1990 – 2000 Equal Opportunity to Public Education
5. 2000 – Present Inclusion and Appropriate Educational Programming (AEP)

A variety of researchers’ work on principal leadership in inclusive special education was connected to Leithwood, et al.’s (2004) three basic tenets of successful leadership practice as a conceptual framework for understanding what school principals can do to support diverse student

needs. The chapter concludes with a brief examination of the current inclusive special education policy within the RSSD that was published in 2005.

### **Chapter 3: Methods and Methodology**

For my research design, an historical case study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Gillham, 2000; Lapan & Quartaroli, 2009; and Yin, 1997, 2004) was conducted to both examine and interpret the answers provided by select current and retired RSSD employees to questions from my interview protocols regarding the evolution of inclusive special education policies and practices in the division from 2002 until 2015. These qualitative data were collected to tell the story of how the two legacy school divisions were amalgamated in 2002 and how the resulting amalgamated school division initialized both policy and the resulting practice(s) regarding inclusive special education. Thus, an historical case study seemed an appropriate methodology.

The study was, in part, informed by a great wealth of research concerning inclusive special education. As suggested earlier, the Salamanca World Conference on Special Needs Education (UNESCO, 1994) resulted in delegates from 92 different governments reaffirming their commitment to educating all children regardless of their learning needs. This World Conference arguably brought inclusive education to the forefront of both practice and policy, however as suggested by Ainscow & Cesar (2006):

... the field remains confused as to what actions need to be taken in order to move policy and practice forward. In some countries, inclusive education is thought of as an approach to serving children with disabilities within general education settings. Internationally, however, it is increasingly seen more broadly as a reform that supports and welcomes diversity amongst all learners (UNESCO, 2001) (p. 231).

As surfaced in Chapter Two, inclusion, in Manitoba, is currently more widely regarded as an umbrella concept and as McGlynn & London (2011) suggest, “is concerned with overcoming barriers to all types of marginalization, exclusion and underachievement which may result from religion, culture, ethnicity, gender, ability/disability, socioeconomic status, language and other dimensions of diversity” (p. 156). As the current principal of a large kindergarten to grade 6 school in the RSSD, I was most interested in examining the divisional policies and practices related to inclusive special education through an historical case study analysis as this analysis may provide clues to my future actions as an administrator in attempting to support the aforementioned diversity amongst all learners in the division. No identifiers were used in the analysis, reporting, or dissemination procedures of this study.

### **Research Participants**

As mentioned earlier, study participants were recruited through purposeful sampling (Patton, 2002). It is current divisional policy to make research requests for potential study participants from the assistant superintendent of program or his designate— ethical approval having first been obtained from the University of Manitoba’s Education and Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB). Study participants included two critical groups. One group from divisional and student services leadership personnel as shown in the table below (See Table 3.1). Another group consisted of two retired employees from the RSSD and a retired trustee. One of the retired employees named Becky (pseudonym) was the assistant superintendent of student support services, another retired employee named Joseph (pseudonym) was the superintendent of the RSSD at the time of amalgamation, and the retired trustee was involved with many of the meetings and conversations that occurred with the trustees from both legacy school divisions

prior to and during amalgamation. Becky was both a student services consultant and assistant superintendent of student support services in the division as shown in Table 3.1 below.

Moreover, she was my senior administrative link when I was the principal of a smaller K-6 school in the RSSD and she told me that she was interested in being interviewed about inclusive special education in 2013 before she retired. The second individual I attempted to recruit was a previous director of clinical and extended services in the division from 2002 until 2010 (See Table 3.1 below). Unfortunately, this individual chose not to take part in this study as she was concerned that confidentiality could not be guaranteed given the size of Winnipeg and the number of urban school divisions that amalgamated in 2002. However, this individual did agree to be a critical reader of this thesis and gave me several source documents for analysis from one of the legacy school divisions with which she had been employed. Joseph, the superintendent at the time of amalgamation agreed to be interviewed and provided key historical background regarding how the two separate legacy school divisions collaborated to amalgamate. The rationale for selecting the above retired employees and a trustee as potential interviewees was that they all played key roles in relation to the beginnings of inclusive special education policies and practices in 2002. I believed that these individuals could potentially provide rich data that would be invaluable to an historical case study analysis of the evolution of inclusive special education policies and practices in the RSSD.

Table 3.1: River South School Division Select Staff Members

<i>Superintendent</i>	<i>Assistant Superintendent-Student Services</i>	<i>Director of Clinical &amp; Extended Services</i>	<i>Select Student Services Consultants</i>
Joseph 2002-2008	Katie 2002-2005	Sarah 2002-2010	Becky 2002-2004
	Becky 2005-2013	Janet 2011 - Present	Lindsay 2003-2007
	Shelley 2013-Present		Cynthia 2012-Present

Permission to engage in this study was solicited from the RSSD’s current assistant superintendent of program’s designate. I asked the current assistant superintendent of program’s designate to send e-mail letters of recruitment to all administrators and members of student services teams in the division.

Since this was an historical case study, one criterion for participant selection was that the potential interview subject must have worked a minimum of ten years in the amalgamated division. This criterion was included on my recruitment letter. Great care was taken to protect the confidentiality of these potential research subjects. All identifying characteristics were removed from the data and all interviewees were provided nondescript identification in the form of pseudonyms in any and all reporting. Moreover, the names of the school divisions were also changed to maintain their confidentiality.

The potential effects of my peer relationships with possible study participants were minimized as I was not in a “power over” situation with any study participants from RSSD. Moreover, as a kindergarten to grade six principal of a school in the RSSD, I did not have any undue influence on other administrators or divisional student services personnel as I was not in a position to hire or to provide a performance review to any of these individuals. I did not interview any members of the student services team at my own school or any divisional consultant who was associated with my current school. My overall goal was to have a maximum of 15 research participants.

Great care was taken to protect the confidentiality of individuals. All proposed research participants were made aware that the Assistant Superintendent of Program would receive a copy of the final thesis in their consent form and that their participation in the study would not affect their future employment in any way. The criteria for participant selection included that: (a) each participant was employed as an assistant superintendent, consultant, student services personnel, or school principal in the RSSD between the years of 2002 and 2015; and (b) had a minimum of ten years of experience working in the RSSD.

According to my plan for participant selection as described above, I was able to recruit six school administrators who had an average of 16 years of administrative experience amongst them; one early years divisional consultant with 30 years’ experience; three assistant superintendents of student services (one current and two retired); one retired superintendent; one retired school trustee; and one divisional student services consultant with ten years of experience. Four English-speaking schools and one French Immersion school were represented in this study. Represented schools ranged in size from approximately 250 to 850 students. All interviewed administrators worked in either early years, kindergarten to grade eight, middle years, or high

schools. In addition, I was able to correspond with a retired employee from Manitoba Education who acted as the Director of Program and Student Services Branch for ten years and as the Coordinator of the Student Services Unit for five years. She volunteered to answer the questions from my interview protocol that related to her work on inclusive special education.

### **Sources of Data**

Data was collected through two main sources: i) qualitative interviews with two previous employees, six current school administrators, three current student services employees, a retired trustee, and a retired employee from Manitoba Education; ii) document analysis of published documents regarding student support services from both legacy school divisions and policies from RSSD which describe and/or support inclusive special education in the division. I selected these sources of data for two main reasons. The first reason was that I was interested in discovering the responses of two previous superintendents, a former trustee, and nine current employees of the RSSD to questions regarding the evolution of inclusive special education policies and practices in the amalgamated division. The second reason was that I wanted to examine divisional documents which included policies and public statements that referred to an inclusive special education philosophy since, as argued by Bogdan & Biklen (2007), external documents are often indicative of key values of those who oversee running the schools in a division.

The collection of all qualitative data was completed by digitally–audio recording twelve separate interviews with the aforementioned administrators and personnel associated with student services in the RSSD. Moreover, the retired employee from Manitoba Education responded to questions from my interview protocol that she felt comfortable with and qualified

to answer. The interviews took place between the months of May and November in 2016. The questions from my interview protocols were intended to elicit responses from the participants about both policy and practice regarding inclusive special education in the amalgamated RSSD. All participants were e-mailed a Microsoft Word copy of their transcribed interview and were invited to member check their interview for accuracy. Each participant was provided up to four weeks to make any changes or corrections to their interview transcript. Two participants provided corrections, which I subsequently made, and then all participants indicated that the transcripts reflected their intended messages.

### **Confidentiality and References**

At least two competing principles have affected the way in which I cited several of my sources. Although scholarly research should enable the reader to determine where the sources for the research came from, I was required to maintain the confidentiality of the interview subjects and the school divisions as per ENREB. As a result, pseudonyms were used to identify the school divisions that amalgamated to form the RSSD including the King Edward School Division (KESD) and the Dugald School Division (DSD). Moreover, the name of each study participant was changed to the pseudonym that she or he selected before the start of each individual interview with the researcher. For any citations involving original documents from any of the three school divisions from this study, I decided to simply use the generic terms of *DSD Documents*, *KESD Documents*, and *RSSD Documents*. All cite sources were publicly available, therefore it was critical to use these generic pseudonyms to ensure that confidentiality was not compromised. As a result, no sources from any of the three school divisions in this study were included in the References section.

### **Researcher Positioning**

In order to illuminate my own possible biases as a researcher, it is important to share some critical details from my background. I was born in the small Northern Manitoba town of Lynn Lake in November of 1965 to parents who were both teachers. I was a healthy baby except for a birth defect that caused a deformity in my left hand. This hand was both webbed and had three of the individual digits significantly bent over. For the first ten years of my life, I experienced yearly operations at a variety of hospitals in the city of Winnipeg, Manitoba. These yearly operations were intended to make my left hand more functional for daily living. Since my parents lived in Brandon, and hospitals typically did not allow parents to stay with their children overnight at the hospital through the mid-1960s into the 1970s, I have vivid memories of being left alone with all the hospital's frightening sights and sounds. Although I may have experienced some trauma associated with these hospital stays, these experiences have perhaps developed my sense of empathy and interest in children who endure a diversity of hardship(s).

As I grew up in the city of Brandon, Manitoba and, in part due to my yearly operations on my left hand, I struggled with learning throughout early elementary school. Although my father, who by this time was a school administrator, had extensively researched the arguments for and against the retention of students, both he and my mother decided that I should repeat grade three in 1974. My father told me a few years later that even though the research he had read suggested that retention was not the best strategy for many children, he and my mother were convinced that this was the correct choice for me. After repeating grade three, my academic career flourished and the experience of failing a grade at school may have enhanced my own understanding of the wide variety of learning needs that children possess and again potentially influenced my interest in inclusive special education.

At the same time as attending school in Brandon, a life-changing event occurred to me. When I turned 15 years old, I developed Type I Diabetes. After being diagnosed with this chronic disease, I became an eager learner when both medical personnel and dieticians demonstrated the techniques that would enable me to effectively manage this disease. As argued by Jensen (2013), “experiencing adverse circumstances as a child can shape a person’s entire life” (p.6). In becoming an insulin-dependent diabetic at a relatively early age, my life was certainly impacted and the result has affected the shape of who I am and my ability to empathize with and seek understanding for diverse people. I do not identify myself as disabled, however I have recognized elements of Oliver’s (1990) social model of disability in my own life through experiences such as completing a mandatory physical examination by a registered Manitoban physician to maintain a provincial driver’s licence - am I perceived by society as being “disabled” since I must complete this extra step to keep my driver’s license?

### **Research Instruments**

According to Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, the best examples of qualitative research include the techniques of participant observation and in-depth interviewing. A naturalistic in-depth interview technique was used in this study to support the inquiries made of select administrators and select members from student services in the RSSD about their perceptions of the evolution of inclusive special education policies and practices between 2002 and 2015. Two interview protocols were designed for the study-one for current employees and one for retired employees. The questions in both interview protocols were created to elicit responses from interviewees regarding inclusive special education policy and practice within the RSSD. The interview protocols can be found in *Appendices B* and *C*. Participants’ responses to each of these questions

were recorded digitally, manually transcribed, member-checked, and then the researcher moved to an analysis of the data.

### **Data Analysis**

As cited in Basit (2003), “the object of analyzing qualitative data is to determine the categories, relationships and assumptions that inform the respondents’ view of the world in general, and of the topic in particular (McCracken, 1988)” (p. 143). All data regarding the topic of the evolution of inclusive special education policy and practice in an amalgamated urban school division were first collected through interviews in a single phase. The researcher then used inductive analysis to complete a preliminary examination of the data to determine various codes to support an explanation of participants’ responses to the interview questions. Some topics were raised in most of the responses from participants; other topics were suggested by three or four of the participants; and still other topics were mentioned by only single participants. These topics were used to create a total of 168 category codes. Since these codes were not predetermined, this method of coding aligned with Basit’s (2003) suggestion of ‘grounded theory’ that was initially established by Glaser and Strauss (1967). In keeping with grounded theory, the primary researcher used a constant comparative technique (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007) to take the codes from the interview protocols and organize them into key themes which aligned with the leadership research on inclusive special education from numerous scholars (Billingsley et al., 2014; Cobb, 2015; Crockett, 2002; Leithwood et al., 2004; Riehl, 2009; Theoharis & Causton, 2014; and Waldron et al., 2011). 14 key themes were created by the researcher that were based upon the aforementioned category codes that related to the leadership research on inclusive special education as follows: inclusion; initial policies and practices; initiatives; shared

meanings; shared instructional practices; policy and practice changes; role of the principal; professional development for principals; funding; organizational conditions; accountability; work with community based agencies; implementing individual educational plans (IEPs); and recommendations for future principals. These 14 key themes were further reduced to eight themes that related to the initial research questions from this study. In this way, a case description was developed which provided, as argued by Yin (1994), an "... analysis organized on the basis of description of the general characteristics and relations of the phenomenon in question" (p. 5). Here the phenomenon in question was the evolution of inclusive special education policies and practices within the RSSD from 2002 until 2015.

### **Trustworthiness and Validity**

For this study, three different validation procedures were utilized to strengthen the validity of the study as described by Cresswell & Miller (2000). These three procedures included "researcher reflexivity" (p.127), "member checking" (p. 127), and "thick, rich description" (p.128). Cresswell & Miller (2000) describe researcher reflexivity as the process by which the researcher describes her or his assumptions, personal beliefs, values, and potential biases that may influence her or his interpretations of the data collected. This researcher reflexivity was addressed in the previous chapter in the researcher positioning section. Member checking is described by Cresswell & Miller (2000) as the process, "... of taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account" (p. 127). As mentioned previously, all interview transcripts were returned to each interview informant so that she or he could check the transcript for accuracy and suggest any corrections or changes to the primary researcher. It is important to note that each interview

informant reported her or his satisfaction with the accuracy of each transcript provided. As described by Cresswell & Miller (2000), “another procedure for establishing credibility in a study is to describe the setting, the participants, and the themes of a qualitative study in rich detail” (p.128). As the primary researcher, every attempt was made in this historical case study to provide rich and thorough details.

### **Summary**

This chapter provided details about the qualitative data collection methods that were used to complete this thesis. An historical case study method was utilized to frame the study. A total of six school administrators, an early years’ consultant, three assistant superintendents of student support services, both a retired superintendent and a retired school trustee (from the time of amalgamation), and a retired employee from Manitoba Education participated. A section on researcher positioning was included in the chapter to surface my own personal beliefs and potential biases. Moreover, the methods of coding and inductive analysis were specified as the means for making sense of the data and for the purpose of completing a key theme analysis related to the initial research questions. The chapter concluded with a description of three different validation techniques that were used in the study to enhance the trustworthiness of the research.

## **Chapter Four – Findings**

### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I will provide an analysis of the history of how inclusive special education policies and practices have evolved in the River South School Division (RSSD) through a discussion of eight key themes that emerged from interview data gathered from research participants between May and November of 2016 and an examination of key documents related to the following research questions:

1. What were the initial policies and practices with regard to inclusive special education service delivery adopted and/or endorsed by the River South School Division (RSSD) in 2002?
2. a) How have divisional policies and practices been redesigned and/or changed since 2002 to support inclusive special education?  
b) What professional development opportunities were provided to school principals in the RSSD to support their understanding of these policies and practices?  
c) What forms of accountability (for example, public reporting about how the division is meeting the legislative, regulatory, and standards requirements of inclusive special education as mandated by the provincial and federal governments) have been implemented by the division to monitor the impact of the division's inclusive special education initiatives?

Moreover, in this chapter, I begin with a brief description of possible school division amalgamations as described in the *Report of the Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Commission* (The Norrie Report), (1994) in the province of Manitoba, followed by a description of the models of student service delivery in operation in each legacy school division before amalgamation in 2002.

As suggested in my Methods and Methodology section, to protect the anonymity of both legacy school divisions that amalgamated to form the RSSD, pseudonyms were used including the King Edward School Division (KESD) and the Dugald School Division (DSD). In addition, the name of each study participant was changed to the pseudonym that she or he selected before the start of each individual interview with the researcher. A total of 13 interview participants' responses will be cited in this chapter including: 1) Joseph, a former superintendent of both the DSD and the RSSD; 2) Barbara, a former school trustee for both the DSD and the RSSD; 3) Alice, a former assistant superintendent of student support services in the KESD; 4) Shelley, the current assistant superintendent of support services for the RSSD; 5) Rhonda, an early years' consultant for the RSSD; 6) Becky, a former assistant superintendent of student services for the RSSD; 7) Lynn, a French Immersion principal in the RSSD; 8) Helga, a senior years vice principal in the RSSD; 9) Cynthia, a student services consultant in the RSSD; 10) Joe, a K-8 principal in the RSSD; 11) Lisa, an early years principal in the RSSD; 12) Debra, a middle years vice principal in the RSSD; and 13) a former employee of Manitoba Education.

### **Looming Amalgamation**

A review of Manitoba school division boundaries was initiated by the Progressive Conservative provincial government in the early 1990s when it hired a former City of Winnipeg

Mayor, Bill Norrie, to lead the Manitoba School Divisions/Districts Boundaries Review Commission. This Commission published a report, more commonly known as the Norrie Report (1994), which observed that in September 1994 there were 57 school divisions and districts operating in the province of Manitoba, the majority of which had been in place for more than 30 years. Thus, the Commission's mandate from the provincial government was, "... to study, consult and make recommendations to the Minister of Education and Training on any adjustments in school division/district boundaries for the Province of Manitoba" (p. 2). Although this Commission examined school division boundaries for the entire province, regarding the ten urban school divisions at that time, it commented that, "... the only unanimous position the Commission heard at all of its public hearings was that there (were) too many school divisions in Winnipeg" (p. 106).

The provincial government had suggested that one major reason for school division amalgamations was that there would be an overall cost-saving. However, as detailed by Levin (2005), he and a fellow colleague from the University of Manitoba presented a brief to the Norrie Commission in which they argued that, "...school district amalgamations would neither save money nor improve education" (p. 141).

Regarding inclusive special education, another one of the Commission's arguments for school division amalgamations was that a reduction in the number of school divisions would allow for an increased sharing and/or access to specialty programs offered by one large urban school division who had, "... developed considerable expertise in dealing with specialty issues" (p.108). The Commission's argument was that there would be a potential benefit to all children in Winnipeg if the number of divisions were reduced as there could be additional access to such specialty programming. The Commission's final conclusion on the implications of school

division amalgamations in 1994 was that, "... it would appear most advisable to reduce the number of school divisions from ten to a more reasonable number, but not to one large division" (p. 112). According to Levin (2005), the Commission further recommended, "that Manitoba redraw school district boundaries completely, moving from fifty-six to twenty-one districts" (p. 142).

Even though the Conservative government considered the recommendations from the Norrie Commission, these recommendations were not implemented. By the spring of 2000, however, the newly elected New Democratic Party (NDP) Government of Manitoba and specifically Drew Caldwell, the Minister of Education at that time, were both in full support of decreasing the number of urban school divisions in Winnipeg (Levin, 2005). According to Levin (2005):

reducing the number of school boards was undoubtedly popular. It would be difficult to find many voters in Winnipeg who thought the city needed nine school districts.

Presumably this was why so many other provinces had taken the step, giving it a sense of inevitability...The Manitoba Teachers' Society had been a consistent advocate for amalgamation, arguing that having so many small districts resulted in inequalities in programming. (p. 143)

Before the Manitoba government decided upon how to best amalgamate their school divisions and the exact process that should be followed to do so, there continued to be much debate within the government about the timing of these amalgamations. Other provinces such as Alberta, for example, had given their school districts only six months to amalgamate. As a result, Drew

Caldwell “required” that by September of 2000, all provincial school divisions had to report on their plans to amalgamate or as cited in Levin (2005), “... if they did not he would make decisions about what amalgamations would occur. He stated that changes would be made in time for the elections for school boards that were scheduled for October 2002” (p. 144).

In terms of the number of school divisions planned for Manitoba, Levin (2005) reported that:

by the end of the summer of 2001 the government had a target of fifteen to twenty amalgamations, bringing the number of districts down by about a third. It was also clear that amalgamating existing districts would be much less disruptive than redrawing all the boundaries to create a whole set of new districts... (p. 144)

As a result of this government decision to amalgamate, both the KESD and the DSD, who shared a common quadrant in the city of Winnipeg, were given one year to establish a newly formed single school division.

When asked about preparations for pending amalgamation during his interview, Joseph, who had been the superintendent of the DSD and subsequently hired as the superintendent of the RSSD at its inception, mentioned that there had been various rumors about amalgamations in the city of Winnipeg and further stated that:

...so as the, and I’ll still use the term rumor, kept growing and there was the sense that probably something was going to happen, from the (Dugald) perspective, we heard stories about us joining forces either with (names of two urban school divisions) or (King

Edward). And a fourth rumor was that we were going to be divided into sections and not only disappear as a school division, but have probably up to three of our parts join up with other parts of the city of Winnipeg... So our preparation at that point was really nonexistent. We were more concerned about what the future held and our worry, and that was both at the trustee level and at the school administration level, was that the worst-case scenario for us was that (Dugald) would be divided up into parts.

Moreover, Alice who was an assistant superintendent of student support services in the KESD suggested that, "... on the day that the provincial government announced which divisions would be amalgamated there was shock, horror and disbelief".

Joseph further suggested that when he and select divisional administrative staff and trustees from the DSD met with representatives from the province including the minister, they had indicated to the province that if amalgamation was going to impact the DSD, then they wanted to make sure that the school division stayed together as a whole. As it turned out, the DSD did remain intact and the decision from the province was for the DSD to amalgamate with the KESD.

By 2002 then, the Manitoban NDP government finalized its plans for school division amalgamation thereby reducing the number of divisions in the city of Winnipeg from nine to six; the number of rural school divisions from 36 to 26; and the number of northern school divisions from eight to four. As mentioned earlier, those amalgamations that the NDP government endorsed were not aligned with the recommendations from the Norrie Commission. The process that was followed regarding the initial policies and practices related to inclusive special education service delivery in the newly formed RSSD will be examined below.

### **Service Delivery Models**

In this section, the perspectives of participants regarding the impact of amalgamation on inclusive special education service delivery and related policies and practices that were ultimately adopted by the RSSD will be described. A common theme that emerged from the interview data that related to the first research question was that the legacy school divisions each relied on a different model of service delivery. The DSD endorsed a full inclusion model. By contrast, the KESD followed a more traditional special education model that relied on offering segregated services and supports. These contrasting models of service delivery will be described in more detail.

#### **Different Ends of the Spectrum - The Amalgamation Process**

Regarding school division amalgamations, as argued by Levin (2005), "... the range of financial and administrative issues that had to be sorted out brought unexpected complexity to the process" (p. 156). The process of coming together as a single division in the RSSD was certainly complex and offered a variety of challenges. According to Barbara, a former school trustee from the DSD and later the RSSD:

...we had to come together on so many things. They (the legacy divisions) were two different cultures entirely. There probably couldn't have been two divisions more polar opposite... Also in terms of the way the leadership was, the way the board functioned. The board on this side (DSD) was way more involved, way more hands-on... So when we amalgamated, it was a shock...And so we fought it, and we went to all the meetings with Drew Caldwell and we fought it and gave all the reasons why it really couldn't

happen... They were scared it was going to cost more money, and it did. But even the way the unions worked was totally different, the way the assignment of services for custodial services, totally different. Like, the way people were paid... And then there are all these philosophical differences. You know, French Immersion had to be taught by a French Specialist in the (KESD). Here, you know, in the (DSD) everyone taught their own French... So there were some things that you know, they weren't perfect, and we weren't perfect. And what we had to do was come up with perfect. And we worked so hard to do that in every aspect, in every single policy...

As further evidence of the complexity of amalgamation related to student support services, Joseph, the superintendent in 2002, stated that:

... when it came to student services, obviously the division I was most familiar with at the start was (Dugald). We had a department which we felt was highly effective. It doesn't mean that we didn't have a number of issues to deal with and that we didn't have some ideas about some future changes. However, when we went into amalgamation with (King Edward), it was all about learning what was taking place on the other side of the new division.

Alice, a previous assistant superintendent of student support services in the KESD, also provided evidence for the challenges associated with amalgamation when she stated that:

ongoing meetings were held among Student Services staff to share information concerning policies and practices to come to an agreement on existing policies or develop new ones. This was a period of confusion as existing practices in each division continued until changes/modifications could be developed, written and presented to administrators etc. and then to school personnel. This process occurred on top of the usual workload of divisional staff. It was a busy and difficult process in many ways. Although not necessarily opposed to change, both divisions strongly supported their practices and in some cases the new policies/practices changed programs that were near and dear to those involved.

Regardless of the challenges that forming a new school division posed, Barbara, Alice, and Joseph all spoke of the consultative nature of forming this new school division. As Joseph stated during his interview:

it was a process that was highly consultative to be honest. It began at the senior administration level. Student support services, as I have referenced earlier, was one of the many areas that we had to contend with, and when we started, there was a lot of dialogue. There was a lot of trying to understand what was going on in the respective worlds of the two school divisions. And so slowly but surely we began to develop a plan of action, but that plan of action involved a great deal of consultation with school administrators and with those who were involved in various capacities in student support services in the two divisions.

Even though the process of coming together as a single division required a consultative approach, it was discovered through an examination of the responses to specific interview protocol questions, that what was taking place regarding the practice of student service delivery in each legacy school division was somewhat different. What follows is a description of the models of student service delivery in operation in each legacy school division before amalgamation.

***Inclusion: The Dugald School Division Model for Inclusive Special Education***

Shelley, the current Assistant Superintendent of Student Services in the RSSD, and who began her career in the DSD explained that, "...a key document which informed the (DSD's) approach to supporting student learning in the division was one (by a former superintendent of the division – *DSD, Document 1*)". Moreover, Shelley suggested that a working paper from (another previous superintendent – *DSD, Document 2*) also informed the model of student support offered in that division. In his position paper, one former superintendent suggested in the *DSD's Document 2* that:

instructional diversity is applicable for most content taught to students and the instructional activities arranged for most students. However, we have a number of students in the division whose needs have been identified as being sufficiently different from the needs of other students that we must provide special educational support and/or a special education environment. (p. 46)

He further argued in the *DSD's Document 2* that:

... it is expected that a school will utilize every resource available to retain students who are having educational or behavioral difficulties in that school. Assistance should be sought from other agencies and/or the system resource or counseling personnel when necessary. Only after all avenues of help have been exhausted and a reasonable trial period elapsed should a school seek to have the student moved to another school setting.

(p. 47)

In another former superintendent's working paper, he recommended in the *DSD's Document 1* that, "removal of children from the regular setting should be done only for short periods of time. Self-concept damage is too great and reintegration of the student into the regular classroom at a later point is too difficult" (p. 8). Regarding the labels that were attached to children in the late 1970s, this former assistant superintendent further suggested that, "whatever the labels, the emphasis has been on real or assumed liability, on 'accentuating the negative'... The current labels generally function to further debilitate rather than help the child" (p. 12). As a final argument for teaching a variety of students in the regular classroom setting, the former superintendent stated in the *DSD's Document 1* that, "almost any child can be taught almost anything if programmed correctly" (p. 17).

So the philosophical positions suggested by both former superintendents of the DSD supported the idea that the classroom teacher, through both instructional diversity and with support from other professional staff, would be able to accommodate the learning needs of almost all students in their classrooms. Moreover, the DSD stressed the idea that moving a child to a different school setting was a last resort. According to the *DSD's Document 3* from 1983:

although every school is attempting to provide accommodative and innovative procedures for the successful management of most children most of the time in the regular classroom, when extended support is deemed desirable, special Divisional program or service options are available. For children whose learning has been severely restricted, a special resource support is available in the Division's schools. For elementary pupils whose second language is English, special ESL support can be made available. For junior high school age students, the CARE project offers a short-term intervention. At the high school level, a Work Education program is available. Lastly, for those students experiencing severe reading, writing, or mathematics difficulties, a multi-week Learning Centre assignment is a possibility. That length of assignment is flexible. (p. 1)

According to the *DSD's Document 3*, special resource support was provided to those schools having a "...high concentration of students who [had] demonstrated extreme difficulty within the regular class and school environment. These children generally exhibit[ed] severe developmental lags and limited life and language experiences" (p. 3). The Cooperative Academic Real-World Experience (CARE) program was provided to junior high-aged students who were considered "at-risk". This program was described as, "... a short-term intervention designed primarily to make students aware of the importance of educational planning for the future world of work, to help them expand their knowledge of work opportunities, renew their motivation, and add purpose to their education" (p. 7). This program was generally provided to students over a two-week period. The English as a Second Language (ESL) program was offered to elementary-aged students and had two options - an integrated program shared cooperatively by the regular classroom teachers and an ESL/special programs teacher or aide who aimed to provide extra

assistance to the ESL student; or special resource assistance which was offered to the teacher and resource team within the child's home school to support the learning of the ESL child. A Work Education program was offered at one of the DSD's high schools beginning at the grade ten level. The aim of this program was to develop "...attitudes, desires, skills, and knowledge necessary for entry into the occupational and general life of the community" (p. 11). As further suggested in *DSD's Document 3* (1983), the Learning Centre program offered a specialized instructional setting at one of the division's kindergarten to grade six schools and provided specific and intensive instruction in one or more identified areas of learning difficulty for up to five children for a half-day each morning for five or more weeks. After a student's participation in the Learning Centre program, "... some or all members of the school support staff, the student's parents, the learning specialist, a resource teacher aide, and the coordinators of counseling and of special programs are all involved in coordinating the total learning experience..." (p. 17).

The DSD's approach to student services and programming for all students in the division followed a line of logic that the classroom teacher was the key to supporting most, if not all, student learning needs and if a student was identified as needing a placement in an alternative setting, then the duration of time that this student was out of the regular classroom would be minimized as much as possible according to the needs of the specific student.

During her interview, Shelley explained that the concepts of a community school approach to inclusive special education and the reluctance to remove students from their community school as argued by the former superintendents above, informed her role as a resource teacher in the DSD as she had been tasked:

... to bring children who had been in a cluster program in various areas in the school division (DSD) to their home communities and that was prior to amalgamation that that work happened... Families had liked some of the components of that [having their child in a cluster program] because they felt like they belonged to a cluster group of parents and also at amalgamation, the other school division we amalgamated with was still in that cluster idea and some specialized programs were occurring. So, we came together and I would say that we came together and there was quite a clash around inclusion and you heard words in that other school division that I worked which were unfamiliar to us in the (DSD) - words such as “that child belongs in the Community Access Program” and “that child belongs in the Behaviour Program”; “that child belongs in going to an external agency”. So with that, the school division really was in a very, very rocky place...

In the following section, details about the KESD’s model for student support services will provide evidence for Shelley’s reference to the clash around the meaning of inclusion between the two legacy divisions.

***Specialized Programming: The King Edward School Division Model for Inclusive Special Education***

According to the *KESD’s Document 1* (1997), “...service to students encompasses a full range of service delivery options, from consultation to intensive direct work with students. Careful consideration of student needs proceeds service choice. This belief implies that direct service is not always the most effective option for service delivery” (p. 2). KESD’s “full range of

service delivery options” included a variety of specialized programs for students who did not experience success in the regular classroom setting.

As suggested by Rhonda, who was an early years’ consultant and began her career in the KESD:

... when I began my career, it was the era of segregated special education programs, so our moderate to severe students were actually bussed out of the school division to special programs in (name of large urban school division) and we had segregated programs for, I think we called it Developmental Education or something such as that for students who were just struggling in the classroom with content...

In fact, the KESD had numerous specialized or clustered programs that it utilized on an ongoing basis throughout its history. These programs, which housed specifically, identified students who shared common learning difficulties included, as referenced from an archived record on the divisional website in the *KESD’s Document 2*:

- *An Autistic Program* at a kindergarten to grade six school that was established by the Department of Education in 1985, “... to service the needs of children who were labeled Autistic, Autistic-like, or having Pervasive Developmental Disorder” (p. 1). This program later became known as the Inter-divisional Program for Students with Autism (IPSA).
- *A Community Access Program (CAP)* which was designed to “...meet the educational needs of a range of moderate and/or multi-handicapped children and youth in the KESD (elementary, junior high and senior high levels)” (p. 1).

- *A Behavior Support Program* that was designed, "... to provide extra support for students (teachers and families) who exhibit behaviors characteristic of severe emotional disturbance and/or emotional disorder and where regular school supports are not sufficient. Support is provided in the home school and in a low-enrollment setting" (p. 1).
- *A Community Based Learning Program* which was, "... established for those students who it is deemed by their present level of functioning and needs are best served by an educational program which is carried on outside the school setting" (p. 1).
- *A Job Works Program* designed for students to, "... Earn credits both in school and out of school. Job Works is a sharing between the school and the work world and the education of the student" (p. 1).
- *An English as a Second Language Program* designed to support incoming students whose first language is that other than English, "... In elementary, junior high and senior high schools. This support is provided for a period of two years (plus Kindergarten if applicable) which is consistent with Department of Education guidelines" (p. 1).
- *A Project Action Learning (PAL) program* designed as a, "... Special Education Program for students who exhibit behaviors characteristic of severe emotional disturbance and or emotional disorder" (p. 1). This program was made available to elementary and junior high aged students.
- *An At-Risk Program* that, "... was created for the express purpose of working directly with an identified group of students deemed 'At-Risk' of disconnecting with their education" (p. 1).

In the early 1990s, the KESD began moving toward mainstreaming and/or integrating students with specific learning needs into regular classrooms. Rhonda, an early years' consultant, provided evidence for this movement in her statement that:

... I taught in a cluster program and started, we called it mainstreaming back then, mainstreaming the developmental education students into regular classrooms so that they would be connected to regular classrooms and come out for support – more like a direct service resource teacher model rather than having a homeroom segregated program... Then, we had over the years that I worked on supporting mainstreaming, we started to bring our students with moderate and severe special needs home to the school division and started to house them and started to have them attach to homeroom classes and then come out for special programming as opposed to having homeroom classes that were strictly for students with special needs.

Alice, a previous assistant superintendent of student support services, provided additional background on specialized programming in the KESD when she suggested that:

these programs were highly popular with parents who wanted their special needs child to be in a more protected environment. The IPSA (Interdivisional Program for Students with Autism) program always had a waiting list and was managed through intake meetings to determine who would get a spot as enrolments were controlled. In other cases (Sp. Ed.) parents moved to be in the division so that their child could attend the small group program. These programs became unpopular with educators who focused only on full

inclusion. However, the program operated on kind of a reverse integration where students in the Sp. Ed. program were integrated as much as possible in an age appropriate regular classroom.

Becky, who was the assistant superintendent of student support services during amalgamation, alludes to this integration and segregation in the KESD and the corresponding inclusive model in the DSD when she stated that:

(KESD) had lots of programs. Most of the neediest students were in secluded programs... with excellent programming and lots of opportunities... and in (DSD), it was the opposite. It was more the “inclusion at all cost in the classroom” attitude. And so both were at... actually at different ends of the spectrum... which was really interesting.

Programs like the KESD’s CAP (Community Access Program) certainly seemed more aligned with the student integration model from the historical era of the 1970s through the 1980s.

One of the major “philosophical differences” between the two legacy divisions which Barbara, the former school trustee mentioned in her interview, was that even though both legacy divisions utilized specialized programs for students who were struggling in the regular classroom, the KESD made these alternative student placements for a much longer period.

The KESD’s practice regarding the placement of “special needs” students in specialized programs with occasional integration was aligned with Oliver’s (1990) *individual model of disability* since there was a perceived notion that “with instruction by a qualified special education teacher” the “special needs” students could be re-integrated into the regular classroom

after having been “fixed”. However, the DSD’s practice of welcoming all children into their neighbourhood school and reliance on the classroom teacher’s expertise to meet the learning needs of the children seemed more aligned with Oliver’s (1990) *social model of disability* since “removal of children” was perceived in a much less positive light and it was more important to appropriately program for a child’s needs in the regular classroom – the main social setting.

### **Amalgamation – Simply an Organizational Change?**

As stated above, the KESD and the DSD amalgamated at the beginning of 2002. Both legacy school divisions had similar organizational structures regarding student services support. Joseph, the previous superintendent of the DSD, stated that:

... I did feel that (Dugald) had a higher level of service provided by the leadership team in that department (Student Support Services). I speak of people such as consultants and clinical services, and those particular areas. Both student services’ areas in both legacy divisions, however, were overseen by one of the assistant superintendents- so that was similar.

Joseph further explained that each assistant superintendent who oversaw student support services from their respective legacy school divisions:

... began the process of working together. Until we had an appropriate organizational model for the new school division and a whole plan of action for everything that we had to do, it had to begin with the two of them working together... In other words, the two

divisions did not begin in an integrative world at the beginning. And they spent a great deal of time talking about what the new world would look like and at the beginning part, was how are we going to do this work? They had a lot of very capable colleagues both in let’s say a consultants’ level, clinicians’ level that they could bring together as a team to work on this.

The “appropriate organizational model” for Student Support Services that was instituted for the RSSD included an overall Superintendent, Joseph, and an Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services, Alice, who worked closely with the Director of Clinical and Extended Services, Sarah. Moreover, there were numerous consultants and clinicians who worked in Student Support Services delivery. The superintendent and key student services personnel in each legacy school division and the resulting key administrator in each area for the RSSD are shown in *Table 4.1* below:

*Table 4.1 Key Administrative Personnel*

<b>Position</b>	<b>DSD</b>	<b>KESD</b>	<b>RSSD</b>
<b>Superintendent</b>	Joseph	Fred	<b>Joseph</b>
<b>Assistant Superintendent- Student Services</b>	Louise	Alice	<b>Alice</b>
<b>Director of Clinical and Extended Services</b>	Sarah	Fran	<b>Sarah</b>

As listed in *Table 4.1* above, two key administrative staff in Student Support Services for the RSSD came from the DSD and one came from the KESD. It is interesting to consider whether there was an intentional move to be more aligned with the DSD's model of "full inclusion" since two previous key personnel from the KESD were basically "let go". Even though Louise and Alice both utilized their experiences with student services from both legacy divisions to collaborate, Alice was the successful applicant for the first Assistant Superintendent of Student Services in the RSSD. Fred, Louise, and Fran all left the RSSD for other opportunities after being unsuccessful in their attempts to remain in upper administrative positions in the new division. This must have been a difficult time for the RSSD as certain tensions may have been created by who got hired in this brand-new division. Barbara, a former school trustee, stated that:

in the (DSD), French Immersion was dual track (both English and French students within the same school). It went from being dual track to single track in the (KESD) because that was (Fred's – former superintendent) belief. And not my belief. I believe that people should go, as much as possible, to their community school...

This difference between dual-track French Immersion in the DSD and single-track in the KESD is one example of possible philosophical differences between the two legacy divisions that caused tension. Regardless of these possible tensions, at the time of amalgamation, the organizational structure of senior administration positions from both previous legacy school divisions remained intact. The only thing that changed was who was working in each of those senior administration positions.

The Board of Trustees for the RSSD was tasked with deciding who would become the superintendent of the RSSD. However, this newly formed board was unable to reach a consensus as to who the first superintendent would be after an initial round of interviews. As a result, the board of trustees hired an independent arbitrator to assist in making this hiring decision. Regarding the independent arbitrator's decisions on the matter of who would become superintendent of the new division, Barbara, a former school trustee explained that:

...we said, "Well, we'll go with whoever his recommendation is" – and it was (Joseph)... Best thing that ever happened. He could bring people together. He could listen to diverse opinions, listen, listen, listen, and then go okay what I think's happening here is, and then bring them all together and you'd go, "That's exactly right".

The Board of Trustees played a very important role in the hiring processes for the newly amalgamated division. When asked about the way the legacy school boards came together at the start of amalgamation, Joseph recalled that the two school boards were suspicious of one another and suggested that:

...I do believe it was simply a case of the politics that were going on in the province of Manitoba and again legacy, both boards were very, very proud of their respective worlds, and like all of us, were worried about what the future held...So all of a sudden they had been going to meetings where there had been nine trustees in one division and seven trustees in the other and those were the faces that were around the table for years on end. Most of the trustees were long-standing, and all of a sudden there are meetings with more

than double the people... And so it was trying to get comfortable with one another, and I have to say to the credit of the trustees, they accepted what was the new reality.

Once the Board of Trustees hired Joseph as the superintendent, the consultative work that Joseph mentioned earlier continued. Regarding the development of policies and practices for the newly formed RSSD, Alice, the new division's first assistant superintendent of student support services, and as cited earlier, suggested that:

ongoing meetings were held among Student Services staff to share information concerning policies and practices to come to an agreement on existing policies or develop new ones. This was a period of confusion as existing practices in each division continued until changes/modifications could be developed, written and presented to administrators etc. and then to school personnel. This process occurred on top of the usual workload of divisional staff. It was a busy and difficult process in many ways...

Although the organizational structure of the new division remained the same, the "period of confusion" that Alice alludes to in her comment above will be addressed below.

### **Uncertainty, Formal Policy, and Appropriate Programming**

As the administrative structures of the newly amalgamated division were being developed, student support services underwent a similar developmental process. Interview participants' responses to this process surfaced four key themes including: a) a period of confusion and the resulting "business as usual" attitudes; b) the formal inclusive special

education policy (Policy Document 1) created by select divisional personnel; c) the use of educational assistants to support inclusive special education; and d) changes to appropriate programming. These themes will be described and elaborated upon in the section below.

### **Business as Usual**

In her role as a RSSD trustee with a variety of divisional committees, Barbara recalled that initial conversations about the philosophy of inclusion in the newly amalgamated division began as a compromise between the practices and philosophies between the two legacy school divisions. During her interview, Barbara suggested that during these initial conversations about the philosophy of inclusion, there existed contrary opinions about whether to endorse total inclusion. Barbara stated:

... do we believe in total inclusion? Maybe we need to go slowly on that. So that's why you still ended up for several years with the (name of senior high school in the KESD) being not so inclusive. Okay, and actually for a few years we held on to the (name of early years school in the KESD) program after amalgamation because it was felt there still needed to be both for the teachers' learning and the attitude being the most important thing, that it needed to be a bit slower than saying okay here it goes. But they went along as that was the compromise that they made. It was a big compromise because it was a bit of a philosophical compromise. And I probably, I actually supported keeping a couple of the programs and even though it was like the provincial run around – "inclusion is the most wonderful thing in the world" - I actually supported them keeping these programs for a while... we had attitudes to work on like, you know, principals who would say to

you, “This is how we do it at the school”. Well maybe it’s wrong. So that... there was a big... to me a big attitude shift that had to happen and there was also a huge professional development curve that needed to happen. Huge. It’s so teachers could feel empowered with everybody. And some of the strategies that work weren’t being used in lots and lots of the classrooms on both sides. So there was a whole thing around what needed to happen around inclusive strategies and best practices in the classroom...

Rhonda, an early years’ consultant who started her career in the KESD provided some possible reasons as to why specialized programs continued in the RSSD when she suggested that regarding full inclusion:

... there was lots of pushback from schools and educators as to why that [full inclusion] would happen. Some of it well-intentioned in the sense that educators were afraid that they weren’t going to be able to serve the needs of the children in a community school - that they weren’t equipped to serve the needs of children in a community school. And some of it, just frankly, bias about that they [special needs students] didn’t belong. They weren’t, you know, they were supposed to go somewhere else because that was such a traditional view of what should happen for students with special needs... there is no question that the success [of inclusion] depended on the beliefs of the teachers, of the school leaders, and it took some time for the idea of inclusion as part of what schools were, to take root.

Joseph, the previous superintendent of the RSSD, provided more evidence for this “business as usual” attitude when he stated that:

at the very beginning, I can say I knew very little of the [specialized programming in the KESD] and it was like peeling an onion. You know, when you began to look at what the future world held, you had to get a real handle on everything that was existing. And one of the things that we didn't want to do was dismantle anything at the beginning. We felt that it was certainly going to be a multi-year project to get things underway and it really had to begin with trying to envision what student support services was going to constitute...And what we felt would in the end govern our decisions with respect to what the new (RSSD) role looked like in this department.

After being asked about divisional policy and practice changes in terms of inclusive special education in the newly amalgamated division, Joseph further suggested that, “as superintendent, I did not feel that there was a major change in the schools. Some of the major changes rested more with the level of support that was provided”.

As final evidence of this prevalent “business as usual” attitude in the RSSD, several specialized cluster programs which originated in the KESD continued to be implemented in the RSSD well after amalgamation. According to the former school trustee, Barbara, and the former assistant superintendent of student support services, Alice, the Project Action Learning (PAL) program kept operating until 2006, the Community Access Program (CAP) until 2008, and the Autistic Program until 2010. The RSSD continues to maintain English as an Additional Language programs in numerous schools throughout the division.

When Lynn, a principal of a French Immersion school in the RSSD, was asked about how divisional policies and practices have been redesigned and/or changed since amalgamation, she replied that, "... our policy on inclusion, I'm not sure how far back it dates, but my guess would be that right after amalgamation that particular policy was created and I don't think it has been changed since...". In fact, the divisional policy on inclusion was published three years after amalgamation in 2005. Barbara, a former trustee from the RSSD recalled that a variety of members of the RSSD including the assistant superintendent of student support services, the director of clinical and extended services, select consultants, select clinicians, select trustees, and select school administrators were part of a "Special Needs Commission" who created the divisional policy on inclusion following three years of intermittent group meetings. Barbara further suggested that before the policy on inclusion was created, "... I would say that there was nothing. It was like fly by the seat of your pants, but do the best that you can do". What follows is a description of the RSSD's inclusive special education policy that was published in 2005.

### **Formal Inclusive Special Education Policy in the RSSD**

As suggested in Chapter Two, creating a clear vision of inclusive special education and the corresponding services and programming provided to all students is important at both provincial and local levels. Regarding initial policy regarding inclusive special education in the RSSD, during her interview, Becky, the assistant superintendent of student support services at the time of amalgamation suggested that:

... I don't think we had a heck of a lot of policies. There were some little minor policies about medical needs and... but real policies about inclusion... it wasn't enshrined in policy, it was more practice.

Becky's statement above provides evidence that the division's official policy on inclusive special education was not in place at amalgamation. As mentioned above, the policy was not published until 2005. However, on a provincial level, the legislation of appropriate educational programming with the proclamation of Bill 13 in 2005 aligned with Manitoba's philosophy of inclusion. During her interview, Becky referred to the *Appropriate Education Act* that was established by the provincial government when she stated that:

... if you look at the *Appropriate Education Act*, which was a big policy that the province did, we didn't do that (the RSSD), but we adopted it of course – we had to. So that was a major item and that's going to be guiding the future. That's going to be what everyone is going to lean on.

The RSSD's adoption of the province's work on Bill 13 emerged in its policy on inclusion – a full three years after amalgamation. This divisional policy, known as *Policy Document 1 - Inclusion and Appropriate Educational Programming*, as mentioned previously, was first created through collaboration amongst select RSSD personnel and then endorsed by both the upper administration and the board of trustees.

As suggested in Chapter Two, the *RSSD's Policy Document 1* cites Manitoba Education's definition of inclusion. The policy also specifies other key philosophical statements including:

The Division recognizes that today's classrooms reflect our diverse communities and include a combination of student needs, learning styles and cultural backgrounds. The Division is committed to the rights of all students to participate in educational programming that, within available resources, will maximize the opportunity for students to achieve their individualized learning outcomes. (p.1)

As argued previously, the phrase, "within available resources" is reminiscent of the earlier Peters' (2007) quotation about "subject to available resources". As a school division, the RSSD will maximize the learning opportunities for all students, as long as it has the resources to do so.

Regarding "available resources", Becky suggested that one of her key roles as an assistant superintendent of student support services, along with members of her divisional student support services team, was to effectively communicate with the formal divisional education committee made up of upper administration and members of the board of trustees. She and her team members were responsible for convincing the education committee of the importance of providing money to support "special needs" students. In speaking about the cost of "special needs" students, Becky stated that:

...I would present to the whole board about that. And that was really important because students with special needs cost a lot. And I had to make sure always that all of the board members were convinced of the importance of spending money for these students...I was

very connected to all the school divisions because I was in the field so long in student services that I was connected to all the school divisions in Manitoba through the Student Services Administrative Association of Manitoba. So we talked a lot and we shared the ideas and you could see that the divisions that brought along the trustees did more innovative things for students with special needs because they controlled the money.

Becky's above suggestion about the importance of influencing the decision making of the trustees is a critical one. In addition to the idea that educating students with special needs costs a lot of money, their education is viewed as a privilege since Manitoba school divisions can divert additional funds received for students with special needs into the division's general budget. As a result, special needs students may be viewed as a commodity since any division who determines a cheaper method of supporting inclusive special education may benefit financially.

Perhaps of equal importance to the decision making of trustees and how the funding for all students in the division is allocated is the reference to the following programming and/or instructional strategies incumbent upon all educators in the division intended to help meet student learning needs from the *RSSD's Policy Document 1*:

- foster school and classroom communities where all students, including those of diverse needs and abilities, have a sense of personal belonging and achievement
- identify and foster practices by which students with a wide range of learning needs can be taught together effectively
- enhance, through modeling and instruction, student abilities to deal with diversity

- offer students an environment that provides potential for dignified, meaningful relationships
- provide each student with appropriate supports, including instructional placements, to develop their personal best in a setting that respects their abilities
- help each student contribute to the classroom and school community
- develop and maintain competencies for achieving these principles (p.2)

As argued in Chapter Two, although the above principles are aligned with Leithwood et al.'s (2004) effective divisional leadership strategies of setting directions and developing people and are at least partially aligned with Booth's (2005) definition of inclusion, the RSSD has neither reviewed nor revised its policy on inclusive education since 2005. As a result, the *RSSD's Policy Document 1* may fail to address the needs of groups of students who are "diverse" beyond simply learning needs, learning styles, and cultures. One of the interview participants, Lynn, a French Immersion principal, argued that the division required additional work on clarifying ways to meet the needs of diverse learners when she mentioned a draft policy on diversity in the RSSD that has yet to be completed. Lynn stated that:

... something obviously that's happening in other school divisions in Manitoba is that they are developing policies around diversity and they're beginning to talk quite a bit more about what that means. And that you know, it also is to support students, you know like LGBTQ [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer] students. I think that's an area where we continue, how should I put it, we could benefit from doing more in that area and more around the respect for diversity policy. Again, some school divisions have

developed this quite a bit. Even to the point where they have quite a lot of educational resources available for teachers - again to further, I'll call it respect for diversity, I know that's quite, it's more than just that particular population. But I think it's something that would be a wonderful next step for a steering committee on safe, caring and inclusive schools ...to sort of advocate for more work around that particular policy.

After taking the first three years after amalgamation to create a policy on inclusive special education, one trend that continued in the new division was the use of educational assistants (EAs) to support students identified as "special needs". As cited in the previous literature review in Chapter Two, the use of EAs to support inclusive special education is widespread in numerous western countries including Canada. As suggested by Giangreco (2013):

internationally, the utilisation of teacher assistants to support the education of students with disabilities has reportedly increased in several western countries (e.g., Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Malta, United Kingdom [UK], US; Blatchford et al., 2011; Bourke, 2009; Giangreco & Doyle, 2007; Giangreco et al., in press; Logan, 2006). Reliance on teacher assistants is considered by many a necessary mechanism to support inclusive education. Problematically, teacher assistants have become almost exclusively *the way*, rather than *a way*, to support students with disabilities in general education classrooms, especially those with severe or low-incidence disabilities (e.g. autism, intellectual disabilities, behaviour disorders, multiple disabilities; Giangreco & Broer, 2007). (p. 94)

As suggested earlier, when asked about divisional policy and practice changes regarding inclusive special education at the time of amalgamation, the previous superintendent, Joseph recalled that:

some of the major changes rested more with the level of support that was provided... The level of support that we had especially with our teacher assistants (educational assistants) in the classroom was slightly higher in the (DSD) if you're looking at ratios. And so obviously those were all matters that had to be addressed as we were to go forward.

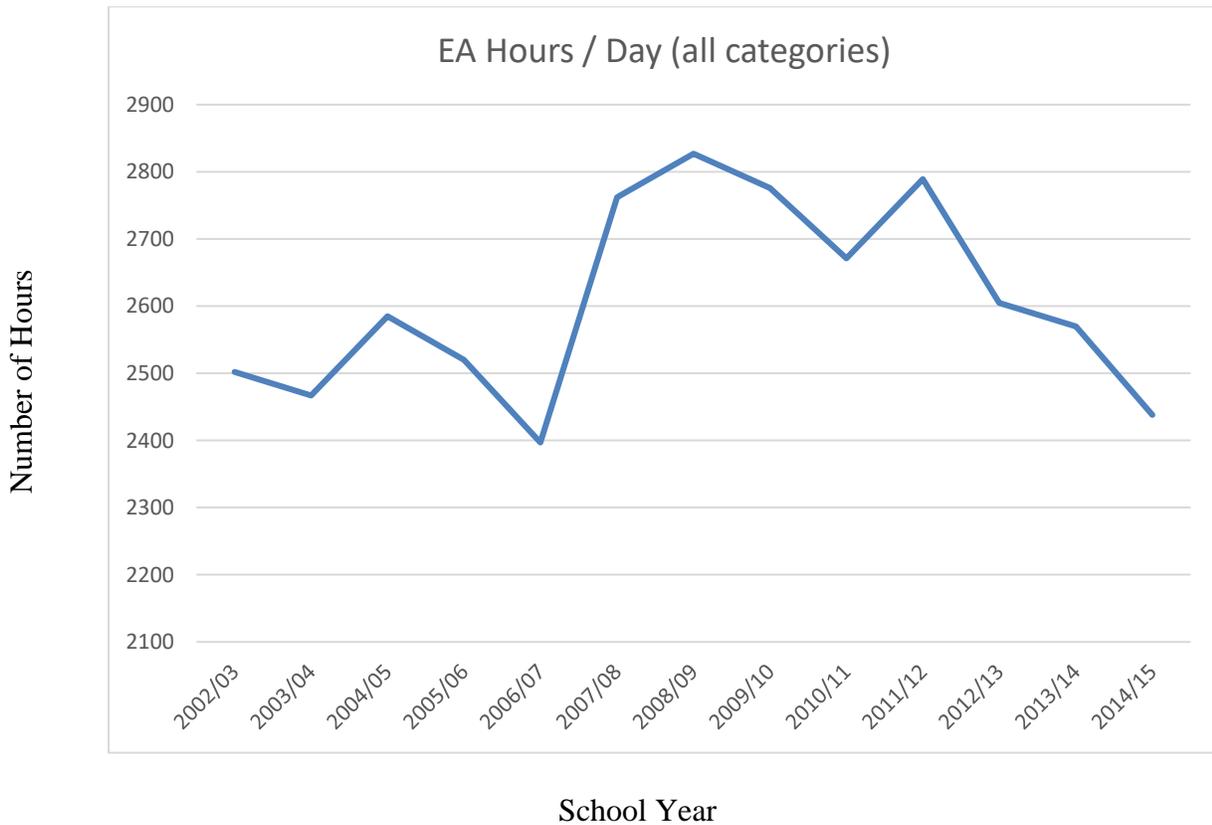
So, as the RSSD moved forward, the trend of utilizing EAs as the major way to support inclusive special education remained constant.

### **Continued Use of Educational Assistants in the New Division**

In her correspondence concerning inclusive special education initiatives that were employed by educators in Manitoba, the retired employee from Manitoba Education who acted as the Director of Program and Student Services Branch for ten years and as the Coordinator of the Student Services Unit for five years suggested that, "the use of educational assistants became the norm -very linked to the introduction of special needs funding. EAs made it possible for special needs kids to be in the classroom". Rhonda, an early years' consultant from the RSSD, also suggested that Manitoba Education "... put pressure on schools to have students with special needs spend as much time as possible in the regular classroom as part of regular education - where deemed necessary, with educational assistant support". In order to determine whether or

not the use of EAs in the RSSD was the “norm”, the current Assistant Superintendent of Facilities and Operations for the RSSD provided the following chart as illustrated in *Table 4.2* below regarding the use of EAs in the RSSD over time:

*Table 4.2 EA Hours per Day in the RSSD*



As can be observed in the above line graph, since its inception, the RSSD has utilized a minimum of 2400 EA hours per day. A full-time EA works six hours per day, so 2400 hours would indicate that at a minimum; approximately 400 EAs are utilized by the division throughout its 34 schools each day. The use of EAs is clearly a model of student support that the

division has consistently relied upon and appears to be a “norm” for student support in the division. This is also a model of support which is more aligned with Oliver’s (1990) *individual model of disability* since EAs are typically placed with students who have received either Levels 2 or 3 funding from the provincial government.

A variety of the interview subjects in this study discussed the role of educational assistants as it pertains to the inclusion of special needs students within the regular classroom setting. Becky, the retired assistant superintendent of student support services from the RSSD, suggested that:

... paraprofessionals [EAs] play a key role with students with special needs. They’re right there next to the child, hopefully not too close to the child, but they’re in the classroom with the child and they can... they can seclude the child if they’re not careful. So for them to be an inclusive agent, or an inclusion agent, they need to be trained to know that. Let the child kind of figure things out; let the child interact; don’t protect the child too much; don’t be so close that no kids want to talk to them.

In discussing the role of EAs in the classroom, Helga, a senior years vice-principal in the RSSD, suggested that school administrators need to clearly articulate the appropriate role for an EA who is working in the classroom because:

...if they [EAs] feel that their job is to work with a level three student, they may not circulate in the class as much as we might think is best. But if they don't understand why we might want them to circulate in the classroom, they wouldn't understand that the purpose of that is in order to help all students including the student that they're working with. So that the student that they're working with is able to have some independence and if they're not standing beside that student, then maybe another student will come in and help or maybe the classroom teacher will move in and help. If they don't understand the thinking around that, then I think that that can create situations where special needs students in particular are not included as much as they could be.

Both Becky's and Helga's comments connect to the earlier argument from Edelman, Giangreco, Luiselli, & MacFarland (1997) that EAs often separate "special needs" children from their peer group.

Cynthia, a divisional student services consultant for the RSSD further commented that, "... an EA does not mean a plan. EA support is not a plan, it's actually what is needed to support the plan and what needs to tuck into that plan to make the plan work". Debra, a middle years administrator, suggested that she had observed different models of EA use depending upon which school she had worked in. She explained that in one school:

everything was the push-in model and the support was in the classroom and different types of adaptations were made so that students could be in the classroom and students could be working all together regardless of who was working on what. Whereas, I've also

been in a school where it was primarily a pullout model and that, but I think again that's from a lack of training. It's just been business as usual there - where the classroom teacher took ownership for regular students and the resource teacher had the EA working directly on pullout with students that didn't fit that mold in the resource room.

In discussing EA placement within divisional schools, Helga, a senior years administrator stated that, "once students are identified as level two or three, EAs are provided accordingly from the division. Some EAs are provided to the school just based on numbers [of students in the building]".

Shelley, the current assistant superintendent of student support services in the RSSD talked about her experiences as a principal in a kindergarten to grade six school within the RSSD. She believed that this school embodied the most effective role for EAs that she had ever witnessed. Shelley stated that:

I do think it was some of the structures that were in the building. Some of the structures were that teachers, at that period of time, met with their EA every single morning. It was much more of a structure where the EA was assigned to classroom teachers and not assigned to specific kids... it wasn't perfect, but it was pretty darn close to it. Teachers really had a real clear sense of how to communicate and work with other adults in the classroom. EAs also didn't see themselves as, "I'm with so and so and that's all I do". They saw themselves as watching so and so and supporting so and so and everything, but there was a flow within the classroom structure that actually, I've never seen again...

Shelley further articulated that the EAs and teachers were trained together on appropriate programming which provided a sense of equity and value amongst all personnel. Moreover, she suggested that in this school there wasn't any "...confusion of what your role is so it was very clear that the teacher's role was to do this and the EA's role was to do that". Shelley's comments from above align with the concepts of appropriate roles for EAs as espoused by scholars such as Giangreco (2010, 2013).

The RSSD continues to use EAs in every school in the division as the major way to support the learning needs of students. Shelley's above suggestion about witnessing effective roles for EAs in only one school aligns with the argument from the previous literature review section that the use of EAs continues to be a contentious one. As suggested by Broer & Giangreco (2003), EAs typically work with students identified with specific learning needs – students who may be most at-risk for academic struggles- and often have the least amount of training amongst the adults working in the classroom. As the use of EAs continues throughout the division, the final theme that emerged from the interview data was changes to appropriate programming that will be addressed below.

### **Changes to Appropriate Programming**

Several interview subjects suggested that the RSSD has deepened its understanding of the concept of 'appropriate programming' and this has resulted in changes to instructional practice. One concept that emerged in several interviews connected to appropriate programming was that an investigation into and use of models such as Universal Design for Learning (Hitchcock, Meyer, Rose & Jackson, 2002; Katz, 2012a, 2013; Rose & Meyer, 2000) to support the learning

needs of diverse students was occurring in the RSSD. As suggested by Rose & Meyer (2000), the concept of “universal design” emerged from the field of architecture and the work of Ron Mace who coined this term to describe how buildings could be made more accessible to individuals with various disabilities. For example, buildings without wheelchair access would have installed such devices as ramps and wider doorways to allow for wheelchairs. As Rose & Meyer (2000) contemplated the connections between universal design in architecture to both access and learning in education, they concluded that, “because access to information and access to learning are different in character and present different challenges, we created the term ‘Universal Design for Learning’ to differentiate learning from access” (p. 68). Hitchcock, Meyer, Rose & Jackson (2002) also suggest that regarding learning, “students with diverse learning needs are not ‘the problem’; barriers in the curriculum itself are the root of the difficulty” (p. 9). To meet the needs of a wide array of learners and their access to the general curriculum, these authors further recommend that, “teachers need to offer a large number of alternative ways to access, use, and engage with learning content” (p. 9).

These ideas of alternative ways to approach curricular learning also align with Katz’s (2012a) “Three – Block Model of Universal Design”. In Katz’s (2012a) model, however, she also includes the aspects of social-emotional learning as she advises that all students must feel safe in order to learn to the best of their abilities. Katz (2013) recommends the use of her, “...Respecting Diversity (RD) program and democratic classroom management with class meetings” (p. 158), to build an inclusive and safe classroom environment for all. Katz (2013) firmly argues that, “...inclusive education benefits students with and without disabilities, both socially and academically” (p. 156).

In my interview with the retired employee from Manitoba Education, she suggested that, “more recently school divisions have done significant professional development in Universal Design for Learning (UDL). All of this supports teachers in teaching the diverse learners in their classrooms.” The RSSD has been one of those divisions to offer professional development in UDL. As a school administrator, I brought a team of two classroom teachers and the resource teacher to a book study on Katz’s (2012a) “Three-Block Model of Universal Design” offered by the divisional Student Support Services team during four months in 2013. Jennifer Katz was a guest speaker at one of these UDL professional development sessions. Moreover, four other interviewees in this study referenced their support of teaching approaches such as UDL. As suggested by Cynthia, a divisional student services consultant, “I think that there’s significant work being done in Universal Design. Both the Jennifer Katz model and other things that are popping up as well that is really increasing the inclusion and inclusion in the schools”.

Further regarding appropriate programming, during her interview, Lisa, an early years administrator, stated that:

I’ve witnessed, over my years in this division, truly moving from that more integrative model and looking at specific sorts of programs to meet kids’ learning needs, to a more inclusive model – where kids are just naturally a part of the classroom setting. And where individual needs are being met either within the classroom or within the school building, but not again so much as a program, but more in terms of appropriate programming.

Cynthia, a divisional student services consultant, argued that teachers and administrators in the RSSD, "... have gotten very clear on what adaptations are. And that adaptations for anybody as a right – it's something that's required in order to access the curriculum". Cynthia also discussed the increased understanding amongst staff members in the RSSD regarding modifications and individualized programming. In addition, she stated that:

...the rubric that's been developed around student services standards by our department, and as we talk with groups, it allows for that discussion from different groups. So as we talk as a student services department, there's a discussion that comes out of that, our hope is to take it more towards administration. So that we have a clear, common understanding of that appropriate education because those student services standards come directly from the Appropriate Education Bill.

Helga, a senior years administrator, discussed appropriate programming when she suggested that:

... we've talked a lot about adaptation plans within the school division. I think the fact that it's known that we expect that students are working in the classroom with their same-aged peers as much as possible, and with as little support as possible. With support, but you know, on the sidelines...

Shelley, the current assistant superintendent of student support services, also discussed appropriate educational programming when she suggested that:

...all the appropriate educational programming changes that happened from Manitoba Education changed the way we worked. Because there have been all kinds of things like the *Safe Schools* legislation that came through – that changed the way we worked. And most recently all the mental health resources and changes to that also changed the way we worked... Lots of practices and changes around documents around behavior. A huge amount of that understanding of FAS (Fetal Alcohol Syndrome). Understanding behavior related to autism. Understanding behavior related to some kids with a story where they can't manage themselves.

The appropriate educational programming changes that Shelley, Helga, Cynthia, and Lisa refer to in their above comments are specified in *RSSD's Document 2* that was published in May, 2014 and amended in September, 2014. According to this divisional document, student specific planning is described as:

...the process through which members of student support teams, including educators and parents, collaborate to meet the unique needs of individual students. The purpose of student specific planning is to help students attain the skills and knowledge that are the next logical step beyond their current level of performance. Through the student specific

planning process the student support team works to identify a student's unique learning needs and to determine, implement, and evaluate appropriate educational interventions. These interventions may range from short-term strategies applied in the classroom to comprehensive, individualized programming. The student specific planning process is sufficiently broad-based to address, in a systematic way, a wide range of exceptional learning needs. (p. 3)

This document further cites Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning's range of instructional supports for addressing student diversity including differentiated instruction, modification, adaptation, and individualized programming. Within the RSSD, there is an expectation that instructional supports are intended to address the specific programming needs of each student. The *RSSD's Document 2* further indicates that according to:

provincial legislation and regulations and Manitoba Education and Advanced Learning Standards and policies require that Student Specific Plans, which may include an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) should be developed for some students. A Student Specific Plan or IEP must be developed for a student when:

- It is not reasonable to expect the student to meet or approximate the expected learning outcomes of provincial curricula
- The student receives Low Incidence Categorical Funding (Level 2 or 3)

- The student is determined to be eligible for the English as an Additional Language (E) course designation, the Modified (M) course designation, or the Individualized Programming (I) designation in grades 9 – 12+
- The student has a Unified Referral and Intake System (URIS) Group A plan  
In grades K-12+ an Adaptation Plan is also a student specific plan that should be developed for students who have an identified learning need and who require additional instructional supports in order to follow grade level curriculum. (p. 3)

The *RSSD's Document 2* is a comprehensive document that includes detailed descriptions of, how to plan for, and how to report on Adaptation Plans, Individual Education Plans (IEPs), Individualized Transition Plans (ITPs), Modified Course Plans, English Language Acquisition Plans (ELAPs), Electronic Course Plans, Behavior Intervention Plans (BIPs), Exceptional Education Plans (EEPs), and Targeted Intervention Plans (ITPs). According to this divisional document:

In order to support the Student Specific Planning process in the (RSSD) the following student specific plans have been created:

***Applicable Student Specific Plan(s)***

- *Adaptation Plan* - Students with an identified need (including English as an Additional Language Learners) who are following grade level curriculum

- *Individual Education Plans K-8*- Students working on outcomes that are significantly below grade level or on functionally appropriate outcomes
- *Individualized Transition Plans 9-12+* - Students working on curricular outcomes that are significantly below grade level or on functionally appropriate outcomes which may include an ITP Modified Course Plan
- *English Language Acquisition Plans K-8* - English as an Additional Language Learners (EAL) who require individualized learning experiences to support English language acquisition
- *Electronic Course Plan 9-12+* - EAL students who require individual learning experiences to support English language acquisition
- *Behavior Intervention Plan K-12+* - Students who require individualized proactive and reactive behavioral supports
- *Exceptional Education Plan K-8* – Students who are working on outcomes that exceed curricular outcomes

*Targeted Intervention Plan* - Students who require additional support to improve academic achievement, working at or near grade level. (p. 5)

The *RSSD's Document 2* was introduced by the divisional student support services team including consultants and the assistant superintendent of student support services to all divisional resource teachers, counselors, administrators, and clinicians in September, 2014. Moreover, additional information sessions were provided to select early years, middle years, and senior years English as Additional Language teachers. These divisional sessions offered an opportunity for all principals and vice-principals of schools to develop their understanding of the variety of

plans available to support student learning. Also of note, these sessions were provided to Families of Schools which, according to Shelley, the current assistant superintendent of student support services, was an organizational structure that was created by the Senior Administration Team (all the superintendents) in 2007 as a way to organize personnel for professional development and/or divisional information sessions. There are four Families of Schools in the RSSD, each one organized by the local high school in a particular community and all the feeder schools that send students to that particular high school.

Arguably, the above professional development sessions offered by the RSSD connect with the second basic effective leadership practice of developing people espoused by Leithwood et al. (2004). As cited in Chapter Two, these researchers suggest that supporting the professional development of staff members through such experiences as, "... offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualized support and providing appropriate models of best practice and beliefs considered fundamental to the organization" (p. 9), are critical to positively impacting student learning. The professional development that was offered on the *RSSD's Document 2* also connects to the next study question as described in the following section.

### **Critical Professional Development Opportunities**

The way the RSSD trained its staff regarding the rollout of its *Document 2* connects to the third research question about professional development opportunities provided to school principals in the RSSD to support their understanding of inclusive special education practices and policies. Following a brief description of a school principal's role in understanding inclusive special education, participants' interview responses will be both described and discussed as they

relate to the following key themes: a) the variety of options for inclusive special education professional development offered to school principals; and b) the role of the divisional student support services department in offering these professional development opportunities.

### **Principal Leadership**

As argued earlier, it is critical that school principals have a clear understanding of the definition of inclusive special education. In addition, school principals can help provide a clear vision for creating a positive school climate in which inclusive special education can flourish. According to *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services* (2006), school principals "...have, subject to *The Public Schools Act* and the direction of the school board, a responsibility for the education of all students in their schools and for the staff of the school division under their direction" (p. 3). Moreover, according to *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services* (2006), the principal is responsible for:

ensuring that a student is assessed as soon as reasonably practicable and referred for a specialized assessment if the in school team is unable to assess why a student is having difficulty meeting the learning outcomes and is of the opinion that the student cannot meet learning outcomes even with differentiated instruction and accommodations. (p. 14)

Forming a clear understanding of inclusive special education may require professional development on the part of school principals that, in turn, could support school principals' use of

this learning to help influence the professional development of the teaching personnel in their schools. As cited earlier, Billingsley et al. (2014) suggest that:

in most of the inclusive settings, principals and others provided leadership for ensuring that teachers were well prepared to address the needs of students in their classrooms. This occurred through the extensive use of planning time and opportunities for PD before beginning the inclusive program (e.g., Burstein et al., 2004; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999). (p. 28)

These authors further suggest that school principals who either develop or help develop professional learning communities amongst all teaching staff regarding supporting diverse student learning needs enhance collegial staff relationships, improve teaching pedagogy, and improve learning outcomes for all students.

When asked about inclusive special education professional development opportunities made available to Manitoba school principals, a retired employee from Manitoba Education who acted as the Director of Program and Student Services Branch for ten years and as the Coordinator of the Student Services Unit for five years corresponded that:

there have been many opportunities provided both locally and through the Council of School Leaders (COSL). After the amendment to the *Public Schools Act: Appropriate Educational Programming (AEP)*, there were sessions held across the province and on request about the *Standards for Student Services* and all of the AEP support documents.

Other opportunities for principals regarding learning about inclusive special education are available at local universities including special education courses, master's and/or doctorate programs, post-baccalaureate diplomas in education, and degrees that focus on educational administration. Moreover, there are opportunities made available through the province such as special education certificates, workshops on inclusive education, and professional development offerings from the Manitoba Teachers' Society. As mentioned previously, the RSSD has also provided professional development sessions related to inclusive special education for school administrators such as the sessions on the division's *Document 2*.

According to the *Public Schools Act*, school principals are responsible for the education of all students and as cited earlier, Praisner (2003) argues that:

due to their leadership position, principals' attitudes about inclusion could result in either increased opportunities for students to be served in general education or in limited efforts to reduce the segregated nature of special education services. Therefore for inclusion to be successful, first and foremost, the school administrator must display a positive attitude and commitment to inclusion (Evans, Bird, Ford, Green, & Bischoff, 1992; Rude & Anderson, 1992). (p. 136)

Arguably, a positive attitude and commitment to inclusive special education on the part of school principals may be supported through purposeful professional development opportunities. The opportunities afforded principals in the RSSD will be addressed below.

### **Voluntary Professional Development Opportunities for Principals**

Shelley, the current assistant superintendent of student support services, indicated that the RSSD has, "... done tons of work in our Family of Schools in the last couple of years... four years actually. We've been doing work on our mental health model to help schools and school leaders think about that in a more deep way". When Joe, a kindergarten to grade eight principal, was asked about professional development opportunities that were provided to school administrators, he initially struggled to find examples, however he did state that, "there's certainly some sessions with Family of Schools and talking about what you're doing programming-wise. There's certainly some stuff in there".

When asked about professional development opportunities that have been provided to school administrators, Helga, a senior years administrator stated that:

I think administrators are encouraged to take course-work and have their Special Education certificate. I mean we did discuss this [inclusive special education] at our early and middle years' council meetings [invitational meetings held monthly for available early and middle years' administrators], and certainly at our monthly divisional administration meetings [mandatory monthly meetings for all administrators, consultants, and clinicians in the RSSD]. We often have discussions on inclusive education. I think it just runs through everything we do to be honest.

Cynthia, a current divisional student support services consultant, suggested that administrators in the division have been provided with professional development opportunities regarding student specific planning. She indicated that:

...student specific planning – that document and the role that that has been something that's been a huge focus for us so that we get that consistency across the board... as the funding model changes there could be more sharing next year. Because principals will need to have a really good understanding of ... all kids are funded, but there's no such thing as a low incidence categorical funded student anymore. I think this will be stressful to schools. How are we going to plan for those kids? So I think that will be coming as well.

Cynthia's comments about the professional development offered to school administrators regarding appropriate educational planning were offered in Families of Schools to all administrators, resource teachers, counsellors, and clinicians in the RSSD at two half-day sessions in September, 2014. These two sessions were entitled, "*Going Deeper into the Plans and Support Document*" and "*Practical Exploration/Collaboration*".

Lynn, a French Immersion principal, further shared that:

...the amount of professional development that was offered I would say generally was very... it was comprehensive, rich and really guided schools in their work in this area. And support services, that particular department in our school division I think were offering what was some of the best professional development... So I think again what I'm understanding is that what we do in the schools is important in terms of professional development - that we give

those opportunities... a lot of those opportunities though are coming from the school division or beyond.

Lynn's comment about professional development opportunities coming from beyond the school division was reiterated by a retired employee from Manitoba Education who acted as the Director of Program and Student Services Branch for ten years and as the Coordinator of the Student Services Unit for five years. As cited earlier, she corresponded that:

there have been many opportunities provided both locally and through the Council of School Leaders. After the amendment to the *Public Schools Act: Appropriate Educational Programming* there were sessions held across the province and, on request, about the Standards for Student Services and all of the Appropriate Educational Programming support documents.

Shelley, the current assistant superintendent of student services, talked about recent offerings for professional development regarding inclusion when she suggested that:

recently we did a historical look at inclusion. We've been on a bit of a bandwagon on that, if we call it that, with school leaders, clinicians, trustees, the union, and then thinking about where we're going to go with our parent groups and teacher groups. We haven't got that far yet, so there will be lots of PD I

think that come out of some of the changes in our funding model that might get shaken out of that...

By examining the administrators' comments from above, it appears that numerous opportunities for school principals were provided by the RSSD to help deepen administrators' understandings of the concepts of inclusive special education and appropriate programming. However, it is important to note that these opportunities were voluntary and not mandatory.

Shelley, the current assistant superintendent of student services suggested that regarding professional development offered by the student support services department, "we worked on the philosophy that it's really important to come as a team. As a team, you can work together, come back to school with your team, and help the school grow from what the team's learning has been". The team that Shelley refers to in her comment above is aligned with the suggestion from *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services* (2006) that:

the school-based student services support team typically includes a school administrator, resource teacher(s), counsellor(s), classroom teacher(s) and others who have responsibility for students with exceptional learning needs. The team is important in helping schools develop exemplary practice in inclusion and in promoting the planning, development and monitoring of IEPs for students in all aspects of their school life. In cases where students require an IEP, a member of the school-based student services support team is generally designated as case manager. (p. 5)

The above quote regarding the implementation of appropriate educational programming for all students being a “team” responsibility suggests that it is not simply the school principal’s job to be informed about inclusive special education policy and practice. However, the leadership required to maintain a coherent vision of inclusive special education amongst a school team would require professional development on the part of the entire school-based team and specifically the school principal who is a key member of that team. In the RSSD, the opportunities for professional development regarding inclusive special education were most often offered to school teams by the student support services department. These PD offerings will be discussed in the section below.

### **Inclusive Special Education PD Opportunities Provided by Student Support Services**

Lisa, a current early years principal, discussed the professional development that was provided by the student services department from the RSSD when she stated that:

when I was a student services consultant, we were very cognizant of the need to not only develop and work with our resource teachers, but that it had to begin with the administrators. We started to develop professional development opportunities where administrators were invited to be part of those conversations because they are the leaders in the building and they need to be empowered with the information, the strategies, and the learning. That was really important to us as a student services team.

Becky, who was the assistant superintendent of student services at the time of amalgamation, perceived that one of her roles was:

... supporting administrators. They were my classroom. I saw the administrators as, “That’s the class I have”. And I was there to give them the most tools possible so that they could do the work...working in a team, inclusion as a whole, just talking about inclusion. Appropriate education when it came out. Behavior support because principals needed a lot of support with that, because I mean the buck stopped there. The behavior issues landed in the principal’s office – so certainly that. The individual educational planning, we really wanted the principals to understand how to do an IEP. They didn’t write them, but they had to know how because they had to support their staff and they had new staff and they had to help the new staff be up to par, so that was really important. Actually, when student services did professional development ...we always asked the principals to come and I was really impressed because most of them did, whenever they could...

Shelley further discussed the role of the student support services department’s personnel providing professional development in the RSSD to school principals with a “potpourri” of opportunities. She also talked about the opportunities provided to school administrators with regard to appropriate programming and pupil file management. She further stated that:

...the school division has been very responsive to what school principals have told us they need and some of it hasn’t been, for example, all of the whole division at the same

time, some of it might be school principals saying can you come alongside me to do professional development in the school?

Debra, a middle years administrator, suggested that the professional development opportunities available to school principals with regard to inclusive special education required the school principal to seek them out in her statement that, "...there are opportunities available, but in some ways you have to seek them out". According to the Manitoba Teachers' Society's *Code of Professional Practice (2016)*, "...a Member makes the ongoing effort to improve professionally..." (p. 1). Since school administrators are members of the Manitoba Teachers' Society, it is clear that the RSSD aligns itself with the *Code of Professional Practice* in that one major expectation of the school principal is that she or he engages in the professional development opportunities offered by the student support services department of the RSSD. These professional development opportunities will support a school principal's familiarity with and understanding of the ways in which school personnel can support diverse student learning needs. The final theme to emerge from this historical case study will be addressed in the section below.

### **Public Reporting and Accountability**

The expectation of the RSSD that each educator including the school principal will actively seek professional development connects with the notion of educational accountability and therefore the final research question in this study. Following a brief description of the meaning of educational accountability according to Leithwood & Earl (2000), interview

participants' responses will be both described and discussed as they relate to the following final theme: a) Individualized Education Plan (IEP) reporting and Provincial Report Cards.

### **Educational Accountability**

According to Leithwood & Earl (2000), educational accountability deals with the processes by which provinces, school divisions, and schools attempt to address various school-related goals. These authors further suggest that there is an overall assumption that greater accountability will cause, “(a) better alignment between public aspirations and the purposes schools strive to achieve and (b) improve performance on the part of schools, typically defined by traditional achievement criteria” (p. 1). Moreover, Leithwood & Earl (2000) argue that there are five key questions to consider regarding educational accountability including, “...What level of accountability is to be provided? Who is expected to provide the account? To whom is the account owed? What is to be accounted for? And what are the consequences of providing an account?” (p. 2). Regarding the above-mentioned level of accountability, Leithwood & Earl (2000) suggest the following three levels, “description, explanation, or justification” (p. 3). The above five questions will be considered as they pertain to the measures of accountability which arose from interview responses in this study including IEP reporting, Provincial Report Cards, and the *Financial Reporting and Accounting in Manitoba Education* (FRAME) report as seen in *Table 4.3* below:

Table 4.3 Educational Accountability

<i>Report Type</i>	<i>What level of accountability?</i>	<i>Who provides the account?</i>	<i>To whom is the account owed?</i>	<i>What is to be accounted for?</i>	<i>What are the consequences of providing an account?</i>
IEP	Description, explanation, and justification	School-based student support team	Parents/Guardians and the Manitoba Government	Report on specific appropriate programming for an individual student and his or her progress to that point	Mandatory accounting as per the Manitoba Government
Provincial Report card	Description, explanation, and justification	Classroom teacher and/or Student Support Team	Parents/Guardians	Summative report on both academic and behavioural progress of student at a particular point	Mandatory reporting as per the Manitoba Government
FRAME Report	Description and explanation	School division	The Manitoba Government	Standardized method of accounting and financial reporting for school divisions in Manitoba	Mandatory reporting as per the Manitoba Government

**IEP Reporting and Provincial Report Cards**

Regarding public accountability for reporting on ISE and AEP, both school administrators and personnel involved with student support services in the RSSD discussed reporting to Manitoba Education on the Student Services grant, the provincial report card process, the IEP reporting process, and the IEP review process that occurs every three years with the provincial government.

Becky, a retired assistant superintendent of student support services for the RSSD had the following recollections when asked about accountability, “we did share what we spent on students with special needs with the public, so they knew how much money we spent, for resource teachers, for paraprofessionals (EAs), for equipment - we did all that”. Becky went on to suggest that initially the division reported to a committee made up of parents of special needs students in the RSSD and she believed that this was a form of accountability-at least to these particular parents.

Lisa recalled her previous roles in the student support services department in the RSSD and suggested that the RSSD has evolved in its efforts to be accountable to the public. She suggested that:

...I think as a division we've really been tightening that up [accountability] in terms of ensuring that students, regardless again of level of funding, or regardless of level of need, that we were reporting on students' programming, and on student specific outcomes... and even in terms of using the provincial report card... finding, using the indicators and ensuring that where we can, that we're using that report card to communicate with parents, but as well as aligning our assessment practices with the report, reporting indicators...

Shelley, the current assistant superintendent of student support services remarked that:

every year we need to report on our Student Services grant to Manitoba Education and Training. So that doesn't go public though. It goes to Manitoba

Education. The other thing we've just finished for the second time is the review and reporting for Manitoba Education... in this particular case, we were looking at how we're aligning the IEP to the report card. The last time we looked at a lot of policies and a lot about how the IEP looked. And of course we made significant changes to the IEP as a result of that...

Shelley also made a point of mentioning the divisional annual report in which one student with special needs was championed due to her successes as a learner in the division.

Lynn, a French Immersion principal, suggested that:

I think one of the sorts of accountability measures is the fact that we submit our individualized education plans. They are read by the support services consultant and revised by... I mean nothing we do around kids especially kids for whom we are trying to get funding or for who ultimately get funding... there is a great structure in place in our school division in that it does go through different sorts of levels... I'll say almost of approval and revision... It lands at the divisional level with a support services consultant and so these plans are read- they're looked at very closely... we think very carefully, about how we are creating these plans for kids –and so that is a form of accountability. I think what the province has done with having the inclusive education review was a great form of accountability and it also gave the school division an opportunity to see... and

to look again through a different lens at how we were doing in our school division.

Cynthia, currently a student support services consultant in the RSSD reiterated that there is an IEP review process that happens with the government every three years. She stated that:

... usually about a quarter of the IEPs and they actually review them for compliance to the student services standards. And so our department, as practice, collects them every year at November 1<sup>st</sup>. And we read each one of our IEPs and we check them for compliance. And we go back to our resource teachers –not to have them change them but to discuss the smart goals, or the current level of performance or any of those pieces around, does the programing match the priority needs?

Rhonda, an early years' consultant for the RSSD, stated that:

... typically the biggest form of accountability is the IEP or the student specific plan... which sets out the goals for a particular student and then... requires that the school team look at where a student is vis-à-vis those goals throughout the year and particularly I guess at the end of the year when you're developing the new plan... The trick is, you know, having enough accountability, but not using all your resources to provide for accountability and not have your resources for

instruction... so that the student can move forward... And we have to be asking ourselves what forms of accountability do we need and what is only labeling students, or only creating paperwork that is devouring resources and time that could be better used for growth and development.

The retired employee from Manitoba Education who acted as the Director of Program and Student Services Branch for ten years and as the Coordinator of the Student Services Unit for five years suggested the following about accountability:

there is student specific funding for moderate to severe and severe to profound needs and the criteria for eligibility is very specific. Divisions report how they spend these funds annually in the FRAME [Financial Reporting and Accounting in Manitoba Education] report.

Interestingly, of the six interview informants cited in this section, only Becky and Shelley, both assistant superintendents of student support services after amalgamation, referred to the aforementioned FRAME report indirectly in their responses to the accountability measures used within the RSSD. This may be due to the fact that most of the interview informants in this study are school administrators who play a role which does not necessitate as careful an examination of specific funding for “special needs” students as would the assistant superintendent of student support services role in the school division. This may be why the administrators who were cited above mainly discussed either IEP reporting or the provincial report cards. School principals play an

important role in the measures of accountability regarding inclusive special education, however as suggested by Leithwood, Sieinbach, & Jantzi (2002):

most government reform initiatives calling for greater accountability on the part of schools assume a key role for principal leadership (e.g. Wolf et al., 2000). But recent quantitative evidence suggests that principal effects may be considerably smaller than reformers imagine. (p. 95)

### **Summary**

This chapter began with an initial discussion of looming school division amalgamations in the province of Manitoba before 2002. The resulting amalgamation of two legacy school divisions, the DSD and the KESD, in 2002 was then described. These legacy school divisions were quite different in terms of their approaches to student support services models. These differences were noted through eight key themes that arose from interview informants' responses to the research questions including: a) each legacy school division was on different ends of the student support services spectrum before amalgamation; b) after amalgamation, a period of confusion emerged with a "business as usual" attitude which continued in the new division; c) the formation of an inclusive special education policy created by select divisional personnel; d) the continued use of educational assistants as a way to support inclusive special education; e) overall changes to the understanding of appropriate educational programming; f) the variety of options for inclusive special education professional development offered to school principals; g) the role of the divisional student support services team who offered

professional development opportunities to a variety of staff including school principals; and h) the educational accountability measures of IEP reporting and provincial report cards. There is an assumption that school principals play a key role in the leadership regarding greater accountability, however as cited by Leithwood et al. (2002) at the end of this chapter, "...quantitative evidence suggests that principal effects may be considerably smaller than reformers imagine" (p. 95). The evidence discovered from interview participants' responses to my interview questions has informed the results of this study. The final chapter of this thesis will include a summary of findings and recommendations based upon the data collected.

## **Chapter 5: Summary of Findings and Recommendations**

As a result of this study, I had hoped to learn about and provide an analysis of both the initial policies and practices regarding inclusive special education (ISE) that were adopted and/or endorsed by an amalgamated urban school division and the resulting evolution of these policies and practices within this school division from 2002 until 2015. An historical case study method (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Gillham, 2000; Lapan & Quartaroli, 2009; and Yin, 1997, 2004) was utilized to complete the study. Moreover, a two-dimensional theoretical framework was used to illuminate the concepts of ISE/appropriate educational programming and divisional leadership to examine how these concepts may have contributed to the evolution of the policies and practices of ISE in this division. In addition, due to my current role as a school principal, I was interested in developing an understanding of effective leadership strategies that could influence the appropriate education of all students based upon current research and the interview responses from school administrators and student support services personnel from the RSSD.

### **Review of Study Purpose**

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to examine the evolution of inclusive special education policies and practices within an amalgamated urban school division between the years of 2002 and 2015. In this study, I explored current research and knowledge on the history of ISE on both local and international levels. Moreover, the research on leadership related to ISE from numerous scholars (Billingsley et al., 2014; Cobb, 2015; Crockett, 2002; Edmunds & Macmillan, 2010; Edmunds et al., 2009; Riehl, 2009; Theoharis & Causton, 2014; and Waldron et al., 2011) was related to

Leithwood et al.'s (2004) three basic tenets of effective leadership practice. The research questions for this study were:

1. What were the initial policies and practices with regard to inclusive special education service delivery adopted and/or endorsed by the River South School Division (RSSD) in 2002?
- 2 a) How have divisional policies and practices been redesigned and/or changed since 2002 to support inclusive special education?
- b) What professional development opportunities were provided to school principals in the RSSD to support their understanding of these policies and practices?
- c) What forms of accountability (for example, public reporting about how the division is meeting the legislative, regulatory, and standards requirements of inclusive special education as mandated by the provincial and federal governments) have been implemented by the division to monitor the impact of the division's inclusive special education initiatives?

Data were collected through semi-structured personal interviews with a total of 13 people closely involved in this work: six school administrators who had an average of 16 years of administrative experience; one early years divisional consultant with 30 years' experience; two assistant superintendents of student services (one current and one retired); one retired superintendent; one retired school trustee; one divisional student support services consultant with ten years of experience; and one retired employee from Manitoba Education who corresponded with me regarding questions from my interview protocol. Four English-speaking schools and one

French and one French Immersion school were represented in the study. All schools ranged in size from approximately 250 to 850 students. All interviewed administrators worked in either early years, kindergarten to grade eight, middle years, or high schools. Interviews took place over a seven-month period in 2016.

I transcribed all the interviews and the validity of the interviews was confirmed using member checking in which each interview participant received an electronic copy of her or his interview transcript to be reviewed. After member checks were finalized, an analysis of the resulting data were completed through repeated readings of the interview data until various patterns in the data emerged. These data patterns supported the creation of 14 key themes related to the leadership research on inclusive special education from numerous scholars (Billingsley et al., 2014; Cobb, 2015; Crockett, 2002; Edmunds & Macmillan, 2010; Edmunds et al., 2009; Riehl, 2009; Theoharis & Causton, 2014; and Waldron et al., 2011). These 14 key themes were further reduced to eight themes that related to my four main research questions. These themes will be discussed in the section below.

### **Summary and Further Discussion of Findings**

The eight key themes in the findings from this qualitative study will be reported on and subsequently related to both ISE leadership research from various scholars (Billingsley et al., 2014; Cobb, 2015; Crockett, 2002; Edmunds & Macmillan, 2010; Edmunds et al., 2009; Riehl, 2009; Theoharis & Causton, 2014; and Waldron et al., 2011) and Leithwood et al.'s (2004) three basic tenets of successful educational leadership practices including: 1) setting directions; 2) developing people; and 3) redesigning the organization. The chapter concludes with recommendations for both school principals and future researchers.

### Setting School Division Direction

As a result of the data collected from both the interview subjects in this study and from select legacy school division documents, it was shown that both the Dugald School Division (DSD) and the King Edward School Division (KESD) approached ISE policy and practice in different ways. By amalgamating and forming a single urban school division, as mandated by the provincial government in 2002, the DSD and the KESD faced several financial and administrative challenges. Chief amongst these challenges was forming what Joseph, the previous superintendent at the time of amalgamation, referred to as "...an appropriate organizational model for the new school division". Creating this appropriate organizational model required a collaborative/consultative approach amongst divisional leaders including the superintendent, assistant superintendents, divisional student support services personnel, school administrators, and teaching staff.

After interviewing former employees from each legacy school division, it was determined that the DSD followed a model of student support services that more closely matched Booth's (2005) definition of inclusive education since the DSD emphasized that most, if not all, students would attend their local community school. Conversely, the KESD placed specifically identified "special needs" students into specialized programs such as the aforementioned *Community Access Program* and the *Inter-divisional Program for Students with Autism* in their approach to ISE policy and practice. As argued previously, the KESD's approach to ISE was more aligned with Oliver's (1990) *individual model of disability* and the DSD's approach was more aligned with Oliver's (1990) *social model of disability*. In addition, the KESD's

approach to ISE was aligned with the historical eras of mainstreaming, integrated settings and integration as well as the era of additional classroom supports which were prevalent in Manitoba from the 1970s into the 1990s. The DSD's approach to ISE, however, was more aligned with the historical eras of additional classroom supports, equal opportunity to public education, and present inclusion and appropriate educational programming which arose in Manitoba from the 1980s to present day. These differences in alignment between the two legacy school divisions compounded the complexity of the amalgamation that occurred in 2002. Moreover, when considering Leithwood et al.'s (2004) successful educational leadership practice of setting directions, it was more difficult for the newly amalgamated RSSD to create a policy on ISE that it could both endorse and publish. It was not until 2005, a full three years after amalgamation and a variety of committee meetings with select divisional staff, that the school division finally published its formal policy on inclusive education. As argued earlier, Cobb (2015) suggests that school division policies that refer to ISE help create an organizational framework for the entire school division. Arguably, this lack of initial policy on inclusive special education may have contributed to a "business as usual" attitude in the RSSD that continued throughout its first eight years of existence. As previously noted, the last specialized program in the RSSD was not discontinued until 2010.

An additional common theme that emerged from the research in this study that also connects to Leithwood et al.'s (2004) setting directions for a school division is the continued use of educational assistants (EAs) as the main way to support the inclusion of special needs students. As earlier suggested by a retired employee from Manitoba

Education, "... EAs made it possible for special needs kids to be in the classroom". Both legacy divisions used EAs on a regular basis to support the learning needs of specific children in their respective school divisions and this practice continued in the amalgamated division. Evidence compiled from select interview participants' responses to interview questions regarding the role of EAs in the classroom, demonstrated that there was variability in the perception of what role was the most appropriate for an EA to adopt. Examples were provided of EAs supporting special needs students by working alongside these children in the classroom setting, however there were also examples provided of EAs working with children through "... primarily a pullout model". This variability in EA role designation is aligned with research from scholars such as Edelman et al. (1997), Giangreco & Broer (2007), and Giangreco (2013). As mentioned in Chapter Four, designating an EA to work only with a "levelled child" is reminiscent of Oliver's (1990) *individual model of disability* since the learning difficulties of the child help determine the placement of an EA with that child – that is, an in-child problem necessitates the placement of an EA for support. If the RSSD were to align itself more closely with Oliver's (1990) *social model of disability*, then rather than simply placing an EA with a levelled child, the school's student support services team would carefully examine the way teachers set up their classrooms and provide programming that is appropriate for all students. Moreover, alternative approaches such as the classroom teacher working with the levelled child and the EA supporting other students in the class could be considered. These alternative approaches to the use of EAs in the classroom aligns with suggestions from scholars such as Giangreco (2010, 2013) about the most effective use of EAs in the classroom setting.

A final common theme from the findings of this study that is connected to setting directions is that of the evolution of RSSD employees' understanding of appropriate educational programming and the impact this evolution has had on instruction in the classroom. As one of the interview participants suggested, there has been an evolution in the RSSD in both teachers' and student support team members' understanding that, "... individual needs are being met either within the classroom or within the school building, but not again so much as a program, but more in terms of appropriate programming". In fact, the RSSD published a critical *Document 2* in 2014 that supported setting the directions for teaching staff regarding the planning and programming required to meet the learning needs of diverse students. The way the school division supported the implementation of the recommendations in this document is connected to Leithwood et al.'s (2004) second and third basic tenets of successful leadership- the development of people and re-designing the organization as described below.

### **Developing People and Re-designing the Organization**

Four key themes from the findings in this study relate to Leithwood et al.'s (2004) suggestions of the importance of developing people within an organization and re-designing that organization. As cited earlier, Riehl (2009) suggests that the promotion of inclusive educational practices is, in part, based upon, "... promoting forms of teaching and learning that enable diverse students to succeed and moulding school cultures that embrace and support diversity" (p.187). In addition, Billingsley et al. (2014) argue that a critical element of being an inclusive school leader is to build, "... a professional community that shares responsibility for improving

the learning of all students” (p. 27). The interview data collected in this study emphasized the importance of educational personnel, including principals, engaging in professional development related to learning about appropriate educational programming (AEP). One of the RSSD’s divisional student support services consultants suggested that it was critical to have a, “... common understanding of appropriate education because those student services standards come from the *Appropriate Education Bill*”. How the RSSD attempted to support a common understanding of AEP was two-fold. First, the division published its formal *Document 2* in 2014. Second, the division provided professional development sessions for student support school teams through an organizational structure previously described as the *Family of Schools*. These professional development sessions offered an opportunity for select personnel including school principals to develop their understanding of the myriad ways to support diverse student learning. The professional development sessions provided by the divisional student support services team connect with Leithwood et al.’s (2004) basic tenet of developing people, however, as argued earlier, these sessions were voluntary. It is interesting to consider whether the RSSD might make such professional development opportunities mandatory since, as suggested in the *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services* (2006) document, school principals “...have, subject to *The Public Schools Act* and the direction of the school board, a responsibility for the education of all students in their schools and for the staff of the school division under their direction” (p. 3). *The Public Schools Act* outlines the legal responsibilities of a school principal; however, it is critical to note that both the RSSD and Manitoba Education suggest a ‘team’ approach to developing a vision for ISE within a school. As further suggested in the *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services* (2006) document, “the team is important in helping schools develop exemplary

practice in inclusion and in promoting the planning, development and monitoring of IEPs for students in all aspects of their school life” (p. 5).

The divisional student support services department in the RSSD has certainly played a pivotal role in supporting the learning about inclusive education and appropriate educational programming for educational personnel including school principals. As suggested by a former divisional student services consultant, a key element of the professional development opportunities provided by the RSSD’s student support services department included that, “... administrators were invited to be part of those conversations because they are the leaders in the building and they need to be empowered with the information, the strategies, and the learning”. As argued earlier, the RSSD aligns itself with the *Code of Professional Practice* as endorsed by the Manitoba Teachers’ Society since there is an expectation that a school principal will engage in a variety of professional development opportunities in order to build her or his capacity to help lead ISE within the school team.

The final theme from the study findings that is connected to Leithwood et al.’s (2004) redesigning the organization is the educational accountability based upon IEP reporting and provincial report cards. Interestingly, school-based administrators, divisional student services personnel, and assistant superintendents of student support services all mentioned the importance of the IEP review process. The current assistant superintendent of student support services suggested that by reviewing the IEP process in each school in the division, changes to the organization regarding IEP reporting occurred. As cited earlier, the assistant superintendent commented that, “... the last time we looked at a lot of policies and a lot about how the IEP looked. And of course we made significant changes to the IEP as a result of that [the review process]”. In addition, a school principal suggested that, “...what the province has done with

having the inclusive education review was a great form of accountability and it also gave the school division an opportunity... to look again through a different lens at how we were doing...”.

Although only mentioned briefly, the provincial report card process is an additional mandatory accountability measure that reports to students and their families about learning and behavioural progress up to a particular point in the school year. Only one former student support services consultant in the RSSD spoke of the importance of provincial report card as an accountability measure in her comment that, “...using the provincial report card... finding, using the indicators and ensuring that where we can, that we’re using that report card to communicate with parents, but as well as aligning our assessment practices with the reporting indicators...”.

Of the eight themes that were determined by the coding process utilized in this study, the concept of educational accountability had the weakest representation in terms of depth of thinking amongst the responses of key interview participants. As mentioned earlier, most of the interview participants’ spoke only of IEP reporting and/or the IEP review process. This apparent lack of scope in the understanding of the various measures of educational accountability aligns with the suggestion of one interview participant that the RSSD, “...still (has) a long way to go...” with regard to educational accountability measures. As a way to potentially assist school principals in strengthening their role in supporting ISE and AEP, a description of key recommendations follows.

### **Recommendations for School Principals**

Based upon the findings in this study, five key recommendations will be suggested for school-based administrators to consider as they envision a model of

student support services that aligns with the concepts of inclusive special education.

While acknowledging that this is not an exhaustive list, the five key recommendations include: 1) Have a clear understanding of ISE, inclusion, and appropriate educational programming (AEP); 2) Help create a strong school vision of inclusive education; 3) Support the professional development of school staff; 4) Support alternative models of EA placement and support; and 5) Adopt a shared leadership/ collaborative approach.

### **Clear Understanding of ISE, Inclusion, and AEP**

As uncovered in the key terminology section of this thesis, there currently exist a variety of interpretations of terms associated with ISE and it would be prudent for any school principal to understand these interpretations to clarify her or his own understanding of key terms. In this study, inclusive special education is denoted as, “a broad concept that describes the teaching strategies, opportunities, and/or additional supports required for the successful learning of any student who is not appropriately supported by standard delivery of the provincial curriculum”. Moreover, although the Manitoba Government has published a definition of inclusion in its document entitled, *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba* (2006), and this definition has been endorsed by the RSSD in its formal policy on inclusion (*Policy Document 1*), as stated earlier, the primary researcher prefers Booth’s (2005) definition of inclusion as being:

... about increasing participation in, and reducing exclusion from, the curricula,

cultures and communities of local education settings. It is about developing education settings so that they are responsive to diversity in a way that values all students and staff equally. (p. 152)

Also of critical note, is the distinction made between the definition of inclusion and appropriate educational programming as suggested by two Manitoban scholars, Van Wallegghem & Lutfiyya (2013), that inclusion is an expressed commitment to, "... general social involvement, acceptance, and value" (p. 1), whereas appropriate educational programming is a legal expectation of all schools and school divisions in the province.

School principals can build their capacity for understanding the key concepts related to ISE by becoming familiar with pertinent local school division policy and government documents such as *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba* (2006). As suggested by Cobb (2015), school division policy, provincial laws, and government documents regarding ISE, can help support the vision for the organizational framework of the entire school division. Arguably, a clear understanding of ISE, inclusion, and AEP would assist a school principal in creating a strong vision of inclusive education in her or his school.

### **Creating a Shared Vision of Inclusive Education**

Researchers including Edmunds & Macmillan (2010); McGlynn & London (2013); and Edmunds et al. (2009) have all argued that school principals need to be strong proponents of creating a clear understanding of inclusive educational principles amongst all staff in their schools. Of particular note is the aforementioned suggestion by

Billingsley et al. (2014) that, “several investigations emphasized the important role the principal plays in recognizing the need for a shared vision that addresses students with disabilities and inclusion and working to promote inclusion as a core value in the school (Burstein et al., 2004; Fisher et al., 2000; Guzman, 1997; Hoppey & McLeskey, 2013; Janney et al., 1995; Keyes, Hanley-Maxwell, & Capper, 1999; Lieber et al., 2000; Mayrowetz & Weinstein, 1999; Salisbury, 2006; Salisbury & McGregor, 2002; Waldron et al., 2011)” (p. 25-26). School principals, once having built their capacity for understanding the key concepts related to ISE and AEP, need to promote and share these understandings with staff during staff meetings and local professional development opportunities.

### **Supporting Professional Development**

A key role of the school principal is to support the professional development needs of school staff regarding both ISE and AEP. As recommended by Waldron et al. (2011), school principals who support a learning community devoted to professional development and providing resources to teaching staff in order to support diverse classroom learning needs engendered “... a sense of community and equity among teachers” (p. 56). Billingsley et al. (2014) further suggest that school leaders who support the professional development needs of their staff, help create a shared responsibility for meeting the learning needs of a diverse population of students. Moreover, Theoharis & Causton (2014) suggest that schools from their research that have become more inclusive settings, “... have spent significant professional development time and energy learning about collaboration, co-teaching, and

differentiation” (p. 87). As important as supporting the professional development needs of staff members, is the need to consider alternative models of EA use in the school setting.

### **Alternative Model of EA Support**

As suggested in the literature review, the exclusive use of EAs to support students with special needs is a model of support for ISE that presently exists in the RSSD. As previously argued, this type of support is at least partially based upon Oliver’s (1990) *individual model of disability* in which a “within-child” problem necessitates the placement of either a part-time or full-time EA with that child as opposed to examining the ways that educators set up their classrooms and provide appropriate programming to all students. In both Manitoba and the RSSD, the in-class placement of an EA to help support a special needs child continues to be deemed appropriate and seems to be the major model of support for students identified with an identified special learning need.

Since the use of EAs has been maintained as a model of support in the amalgamated RSSD - a minimum of 400 EAs per year are employed in the RSSD’s schools- it is incumbent upon school principals to work with their student support services team to consider how EAs are best used within the classroom setting.

Researchers including Edelman et al. (1997); Broer & Giangreco (2003); and Giangreco (2010, 2013) have long argued that EAs, while potentially important components of an inclusive program, can inadvertently cause further exclusion of a special needs child if the EA works with that child through a pullout model or, as suggested by Giangreco (2010), hovers over such a child in the classroom setting. As a

key member of a school's student support services team, the school principal should consider alternative models of using EAs to support the learning needs of children. One such alternative model is using an EA to work with numerous children within the classroom and not specifically with a child who has been funded as level 2 or 3. It makes sense that the adult working in the classroom with the most training, typically the classroom teacher, works more with the struggling learners than an EA who may have less training.

The current assistant superintendent of student support services in the RSSD previously suggested that the best model of EA use that she has ever witnessed in the school division was at a school for which she was the principal and EAs and teachers were trained together on appropriate programming. She further suggested that these common professional development experiences provided a greater sense of equity and value amongst all personnel in the building. Including the EAs as part of an overall collaborative school team relates to the final recommendation for school principals that is to adopt a shared leadership/collaborative approach.

### **Shared Leadership/Collaborative Approach**

As mentioned in the literature review, Waldron et al. (2011) suggest that it is critical that school principals work collaboratively and share responsibility with teaching staff regarding ISE and AEP as teachers from their study, "... realized that they were empowered to make real decisions about their classrooms and school, they were motivated to improve their practice and determine approaches to better meet the needs of all students" (p.55). Moreover, both the RSSD and Manitoba Education

suggest a “team” approach to developing a vision for ISE within a school. As earlier cited from the *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services* (2006) document, “the team is important in helping schools develop exemplary practice in inclusion...’ (p. 5).

As cited earlier, regarding collaborating as a school team to prepare and plan for ISE and AEP, Theoharis & Causton (2014) recommend that the school principal work together with her or his staff members to create a current service delivery map since, “this process requires school teams to map out their current service delivery and the way they use their human resources in efforts to meet the range of student needs” (p. 85). As mentioned earlier, after examining the school’s current service delivery model, Theoharis & Causton (2014) suggest that, “... the staff looks to create a new inclusive service delivery plan by redeploying staff members to make balanced and heterogeneous classrooms where all students are included, to enhance inclusion and belonging” (p. 85). These two scholars suggest that creating a service delivery map through collaboration can support the maintenance of balanced classrooms in which the learning needs of all students can be potentially addressed.

### **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

The nature of this historical case study was limited to an investigation of a single amalgamated urban school division’s initial policies and practices regarding ISE and the resulting evolution of these policies and practices within this school division from 2002 until 2015. As a result, this focus on a single school division limits the transferability (Patton, 2002) of the findings. Although this study provided rich data collected from participants of select groups

including school-based administrators, student support services personnel, assistant superintendents, a retired superintendent, and a retired school trustee, these interviewees self-reported their understandings of the evolution of inclusive special education policies and practices in the RSSD, thereby limiting the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, this study was small; only 13 participants were interviewed, and occurred over a short period of time. Neither an analysis of inclusive classroom practices nor the experiences of *special needs* students within the school division were examined as part of this study. As a final note, since the researcher is currently employed by the RSSD, his employment status may have impacted his ability to be critical of the division's approaches to ISE and AEP.

Future research should include an examination of how other urban school divisions created their initial policies and practices regarding ISE and AEP after the provincial amalgamations that occurred in 2002. Did any of these amalgamated school divisions begin with a formal policy on ISE? If so, how did policy and practice regarding ISE and AEP evolve in these amalgamated divisions? How might this compare to the findings from this study regarding the RSSD's model of student support services?

As suggested in the *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services* (2006) document, "the team is important in helping schools develop exemplary practice in inclusion..." (p. 5). More research is required to specify how shared leadership could influence a school team and the resulting policies and practices of ISE and AEP the team adopts within the school setting. Further studies could also examine whether there is an optimum level of shared leadership to both create a vision for ISE in a school and/or school division and how this shared leadership could impact the formation of ideal conditions to support the learning needs of a diverse population of students.

Finally, more research is required to investigate the possibilities of utilizing an approach to ISE and AEP that is more aligned with Oliver's (1990) *social model of disability* which:

does not deny the problem of disability but locates it squarely within society. It is not individual limitations, of whatever kind, which are the cause of the problem but society's failure to provide appropriate services and adequately ensure the needs of disabled people are fully taken into account in its social organization. (p. 3)

Although Oliver's (1990) definition of a *social model of disability* emphasizes the word "disabled", this definition is applicable to diverse students who are not a "problem", but rather worthy of deeper consideration regarding the methods by which educators design classrooms and teach in ways that better meet diverse learning needs.

### **Conclusion**

This thesis addressed four key research questions related to the evolution of ISE policies and practices within an amalgamated urban school division between the years of 2002 and 2015. In the first chapter, a description of two critical incidents that the primary researcher experienced in his role as a school principal were provided as a background for this study.

Regarding the role of a school principal, there exists a clear mandate from the Manitoba government, as expressed in the *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services* (2006), that principals "...have, subject to *The Public Schools Act* and the direction of the school board, a responsibility for the education of all students in their schools and for the staff of the school division under their direction" (p. 3). Moreover, as cited earlier, Praisner (2003) suggests that, "due to their leadership position, principals' attitudes about

inclusion could result in either increased opportunities for students to be served in general education or in limited efforts to reduce the segregated nature of special education services” (p. 136). Also, as cited in the *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Extending Genuine Learning and Social Experiences for All School Communities, Final Consultation Report* (2006) the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*:

... guarantees to all Canadians equality before and under the law, the right to equal protection and benefit before and under the law and the right to equal protection and benefit of the law without discrimination, in particular, “without discrimination based on race, national or ethnic origin, color, religion, sex, age or mental or physical disability”.  
(p. 1)

Based upon the above citation, it is clearly the responsibility of the school principal and ultimately the school division to ensure that its policies regarding ISE and AEP are aligned with the province’s expectations. However, as previously suggested by Thompson et al. (2015), “changes in public policy appear to promote an inclusive approach, yet there is some indication that implementation is lagging and there is a gap between policy and practice (Timmons, 2006; Statistics Canada, 2008)” (p. 123). The findings from this study indicated that the greatest gap between policy and practice existed between the two legacy school divisions before amalgamation. The DSD adopted a model of full inclusion and the KESD adopted a model of integration and specialized programming in their approaches to ISE. As mentioned by Barbara, a former school trustee, before amalgamation in 2002, “there probably couldn’t have been two divisions more polar opposite...”.

The fact that these legacy school divisions were quite different in terms of their approaches to student support services models aligned with the suggestion from Lutfiyya & Van

Wallegghem (2001) that, "... the term 'inclusive education' is currently used to refer to a wide range of practice in Manitoba" (p. 79). Moreover, it was argued that the differences in ISE policy and practices between the former legacy school divisions contributed to a period of confusion in the newly amalgamated division. The RSSD did not publish an official policy on inclusive education until 2005, three years after amalgamation. Interestingly, the RSSD continues to support segregated programs for specific Level 3 students such as a weekly divisional swim program in which these identified students are removed from the regular classroom and combined with similarly leveled students from other RSSD schools at a local swimming pool for a one hour program of instruction. In addition, according to the RSSD's 2015 – 2018 Divisional Action Plan, "a new High School program...will be established in September 2016 to provide programming to 50 selected students who have fallen out of reach for graduating with their cohort" (p. 12). These two programs that are both self-contained with students of similar need indicate that the tension that existed between the legacy school divisions regarding full inclusion versus segregated programming continues.

Furthermore, the evolution of ISE and AEP in the RSSD was connected to eight key themes that arose from interview informants' responses to the research questions. The eight key themes from the findings were then related to both ISE leadership research from various scholars (Billingsley et al., 2014; Cobb, 2015; Crockett, 2002; Edmunds & Macmillan, 2010; Edmunds et al., 2009; Riehl, 2009; Theoharis & Causton, 2014; and Waldron et al., 2011), and Leithwood et al.'s (2004) three basic tenets of successful educational leadership practices including: 1) setting directions; 2) developing people; and 3) redesigning the organization.

Moreover, these eight key themes informed five key recommendations for the practice of school principals including: 1) Have a clear understanding of ISE, inclusion, and AEP; 2) Help create a strong school vision of inclusive education; 3) Support the professional development of school staff; 4) Support alternative models of EA placement and support; and 5) Adopt a shared leadership/ collaborative approach. These five key recommendations contribute to an understanding of how to best meet the needs of children such as Franklin who was mentioned in the background to this study. Ultimately, Franklin's learning needs would have better been met through more appropriate educational programming and further collaborative work with all school staff to build a deeper understanding of how to best meet diverse learning needs within the classroom setting. As a result of completing this thesis, it is clear that school principals can do much to co-create and maintain a vision of ISE and AEP that will help meet the needs of a diverse student population.

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## Appendix A

Apo /



Research Ethics and Compliance  
Office of the Vice-President (Research and International)

Human Ethics  
208-194 Dafoe Road  
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Canada R3T 2N2  
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## APPROVAL CERTIFICATE

April 26, 2016

**TO:** Douglas Jonasson (Advisor: Jon C. Young)  
Principal Investigator

**FROM:** Sarah Teetzel, Vice-Chair  
Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)

**Re:** Protocol #E2016:039 (HS19610)  
"The Historical Development of Inclusive Special Education in a  
Large Urban Manitoba School Division (2002-2015)"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement (2). **This approval is valid for one year only and will expire on April 26, 2017.**

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

**Please note:**

- If you have funds pending human ethics approval, please mail/e-mail/fax (261-0325) a copy of this Approval (identifying the related UM Project Number) to the Research Grants Officer in ORS in order to initiate fund setup. (How to find your UM Project Number: <http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/mrt-faq.html#pr0>)
- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

The Research Quality Management Office may request to review research documentation from this project to demonstrate compliance with this approved protocol and the University of Manitoba *Ethics of Research Involving Humans*.

**The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: [http://umanitoba.ca/research/orec/ethics/human\\_ethics\\_REB\\_forms\\_guidelines.html](http://umanitoba.ca/research/orec/ethics/human_ethics_REB_forms_guidelines.html)) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.**

*Appendix B*

UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Education

230 Education Building  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3T 2N2  
Telephone (204) 474-9014  
Fax (204) 474-7550

**Interview Protocol (Retired Employees)**

1. Please describe for me the context in which you worked for the River South School

Division:

- a. Your role/position and the length of time you spent in your role(s).
  - b. You can speak to anything that comes to mind that helps situate the demographic and social environment in which you worked.
2. Please describe for me your definition of inclusive special education.
  3. At the time of amalgamation, what were the initial divisional policies and practices that were implemented to support inclusive special education service delivery?
  4. From whom did the leadership come from to inform the policies and practices of inclusive special education service delivery in the newly formed division?
  5. Describe any inclusive special education initiatives that were employed by educators to ensure that students with special learning needs could take full advantage of the regular classroom setting?
  6. How have divisional policies and practices been redesigned and/or changed since 2002 to support inclusive special education service delivery?
  7. What role do school principals play in the support of inclusive special education service delivery?

8. What professional development opportunities were offered to school principals by the division to support their role in the provision of inclusive special education service delivery?
9. Describe any shared instructional practices within the division that you feel supported inclusive special education service delivery.
10. How did RSSD follow the provincial funding formulas to support the inclusion of children with special needs?
11. What organizational conditions drove the educational responses to student diversity?
12. What forms of accountability, such as the public reporting of the progress of special needs students, were implemented by the division to ensure that its inclusive education policies and practices were aligned with the provincial and federal constitutional mandates?
13. In your role as, (Insert Appropriate Role/Title), how have you been able to work with outside agencies, such as the *Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Center*, to benefit the learning needs of children in your school?
14. Describe your experience with implementing individualized educational plans within your school or in the division.
15. What recommendations would you provide to newly hired administrators in RSSD about leading appropriate education for all students?

*Appendix C*

UNIVERSITY  
OF MANITOBA

Faculty of Education

230 Education Building  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, Manitoba  
Canada R3T 2N2  
Telephone (204) 474-9014  
Fax (204) 474-7550

**Interview Protocol (Current Employees)**

1. Please describe for me the context in which you worked for the River South School

Division:

- c. Your role/position and the length of time you spent in your role(s). If you were a school principal, the grade level/structure of the school, enrolment of the school, school/student characteristics, the nature of the community in which you worked, etc.
  - d. You can speak to anything that comes to mind that helps situate the demographic and social environment in which you worked.
2. Please describe for me your definition of inclusive special education.
  3. What inclusive special education initiatives have you experienced working in RSSD?
  4. In your role(s), how are shared meanings of inclusive special education created within RSSD or in the school(s) in which you have worked?
  5. Describe any inclusive special education initiatives that were employed by educators to ensure that students with special learning needs could take full advantage of the regular classroom setting?
  6. How have divisional policies and practices been redesigned and/or changed since 2002 to support inclusive special education?

7. What role do school principals play in the support of inclusive special education service delivery?
8. What professional development opportunities were offered to school principals by the division to support their role in the provision of inclusive special education service delivery?
9. Describe any shared instructional practices within the division that you feel supported inclusive special education service delivery.
10. How did RSSD follow the provincial funding formulas to support the inclusion of children with special needs?
11. What organizational conditions drive educational responses to student diversity?
12. What forms of accountability, such as the public reporting of the progress of special needs students, are implemented by the division to ensure that its inclusive education policies and practices were aligned with the provincial and federal constitutional mandates?
13. In your role as, (Insert Appropriate Role/Title), how have you been able to work with outside agencies, such as the *Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Center*, to benefit the learning needs of children in your school?
14. Describe your experience with implementing individualized educational plans within your school or in the division.
15. What recommendations would you provide to newly hired administrators in RSSD about leading appropriate education for all students?